

Civil Society Knowledge Networks

A Geography of Ideas in Development

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Abstract

Information technology, media, financial flows and consumer culture have long been acknowledged as transnational connective forces that spread ideas and values around the globe. This work proposes an alternative mechanism for such spread: development-focused civil society organizations. This thesis argues that such organizations constitute a backbone of connections that link a diversity of development actors and local communities into a network with global scope. While individual nodes in these civil society networks may not possess global reach, the network as a whole facilitates the far flung transfer of knowledge and ideas. This work focuses on the ways that knowledge is generated, transferred and renegotiated on both the global, national and local scale through such networks of development institutions. How are global discourses formed, adapted and spread via civil society into local communities? How do local communities interact with, change, implement or ignore the values, knowledge and rhetoric of global movements? How are communities shaped by these discourses and what role do they have in informing the discourses themselves?

The project constructs two case studies of such ‘knowledge networks’ – two international foundations, their partner NGOs in the developing world (Kyrgyzstan and Kenya), and the local communities where the NGOs support ecologically-focused initiatives. The case studies demonstrate the complex and uneven ways in which knowledge and values are shared – and contested – within the networks. Ideas are transformed, adapted or ignored between different nodes, and yet the network retains enough common discourse and shared knowledge to function as a whole. Despite power imbalances, local actors remain agents, not subjects, in these networks and produce knowledge that is prized by other organizations and individuals in the networks. Civil society knowledge networks thus sculpt the content and application of knowledge across global movements, development-focused civil society organizations and local communities in the developing world.

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Acronyms

AKDN – Aga Khan Development Network

AKF – Aga Khan Foundation

AKF Kg – Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan

CBO – Community Based Organization

CFA – (Charri) Community Forest Association

ENDA – Ewaso Niro Development Authority

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

GIZ – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation

KFS – Kenya Forest Service

KWS – Kenya Wildlife Service

MID-P – Merti Integrated Development Programme

MSDSP Kg – Mountain Society Development Support Programme, Kyrgyzstan

MSRC/MSRI – Mountain Society Research Centre/Institute

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

PSAKFE - Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment

REAR-Charri – Reclamation and Exploitation of ASAL (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands) Region, Charri

TCF – The Christensen Fund

UCA – University of Central Asia

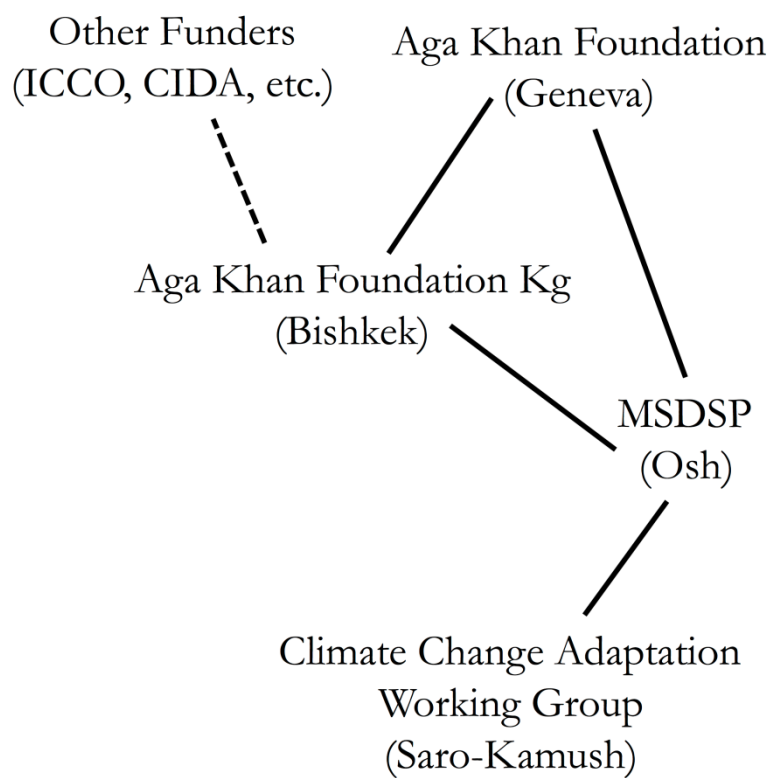
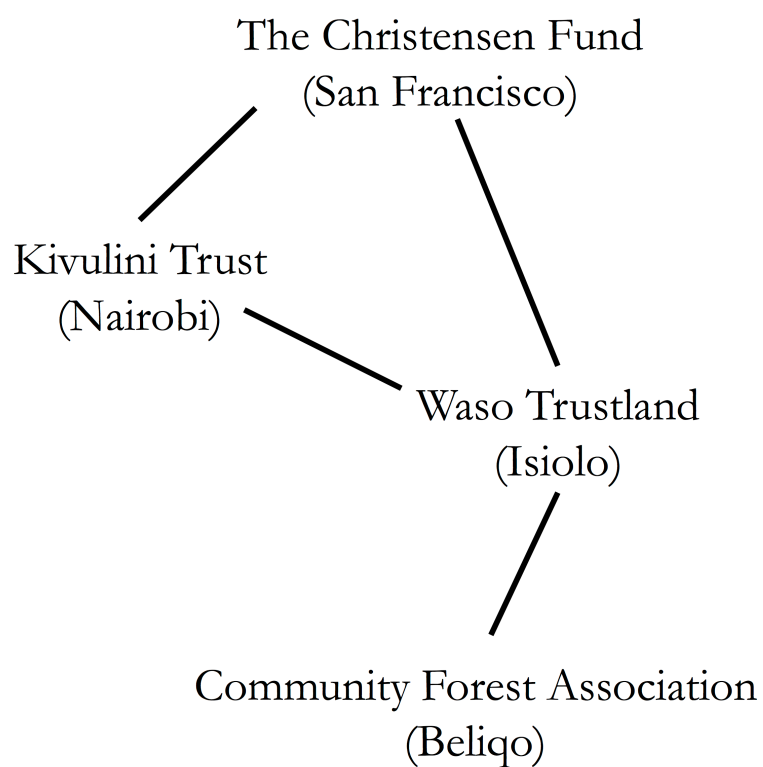
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VSF – Vétérinaires Sans Frontières

WTL – Waso Trustland Project

The Case Study Networks



Cast of Key Characters

The Christensen Fund (TCF), San Francisco, USA:

Jeff Campbell, Director of Grantmaking (until 2014)

Ken Wilson, Executive Director

Wolde Tadasse, Rift Valley Program Officer (until 2014)

Yeshi TekleMichael, Grant Associate

Kivulini Heritage Trust, Nairobi, Kenya:

Hassan Roba, Consultant (from 2014 Director of Grantmaking for TCF)

Hussein Isack (Dr. Hussein), Director

Waso Trustland Project (WTL), Isiolo, Kenya:

Hassan Shano, Head

Liban Golicha, Administrator

Community Forest Association ,Beligo Village, Kenya:

Wako Wado, Chairman, Community Forest Association

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Geneva, Switzerland:

David Boyer, Head of PSAKFE

Mark Whitton, Head of the Natural Resource Management Programme

Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan (AKF Kg), Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan:

Jack, Resource Mobilization/Fundraising Officer

Karl Goeppert, CEO

Laurie Ashley, Consultant, Climate Change Adaptation Project

Nicolle Nelson, Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Officer

MSDSP Kg, Osh, Kyrgyzstan:

Aizada Bekboeva, Climate Change Adaptation Project Specialist

Alibek Mukambaev, Monitoring and Evaluation

Erkin Beisheev, Former Climate Change Adaptation Project Manager (2010–12)

Pirjan Manasov, Climate Change Adaptation Project Manager (2012–13)

Talant Aldashov, Director

Rahat Yusubalieva, Climate Change Adaptation Project Manager (2013–)

Climate Change Adaptation Working Group, Saro-Kamush Village, Kyrgyzstan:

Nurmat Tolumbaiulo, Head of the Climate Change Adaptation Working Group, Head and Founder, Zhalgiz Alma

Chapter One

Introducing Civil Society Knowledge Networks

Picture a small village in a narrow valley nestled into the lower reaches of the Tian Shan Mountains, in the southwest corner of Kyrgyzstan, the “Switzerland of Central Asia”. It perches on the edge of a cliff overlooking a wide river bed with a shallow brown river running down its middle, and snowy mountain peaks visible at each end of the valley. Once the village had been on the river’s banks, but flooding and widening caused the village to move ever further. Indeed, the village is named Saro-Kamush, Kyrgyz for the yellow reeds that grow in the river. On the green-brown hillsides around Saro-Kamush graze herds of horses and sheep, pointing to the semi-nomadic pastoralist livelihoods of the residents of the village. Every summer many in the village leave with all of the herds to pitch their yurts on summer pastures high in the mountains.

Or picture instead a vast unfolding flatland, scrubby bush and acacia trees failing to mask the bare parched earth, swept by hot dry winds. The flatness is broken by a series of hills on one horizon and the shock of the rising bulk of a plateau in the north, blocking any hope of a cell phone signal. A river winds east to west in this landscape, sometimes vast and swollen, sometimes down to a trickle or disappearing entirely, the only flash of verdant green a strip of forest on either side. An occasional village is sprinkled in here and there, huddling close to the rocky dirt road that cuts through the bush. No electricity lines break the visage. This is a small corner of northern Kenya, a part of the country that used to be the Northern Frontier District. People in Kenya’s metropolises speak of it as ‘upcountry,’ a word synonymous with remoteness. The people here, the majority of whom belong to the Borana ethnic group, are largely pastoralist, walking the lands with their herds. They once lived in small movable villages of woven huts that followed the animals, but more and more stay in permanent villages of mud-walled houses. One such village is Beliqo, tucked around a curve of the Ewaso Niro, a three kilometer walk from the river. Many of its residents are gone for long stretches of time with their herds, but many stay, preferring to have access to the village’s primary school, small dispensary, and, most importantly,

food aid, which is crucial to surviving the increasingly lengthy and frequent droughts that wrack this already arid land.

Now picture two gleaming high-rises. One is in Geneva, Switzerland, just a block or two from Lake Geneva. Much of the building is dedicated to the various ventures, charitable and commercial, of His Highness the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismaili community,¹ billionaire, business magnate and philanthropist. No trace of the spiritual role of the Aga Khan is visible in the building, one floor of which is dedicated to the Aga Khan Foundation, the charitable branch of the Aga Khan Development Network. It is filled with largely European and North American nationals that administer or guide the many branches of the foundation, which run development projects in education, health, livelihood creation and natural resource management around the globe.

The other high-rise is in San Francisco, California. One of its floors houses the open-plan offices of another charitable foundation – the Christensen Fund. People sit at their desks, looking into computer screens, tapping on keyboards. Floor to ceiling windows offer views of the city and the bay beyond, but even more eye-catching is the art on the walls: tapestries and paintings that are indigenous or aboriginal, their origins ranging from Central Asia to East Africa to the Pacific Islands to the US Southwest. This art is the first clue of the interests of the foundation, interests that focus not only on indigenous culture, but combine this with ecology and the environment – in other words, biocultural diversity, the view that cultural diversity is crucial to maintaining biological diversity and the ecological wellbeing of the planet (Loh & Harmon 2005).

What connects these villages and glass skyscrapers? What connects a pastoralist people in the remote north of Kenya, struggling in the face of increasing drought, violent resource-based ethnic conflict, food insecurity and aid dependence, to the people sitting in the bright offices of a

¹ The Aga Khan is the current Imam of Nizari Ismailism, a denomination within Shia Islam with between 5-15 million followers. Ismaili Muslims are spread through South Asia, the Middle East, East Africa and Central Asia, as well as Europe and North America.

foundation on the other side of the globe? Though the people in Beliqo village might shake their heads at such a question, those in the foundation are quick to answer – Beliqo residents have shown an interest in conserving their riverine forest and reviving the traditional knowledge and customs that surround forest and river use, an interest expressed in grant applications to the foundation, and one that aligns with its broad aims. Thus resources – in the form of thousands of dollars – flow every year from the foundation to the village. The same processes seemingly connect Saro-Kamush and the Geneva offices of the Aga Khan Foundation. These offices administer and oversee a climate change adaptation project as part of their natural resource management work, and point to increasing climate instability and natural disasters experienced by the residents of Saro-Kamush as good reasons for them to be enthusiastic about taking part in the climate change adaptation project.

But this is too simple a story. It ignores the technological, geographical, social and linguistic barriers around Beliqo and Saro-Kamush that could not have been overcome without intermediaries – in this case, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). How would each village have even heard of these foundations? How could it have composed and sent in grant applications with limited access to information technology, not to mention the knowledge of the language and rhetoric needed to write a grant application successfully? And why would a people often in dire straits, struggling with food and human security or natural disasters, care about conserving a forest, or be interested in learning about climate change?

I. Civil Society Knowledge Networks and the Globalization of Ideas

The aim of this project is to piece together a geography of knowledge within the current practice of development, and to understand the ways in which this geography forms and changes. It is ultimately concerned with the way ideas travel – and the way they mutate, interact and impact individuals and communities along the way. I construct this geography of ideas by examining the way flows of knowledge straddle what Pieterse (1995) terms the “tandem operation of

local/global dynamics”. As such, this work speaks to the literature around socio-cultural globalization, which explores the growing scale and depth of interconnections between cultures and peoples around the globe – and thus epistemic linkages. This literature focuses largely on mechanisms of interconnection such as information technology (including the internet, cellphones and social media sites), the media (such as television), or global consumer culture (i.e., global brands like MacDonald’s).² In contrast, my work looks at a very different route for the flow of ideas: development institutions such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the charities that fund them, and the grassroots movements they support. Development organizations are often at the forefront of the creation and transfer of knowledge and practice in the developing world. My research conceptualizes networks of such organizations, the communities they work in and the foundations that fund them as *civil society knowledge networks*. These networks are uniquely positioned to create connections and shift the content and application of knowledge, both within the developing world and within international epistemic communities. In particular, I use the lens of environmentally-focused development interventions to focus in on the ways rhetoric, ideas and practices are created and negotiated between and within a variety of participants and actors in the development project.

This work uses the model of civil society knowledge networks to explore the formation of development-focused epistemic communities that span the developed and the developing world, linking the local and the global, the traditional and the expert through the flow of ideas. In doing so I expand on the work of Castells (2005), who posits the existence of a ‘network society’ in which the globe is increasingly integrated through the sharing of ideas via information technology. However, Castells himself acknowledges that much of the world is left out of the network society – most obviously, the developing world, parts of which still lack electricity, much less information technology. I argue that networks of development institutions reach

² See Bordo, Taylor, and Williamson 2003; Dicken 2003; Held and McGrew 2003; Lechner and Boli 2004.

where access to information technology is limited, often running projects and supporting grassroots movements in parts of the world largely outside of the main currents of global ideas. This work will demonstrate that even in communities that are becoming connected to the technological ‘network society’, development actors play a key role in transforming local ideas and worldviews through their engagement. This makes development institutions vital to understanding the way ideas move and interact through local/global ‘knowledge networks’.

This work asks a number of questions about the knowledge-relationships between the development-focused organizations in civil society knowledge networks, as well as between these organizations and the communities they work with in the developing world. How are global ideas around development and the environment spread and used, or contested and adapted, through civil society networks and into local communities? How do local communities interact with, change, implement or ignore ecological and developmental values, knowledge and rhetoric? How is the knowledge and practices of local communities shaped by ideas propagated by such networks, and what role do communities have in shaping and creating this content themselves?

II. Grounding the Inquiry: Historical Roots of Knowledge and Development

The developing world has been shaped and formed by knowledge production and spread, from colonialism to the modernization approaches of the 1950s and 60s through the present. This work has its analytical roots in this history, including understandings of colonial knowledge and its legacy. A key part of the colonial project was the production of knowledge. The colonized ‘other’ was studied and categorized in the ‘scientific’ and empirical tradition of the Enlightenment, both for the sake of administration and control through classification as well as scholarship (Said 1994 [1978]). This knowledge could be gained via a system of classification, categorization and ‘scientific’ understanding – in the words of Michael Adas, a Western impulse to “measure and catalogue the worlds they were ‘discovering’” (Adas 1989: 2). This was achieved via both the curiosity of Western scholar-adventurers and scholar-administrators, as well as more

formal state mechanisms such as the census and land surveys (Cohn 1990; Cohn 1996). Much of this knowledge was constructed or imagined, in particular due to the colonizer's view of colonized societies as static, unchanging and primordial (Ranger 1992).

By imagining and constructing social categories, colonial knowledge and the Enlightenment approach towards classification and categorization drew many of the still-existing lines of social division in the developing world, be they ethnic, caste or religious. The colonized themselves also played an active role in this process, both filling the social categories created by the colonialists, and providing information and details to flesh out colonial knowledge (Lonsdale 1989). But though the process was far from unidirectional, it was the colonizers that played the key role in creating and solidifying social categories and divisions, both through colonial knowledge creation and through putting that knowledge to use via administrative policies. The creation of knowledge – knowledge bound within the framework of Western Enlightenment thinking – directly influenced the creation and implementation of colonial rule. Yet as Washbrook (1999) points out, it was not only the Enlightenment tradition that influenced the way the West sought to know the colonized Other. European Romanticism also drove this interest. The Romantics sought not only to know the culture and traditions of the colonized, but also to privilege their uniqueness and value. They prized this knowledge as a source of Western renewal and transformation. This privileging of local and indigenous knowledge (as constructed and understood by the West) is a theme that will continue to echo through Western engagement with the developing world – and throughout this work.

The creation and the spread of knowledge and discourse that shaped colonial rule continued to shape the post-colonial development project. The post-colonial developmental state and the modernization approach of the 1950s and 60s built on colonial knowledge and the colonial understanding of social reality, be it ethnicity, religion or even the interaction between humans and their environment. It also depended on the continuing use of experts, many from the West, to explain how states and societies are best run (Ingham 1993; Evans & Stephens

1988; Mitchell 2002). In this manner knowledge continued to travel largely from the West to the rest, with Western actors interpreting and shaping both development discourse and practice.

The past four decades have seen a backlash against this top-down, expert-led engagement with development and the developing world. This pushback has coincided with the rise of the postmodern perspective in the West, which privileges and emphasizes the specificity and context-dependence of any group of actors, and promotes “the validity and salience of local knowledge” (Beinart 2000: 280) – for example, emphasizing the value of indigenous conservation systems (Berkes 1999; 2000), or culturally specific ways of interpreting gender relations, such as Islamic feminism (Mahmood 2005). In development practice this view puts a premium on the role of participatory decision-making and knowledge, on local self-governance and locally-led civil society organizations (Chambers 1983; Chambers 1986; Hickey & Mohan 2004). In short, the Western-based and expert-led modernization approach has – in theory – been challenged by a locally-bound, participatory and context-specific approach.

But how deep has this challenge been? Alongside the rhetoric of context specificity, local knowledge and community participation, development as both a universal aim and practice has continued to be “the central organizing concept of our time” (Cowen & Shenton 1995b). For instance, while in the early 2000s participatory approaches became ever more prominent in development practice, so too did the widespread acceptance of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, which set the overall, universal aims of development. The privileging and lauding of local ideas, itself a universalizing discourse rooted in Romantic Orientalism and continued in postmodernist cultural relativism and participatory approaches to development, coexists alongside a continued search for knowledge of universal development aims and solutions, rooted in the Enlightenment and then colonial views of progress and shared humanity. As this work will demonstrate, the development project has become the key place of negotiation and enactment of these two visions, often held simultaneously by the same development actors.

III. *A Geography of Civil Society Knowledge Networks*

These same tensions are echoed by a range of globalization scholarship which posits that the world is in the process of being increasingly knit together by a set of (more or less) shared values and cultural assumptions.³ Indeed, the globalization debate explores the link between local specificity, global influence and homogenizing universalist forces, be they economic or cultural, since “the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (Appadurai 1990: 295). The answers that emerge out of this interrogation reimagine the local and the global scales as not sealed off from each other, but rather porous and interconnected. Thus understanding cultural and social change becomes a matter of “rethinking difference *through* connection” while acknowledging the influence of transnational movements and public spheres (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 8). That is precisely what this work sets out to do through the prism of development.

By looking at the ways in which development-focused organizations connect a variety of scales into civil society knowledge networks, this work reconceptualizes development as a crucial agent that forges epistemic links between different geographies, cultures and worldviews. Colonial knowledge production is thus an analytical spring-board for this work, launching it towards an exploration of development’s role in transnational flows of not only people and resources, but also discourse and ideas. This work uses development and those involved in it to examine the world “from the standpoint of participants located at the intersection of the most remote forces, connections and imaginations” (Burawoy 2001: 148). It looks at the way connections between a variety of scales are both produced and experienced by development-focused civil society organizations and the people they work with, connections that purposefully set out to bridge the local and the global, but may end up doing so in surprising, unexpected and even unnoticed ways.

³ Boli and Thomas 1999; Castells 2005; Kaldor 2003; Meyer 1999; Pieterse 1995.

In investigating the way networks of development institutions create and spread ideas, I do not mean to say that the flow of knowledge in such networks is unidirectional, moving simply from the West to the rest. The people that development organizations set out to work with and aid are not passive recipients of such flows of knowledge and ideas. This work will demonstrate that local actors are agents, not subjects, in these networks. They pursue their own agendas and fuse the knowledge of development institutions with their own ideas into new hybrids. Civil society knowledge networks thus lead not to homogenization but an increasing diversity in the way the global is adapted or ‘indigenized’ (Appadurai 1990) by the local. Indeed, while this work builds on some of the core ideas and conceptual categories of the literature around ‘epistemic communities’ (Adler & Haas 1992), I point to the limitations of the way this term has been used to focus on Western ‘experts’ and policy makers. Ideas within civil society knowledge networks also emerge from what is labeled ‘traditional,’ ‘indigenous’ or ‘local’ knowledge (Briggs 2005). Yet as this work will demonstrate, this process is complex and far from obvious. Local communities in the developing world not only adopt and implement the ideas that are spread through such networks, but also repurpose them to promote and enact their own aims and ideologies. These ideas are often grounded in knowledge that comes from below – knowledge produced by what Gramsci (1970) calls ‘organic intellectuals’. The categories of local and global are themselves contested, and are often porous and blend into each other (Ferguson 2006). In exploring the way development creates epistemic links, this work investigates the overlapping boundaries and interpenetration of spatial categories, pointing to the ways in which such distinctions have been privileged, reinforced or romanticized by international environmental movements and development institutions.

IV. Exploring the Global-Local Connection: Two Case Studies

This project thus looks at the way development creates, reshapes and spreads knowledge. It does so through the two multi-sited case studies described at the opening of this chapter. The first is a

network whose global node is the Christensen Fund (TCF), an international foundation based in San Francisco but working all over the globe, and actively creating and involved in one particular global approach towards environmental activism: that of biocultural diversity. One of the many organizations they fund is an NGO in Nairobi, the Kivulini Trust, which is itself an outgrowth of their work in the region. Amongst the many local NGOs that Kivulini connects to the Christensen Fund is the Waso Trustland Project, a small non-profit that for many years has been a land-rights advocacy organization for the peoples of Isiolo district in the north of the country. Now the organization is gradually shifting its focus to ecological and cultural concerns. Finally, the last node in this network is Beliqo, a village where Waso Trustland is running a project to conserve a local riverine forest from logging by setting up a community forest association. The project is funded by TCF, fuelled with advice from Kivulini, and builds on existing organizations in the village. This case study was originally conducted for my thesis for the MPhil in Development Studies at the Oxford Department of International Development, submitted in 2012, and this doctoral thesis has been in part built on the master's dissertation.

The second of the two case studies also includes an international foundation – the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), its headquarters in Geneva. I focus on the work AKF funds and assists in Kyrgyzstan, through both its national branch in Kyrgyzstan (AKF Kyrgyzstan), and the Kyrgyz NGO that implements their projects (Mountain Society Development Support Programme Kyrgyzstan, or MSDSP Kg). Though the focus of both AKF and its Kyrgyz partners is primarily on livelihood, education and health, the Foundation is supporting one project that is outside its usual portfolio in Kyrgyzstan – a project focused on climate change adaptation. The project is structured to consist of an assessment of climate change impacts and then a series of trainings on climate change adaptation in selected villages. After the trainings, the villages create an adaptation plan and compete for a mini-grant of USD 4000 to do one of the projects on the plan. I zero in on this project, the staff in these organizations that support it, and one Kyrgyz mountain village where the project is run: Saro-Kamush. In this village I look closely at the ideas,

perceptions and worldviews around climate change, ecology, activism, civil society and governance of both the participants of the climate change adaptation project, but also of the village residents more broadly.

Each case study conceptualizes these organizations into a network, held together not only by flows of resources, but also by shared (and sometimes contested or subverted) knowledge. While both of the networks are engaged in ecologically-focused interventions (and thus knowledge of the environment) environmental ideas in and of themselves are *not* the focus of this work. It would be far beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into an analysis of the many varieties and strands of environmentalism or even biocultural diversity and climate change adaptation in any detail. The case study networks share, dispute and recreate understandings of not only ecological interventions, but also participatory development, good governance and expertise and authority. Thus environmental interventions, while themselves complex, varied and contested, are used by this work as a *lens* through which to examine civil society knowledge networks. Both of the case studies look at the way development organizations create, spread and utilize ideas around the relationship of humans with the natural world. Yet these organizations and the local communities they work in also develop and contest such ideas, in the process producing and utilizing knowledge themselves. One of the key findings of this work is that despite each case-study intervention having environmental aims, the ideas valued by most of the organizations and communities involved in the projects are *not* around the environment, but rather around politics, rights, livelihood, governance and civic involvement. For instance, we shall see that the residents in the village of Saro-Kamush learn few specific facts about the causal links between climate change and their own experiences of a changing climate, despite participating in a climate change adaptation project. However, they do acquire many ideas about accessing resources from the state and development organizations, or self-organizing around infrastructure projects.

It is worth noting that I am interested above all in the ways knowledge is created, spread and contested across a range of scales via development. As such, the aim here is not normative: I do not set out to criticize or evaluate the efficacy of these organizations or their work, or to critique the project of development as a whole. There is plenty of work to this effect already.⁴ At the same time, this work is not attempting to trace the relationship between development policy and development practice, but rather the way development institutions (including their actions in the world) create and influence the spread of ideas and worldviews. Such ideas can surface as policy, but they may also lie in the realm of more specific, individual concerns. Finally, while power dynamics within the networks is a subtheme in much of this work, it is not the sole focal point of the analysis. I move away from simple hierarchies of power (and their subversion), and broaden the discussion to include “power that is productive rather than repressive, that comes from below as well as above, that is heterogeneous, diffuse, immanent and unstable” (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 3). I highlight and analyze such wide-ranging relationships of power to the extent that they affect the ways in which ideas are created, transmitted and reshaped.

V. Thesis Structure

This work begins by piecing together two key theoretical strands in Chapter Two: knowledge and civil society, with a focus on the way both are rooted in global/local dynamics and geography. The contribution of this chapter, and indeed this work, is to bring these two strands into dialogue in order to illuminate one particular dimension of the way ideas are generated and implemented. At the same time, this chapter highlights the definitional pluralism of a number of terms – global, civil society, local, environmentalism – and sets the broad definitions that will be used throughout the work.

Chapter Three sets out the research design of the project, and discusses the research methods chosen, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I explain the

⁴ See for instance Bano 2008; Cooley and Ron 2002; Escobar 1995; Fisher 1997; Matanga 2010; Reimann 2005.

rationale for structuring the fieldwork and data collection as two multi-sited case studies encompassing San Francisco and Kenya, Geneva and Kyrgyzstan. I then outline the quality and quantity of my data collection as well as the process of analyzing the data. The second half of the chapter gives an overview of the two case studies using a geographically organized narrative of each location and organization. This is where the reader will find succinct descriptions of the main characters, as well as organizational and inter-personal dynamics in the case studies. The chapter concludes with a brief historical and political background of Kenya and Kyrgyzstan, with a focus on the particular details that are essential to understanding the two case studies.

The following three empirical chapters are organized both geographically and thematically. Rather than being divided by case study, the three empirical chapters correspond to organizational and geographic categories in both case-study networks – global movements and foundations, national- and regional-level NGOs, and finally the two villages. Each chapter is organized thematically, and then each theme is sub-divided into the two cases. The goal of the analysis is thus not to be explicitly comparative between the two cases, but rather to *utilize* their differences and similarities to broaden and deepen the argument.

The first of the empirical chapters, Chapter Four, looks at global movements and the international foundations that create and propagate them. The focus is on the relationship between the two, using the Christensen Fund as an example of the way global civil society institutions can foster and create global movements, and the Aga Khan Foundation as an example of the way that such institutions can ‘plug into’ and adopt global movements. The chapter also demonstrates how such transnational institutions forge wider global networks. They do so not only through funding paths to and from other global institutions, but also by cultivating relationships with academic and governmental institutions via conferences, workshops and university networks. This chapter also investigates the way the two foundations attempt to build legitimacy by trying to forge connections to locals or at least NGO intermediaries through field visits, workshops and (in the case of TCF) festivals.

Chapter Five goes on to examine the way networks of NGOs act as intermediaries between the global and the local, transferring and shaping ideas from below and from above. I argue that while such networks can consist of organizations that have very different aims and goals, they are able to function as a network through adoption of the rhetoric and ideas of one global movement. The chapter also charts how the intermediaries transform ideas from above into action – or at least plans for action. They do so in part by designating expertise, in particular by equating expertise with Westerners or at least those with Western education. Yet they also continue the global nodes' search for legitimacy and authenticity through local knowledge. The chapter outlines the way these intermediaries establish connection with or presume knowledge of the grassroots, particularly through adopting the framework of participatory development. It also looks at actors outside the network, in particular the state, and the way that such intermediary development institutions forge relationships with the state, both to access its resources, to provide longevity to their programming, and in return to supplement the (dis)functioning of the state.

The key aim of Chapter Six is to explore the way the knowledge of civil society networks affects and is affected by the local. It examines questions of remoteness and connectedness, pointing out the way civil society networks bring connections – particularly in the case of Kenya – to environmental ideas but also to the international aid system and state resources. The chapter also explores ideas and worldviews around the environment, civic involvement, development organizations and government institutions in each village. It looks closely at the way that development institutions interact with local communities, and in particular the way programs are run rather than simply the rhetoric of the institutions in the networks (particularly when it comes to participation). The chapter looks at what is learned, what is ignored and what is adapted from the case study projects by the local community.

The concluding chapter then ties together the key themes that emerge out of the empirical material. It focuses on the tension between agency and alignment within the networks,

as well as the classification and privileging of certain types of ideas over others. Both are essential processes for the functioning of civil society knowledge networks, and illustrate how these networks expand our understanding of the way development shapes a contemporary geography of knowledge.

This thesis thus seeks to understand the ways ideas are created, shared and implemented in conjunction with a range of development institutions. Ideas around the relationship between humans and the natural world serve as the focusing lens for this work, though in practice the analysis spans a far greater range of ideas, including ideas around the state, associational life, civic activism, livelihood creation and development itself. Networks of development institutions and the communities they work with are a vital and largely unexplored mechanism for the creation, spread and penetration of the epistemic content of development. This work looks beyond global civil society or indigenous knowledge to put the two together, constructing a geography of knowledge that spans the global and the remote, the international and the local. Civil society knowledge networks are thus key to understanding “the penetrative capacity of global processes, including mechanisms by which global structures affect national and subnational institutions and actors” (Boli and Thomas 1999: 47).

Chapter Two

Theorizing Global Knowledge Networks through Civil Society

The impetus for this work came out of the call for an ethnography of the global by scholars such as Burawoy (2001), Moore (2004) and Ferguson (2006). This call is for a deeper and richer exploration of the way that the local is being woven into a tapestry of the global, as well as the processes and means by which the global is constituted, understood and instrumentalised. Indeed, it is also a call to examine the extent to which the local-global dichotomy is a useful way of understanding how various points of the globe are interconnected, and the effects of such connections. This work is an exploration of one corner of this vast terrain, using development-focused civil society and environmentally-focused development interventions as a lens to examine the complexities of these connections. The goal of this work is to use our two case studies to piece together a particular geography of knowledge: knowledge that is transferred and shared; knowledge that is utilized and ignored, challenged and transformed; knowledge that shapes values and thus actions.

To respond substantively to this call, it is necessary to piece together a theory of knowledge creation and its relationship to development. The central argument of this work is built on two broad theoretical strands: the first explores the ways in which knowledge is created, shared, taken-up and contested within a social framework, and the second explores the functioning, role and increasing influence of development-focused civil society. This chapter first looks at a number of theories and terminological debates around the formation and transmission of knowledge, including different ways of conceptualizing the spread of knowledge across a diversity and multiplicity of geographies. I then turn to the ways both knowledge-formation and development-focused civil society are rooted in global/local dynamics and geography. Finally I propose environmentalism as a lens through which to explore a confluence of development civil society, knowledge networks and an exploration of global-local dynamics within the bounds of the two case studies. Along the way, I will deal with a number of

definitional issues around the contested and frequently used terms in this work, including global, civil society, local, environmentalism, and ecology.

I. Knowledge, Global and Local

a. Constructing Knowledge: Definitional Inquiries

The working definition of ‘knowledge’ for this research project is the socially constituted and voiced selection, organization and interpretation of information. In other words, knowledge is the way that humans process and package information (Davenport & Prusak 1998).⁵ A useful starting point for understanding the exploration of knowledge formation and transmission in this work is the anthropological literature around knowledge and ‘knowledge making’ (Marchand 2010b), which informs the vocabulary and the broad questions of this work. For Marchand (2010a), one of the central questions of anthropological inquiry is ‘how do we come to know,’ and this is one of the key questions of this work. In particular, I take a social-constructivist lens: knowledge is produced and reproduced through social relations (Dilley 2010), and as will be explored more in the following section, this work understands civil society organizations as an increasingly pervasive mediator in social relations, particularly in the developing world.

Besides ‘knowledge’, the terms ‘values’, ‘norms’ and ‘worldviews’ occasionally appear in this work. Groenfeld (2003) writes of values as the “guiding principles of a social group” (919) which shape thought. A core aspect of values is that they are principles which define the importance and necessity of a set of beliefs or actions. Norms are similar to values, in that they are “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891). Norms differ from values in that they refer less to internally held beliefs, and more to “practices and rules defining appropriate behavior for specific groups of actors in specific

⁵ This simplified definition purposefully leaves aside the tangled philosophical and epistemological debates around the nature of knowledge (Sillitoe 2010; Honderich 1995), which are beyond the scope and aim of this work. However, while this definition acts as a useful starting place, it will be further nuanced in the discussions on the nature of knowledge within the context of civil society networks in the sections below.

situations” (March and Olsen 1998: 948). While values can be fluid, affected to some degree by factors ranging from biological age to the season of the year, worldviews are the more transcendent and fundamental outlook on the world that are culturally and socially shared. In other words, a worldview refers to the way an individual or a group interprets and understands their surrounding world. All three of these concepts relate to knowledge, they emerge out of the knowledge held and created by individuals and social groups. Finally, an exploration of knowledge inevitably presumes or implies the concept of ignorance. This work is not interested in ignorance as a ‘lack-of-knowledge’; rather it explores ignorance as the “refusal to take notice of” or “not paying attention to” (Dilley 2010, S179). This maps on to the above discussion of ‘values’ – this work is an inquiry into what the actors involved in this research choose to pay attention to (and thus deem important and valuable) and what they ignore, and the way the content of these categories changes through interactions.

Indeed, it is the interactive, social aspect of knowledge production that forms the core of this inquiry. As noted above, the starting assumptions of this work are that knowledge is fluid and interactive, and that it is both created and reconfigured within the shifting nature of social interactions. In the words of Marchand:

The production of knowledge, as mental representations, is social. Knowledge is realized on-line: in communication and, more generally, in interaction. The dynamic nature of interaction presents constant opportunity for new and possibly divergent ways of thinking and speaking about things. Thus dialogue is not an articulation of fixed things already known, but rather it is a kind of ‘knowing in progress’. The state of ‘knowing’ is one of constant flux, update, and transformation; and careful study of this reveals the underlying processes of social and cultural change. (2010a: S12)

The often unequal and novel interactions between different civil society organizations, and such organization and communities, is the one aspect of the (many) social processes that inform the ‘making’ of knowledge that concerns us here. Knowledge emerges out of communities of practice that exist within larger social groupings, and it is a *geography* of these interconnected or nested communities and organizations that emerges out of an inquiry into the social nature of civil-society linked knowledge production.

The acquisition, creation or transmission of knowledge has its own, highly contested vocabulary. This includes ‘making,’ ‘transmission’ and ‘flow.’ ‘Making’ points to process-based formation, while ‘transmission’ or ‘transfer’ points to a more structured and hierarchical exchange that occurs between actors or communities. While this work primarily employs the latter terms, as they point to the social, dialogical and constructive nature of knowledge-creation, it also directly engages with the critique of such ‘transfers’ as not in fact being linear exchanges, but far messier processes through which knowledge is articulated and transformed (Marchand 2010a). I envision the geography of such processes as ‘flows’ of knowledge. This term which has been contested, perhaps most recently by Ferguson, who suggests that “hopping” rather than flowing is more appropriate terminology for the “point to point connectivity and networking of enclaves” that ignores the terrain that lies between (Ferguson 2006: 47-48). While in accord with the spirit of Ferguson’s critique, I would argue that it is built on too narrow a definition of the word flow, which is widely used in mathematics and engineering to refer to movement from node to node in a network, and explicitly does not require engagement with the space between nodes (Pieterse & Black 2004). I continue to use the term “flows” to designate the transfer of knowledge (as well as resources) because of the term’s utility: I would contend that repeated transfers of knowledge over vast physical terrain can most usefully be conceptualized as a type of flow, even if it is a saltatory flow (one that propagates by leaps and bounds). This work does pay attention to the inequalities and disjunctures as well as the multidirectional nature of such flows. These flows have eddies, backwashes and counter currents, as the power dynamics as well as the different relationships and points of connection of the case study networks facilitated diverse dynamics of exchange and contestation.

b. Categories and Geographies of Knowledge: Global and Local, Expert and Indigenous

The unevenness within knowledge flows plays a key role in another essential distinction within this project – the differences within the scope, privilege and power of knowledge at the global

and the local levels, which can also be reframed in terms of ‘expert’ and ‘indigenous’ knowledge. Though this work actively engages in the distinctions and gaps between these categories, it is vital to acknowledge that the categories themselves are highly variable, and the distinction between them blurred and often flawed.

Ferguson takes issue with the global/local dichotomy, arguing that understanding the global as “an enveloping level of coverage” (Ferguson 2006: 42) and the local as representative of ‘grounded authenticity’ is misleading. In Ferguson’s view the local is well integrated into and often savvy in its use of the global, so the assumption that the global somehow supersedes the local in power and reach can be problematic. While elements of Ferguson’s essential critique is accurate – indeed, the way that the local is deeply embedded in the global is a major theme of this work – I would contend that the conceptual categories of local and global are still both useful and descriptive. As will be detailed in the chapters that follow, the local node in our case studies, though in some ways embedded in the global, is circumscribed in significant ways that the global is not, and at the same time has privileged access to certain types of information, which might not be more ‘authentic’ but which is born out of local experience and observation and is often instrumentalised as such. As will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four, the global is largely a self-referential category, often used by the two foundations in the case studies, and broadly refers to the fact that these organizations not only work in a variety of countries around the global, but also engage with movements, ideas and conversations that are not tied to any one country or geographic region. Rather than creating new categories I use the topography of global and local, but undertake a close examination of the complex relationship between the two. The aim of this work is thus not to decide whether global/local is a justified dichotomy, but rather to illuminate a more complex relationship than a dichotomy between any two terms could capture.

A categorical distinction that parallels the global/local division is that between ‘expert’ and ‘indigenous’ or ‘local’ knowledge. Indeed, the latter category is one that will be referenced

repeatedly throughout this work, particularly by the globally-situated actors in the case studies. Indigenous knowledge (IK) can be understood as a “body of knowledge, know-how, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission... [that] is time, place and culture specific” (Ifejika Speranza et al. 2009: 296). The terms traditional (Berkes et al. 2000), customary (Sillitoe 2010) and local knowledge (Olsson et al. 2004) refer to a similar phenomenon, though local knowledge need not necessarily be customary or culturally bounded. However, I echo Sillitoe (2010) in dismissing these semantic debates as peripheral to an examination of the subject itself and the role it plays in the geography of knowledge. Instead, I focus on the ways indigenous knowledge is valued and employed as a category by various actors in the case studies, and the ways in which the term helps draw – and complicate – geographic distinctions between the global and local.

The category of indigenous knowledge points to the very complexities of the geography of knowledge that this work aims to map. While the category refers to a locally-tied, spatially bound body of knowledge (Fernando 2003), not only has the concept itself emerged as common parlance within the discourse of global civil society⁶ (Sillitoe 2010) but it connects indigenous or local communities into an overarching global movement beneath the global civil society banner. Groenfeldt (2003) points out that a high-level sense of indigenous identity has enabled groups that would otherwise be spatially and locally bound to connect by positing the existence of a shared, distinctly indigenous world view, in opposition to a Western one. Such a ‘global indigenous worldview’ seems to qualify the idea of indigenous knowledge as locally situated, and points to the complexities in delineating the distinction between global and local, expert and indigenous. Indeed, Groenfeldt (2003) makes the case that such a globally unified indigenous movement has utilized Western techniques for its own aims, via Western journals, conferences

⁶ A term that will be explained further in the section to come, but here refers to organizations involved in transnationally shared development initiatives.

and legal norms. And, as will be discussed further in the ‘Environmentalism’ section below, global movements have instrumentalised local or indigenous knowledge for global aims as well.

This is not to say that there are no distinctions, both spatial and power-based, between different geographies of knowledge. Indeed, this project treats knowledge within a Foucauldian perspective, looking closely at the intersection of knowledge and power within the case-study network, particularly the way that knowledge and its expression in discourse is a reflection of the power wielded (and sought) by actors in different nodes (Foucault 1980). Yet the geographies are deeply interconnected, and one of the contributions of this work is a critique of the literature that presumes them to be distinct and privileges one as more ‘authentic’ than another. Indeed, the lauding of indigenous knowledge is not without its critics. Ferguson’s critique of demarcating and romanticizing the local as more authentic and grounded points to the ways in which the local or the indigenous are categories constructed and unduly privileged by transnational, Western-based movements (Ferguson 2006). Beinart (2000, Beinart et al. 2009) argues that privileging traditional knowledge can lead to a dismissal of the uses of Western-based scientific approaches towards ecological problems. Fernando (2003) points out that the opposition between western “scientific” or expert knowledge and indigenous knowledge is forced and is institutionally produced in the West, with the two categories having methodological and epistemological similarities, along with a long historical interweave. Even proponents of the utility of indigenous knowledge acknowledge that it is important to note what it is *not*, and that it cannot replace the utility of other ways of knowing and understanding (Nakashima & Roué 2002). The emphasis on indigenous knowledge also leaves it open to critiques developed more broadly for the participatory approach to development that point to the inequalities in power and voice that can arise within participatory or community-led projects (Cooke & Kothari 2001a; Beinart & Brown 2013). Both indigenous knowledge and participatory approaches to development have been accused of perpetuating the power relations they seek to question and undermine. Agrawal (1995, 2002, 2005) has pointed out the inherent contradiction behind the promotion of

indigenous knowledge by the West: indigenous knowledge is valuable to the West because it can advance both scientific knowledge and development, yet these are the very forces that are destroying indigenous knowledge. This tension between privileging local and indigenous knowledge and pursuing universalizing development goals will emerge as a key theme in the chapters to come.

c. Knowledge Linkages: Epistemic Communities, Knowledge Commons and the Network Society

This work critically engages with a construction of not only a ‘local’ but also a ‘global’ geography of knowledge, and the complex relationship between the two. In particular, I make use of three conceptual approaches to the global or transnational geographies of knowledge: epistemic communities, knowledge commons and the network society. Each one offers conceptual strengths, but each also has its limits and blind spots. The analysis presented in this work will use aspects of each of these ways of envisioning geographies of knowledge, but will also offer critiques and extensions of each of these frameworks. All three are descriptive metaphors, and each contributes valuable insights to the analysis in this work, including the role of civil society in constituting geographies of knowledge.

i. Epistemic Communities

Peter Haas defines epistemic communities as “a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge” (Haas 1992: 3). What links together these professionals is a shared belief in the applicability and verity of certain forms of knowledge. This is a subcategory within Thomas Kuhn’s broader concept of a paradigm as a cohesive set of shared values, methods and beliefs within which a community or society operates (Kuhn 1970). Epistemic communities have a shared way of knowing, which includes shared values, causal beliefs and, importantly, shared discursive practices. Haas conceptualizes epistemic communities in relationship to the policy arena, exploring them as a way by which policy makers reach consensus on how to understand

and solve complex and technical problems. These “networks of knowledge-based experts” (Haas 1992: 2) are thus able to articulate the nature, causes and at times possible solutions to complex problems that are themselves transnational in scale, be they climate change or economic crises.

The literature on epistemic communities teases out the relationship between knowledge and power, positing that ideas are diffused into the policy arena via the epistemic community model, which is necessary due to increasing global interlinkages and the growing complexity of social problems which demand “collective interpretation and choice” (Adler & Haas 1992: 368). The epistemic community literature highlights the relationship between discourse and action, pointing out that communication and “the negotiations of meanings, understandings and beliefs” is what allows for a shared set of values and “moral vision” (389) that then allows for action within the policy arena.

Though the epistemic community concept has direct relevance to this project, I argue that it must be broadened from Haas’ original definition. In particular, I would challenge two aspects of his definition: the necessity for an epistemic community to, first, consist of “experts” or “professionals”; and second, to act as advisors to state actors in creating policy. I would broaden the definition to be literal ‘communities of knowledge’, peopled not by only by recognized professionals (a culturally biased and elitist vision of epistemic authority), but by any agents involved in generating a cohesive transnational discourse around a particular issue. Epistemic communities could thus be made up of what Gramsci calls “organic intellectuals” – groups of people who might not define themselves as intellectuals by profession but emerge to voice the aspirations and identity of a group or class (Gramsci 1970). This could include communities that produce indigenous or local knowledge as well as the civil society actors discussed in the latter half of this chapter. Moreover, the role of epistemic communities does not have to be limited to advising the state. Non-state actors, including the local movements and other civil society organizations discussed below, take action based on the consensus of such transnational epistemic communities. The conceptual category of epistemic communities is a

useful one that will be referred to throughout this work, but I propose to move it beyond ‘experts’ and states, to conceptualize broader ‘communities of knowledge’ whose influence extends beyond the state. I thus suggest an opening and flattening of the epistemic community concept, a geographic and conceptual expansion that also involves looking at the role of the local in such communities. Another useful way of conceptualizing such a wide and open community of knowledge without the exclusivity of the original epistemic community concept is the idea of the knowledge commons.

ii. Knowledge Commons

The concept of the knowledge commons is valuable for the broadness and openness of the idea, as well as the ways in which it lends itself to the other conceptual categories within this work, including local knowledge and civil society. If the word ‘commons’ refers a “complex ecosystem” in which “a resource is shared by a group of people that is subject to social dilemmas” (Hess & Ostrom 2007: 3), then conceptualizing knowledge as one such resource allows one to examine the complexities of the social process through which knowledge is acquired and discovered, as well as the way that it is accessed, shared, or perhaps enclosed (putting it outside of the knowledge commons) (Hess & Ostrom 2007). Unlike the original idea of epistemic communities, the knowledge commons has been imagined across a variety of geographies – local, global, “or somewhere in between” (Hess & Ostrom 2007: 9). The conceptual language associated with the knowledge commons is both more open and more egalitarian than that used for epistemic communities. Each individual within a knowledge commons is understood as a generator and contributor of ideas, regardless of rank within an epistemic hierarchy, rather than just a consumer of knowledge. As such, “connection and sharing of ideas without exerting individual ownership of the ideas allows the knowledge to move freely and grow” (Joranson 2008: 68).

Indeed, because of this geographic malleability and inclusiveness, the knowledge commons framework fits well within both a global or transnational conception of knowledge

and also with the discussion of indigenous knowledge. Joranson (2008) argues that indigenous knowledge is inherently a knowledge commons, since a key part of the delineation of indigenous knowledge is that such knowledge is held in common by members of a community. At the same time, she argues indigenous knowledge must be understood within “a global context of the knowledge commons” (65), echoing the arguments of Groenfeldt (2003) that indigenous knowledge itself is a category with a global dimension situated not only in local, but also in transnational contexts.

However, though the knowledge commons is conceptually useful because of its broadening and flattening geography and its examination of the interwoven nature of knowledge production and access, it ignores the unevenness and power inequality within the processes of knowledge creation and sharing. Though this work will partially use the conceptual geography of knowledge as a resource held in a commons, it will nuance the idea by examining the power relations and uneven social processes of creating and accessing this resource. The knowledge commons brings to mind a level field on which all actors stand, able to see and interact with any other with approximately equal ease. I contend that this is too homogenous a geography: within the case studies that follow, all actors do participate in a knowledge commons, but must do so through a fractured, disjointed network. Any given actor does not have equal influence or equal access to all others, but must share and influence ideas through chains of actors to reach more distant sites. This uneven geography has broad impacts on the construction of knowledge.

At the same time, while the commons is conceptually useful in imagining both global and local realms of knowledge as a shared resource, the idea of a commons lacks the descriptive tools to analyze the *ways* in which knowledge is unevenly created, transmitted, and shared within the process of its social construction. In short, the commons geography is perhaps too broad and homogenous to help us understand the complexity of social relationships contained within the process of sharing knowledge resources. Indeed, even authors writing on the knowledge commons often use the visual of a network rather than a common. As Boyle (2003) writes, the

commons can help “reimagine creation, innovation, and speech on a global network” (74), and Kranich (2007) refers to knowledge commons as “resource-sharing networks” (88) and “networked environments” (94). While the concept of knowledge as a resource shared within a complex ecosystem will be both utilized and nuanced in this work, the idea of a knowledge networks, rather than commons, will prove to be a more useful guide to the ways in which such sharing occurs.

iii. The Network Society

An alternative way to conceptualize a geography of knowledge is to use the idea of a network of interconnected idea creators and transmitters. Networks themselves, a concept particularly important in this work, I define with reference to social network theory (Bruggeman 2008) as any system of interconnected nodes, where nodes are points of connection or intersection of whatever constitutes the network. In particular, this work utilizes many of the ideas of Manuel Castells’ (2005) global ‘network society’: a social structure “based on networks... that generate, process, and distribute information on the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the networks” (7). While networks are a very old form of social organization, Castells focuses on the ability of new information technology to overcome limits in their scope and capacity. Castells imagines such networks crossing national boundaries, and creating global connections and flows of information and knowledge.

There is a strong focus on the recent transformative effect of information technology in Castells’ work. I propose to extend the conceptual category of the network society beyond the impact of information technology, arguing that while technology is an important part of the network society, there are other social structures that effectively enable its functioning, even when, as will be argued later in this work, technological connectivity fails. Indeed, Castells himself acknowledges that the network society is highly limited due to the partial penetration of information technology; he writes that while the effects of the network society might be diffused

over the whole globe, it does *not* include most of the people on the planet, though it does affect them. I will make a case for extending the network society model beyond technological penetration, arguing that certain social structures – namely the civil society organizations discussed in the second half of this chapter – enable knowledge networks to encompass parts of the globe where information technology might not reach or be easily accessible.

Understanding knowledge transmission through a network can have a similar flattening effect as the idea of a knowledge commons: Castells' network society fails to take into account the power disparities and structural inequalities that affect both the creation and transmission of knowledge in the network. This work reconceptualizes such knowledge networks as including dimensions of power and inequality. At the same time, a concurrent danger of utilizing the knowledge network framework is ignoring all of the forces – social, cultural, economic, political – outside of the network in question that in fact affect both the actors and the knowledge created within the network. Mejias (2009) calls this “nodocentrism”, “the assertion that only nodes need to be mapped, explained or accounted for” (12). He makes a case for what he terms paranodality, or the space outside of the network:

As far as the network is concerned, the paranodal... gives nodes their history and identity: shifts in the paranodal translate into changes in the location of nodes and the relationships between them, and consequently into changes in the network itself. In short, the instability of paranodal space is what animates the network, and to attempt to render paranodal space invisible is to arrive at less, not more, complete explanations of the network as a social reality. (12)

The problem with attempting to trace all such paranodal influences is that it becomes a totalising research task. It is impossible to consider the possible influence of all outside forces on a specific knowledge network. This work will engage with a number of forces external to the network in question, but cannot claim to a totalising approach to understanding all forces applied to civil society knowledge networks.

II. *Civil Society Geographies*

a. Theories and varieties

This project thus engages with both the *geography* and the *mechanisms* of knowledge creation and exchange, examining the way that macro and micro social scales interact and influence one another with an increasing density of interconnection. Yet this project is not simply concerned with the globalization of knowledge – what is of particular interest is the role that development-focused civil society plays as the mechanism through which these interconnections take place. Like the categories of global and local, civil society is a fraught term, with a controversial and varied history. As Kaldor (2003) points out, uses of the term have evolved from the Enlightenment concept of a *civil* (that is, civilized) society, ruled by law with a state monopoly over violence, to Hegel and Marx's idea of a bourgeois society between the state and the family that is produced by the emergence of capitalism (and includes the economic realm). In the 20th century, Gramsci used the term to denote a sphere separate from both market and state (though intimately linked to the functioning of the latter) that can either support or challenge the existing ruling order and its ideology, and develop an alternative hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Lewis 2002; Buttigieg 1995). This view of the concept influenced an activist, social movement version of the term which emerged in the 1980s and 90s, in conjunction with the dissident movements behind the Iron Curtain at the end of the Cold War. At the same time, the concept became linked to NGOs and charities that could shoulder some of the responsibilities of the state. This later became an element of neo-liberal ideas about development. This neoliberal version co-exists with a postmodern one (Keane 2003), which emphasizes diversity and plurality, in contrast to the shared cosmopolitanism of the activist model or the civic-mindedness of the neoliberal version. The contemporary concept of civil society could thus be referred to as civil societies, which include arenas of plurality and contestation. Indeed, some social theorists such as Kumar (2000) deplore the conceptual looseness of the term, arguing that its very popularity (particularly amongst development practitioners) leads to ambiguities, confusions and contradictions. Yet

Kumar also admits that this popularity is the reason the term cannot be ignored or discarded – and indeed shows its appeal to people and that it “speaks to their condition” (176). In the words of Jean and John Comaroff (1999), “to bemoan the lack of coherence and specificity of the concept of civil society... seems rather to miss the point. So too does the effort to pin it down, to wrestle away its inherent ambiguities” (7-8).

This work follows Kumar’s lead in arguing that the broad popularity and use of the term points to a need to grapple with its conceptual challenges rather than dismiss it. As Gallie (1956) has pointed out, some terms are “essentially contestable”, yet remain useful and usable, provided that both one’s own meaning and other meanings and traditions of the term are acknowledged. The concept of civil society used within this work then is based on the history of the term traced by Habermas (1989) and the way the term has been situated within the global by Mary Kaldor (2003) and John Keane (2003). It can be understood as the space outside of (though often engaged with) the formal mechanisms of the state, the private realm of the family and the economic realm of the market where individuals form movements, institutions, and groups to engage with social issues of collective concern. Kumar (2000) separates uses of the term between the generalists, who follow the tradition of Marx in defining the term broadly, often including the economic realm, and the minimalists, who follow a more precisely defined view of civil society in the tradition of Habermas and Gramsci. My use of the term fits more neatly into the latter category, but sits on the more generalist side of the minimalist spectrum – excluding the economic realm from civil society, but including a wide range of institutions and practices, from church groups to grassroots activist movements to international charities to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The use of the term here emerges less out of a deliberate theoretical choice and more out of the common uses of the term by development practitioners, and thus is grounded in practice and utility.

Defining the term does not eliminate its internal controversies, in particular those related to what David Rieff has described as a “prescriptive” idealization of the political utility of civil

society (Rieff 1999). Civil society can reproduce “dominations and segmentations, hegemonies and exclusions” (Burawoy, 2004: 1616). While this work makes no claim that civil society is necessarily useful, egalitarian or democratic, its aim is not to engage with such normative debates beyond acknowledging them, but rather to construct a descriptive model of one of the effects of organizational networks. Civil society organizations and institutions vary widely, particularly in the scope of their mandates and the level of their reach (Toulmin 2002). I have no interest in limiting the idea of civil society to “a narrowly defined institutional arena” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 22), but I knowingly narrow the scope of this work to a particular type of civil society: the diversity of institutions that in some way engage with international development.

The argument here focuses on development organizations (though it could be extended to other categories, for instance to networks of religious institutions), and engages with their variety, examining the connections between NGOs, the charitable foundations that fund them, and the grassroots movements and community-based organizations (CBOs) they encourage and support. This focus is again grounded in development practice, as civil society in a variety of institutional forms has become central to the process of development work, with both the numbers and influence of NGOs and their partner organizations rising rapidly over the last two decades (Reimann 2006). As will be discussed in more detail below, the diversity in spatial reach and power of such organizations facilitates the formation of institutional civil society networks through their relationships of practice and discourse.

Development, with its theoreticians, policy-makers and implementers, has its own complex history and analytical literature, mentioned already in the Introduction. This work does not operate within the instrumental view of development, with its pragmatic managerial and policy concerns and its aspirational “will to improve” the human condition (Li 2007). At the same time, neither is this work aiming to analytically deconstruct the development project by critically demonstrating its inherent contradictions, hegemonies and hierarchies (Scott 1998; Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Cowen & Shenton 1995b; Cowen & Shenton 1995a). Some

strands of this analytical literature are employed in this thesis, especially when it comes to the relationship between civil society and the state (detailed in particular in Chapters Five and Six), and the development rhetoric and practice that calls itself participatory, bottom-up or indigenous (discussed more below). But the overall aim is to look at development and the actors involved in it as a set of social processes, one amongst many, that is knitting together a diversity of ideas, perspectives, values and aims across a variety of spaces and places into a tangled web of meaning. It is the structure and functioning of such a web that forms the crux of this inquiry.

The foundation of this argument is the assumption that, as John Meyer argues in *World Society Institutional Theories and the Actor* (2010), actors are deeply embedded in a rich institutional environment. Indeed, the case studies will demonstrate that even places that seem initially lacking in institutions in fact have a complex institutional environment – more specifically a bounty of development-focused civil society. Such a rich institutional environment creates systems of culture or meaning that penetrates beyond the boundaries of individual actors, “constructing agency, identity and activity” (4). Meyer argues that “modern world society generates institutionalized models of proper human actors” (2). This work instead proposes that it is not “modern world society” (a term whose enormity makes it rather difficult to handle) but rather civil society in the particular form of development institutions (in all their variety) that enable, empower and shape the opportunities of many human actors by providing linkages to political, technological, financial and information resources.

b. Civil Society and Geographies of Knowledge

Such institutional environments emerge out of the relationships between a range of development-focused civil society institutions whose aims and projects span the global, the national and the local. In so doing, the emergent institutional environment influences not just individual human actors, but creates the broad transnational movements and epistemic trends discussed earlier in the form of epistemic communities and knowledge commons. Indeed, when

Meyer (1999) writes about “world society” and “world polity”, he defines the terms as a global rationalistic culture that creates general and universalistic rules and cultural material, such as those of law, science and nationalism, produced by a set of globalized ‘consultants’ such as NGOs, IGOs and scientific communities speaking in terms of higher truth and moral laws. John Boli and George Thomas also argue that NGOs are embedded in a world culture. They make the case that NGOs are actors constituted by (global) cultural and institutional frames, and in turn contribute to a world culture consisting of a shared *understanding* of principles and purposes of agents such as schools, transnational corporations and states. This shared understanding rests on the presumption of universal needs and desires, and indeed on an assumption of a universal human nature, agency, and purpose (Boli & Thomas 1999).

The ideas around a world culture are contested, as enormous swathes of the globe are left out of such ‘world’ or ‘global’ societies. On top of this, there are vast power inequalities within such a world culture, with some parts of the globe holding much of the power and influence over the global milieu than others. James Ferguson writes about the fact such “global” culture is too often “selectively disordered and starkly divided” (Ferguson 2006: 48). Even participation does not mean unity, but rather a kaleidoscope of cultures interacting, interpreting, reinterpreting and reaffirming their own and others’ cultures within asymmetric power relations. But though such critiques point to complexity, I would not dismiss the ideas of world-culture or world polity entirely. Rather, this work treats them as a terrain of interactions to explore and map. Indeed, the critiques outlined above motivate my examination of the power dynamics between global and local within this work.

The literature on world polity and world culture overlaps with the literature around global civil society, and indeed around civil society and the culture of NGOs (both international and local). If civil society is the medium through which bargains are negotiated between the individual and political and economic authority, then Mary Kaldor reapplies this medium in the context of the global: global civil society consists of “the groups, networks and movements

which comprise the mechanisms through which individuals negotiate and renegotiate social contracts or political bargains on a global level” (Kaldor 2003: 78). Development institutions are one of these mechanisms, connected by transnational civic networks linking the local and global, allowing local campaigns to receive global attention and support, and global campaigns to trickle down to the local. Keck and Sikkink reframe these as transnational advocacy networks whose formation is motivated by core similarities in ideas, values and norms. Information exchange is the key function of such networks, and they both constitute and rely on connections and flows of information, funds and services. At the same time transnational advocacy networks can be arenas of struggle as well as diffusion, shaping and challenging shared norms (Keck & Sikkink 1999). This work will contest and nuance both of these terms by focusing not only on the global or transnational aspects of civil society and advocacy, but at their national, regional and grassroots counterparts.

Whether conceptualized as global civil society or transnational networks, NGOs and other development institutions are able to operate because they are embedded within a global public sphere built on a set of global “civic religions” such as human rights or environmentalism (Kaldor 2003). As Anderson and Rieff (2005) point out, development-focused civil society attempts to represent the ‘universal’ needs and rights of the world’s peoples. Indeed, this is one of the critiques offered in the NGO literature – that in the process of playing the role of “new citizen saviors” and contributors to human progress, NGOs decide on what this progress *is*, becoming the gatekeepers for a “global market of worthy and just causes” (Reimann, 2005: 38, 46). As such, transnational networks of development institutions operate off a widely accepted (but not uncontested) assumption of the moral universality of their values (Anderson and Rieff 2004). The reliance of NGOs on universalist discourses to shape their agenda is tied into their relationship to donors – by sharing a set of universalist values or goals NGOs are able to move resources from a wide variety of funders, while donors in turn use the information and discourse generated by NGOs to legitimize their own existence (Ebrahim 2003). Yet this work will show

that this depiction of universal values and global civic religions is too flat: it ignores the agency of actors within and around development institutions to redefine the agenda. Such actors both appeal to these values and subvert them, both take up such ‘universal’ ideas while also adapting them to local needs and approaches.

At the same time, development institutions and the knowledge they value are not just global in scope. Equally central are participatory approaches to development, which promise to build on the local and indigenous knowledge discussed earlier in the chapter to challenge power hierarchies in development projects and provide responsive development interventions (Chambers 1983; Chambers 1986; Chambers 2004; Hickey & Mohan 2004; Gaventa 2004). The assumptions and incoherencies of these approaches, with their rarefaction of “community” and “local knowledge”; their neglect of local hierarchies, power dynamics and motivations; and their tendency to find the knowledge and needs that they set out to see have now been critiqued and deconstructed (Cooke & Kothari 2001a; Kothari 2001; Mosse 2001; Mosse 2003; Mosse 2005; Cleaver 2001). Yet these ideas still hold immense power and appeal within development institutions, and one of the subthemes of this work is to understand why this is, and how both participation and the local are used and understood within the case study networks.

Reimagining development institutions and the communities they work with as civil society knowledge networks underscores the critique of the epistemic community concept made earlier in this chapter. While Haas dismisses social activist networks as lacking a shared knowledge base and causal beliefs and thus unable to constitute an epistemic community, I would echo Gough and Shackley (2001) in their argument that NGOs and other civil society or activist organizations are not outside critical agents, but are often “partners in developing workable frameworks and principles for implementing actions” (329) – particularly as megaphones for voices and public opinions that would otherwise fail to be heard. NGOs might be ‘gatekeepers’ in deciding which causes are worthy, but they also are active agents within the conceptualization of the causes themselves. Indeed, as argued earlier, civil society too can lay

claim to the role of ‘experts’ in shaping and creating ideas. This claim is not restricted to institutions with global reach: through civil society knowledge networks, grassroots movements and organizations can challenge the authoritative claim of “professionals with recognized expertise” (Toke 1999: 97; see also Sowell 2009). And since the role of such epistemic communities does not have to be limited to advising the state, civil society groups can both be constituting members of epistemic communities and be themselves the entities guided by the ideas and knowledge that such communities offer.

III. *The Lens of Environmentalism(s)*

A useful lens for narrowing an exploration of the way that geographies of knowledge and civil society networks come together is environmentalism. Environmentalism is a dynamic example of a transnational movement operating on multiple tiers of a complex global network, ranging from local projects to national policies to transnational advocacy organizations. Of course, environmentalism is far from *one* movement – there are many strands, rhetorics, aims and geographies of environmentalism, so perhaps it would be fairer to speak of environmentalisms and environmental movements. However, there are certain common factors tying these disparate strands together. Environmental movements are built not only on the assumption of a shared humanity but also a shared experience of the physical world. Though environmentalism has its own long history, complete with dominant discourses and cultural bias, it is not only tied to social phenomena (Rydin 1999) but also connected to the physical world on a global scale. Yet environmentalism includes many different priorities and discourses: some focus on indigenous knowledge and resource rights, others on scientific priorities and state-led fortress conservation,⁷ and yet others on the private sector as a vehicle for environmental improvement (Guha & Martínez-Alier 2000). Its sub-strands within development work can go by many names, including

⁷ Fortress conservation, or protectionist conservation, protects biodiversity and natural resources by creating areas where human activity is either excluded or highly curtailed and regulated (Doolittle 2007).

sustainable development and natural resource management. My concern in this research project is less with the content of environmental movement(s) themselves, but rather environmentalism as epistemic communities tied together through international linkages (Jeon & Yoon 2006). This ties into the substantial literature on the relative value and privilege of global versus local environmental knowledge, such as that highlighted by Beinart (2000).

Guha and Martinez-Alier (2000) explore the diversity in environmental movements between the Global North and South. They base their analysis on a critique of Ronald Inglehart's post-materialist thesis from the 1970s, which argued that environmental awareness and activism is something that comes *after* development, that environmental movements are the province of the rich, who can afford to think about issues beyond their material well-being – such as the environment (Inglehart 1971; Inglehart 1981; Inglehart 1995). Guha and Martinez-Alier (2000) argue that Inglehart is incorrect: they make the case that there are strong material reasons (such as protection of livelihoods and natural resource use) for people from emerging economies to become involved in environmental activism. As will be detailed in later chapters, my evidence supports this view. Guha and Martinez-Alier delineate different varieties of environmentalism, drawing out the distinction between those originating in developed and developing economies, and arguing that there are fundamental differences between their motivations, forms of action and aims. My analysis illustrates such diversity, but simultaneously shows the ways in which geographies of knowledge can in certain cases bridge such distinctions, and create networks that link together or simultaneously encompass different origins and varieties of environmentalism, from the grassroots to the transnational.

a. Situating the Case Studies within Environmental Movements

The multi-sited case studies used in this work are themselves part of contrasting strands of environmentalism. In his 2002 book, *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, Martínez-Alier divides environmental movements and their history into three broad “clusters”, though the boundaries

between these clusters are blurred and blended. One of these clusters is what Martínez-Alier terms the ‘Gospel of Eco-Efficiency’, but could equally well be called Sustainable Development. Here, the rhetoric is not of nature, but rather of natural resources, and instead of a “transcendental reverence towards Nature”, its focus is on “scientific management of natural resources for permanent use” (7). This cluster of ideas and movements advocates two types of solutions to ecological problems: economic (for instance through carbon taxes or REDD⁸ programs) and scientific (through green technology such as solar power and more efficient agricultural technologies).

This is precisely the cluster of movements that the Switzerland-Kyrgyzstan case study network is part of. The development intervention that lies at the heart of this case study is a climate change adaptation project, itself housed within the natural resource management program within the Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan and their partner NGO, MSDSP Kg. Adaptation has grown increasingly large on the development agenda since the early 2000s, increasing in popularity with both donors and implementing organizations. Before the 2009 Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that “a comprehensive framework for adaptation” is “absolutely critical” (Ban 2009, quoted in Thornton and Manasfi 2010). The aim of climate change adaptation is to adjust “natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities” (Klein et al. 2007: 750), or, in the words of Thornton and Manasfi (2010), to “climate-proof development” (132). The focus on adaptation is a move away from mitigation of climate change, and is a far more politically and economically neutral agenda of preparing communities and countries for its effects, often in ways that neatly ‘mainstream’ into current development programs around natural resource management. Indeed, this is why AFK’s climate change adaptation fits Martínez-Alier’s characterization of the Gospel of Eco-

⁸ REDD stands for ‘reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation’, and is a UN program that in effect pays communities in the developing world to maintain and conserve their forests.

Efficiency. The climate change adaptation project never mentions the words ‘environmentalism’ or even ‘nature’; instead its rhetoric is of infrastructural and economic ways to address a changing climate.

Besides being an increasingly powerful global call to action within the development sphere, climate change adaptation also makes for a useful epistemic lens for this work in its concerns with multi-scale dynamics – at least in the academic literature, if not in practice (Agrawal et al. 2009). Climate change is a global phenomenon, linked to global systems of economics, governance, consumption patterns and activism. At the same time, much of the focus of adaptation programs, including that of AKF’s, has been on the local. While adaptation programs have searched for technologically-based, reproducible solutions, they have also adopted some of the rhetoric and methods of participatory development. As such, they have attempted to integrate community-generated ideas and grassroots involvement. These approaches have their own critics based on the multi-scale nature of climate change noted above: local communities cannot easily engage with national or global priorities for adaptation (Thornton & Manasfi 2010). Thus even within the strand of climate change adaptation, global/local dynamics and the geography of knowledge (as well as resources and power) play a key role in determining the way adaptation is understood and put into practice.

Besides “geo-efficiency”, another broad strand of environmentalism is what Martinez-Alier calls the Cult of Wilderness. This cluster values and idealizes wilderness for its intrinsic aesthetic and moral merits. This is a non-material love of beautiful landscapes, a set of ideals around a pristine and primeval nature which can be either based on traditional or religious beliefs or is Inglehart’s post-material valuing of the leisure and aesthetic pleasures of the environment. The applications of this strand within the developing world can range from fortress conservation to co-management with local communities, but co-management is largely seen as a failure or a last resort. In contrast, the third cluster in Martinez-Alier’s delineation is what he calls Environmentalism of the Poor, but can also be termed Environmental Justice or Popular

Environmentalism. This refers to local or developing world resistance to the environmental impacts of economic development – an archetypal example is indigenous communities protesting dam-building projects. This resistance could emerge out of livelihood concerns, territorial rights or cultural or traditional beliefs around the sacredness of nature – in short, either material or sacred interests, though Martinez-Alier argues that it tends to be the former. The focus thus becomes concern for “today’s poor” and for “contemporary social justice for humans” (11), rather than future environmental or resource value. This set of movements receives academic support in from work on agroecology, ethnoecology and biocultural diversity, political ecology, ecological economics and the like. A common theme running through such research agendas is the importance of the co-production of ecological knowledge. Martinez-Alier calls this “science with the people” (12), and links it to an acknowledgement of and pride in indigenous practices that promote sustainability and biodiversity.

While the Christensen Fund has clear affiliations with the Cult of Wilderness in its love for landscapes and the intrinsic value of biodiversity, its mandate of promoting biocultural diversity also fits into what Martinez-Alier calls the Environmentalism of the Poor. Supporters of biocultural diversity argue that cultural diversity is essential to preserve biodiversity and stop ecological degradation. Though the term was brought into use by Posey (1996), the arguments around biodiversity were first formalized in The Declaration of Belém in 1988, when a gathering of indigenous and ‘traditional’ peoples met with scientists and environmentalists at the First International Congress of Ethnobiology in Belém, Brazil. The declaration argues that “there is an inextricable link between cultural and biological diversity”. It recognizes that not only do social, cultural, and economic systems hold both the problems and the solutions to biological problems (Cocks 2006), but also that diverse cultural practices are valuable to maintaining biodiversity. Biocultural diversity thus points out the link between the knowledge and cultural traditions of ‘indigenous’ and ‘traditional’ peoples (themselves contested labels problematized in this work) and the protection of diverse landscapes, flora and fauna.

The mechanisms through which this link is created range from the designation of certain sites as sacred spaces, to the use and conservation of plants for medicinal purposes (Cocks 2006), and an increasing number of civil society organizations are claiming to be preserving indigenous knowledge. As such, biocultural diversity is a global idea and movement, but at the same time privileges local and indigenous knowledge. Yet it privileges indigenous knowledge not simply as an inherent good, but as a way to resolve global problems of biodiversity loss and resultant ecological degradation. The literature and activism around indigenous knowledge stresses “the contributions of indigenous knowledge to understanding and interpreting ecological processes”(Speranza et al., 2010: 296), contributions that address the failing of positivist and scientific knowledge, especially in proposing viable “collective responses to climate change” (Green & Raygorodetsky, 2010: 242). Thus the global movements to support and preserve indigenous knowledge and biocultural diversity epitomize the complex relationship between the global and local dynamics of knowledge production. The Christensen Fund’s approach contrasts with AKF’s climate change adaptation project, yet both have simultaneous engagement both with the rhetoric of the local and particular, and with the global scope of ecological problems.

IV. Conclusion: Towards a Geography of Knowledge via Civil Society Networks

While the goal of this project is to examine the ways in which civil society networks knit together scales and geographies of knowledge, I do not claim that civil society networks (and particularly the ones I choose to examine) are the only mechanisms for knowledge exchanges between ‘North’ and ‘South’, even within the bounds of my case studies. Many other organizations (civil society, government, social and economic) and individuals are of course involved. If knowledge is an interaction of minds, bodies and environment, then this work focuses on a reconceptualization of one of the many social mechanisms informing the generation and spread of knowledge (Cohen 2010). In other words, “to address satisfactorily the broad framing questions, concerning ‘how we know’ and ‘how we come to know’, we need more than a single

explanatory account” (Cohen 2010: S193), and this work provides one explanatory account amongst many, but an essential one in engaging with the central role of civil society organizations in context both developed and developing countries.

This work thus proposes to bring bodies of literature and research around knowledge and civil society together in a novel way, within the framework of globalization and through the lens of environmentally-focused development projects. What follows is a mapping through the particular details of two case studies of a geography of knowledge (including its production, spread and contestation) via civil society networks. By analysing of all the scales in each network simultaneously, I attempt to illuminate the ways these networks function as a whole. In so doing I argue that development-focused civil society bridges the local-global divide precisely via the knowledge that enables and creates such networks.

Chapter Three

Methodology, Case Studies and Context

I. Methodology

a. Designing Two Multi-Sited Case Studies

While the central aim of this work is to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the way ideas are created and spread within an increasingly globalized world, this project itself is grounded in empirical research. This project relies on two case studies to tease out the detailed dynamics and particularities within the process of creating, spreading and contesting knowledge within networks of development organizations and communities. A case study here is broadly defined using Yin's (2009) view of case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (18), or Feagin et al.'s definition of case study as "an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon. The study is conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources" (1991: 2). It is these elements of collecting rich, detailed, contextualized qualitative data that defines the methodological approach of this work: a case study approach has the strength of providing insight into personal meanings by focusing in on the thought processes of individuals while at the same time gathering rich contextual data (Platt 2007).

"Case" is used here as an analytical category: the structures and boundary lines around each case are analytical constructions, yet they provide essential start and end points to the empirical investigation of this thesis. The case studies are both structured and delineated in relationship to the core research questions and aims of this work. Hamel et al. (1993) argue for using the local microcosm as a doorway for exploring the global macrocosm, provided that the limitations and particularities of the case are acknowledged. I apply this point by constructing two multi-sited case studies, each consisting of four different civil society organizations and one of the communities they work with. Each of these is a single case made up of sub-cases, all

interconnected into one network. If “the project cycle... insures the separation of planners and implementers” (Mosse 2005: 4), then this work brings the two together, along with the communities where the implementers work. The case studies were designed to examine how all three are nodes in a network, integrated to some degree but also with discrete individual levels where knowledge is generated and transmitted. In this way they are a means to examine forces of cultural and social globalization “from the standpoint of participants located at the intersection of the most remote forces, connections and imaginations” (Burawoy, 2001: 148). Thus connections and flows (along with disconnections and tensions) are as much a part of the case study as the individual nodes themselves. Indeed, Urry (2000) makes the case that isolated social units of analysis are artificial constructions, and Marcus (1995) goes further, arguing that globalization has made research which is confined to local geographical units increasingly untenable as the links between such units and wider global structures deepen and multiply. Marcus argues that a research ‘site’ need not be geographically defined, writing that “multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions of locations... with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument [of the project]” (1995: 105). Such multi-sited research is the foundation of this research project; the chains and threads connecting different tiers of the cases are as central to the empirical data as each individual location.

One of the difficulties of selecting and designing case studies is deciding where each case begins and ends. This is particularly true of the multi-sited network model – besides all of the nodes that comprise each knowledge-network, there are many other social, political and contextual forces that influence the way each of the case study networks functions. As with any empirical research project, it is impossible to examine every possible variable that ties into each case study. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, this work does go out of its way to engage with this limitation by exploring Meijas’ (2009) concept of ‘paranodality’, or what lies outside the network but still influences it. Each case study does include one of most influential

and primary of such paranodal forces: the state. The state is the one agent outside the network that emerged again and again in conversations throughout my fieldwork. As a result, each case includes an exploration of the relationship between the civil society organizations in question and local and national government institutions. Other external forces, such as donors, academia or international institutions that interact with the case study organizations are acknowledged but the discussion is limited in order to keep the central argument focused and the scope of the inquiry feasible.

Another key difficulty of approaching research questions via a case study lies in the issue of representativeness – of generalizing from the particular to the universal. As Molyneux (2001) points out, “since any ethnographic account of development and globalization is necessarily partial and selective, at best it can provide a focused illumination of a part of a complex whole” (273). As such, this study does not attempt to use the cases deductively to produce universalizing theory, but rather to explore the usefulness of the framework laid out in the preceding chapter in making sense of the particularity and complexity of the two cases in question (Yin 2009). At the same time, it appropriates the techniques of grounded theory, allowing the core argument to emerge out of the data and the analysis of the interplay between the data and the broad inquiry of the project (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The goal is to piece together and illuminate a descriptive framework for the geography of knowledge in international development practice that is broad enough to incorporate the variation and particularities of the two cases. Using two case study networks rather than one shows a clearer picture of the core patterns and relationships within the descriptive framework, allowing me to develop general propositions between the two cases, as well as adding both breadth and richness to the inquiry.

The two case study networks have been chosen precisely on this basis of similarity and contrast. The case study locations were selected to match each other along a wide number of dimensions. Both include a geographically remote, semi-nomadic pastoralist people who are concerned with the livelihood implications of sustainable resource use, are disillusioned with the

state, and are being encouraged to engage in ecologically-focused initiatives by regional NGOs tied to international private foundations. Both of these foundations are interested in and are funding environmentally related programs, and thus are connected to global environmental movements – though to different flavors of environmentalism in each case. However, conducting a comparative case study in two different parts of the world enables me to examine the role that cultural, political and historical specificity play in the ways these networks interact with the local. At the same time, looking at two different foundations with two different visions of development lets me examine the ways in which different organizational cultures and epistemic commitments influence the way such a network functions. Thus the end goal of using the two case studies is not simply to compare and contrast them to clarify their distinctiveness and particularity, but also to tease out the dynamics of similarly-structured civil society knowledge networks within two different geographic and institutional contexts.

b. Within the Case Studies: Mixed Qualitative Methods and Participant Observation

The case studies use interviews, participant observation and thematic analysis to analyze the mechanisms through which ideas are created, borrowed, spread and disputed within and between development organizations as well as the communities they work with. Each of the case studies is built on three to four months in the field, with approximately two-thirds of the field time split between the offices of each of the organizations of the civil society network, and another third immersed in each local village community. I deliberately chose those data-collection methods which would allow the greatest access to a multitude of voices, actions and opinions, as well as a diversity of differently-situated actors in the case studies. These methods include in-depth semi-structured interviews (with over 200 interviews conducted in total), many more informal conversations and discussions, textual analysis of the written materials produced by the networks, and participant observation inspired by ethnographic methodology.

As this study examines connections and flows via discourse and practice, its methodological approach is designed to utilize conversations as a window into attitudes, actions and values. Focusing on the way people articulate their understanding and engagement with environmental values and civil society allows for an analysis of the interpretive repertoires of different tiers of actors along the network. The research uses both semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, adapting what Atkinson et al. (2001) describe as ethnographic interviewing: emphasizing time, openness and repeated interactions with participants in order to build rapport and engage the participants in the research process itself. Rather than seeking only for specific pieces of information and approaching the interview “as a pipeline for transmitting knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995: 3), I approached interviews as a two-sided social encounter, and the knowledge produced by them as emerging out of the interaction between myself as interviewer, the person being interviewed and any third party such as a translator. Thus interviews were approached as moments of mutual meaning-making from both interviewer and respondent (Holstein & Gubrium 1995). In practice this often meant entering the interview with a pre-conceived range of topics and questions, and making use of an interview guide for interviews at each tier of the process outlining the thematic areas I wish to cover (Morgan 2008a), but at the same time actively engaging with the content of the interview, challenging answers, asking for depth, allowing the improvisation of new questions, adumbrating new interpretations, or privileging the development of certain topics over others. Such flexibility allows for a depth and richness of data that is particularly suited to the complexity of mapping such knowledge networks (Wengraf 2001; Beinart 1991).

The interviews consciously incorporated a variety of voices and vantage points, not only across staff positions in the civil society organizations, but also across a range of residents in each community, varying in age, socio-economic position, gender and the entire range of involvement in the development projects in question. In the foundations and NGOs I interviewed nearly everyone I could access, allowing for a broad and nuanced picture of the

organizations, their cultures and the ways they created, took-up, privileged and transmitted ideas. In the villages I used a mix of theoretical sampling (allowing my sampling to take into account my own evolving knowledge and theory-formation, for instance the need to include village government officials or religious leaders) and stratified sampling (making sure various sub-groups, such as different ages, genders and economic backgrounds, are represented) (Morgan 2008b; Morgan 2008c; van den Hoonaard 2008; Saumure & Given 2008). Using these sampling techniques allowed me to both to take into account a wide diversity of perspectives and experiences, but also pursue emerging lines of inquiry and new leads and ideas during the fieldwork. When possible I have conducted multiple rounds of individual interviews with the same key actors – for instance, I interviewed Ken Wilson, the head of the Christensen Fund, three times over the course of three years. This allowed me to build off the content of previous interviews and research in village communities, and thus to explore new points of formation, disconnection and contestation in the flow and creation of knowledge.

While some of the elite interviews were recorded, many were not, either at the request of the person I was speaking with or because many happened in public spaces over meals or coffee, where a recording would be untenable because of the high background noise. None of interviews in the villages were recorded – I quickly found that while elites usually forgot about the recorder, many of the people in the villages continued to be uncomfortable when recorded. I took detailed notes during all interviews, and as frequently as possible wrote down direct quotes verbatim. As such, many of the direct quotes in this work were not recorded, but are reconstructed from detailed interview notes taken during the conversation.

This work also builds on participant observation, particularly at the local level. I spent one month in each of the village communities of the two case studies, taking part in the day-to-day life of the communities while conducting interviews there. I participated in activities ranging from family life (including chores, cooking and playing with children) to community activities (such as sitting in classes at the school, attending village celebrations and being present at

community workshops and work parties). This not only opened up new insights and questions, but allowed me to gather empirical data about actions as well as rhetoric and discourse, providing contextualized knowledge of how universalist discourses are formed and disseminated (McKechnie & Lynne 2008; Corbetta 2003). Descriptions in the chapters that come that are not cited to specific informants are thus drawn from field-notes based on my observations and experiences during fieldwork. Participant observation also informed the structure and content of the interviews, as my interview questions evolved to include my observations in the communities.

Participant observation or observation of any kind was difficult at the global level – for instance, I proposed to the Christensen Fund that I spend time as an unpaid volunteer or intern at their office, putting my past experience in the non-profit world to use. However, they declined the proposal, as discussed further in the section on power below. Yet while I was not able to participate as a staff member or intern in the organizations that comprise my case studies, I used as much observation as possible in my data collection. This was particularly feasible in the intermediary organizations (Kivulini Trust, Waso Trustland, Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP) where I typically lived for two to three weeks with staff members, and was included in office meetings, conversations and social events. Living with staff members and attending social events also allowed me to participate in a wide range of informal conversations, complaints, stories, life histories and gossip, which informed interviews and deepened my contextual knowledge. In this sense, while I would hesitate to wade into the controversies surrounding the term ‘multi-sited ethnography’ (Wogan 2004), I would make the case that this work is ethnographically-inspired. In incorporating participant observation and immersive fieldwork based on building relationships with the main actors in my case studies, this work builds on Willis and Trondman’s (2000) definition of ethnography as “involving direct and sustained social contact with agents, and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly *in its own terms*, the irreducibility of human experience” – in

short “the disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events” (5, original emphasis).

Besides semi-structured interviews and participant observation, this research also uses texts as a window onto the more formal or encoded side of the organizations it studies and the beliefs and ideas they produce. All of the organizations in the two case studies produce text describing themselves and their aims and actions, text in the form of websites, grant applications, annual reviews, charters and the like. Some of this text is publicly available, or is meant to present these organizations to others (such as grant applications), and as such yields rich data on their public and institutional rhetoric, serving as a way to understand the way these organizations cast themselves in the public sphere. Other text is less formal (including emails to me or the content of presentation slides used for internal meetings), or is meant for internal use (such as memos or staff training material). The language and rhetoric they use provides clues of the knowledge generated and transferred or disputed within and between these organizations.

c. Data Analysis: Piecing Together Themes, Discourse and Thick Description

I use both thematic and discourse analysis to interpret and analyze the data that emerged from interviews, observations and texts. Thematic analysis is the primary tool used to tease out the key patterns, observations and arguments in this work, and is focused around organizing and analyzing the data by “identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning... and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles” (Lapadat, 2010: 925-6). This process was simultaneously deductive and inductive. Some of the key themes were identified deductively on the basis of the key research questions of the project and its central focus on the processes of creation, spread, application and contestation of ideas and rhetoric within global civil society networks. In particular, the thematic analysis traces three dimensions of the impact of knowledge flows between global foundations, local communities and regional NGOs: attitudes and values,

ideas and knowledge, and behavior, both in terms of the environmental aims of each of the case study projects and towards civil society more broadly. The data analysis also examines points of connection and overlap as well as contestations and variation, both vertically – between different levels of the each network – and horizontally, within each organizational ‘node’ in the network and between the two case studies.

At the same time, the thematic analysis was also largely inductive, allowing patterns and unsought themes to emerge from the data, sometimes adding entirely new lines of inquiry to the project that then became reflected in the data gathering: this was the case with the role of and relationship with the state. In this way, the data collection and analysis is influenced by grounded theory methodology – data leads to insights and questions that then influence further data generation, and reconsideration of theoretical constructs and ideas occurs repeatedly in relation to empirical findings occurs repeatedly (Schwandt 2007b; Clarke 2007). This process leads to theoretical frameworks that are “conceptually dense and grounded in the data” (Gibson, 2003: 132). As mentioned in the earlier discussion of the ethnographic influence on data collection, both the data-gathering and the analysis and writing attempt thick description, painting a rich and detailed picture of the two case studies while still pursuing the central inquiries of the project, including “both the important concepts and processes identified in the study and the overarching patterns of experience by which those concepts and processes are manifested”, as well as “both patterns of commonality across all cases and the contextual aspects of the phenomenon that account for differences among participants” (Ayres, 2008: 868).

Beside thematic analysis, I occasionally employ discourse analysis, that is, the analysis of “the processes whereby speakers methodically construct their worlds of meaning” (Schwandt, 2007a: 73). I view discourse as fluid, as “active, reactive, and inter-active” (Lynch, 2007: 512), and thus while I point to the inconsistencies or contradictions in the language of my respondents, this is meant not as a normative but rather a descriptive and analytical stance. While I do not pursue discourse analysis as my main mode of analysis as it would take me away from

the main focus of this work, I remain sensitive to language and diction in my empirical material, and am aware of discourse as the “systems of thought that construct subjects and their worlds” (Schwandt, 2007a: 73).

d. Power Dynamics, Research Constraints and Ethics

Researcher bias, power inequalities and positionality within the research design cannot be ignored. The fact that my research was participatory was both inevitable and intentional. As a researcher, I could not help but actively participate in both the interviews and the actions people took around me. Indeed, I was often asked to become involved in the operations of the villages and the civil society organizations that I researched, writing grant proposals, making suggestions for projects and designing websites. I welcomed these invitations, approaching them as opportunities to become embedded in the researched landscape. I designed my research to allow as much participant observation as possible, living with local families at each site of the research and participating as fully as possible in the communities and the organizations I was studying. As such, my own background and mental landscape filtered and molded the empirical data I gathered. In addition, my presence affected the way people behaved and the way they formulated responses to the questions I asked them. In short, my own embeddedness and positionality within the research project is both a hindrance and an aid, molding the empirical findings of the project.

As a Caucasian, young, English-speaking female postgraduate researcher, with work experience in NGOs and civil society groups in North America and South Asia, my background impacted the collection of empirical data. Some doors opened because of it: a business card with the University of Oxford logo and my position as a doctoral student often gave me the legitimacy to both conduct interviews and set up immersive living arrangements. My gender and ethnicity often gave me privileged access, particularly to informal interactions and participant observation with women at the local level. My relative youth could be an advantage, allowing me

to be perceived as less threatening when I asked probing or uncomfortable questions. At the same time, my youth and my gender at times undercut my legitimacy and power in the eyes of some of the individuals I conducted research with, and my ethnicity constantly and flagrantly marked me as a privileged outsider. I engage with these issues by explicitly reflecting on the inherent power inequalities as well as my personal values and background throughout the data gathering and analysis, utilizing Gouldner's definition of reflexivity as seeing "both the inquiring subject and the studied object ... not only as mutually interrelated but also mutually constituted" (1970: 493, cited in Atkinson et al. 2001) as the starting point in incorporating a reflective acknowledgement of my own influences on the construction of knowledge through this project.

Indeed, power dynamics played a key role not only in what people said to me, but also in the accessibility of respondents and interviewees, and ultimately in the very shape of the case studies. This was particularly true of my research and relationship with the civil society organizations in the case studies. As with much organizational research, gaining access was often a long and arduous process of negotiation and relationship-building with gatekeepers (Bryman 1988): while many elites in these organizations generously gave me their time and knowledge, others were suspicious and unwilling to speak with me, and at times tried to redirect me to other gatekeepers in order to block or slow my research. These are 'defensive elites': "people or groups who are threatened by, have little to gain from, or are otherwise reluctant to place themselves under scrutiny" (Odendahl and Shaw 2001: 300). Though I was surprised to find defensive elites in development organizations, this was particularly the case at the global level. Though some of these elites were eventually won over by persistence, professionalism and "empathetic neutrality" (Moyser, 2006: 86) such difficulties show that managing power dynamics in elite interviews was as important as within the village communities.

Language was also a major constraint and facilitator in the case studies. I speak both English and Russian fluently, meaning that I could speak to the educated local elite in both Kenya and Kyrgyzstan, which included all these working in the NGOs in both countries. In both

of the villages I lived in (Beliqo in Kenya and Saro-Kamush in Kyrgyzstan) my host families spoke English (in Beliqo) and Russian (in Saro-Kamush) well enough for me to be able to become somewhat integrated into family life. However, in both of the villages I had to use a translator during most of my interviews. In both places I hired local residents as my translators. In Beliqo this was Salad Choki, a young man in his late 20s who had spent most of his life in the village, but had also lived for a while in Nairobi, where one of his jobs had been collecting data for an AIDS related research project with a foreign researcher. Salad was unemployed at the time he became my researcher, though he was about to become an aide at the village's basic health clinic. In Saro-Kamush my translator was Maksat Kazubekova, an older woman (likely in her late-50s) who was one of the two Russian teachers in the village school (Eliza, the other Russian teacher, was the head of my host family in the village), and from one of the wealthier families in the village.

Hiring local interpreters gave me the advantage of having translators who were much more besides: both Salad and Maksat became a source of contextual knowledge, cultural explanations, background and life histories. In short both were indispensable in filling me in when I need to know more and providing connections and introductions in the villages. However, hiring locals rather than professional translators from outside the village also had its disadvantages: in both cases the translation was far from fluent, simultaneous or effortless, and I could never be positive whether my translators stuck closely to the word choice of the interviewees, though I stressed the importance of close translation as much as possible. In this sense all of my interviews were necessarily filtered through the preconceptions and ideas of the two translators, and their social standing in the village did influence who they introduced me to and the way I drew samples from the village population for my interviews. While I consciously tried to correct for these biases, the power dynamics within my interviews were linked not only to me but also to my translators – inevitably, having a young, educated man in Beliqo and a middle-aged school teacher in Saro-Kamush also influenced what people said in interviews.

These questions of power dynamics interlink with the ethical questions inherent in any field research. Throughout this research I grappled with questions of consent, expectations and confidentiality. The distribution of power shifted with each interaction within my fieldwork, and keeping these shifts in mind is a crucial aspect of the fieldwork and the analysis that follows. As such, informed consent was central to every interview and interaction in the case studies, and was an ongoing part of the research (Miller & Bell 2002). This meant getting active consent from participants (Losch 2008) – at the beginning of every interview the person I was speaking with was informed of the purpose of the study in simple, jargon-free language, asked if they were happy to participate, and given free rein to refuse to answer any of the questions, or to ask that responses not be recorded at any point in the interview. At the end of every interview, I asked respondents if they have any questions for me or anything they would like to add – thereby granting further autonomy and control to the participants in the research.

In keeping with the autonomous, power-conscious ethos of the research, after discussion with a range of research participants I chose not to make participants anonymous unless they asked to be. Even with pseudonyms, it would be easy to trace the identities of many key participants because of the organizations and public figures involved in the research (themselves important for the argument of the piece). Many of the participants preferred to be cited using their names so that they could retain ownership over their opinions and thoughts, echoing the issue of participant “ownership” of data highlighted by Grinyer (2002). As Ogden (2008b) points out, participants might feel disempowered with the use of a pseudonym, and might prefer to be represented in the research as who they really are; “researchers have been criticized for the overuse of pseudonyms and engaging in a form of ethical paternalism for assuming that participants must be anonymized”, even if participants do not state such a preference (693). Thus, I have adopted what Ogden (2008a) terms a participant-centered approach: each participant in the research was told at the beginning of an interview that they could choose to have a pseudonym, and that they could request anonymity at any point during and after the

interview. Many participants preferred to only give their first or given names, in which case only these are used in the citations.⁹

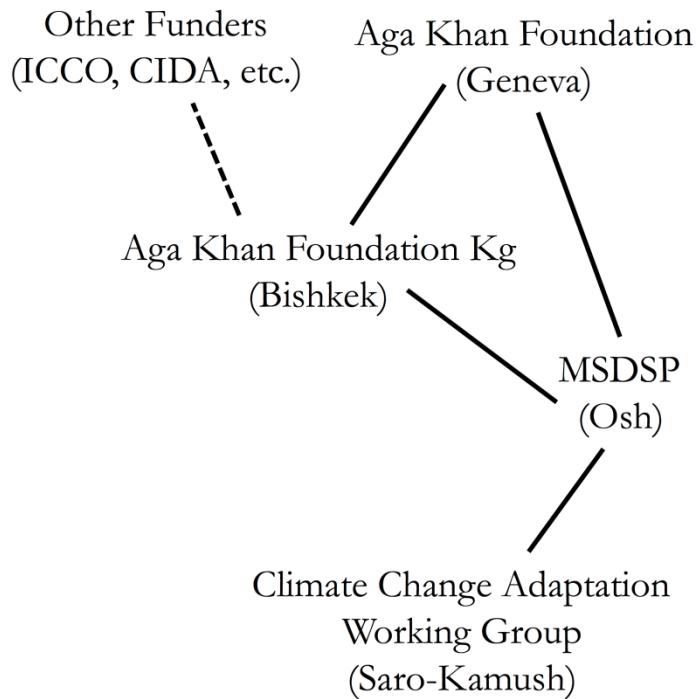
Finally, I was very aware of my obligations to the organizations and communities upon whose goodwill, time and hospitality I relied, and attempted to contribute something in return, helping write and edit grant applications, putting together a website for one of the organizations, and attempting to take an active role in the household chores and burdens of the families with whom I stayed. Though I did not financially compensate any of the participants for their time, I did compensate the families with whom I stayed for board, often by buying or bringing food, occasionally by giving money. At the same time, I was constantly managing expectations in the research, making clear that I could not provide financial help to the individuals or organizations involved in the study.

II. *Introducing the Case Studies: Organizations and Individuals*

It is not easy to keep track of all of the actors, individuals, organizations and agendas in this work. By its very nature, having two case studies, each with four or five different sites, makes for a complicated web of interests, contexts and personalities. The sections below give a brief introduction to each of the organizations, villages and major personalities within this project (with names highlighted in bold for quick reference), and briefly describe their relationships to each other. The organizational chart at the beginning of the work will also act as a guide to the names and roles described below.

⁹ In keeping with the participant-centered approach and the ethnographic ethos of the project, I have used the form of name most commonly used by and applied to the research participants in my citations – for instance, Isack Hussein of Kivulini Trust is cited and referred to as Dr. Hussein, as this is both what he was called by his colleagues and acquaintances and the way he signed off on email communication, and after the initial citation Ken Wilson of the Christensen Fund is cited as Ken, for the same reasons. In the case of research participants with Kyrgyz or Borana names, their names were transliterated into English by me, as close to the original pronunciation as I could make them.

a. Case Study One: From Geneva to Saro-Kamush, Through Bishkek, Osh and Kara-Kulja



i. The Aga Khan Foundation, Geneva

The **Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)** is an international charity, headquartered in Geneva, with fundraising branches in the US, Canada and UK. It was started in 1967 and is headed by His Highness the Aga Khan, the very wealthy, Western-based head of the Ismaili community. While the foundation is a personal foundation in that it draws on the funds of the Aga

Khan, it is also an operating foundation in that it runs and manages its own projects. In fact it also fundraises from other international development agencies, including the UN, the World Bank and other intergovernmental organizations. In 2006 (the last year for which such figures are publicly available), AKF disbursed 120 million US dollars in program grants and assistance (AKF 2006).

The foundation has five thematic areas of focus: rural development (which includes natural resource management), health, education, civil society and the environment (which includes disaster risk management). Its programs lie largely in Central Asia, the Middle East, East Africa and South Asia, with some additional countries not in these geographic areas.¹⁰ While the Foundation is avowedly secular, the Ismaili connection does play a role (if an unacknowledged one) in their work. Not only does the Foundation work in parts of the world with significant Ismaili minorities (parts of East Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia), but it also

¹⁰ The 16 countries where AKF has field offices and programs are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Uganda (AKF Overview 2014).

draws on the Ismaili community, particularly the expatriate community in North America and Europe, for funds, know-how, volunteers and staffing. This relationship with the Ismaili community is not formalized, though there is a program to send Ismaili professionals from North America as volunteers to give their expertise to AKF's country offices. Yet the Ismaili connection was mentioned to me repeatedly in informal contexts. During office gossip among expats in AKF's Kyrgyzstan head office I was told that the current CEO (Karl) was the first non-Ismaili to head that branch of AKF. Because of the Aga Khan's status as the equivalent of a head of state, his agencies have very formalized relationships with the governments of the states where they are located. The Aga Khan has a diplomatic office and a diplomatic staff in all such countries to formally liaise with the state and build relationships with members of government. At the same time, AKF goes to a lot of trouble to demonstrate that it is not a religious organization. For instance, Mavluda Djaparova, head of communication at AKF Kyrgyzstan, told me how the Kyrgyz office made a documentary film aimed at raising the disaster preparedness of the local population in which they interviewed several imams with the explicit aim of undermining religious fatalism. Though the film was aired, AKF's Geneva office made sure that AKF was not credited or referenced in it in any way because of the religious references (Mavluda, 19/03/2013).

The Aga Khan Foundation is just one agency in the **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**, which is a collection of both for-profit and non-profit enterprises ranging from a hotel chain to a fund for traditional culture. Though the different agencies sometimes cooperate, they are largely independent. The only other agency of AKDN that played an active role in this research is the University of Central Asia, described in more detail in the section below. The Foundation itself is divided into the head office in Geneva, fund-raising offices in Europe and North America, and country offices in the countries where AKF runs its programs. The relationship between the head office and the branches makes for a complex picture which varies between what I observed, what people told me at the head office, and what staff members said

to me in the Kyrgyzstan office. Though staff at the head office at times described the country offices as merely branches of the Foundation, at other times they insisted that the country offices have a large degree of autonomy. **Mark Whitton**, the head of the natural resource management program in the Geneva office, told me that the role of the head office is largely to set the broad programmatic concerns of the country branches, liaise with the board of trustees, approve new programming, and help in funding searches. The Geneva office also provides some technical, organizational and fundraising support to the country offices. Mark stressed the freedom of each country office, while Geneva simply “raises [their] profiles” by bringing country office ideas to the board while providing some basic oversight (Mark Whitton, 14/2/14).

The head office of AKF is also the site of the **Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment (PSAKFE)**. This is the continuation of what was the Bellerive Foundation, an environmental foundation founded in 1977 by the current Aga Khan’s late uncle, which merged with AKF in 2006. In the words of **David Boyer**, the head of PSAKFE since 2008, PSAKFE is a small internal fund (he is the only staff member), with the aim to integrate environmental perspectives across all of AKF’s programs. PSAKFE gave USD 20,000 as initial seed money to the climate change adaptation project run by AKF Kyrgyzstan that forms the heart of this case study, though iterations of the program have also been funded by the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

ii. Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan

The **Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan**’s offices are in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, in a gleaming new high-rise devoted to a cross-section of Aga Khan Development Network agencies. AKF Kg has a floor to itself, though this hardly holds the desks of the nearly two dozen people that work there. The organization receives visits from the program staff in AFK Geneva every three to six months, AKF Kg (as well as their NGO partner MSDSP Kg) staff members visit the

Geneva office for trainings and workshops a few times a year, and AKF Geneva, AKF Kg and AKF MSDSP hold an annual strategy planning retreat together. However, AKF Kg has a large degree of autonomy to design its own programming and find its own funding. AKF Kg and MSDSP combined have a budget of US\$ 3.6 million, and of this \$1.4 million comes from the Aga Khan, referred to by staff as His Highness or HH funding. The rest comes from a cross-section of external funders, including the EU, USAID, the Norwegian, German and Canadian governments, the World Bank and small foundations such as the Christensen Fund (Karl Goeppert 15/03/2013). The resultant autonomy is reflected in AKF's climate change adaptation project. Both David Boyer, the director of the Prince Sadruddin Fund for the Environment, and staff members in the AKF Kg office attributed the initial idea and imperative to **Laurie Ashley**, the American hired as a consultant by AKF Kg to advise on environmental and natural resource



management programming.

Laurie developed the program together with **Jack**,¹¹ the head of fundraising (or 'resource mobilization' in AKF-speak), and Talant, head of MSDSP Kg (described in detail below).

Besides Jack and Laurie, I interviewed most of the other staff members at AKF Kg. Amongst them, the other key players that will come up repeatedly in this work are **Karl Goeppert**, the German CEO of AKF Kg, and **Nicolle Nelson**, head of the Research, Evaluation and Learning unit. Other than Talant, all of the above are expatriates, and as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, most of the leadership roles in AKF Kg are filled by expats. The office is also overwhelmingly female, especially when it came to lower-level staff. Everyone at AKF Kg

¹¹ Name changed on request.

gathers together every Monday morning for a meeting, and it was here that I was initially able to find out about the agendas and personalities of the organization.

Though these are the offices of the Aga Khan Foundation, a handful of MSDSP staff members are based there as well. The key ones in this work are **Mavluda Djaparova**, the communications coordinator (the equivalent of a press secretary or publicist) of MSDSP Kg, and **Rahat Yusubalieva**, the Project Manager for the third iteration of the climate change adaptation project, hired in April 2013. Indeed, though the staff of both organizations drew a line between AKF, which has a primarily fundraising and reporting role, and MSDSP Kg, which is AKF's implementing partner and legally an independent organization, in practice the two organizations are integrated and interdependent. Despite being in different cities, AKF largely supervises and directs the activities of MSDSP. In turn Talant, MSDSP's director, seemed to have a strong voice in AKF.

AKF Kg is externally oriented, not only towards international donors, but also towards Kyrgyz NGOs and government agencies. For instance, during my time at AKF Kg's office, I attended several meetings of the Mountain Partnership, a collection of natural resource management NGOs focused on mountain societies. These meetings were hosted by AKDN in their own meeting rooms. Even program-related meetings at AKF Kg sometimes included outside organizations working on similar interventions, such as an agricultural greenhouse project meeting I attended where several other Kyrgyz and international NGOs shared their work. Likewise, AKF Kg collaborates with other AKDN agencies, most of whose Kyrgyz branches were located in the same high-rise in Bishkek. The most important of these for this project is the **University of Central Asia (UCA)**. This is the Aga Khan's ambitious project to run a world-class university in Central Asia, with three campuses in three countries – Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan – each based not in a major city but rather in a small town in a remote, often mountainous region of each country. At the time of writing, construction had just begun (after many delays) on the Kyrgyz campus in Naryn. However, the research and

continuing education sections of the University have been operating for several years, and my research at AKF Kg was initially facilitated by the **Mountain Society Research Institute** (at the time it was the Mountain Society Research Centre). This institute is part of the University of Central Asia, based in Bishkek, and is focused on conducting applied research linked to Central Asia, livelihoods and natural resources that involves both foreign and local academics. It was through this research center that I affiliated to AKF Kg as a visiting researcher. Two of its staff members, **Chad Dear** (the head of research and my initial contact point with AKF Kg) and **Horst Weyerhaeuser** (the institute's director), gave valuable perspectives on the role of applied research and the connections between AKF Kg and the Mountain Society Research Institute. They also facilitated introductions and legitimized my role as researcher with AKF Kg and MSDSP Kg.

iii. MSDSP Kg and the Climate Change Adaptation Project

The **Mountain Society Development and Support Programme Kyrgyzstan (MSDSP Kg)** 2012 annual report introduces the organization as an “initiative” of AKF. This rather ambivalent statement about the relationship between the two agencies, despite the implied hierarchy, means that MSDSP can present an independent front to the world when necessary – it is registered as a stand-alone NGO in Kyrgyzstan, is often referred to as a “local” partner organization on grant applications, and operates in a different city. Besides the large head office (with more staff members than AKF Kg) in Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second-biggest city and its major metropolis in the south, MSDSP also has offices in Naryn in the center of the country, and Alai, Chong-Alai and Kara-Kulja in the southern provinces. The head office, located in a gated compound in a central part of Osh, has its own drivers, car, engineer, agricultural specialist, and even a local woman who sells home-cooked lunch to the staff in the lunch room. I found the MSDSP Kg office to be rather more congenial and friendly, as well as more gender balanced, than the AKF Kg offices

in Bishkek. Its staff was entirely local,¹² and in 2012, it had a budget of over US\$ 2 million to spend on programming. However, as mentioned above, MSDSP is in fact closely interwoven with AKF Kg, with some staff members based in AKF Kg's Bishkek office. While AKF Kg focuses on fundraising, grant-writing (and thus program creation), collaborations and trainings, MSDSP Kg is largely focuses on making programming happen. This means that it can have a degree of autonomy in interpreting programming and designing and tweaking implementations – a process which often points to MSDSP's organizational values and interests.

The director of MSDSP Kg, **Talant Aldashov**, holds large sway over the way programs are run and executed. In particular, Talant took quite a lot of credit and agency when it came to the **climate change adaptation project**, the focal point of this case study. Though the program was largely designed and initially researched and tested by Laurie Ashley, Talant told me that the idea was originally his. The program itself has gone through three iterations: the first was a year long, finished in 2012, and was funded by the ICCO; the second was two years long, ran from 2012 to 2014, and was funded by the Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment (PSAKFE); the third is three years long, started in spring 2013, and is funded by CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. It is the second iteration that I use as a lens in this case study; however, I do refer to the materials and staff members of all three in this work. The second iteration of the program is run by **Pirjan Manasov**, the project manager based in the Osh office of MSDSP, with the help of **Aizada Bekboeva**, the project specialist based in Naryn district and tasked with overseeing the projects there. Besides Pirjan, Aizada and Laurie, I also spent time with **Alibek Mukambaev**, the MSDSP staff member then carrying out an evaluation of the program, as well as **Erkin Beisheev**, the former project manager of the first version of the project.

¹² With the exception of only one staff member, Laila Zulkaphil, the Reporting Manager for MSDSP whose role was to write up the program reports, and who was Mongolian-born and Western-educated.

The program runs in MSDSP's operating areas: Naryn district in the center of the country and Osh district in the south. The stated goal of the climate change adaption project is to spread information about climate change, and enable local communities to develop pragmatic climate change adaptation plans that would be integrated into local governance structures as part of the broader regional development plan (AKF Kg 2010). Though the second iteration of the program is housed within MSDSP's natural resource management program, a major aspect of the program is building local civil society – indeed, the first iteration of the project was under the civil society program at MSDSP, and the program title of both the first and third round of the program is “Building local civil society through climate change adaptation and resilience in Kyrgyzstan”.

The program conducts participatory assessments of the possible consequences of climate change on selected mountain villages – for instance, glacial lakes rising and flooding the village, or more avalanches as more melting snow comes down in the spring, or droughts and extreme weather. The program then returns to conduct an information session that teaches community members about climate change. It then returns again for a session about creating an adaptation plan for climate change impacts – for instance, the plan could suggest planting more trees to hold slopes in place, or reinforcing riverbanks and moving houses to higher ground. At this point participants select a small working group whose role is to solidify the plan and integrate it into local government institutions. The last part of the program allows the group to select one part of the plan to turn into a project proposal, which they submit to MSDSP as a mini-grant proposal. Not all villages win the grant, but the two-thirds or so that do get \$4000 USD to carry out the adaptation, which is supposed to be run by the working group. The aim is to have the villages learn not only about climate change and adaptation, but also about how to develop project proposals for development institution and get such projects off the ground.

The climate change adaptation project also emphasizes (both in writing and in practice) the importance of creating a relationship with local and national government structures. This

meant not only adding the climate change adaptation plans produced by participating villages to the local development plan, but also integrating the program with the national-level Ministry of Emergency Situations – and the choice of this Ministry, rather than one devoted to agriculture or pastoralism or environment, is significant in demonstrating the disaster risk reduction lean of the program. The program was also a way for MSDSP to become a part of a coalition of NGOs working on climate change, who lobbied for and commented on a national-level climate change adaptation plan.

Both the Naryn and the Kara-Kulja regional offices of MSDSP played a role in this research, as the climate change adaptation project is conducted in both regions. Because the project was different stages in the two districts, I was able to observe Pirjan and Aizada conducting trainings in the earlier stages of the program in Naryn district, and then immerse myself in the working group and the mini-project during the later phase of the program in Kara-Kulja district. I also draw on time spent at both offices to discuss the relationship between the MSDSP head office and the regional branches – in this both **Melis Berdibekov**, the head of the Naryn office, and **Kubanich**, the head the Kara-Kulja office, play a large role. Of the two, the Naryn office is far more prominent, with more staff and a larger building in the small town of Naryn, the closest the mountainous center of the country has to a metropolis. The Kara-Kulja office is far smaller: it has less than half-dozen staff members, and takes up two small rooms in a government administration building (though Kubanich was famous amongst the AKF Kg expats for being a dead-ringer for George Clooney). Kara-Kulja itself is a large village, though it is the administrative and market hub for the sub-district.

iv. Saro-Kamush and Zalgat Alma/The Climate Change Adaptation Working Group

The village of Saro-Kamush, one of the villages where the climate change adaptation project is being run, is the local node of this case study. This is a village of about 900 people, a 20 minute drive outside of Kara-Kulja, situated next to a river-canyon and surrounded by mountain

foothills, with a great snowy range closing off the ends of the long valley in which the village nestles. The village is run by the (elected) village elder, with a council of elders to advise him or her, though local political power actually lies with higher sub-district and district councils (for which the village members can stand in elections). Though at lower altitude than many of the other villages in the district, it is still a mountain village, where the main occupation is herding. Indeed, the people there are semi-nomadic pastoralists, many leaving the village in the summer to move up to summer pastures with their cows, sheep and horses, living in yurts and (for a fee) looking after not only their own livestock but also those of their neighbors that choose to stay in the village for the summer. Both in winter and summer, the animals graze on communal pastures that are under the use of the village (which is technically “renting” them from the government in a long-term lease); animal-owners pay a different level of pasture tax depending on the numbers of animals they put on them.

Yet while every family in the village owns at least a few sheep, a major source of income (indeed perhaps the greatest source of income) is remittances from family members in Bishkek or abroad, largely in Kazakhstan or Russia. This echoes the economy of the country as a whole, where the largest source of income is remittances. Every single house where I conducted interviews had at least one member of the younger generation (20-40 year-olds) working away, and it was income from such remittances that seemed to fund the rather high standard of living in the village – every family had at least one TV, and many had a car. Everyone had a cellphone, and I even saw one woman with an iPad, bought for her by a brother working in Moscow.

Those working abroad were typically working in menial labor such as cleaning or cashiering or selling goods in the market – frequently with university degrees in hand. Migrants willingly submitted to substandard living conditions such as terrible crowding in order to be able to send remittances home. And not everyone was successful – **Eliza** and **Nurmat Tolumbaiulo**, the couple I lived with in the village, now in their early 30s, spent most of their 20s trying to make it abroad, first in Kazakhstan reselling goods, then in Bishkek reselling scrap

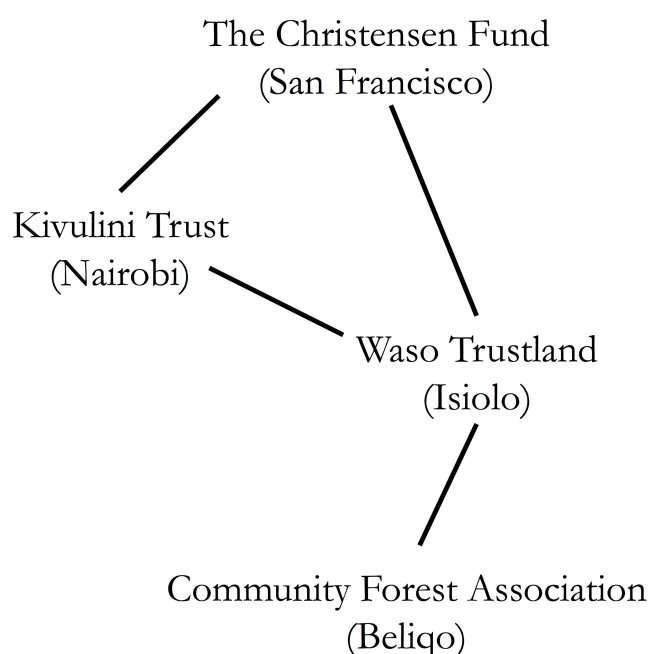
metal and finally in Moscow (just Eliza) working as a cashier. As Eliza put it to me, they were never successful at any of this – they always just barely managed to break even. Though many young people were sending home money in this way, and though their families did express gratitude and even dependence, they also deplored the lack of employment opportunities in the village and in Kyrgyzstan as a whole. When I asked why all the youth could not be herders, I was told that herding simply did not make enough money for discretionary spending – it was just enough for food, but that is about it. This migration was nearly always temporary, even when successful, and many young people returned to herding or other local pursuits afterwards.

The associational life of the village largely revolved around the village Mosque and the village clinic, and consisted in informal associations based around religious life or fundraising for village necessities such as a new clinic or a new kindergarten. Besides these two focal points, much of the organizational life in the village – particularly that with external links or funding – centered around the village school. The school had about a dozen staff members and a hundred or so kids, and was both a primary and secondary school. Both the husband and the wife in the family that hosted me are teachers in the school, and **Maksat Kazubekova**, my translator, is one of the Russian teachers there (her sister is the principal of the school).

During my research there in April 2013, Saro-Kamush was about two-thirds through the CCA program – they had completed the assessment, the information session and the plan-creating session, and had formed a working group, applied for a mini-grant, and won the grant. Their mini-grant proposal was to clean out the main canal in the village, which was blocked up with sedimentary run-off, and place a concrete pipe with a bridge/road over it in one spot so that vehicles could get from the village road to the fields where fodder is being grown. (Before the project people would use horses to get across the canal when it was full.) At the time I was in the village the mini-grant paper work was signed, materials were being bought, and work was just starting as I departed.

The main point person for the mini-grant project was **Nurmat Tolumbaiulo**, the 33 year-old physical education teacher in the school and my host in the village. Back in his 20s, Nurmat had founded and led a registered local community-based organization (CBO, or ‘jamat’ (fund) as they were known in the village), called **Zhalgiz Alma** (Single Apple). This was initially an active micro-credit/micro-savings organization, but had been inactive for several years because Nurmat had left the village to work abroad, and the person who took over mismanaged the funds, though the CBO was still registered with the state. Both the working group and MSDSP saw that working with an existing registered agency – even one that had been inactive for years – was to their advantage, as it had a bank account and recognition from the state in the form of a license. The registered members of the group overlapped largely (though not exclusively) with the members of the adaptation plan working group.

b. Case Study Two: From San Francisco to Beliqo, Through Nairobi and Isiolo



i. The Christensen Fund

The Christensen Fund is a charitable foundation based in San Francisco, named after its founders, the Christensen family. Though the Christensen family takes a far less proactive role in the foundation than the Aga Khan does in his, Diane Christensen, the daughter of original founders, is on the Christensen Fund’s board. It was founded in 1957 with a

focus on the acquisition and promotion of “non-European” art. Since the 1980s its mission has expanded to include the preservation of not only artistic expression but also the landscapes that play a key role in artistic production, and starting with the 2002 hire of Ken Wilson as its

executive director, the fund has focused on promoting biocultural diversity. TCF's spacious San Francisco office accommodates over a dozen employees, though a small number of TCF staff members, notably many of their program officers, are based in the Fund's countries of operation.

I conducted over a half-dozen interviews and informal conversations with TCF staff, including its executive director **Ken Wilson** and **Wolde Tadasse**, the Oxford-based then-program officer for the East Africa region (active until 2014), as well as **Yeshe TekleMichael**, a grant associate at TCF, and **Jeff Campbell**, director of grant-making until 2014. TCF is a global foundation: though its offices are in San Francisco, its grant-making programs span Central Asia, East Africa, Melanesia and Northern Australia, the US Southwest and the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as a global program of encouraging international institutions, conferences and leaders to promote biocultural diversity (TCF 2012). TCF is above all a grant-making body – unlike AKF, TCF is *not* an implementing or operating foundation overseeing its own programs. The focus of the grantmaking is on biocultural diversity and indigenous knowledge, and the role that indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions play in biodiversity and environmental conservation. Though TCF emphasizes its non-prescriptive role in making grants, it expects grantees' projects to fit within the framework of the fund's mission, and thus cannot help but influence the kind of projects and ideas grantees engage in.

ii. Kivulini Trust

One of the Christensen's grantees in East Africa is **The Kivulini Heritage Trust**. Kivulini is housed in a modest three room office in a wealthy part of Nairobi. I spent two weeks in the offices of Kivulini, most of my time in conversation with Kivulini's founder and head, **Dr. Hussein Isack**, usually referred to by others as **Dr. Hussein**, as well as with **Fatuma**, the organization's administrative assistant and general jack-of-all-trades, and **Hassan Roba**, who served in a pro-bono advisory and consulting capacity for Kivulini. In early 2014 Hassan Roba

was hired by the Christensen Fund as their Rift Valley Program Officer, replacing Wolde Tadasse, and demonstrating the many interconnections and close relationships within the network, particularly between Kivulini and the Christensen Fund. Dr. Hussein is by training an ethno-biologist, holding a DPhil in biology from Oxford and now working as the director of Kenya's National Museum (Kivulini is his side project), where Hassan Roba was his college and worked as a senior researcher. His doctoral work focused on the honeybird, a bird that lives in a symbiotic relationship with some of the peoples of northern Kenya, leading them to honey and relying on them to break open the hive. This perhaps is the perfect analogy for Dr. Hussein's and Kivulini's focus: on the connection between peoples and landscapes, culture and nature, and



the way the two interact to the mutual benefit of both. Kivulini is a strong partner of the Christensen fund. After Dr. Hussein worked for TCF for two years as a consultant and field officer in East Africa, Kivulini was founded at the urging of TCF executive director Ken Wilson. Indeed, Kivulini's purpose statement is in many ways an echo of TCF's: to support "communities' endeavors to sustain environmental and cultural vitality

and prosperity" (Kivulini Heritage Trust, 2011). Both the formal vision and mission statement of Kivulini echo this dual emphasis on both culture and natural environment. It is the main avenue through which TCF receives grant applications and project information from community groups in Kenya and distributes grants to them in turn.

While its formal relationship to TCF is straight forward, its relationship to Waso Trustland and the Community Forest Association in Beliqo (the other organizations in this case study network) is less so. WTL receives its grant money (partly for operating costs and partly to pass on to the funded projects run by community groups) directly from the Christensen Fund, and is their hub in Isiolo district. But this relationship is shifting, with some of the groups that

were once funded by TCF via WTL now funded through Kivulini. However, within the scope of this case study it can be said that Kivulini acted as a partner to WTL. Kivulini did not pass on grant money to the organization and groups, but did help WTL write grant proposals, visited the local groups they work with, and worked as a general advisory organization. Dr. Hussein maintained a close relationship with Hassan Shano. Dr. Hussein is himself ethnically Gabbra (a sub-branch or an ethnicity related to the Borana that made up most of Beliqo village). Though he is from a different village in the north of Kenya, much of his extended family, including his brother, live in Beliqo Village, where his brother is considered an elder. Most of my interviewees in Beliqo not only had heard of Dr. Hussein, but spoke of him with great respect and admiration.

iii. Waso Trustland

Waso Trustland Project (WTL) is an organization rooted in the suspicion of the state, both nationally and more crucially locally. It is also rooted in the centrality of land and land issues to the region. Tensions between land rights, ethnic divides and political privileging have been and are felt throughout Kenya, most starkly demonstrated by the 2007 post-election violence. But land rights form a particularly sensitive topic in the north of Kenya, where most of the land is “trustland” formalized by the Trustland Act – communal land open to use and grazing by the pastoralist communities that survive off it, and held in trust by the elected county council. WTL began in 1996 as an organization concerned with the abuse of the Trustland, both by the government more broadly and the Isiolo county council in particular. WTL’s founder and head, the charismatic and respected Borana elder and activist **Hassan Shano**, as well as its long time administrative assistant and jack-of-all-trades **Liban Golicha** (also ethnically Borana), remain highly concerned with and committed to investigating any whiff of ‘land grabbing’ or land-related corruption. They have been particularly concerned with past council attempts to sell off trustland to ‘foreigners’ (that is, those not native to Isiolo county) without the knowledge,

participation or benefit of the local communities. The rhetoric of Hassan Shano in particular is peppered with references to the possibility of corruption. Another area of apprehension and one directly related to the case study in question, is WTL's concern with council-lead conservation efforts in the district. For example, Hassan Shano was deeply worried about the founding of game reserves that could curtail pastoralist land, that are not set up with community knowledge or consent, and are not exploited in such a way that financial gains from tourism would go to locals.

Waso Trustland demonstrates, agitates, draws media attention and litigates against perceived corruption or misuse of power – indeed, Hassan Shano has been jailed twice during protests on charges of ‘incitement’. But land rights alone do not make up WTL's current focus. Their stated mission is broad, encompassing peace work (in the case of northern Kenya, the connection is obvious, as much ethnic conflict is centered around land use disputes), as well as AIDS, cultural heritage and environmentalism, particularly as it is linked to natural resource use. In Shano's view, much of the conflict in the region came about from tensions over land access and resource use. Indeed, WTL's involvement with conservation around Beliqu Village arose from a concern with water rights and the use and misuse of the Waso (or Ewaso) Niro River. The Waso Niro is the main life line for a region that is arid and semi-arid and has become prone to severe annual droughts. WTL became involved in the emerging conflict between the farmers of central Kenya, who were diverting the water upriver for agricultural use (often, according to Shano, to water large flower farms that sold flowers for export), and the pastoralists downstream in northern Kenya, who rely on the river to water their livestock and were facing a severely curtailed water flow. From this concern with the misuse of water WTL became aware of similar concerns surrounding the riverine forest around the river in the vicinity of Beliqu village.

Over its history, WTL has moved from focusing on litigation and agitation to working more directly with village communities in Isiolo County. This often takes the shape of workshops and meetings in villages, which Shano and Liban use as a way to spread information

on land and resource rights and to get a feel for the challenges facing pastoralist communities around these rights. Two concerns emerged repeatedly in Beliqo village: outside communities logging the forest and farmers in central Kenya diverting water from the river. This happened at the same time that TCF, WTL's main funder, encouraged the organization to expand beyond advocacy and engage with more ecological and cultural issues in the region. These two factors together led to the broadening of WTL's activities, and to the formation of the community forest association in Beliqo under its guidance.

iv. Beliqo Village and the Community Forest Association

Beliqo Village is a collection of low mud houses and woven huts in Merti District, Isiolo County, Eastern Province, northern Kenya. This is an arid and semi-arid region, where the main source of livelihood is pastoralism, and which struggled under the pressure of worsening annual droughts. Animals are herded over communally held 'trust lands.' The rights to the land are vested in the communities that reside on them, and are held in trust by the elected County Council. Community members speak of the councillors with a mixture of respect (most are community elders) and exasperation at the corruption that seems to plague the council, which has been accused of controlling access and ownership of the land for personal gain.

Beliqo is located three kilometers from the banks of the Waso Nyiro River. The river is one verdant strip in this arid region, and the ecosystem around Beliqo Village, referred to as Charri, is home to a riverine forest. This forest has been under threat from loggers, both from within the local community and from neighboring non-pastoralist ethnic groups. It is also threatened by charcoal-burners, who burn the tree trunks down into charcoal. The forest is key for grazing goats and sheep, as well as a source of firewood and building material for the village.

According to the 2009 Kenya census, Beliqo has a population of around a thousand, though according to the sub-area chief the number is closer to two thousand (most likely because it includes herders away from the village during the census). The village itself is relatively

new, springing up a few decades ago. Village life is a relatively new phenomenon for the Borana (Dahl 1979), who have begun adopting a more sedentary life-style in order to give children a primary education, and to have access to medicine and, crucially, to food aid during times of drought. Indeed, about two-thirds of the families in Beliqo subsist for half of each year on food aid provided by the World Food Program. Both primary schools and food aid have encouraged families to stay in the village, either sending one family member out to the grass-lands with the family's livestock or hiring poorer members of the village as herders. Though a minority of adults in the village have completed primary school, a majority (though far from all) of the village children currently attend.

The political administration of the village is divided between the area chief, Chief Golo, and the sub-area chief, **Chief Dima**, both of whom are appointed by the government. The area votes for a councillor to sit on the County Council and represent the area's interests. The ethnic group dominant in the village, and in Isiolo County as a whole, is the Borana, a Muslim pastoralist people (Isack 1986). The village is six hours by bus over an unpaved road from Isiolo, the nearest metropolitan center, and does not have electricity or a cellphone network. It does have a primary school, a mosque and a dispensary, but to consult with a doctor or nurse, use a cellphone or attend secondary school, one must travel at least an hour and a half further north to the little town of Merti. As no one in the village owns a vehicle, they must either catch the bus that comes by every other day or ride on the top of a passing lorry, an unreliable and uncomfortable option that is considered inappropriate for women or youths. In other words, Beliqo is infrastructurally isolated, without developed communication and transportation links to the rest of the country.

However, despite this isolation, Beliqo hosts a kaleidoscope of formally registered and community-based organizations concerned with a variety of social causes. According to Chief Dima and several other village members, civil society groups began appearing in Beliqo in the late 1990s (Dima 05/08/2011). The civil society landscape is fluid, groups appearing and

disbanding, others continuing in name while inactive. At a rough estimate there are close to twenty groups in the village at any one time, most with between ten and twenty members, varying in scope, membership and levels of activities, ranging from youth and women's groups to herders' organizations, savings groups and natural resource-use groups. Fourteen of these civil society groups have for the past two years been members of the **Beliqu Community Forest Association (CFA)**, which is structured as an umbrella group, with a handful of decision-making posts and a representative of each of these groups on the CFA committee. Waso Trustland brought knowledge of the **2005 Kenya Forests Act**, which shifted management of Kenya's forests away from the government to the communities, legally enabling communities to both make use of and be responsible for the forests. When Waso Trustland suggested that the village form a Community Forest Association (CFA) of their own with a biocultural diversity bent and Christensen Fund funding, there had already been an active grassroots resource use and conservation group called REAR-Charri in the village. The Community Forest Association grew out of REAR-Charri with the organizational and legislative knowledge – as well as the continued involvement – of Waso Trustland. CFA's mandate is to conserve the riverine forest around the village from logging and burning, which they are able to do by hiring a few local guards to patrol the forest under the Forests Act's authority. They also started a tree nursery, built a community meeting hall, and helped Waso Trustland collect stories about the river – all tie-ins to the Christensen Fund's emphasis on biocultural diversity.

III. Country Context

It is outside the scope of this work to provide a full context of the history and politics of development in Kenya and Kyrgyzstan. A few brief statistics do draw a quick picture. While Kyrgyzstan is the smaller of the two both in land area (close to 200,000 km² compared to Kenya's 581,000 km²) and in population (close to 6 million to Kenya's 45 million), both countries have a similar GDP/capita in purchasing power parity (around \$2000 USD in 2012).

They are both in the medium range of the Gini coefficient of inequality (38 for Kyrgyzstan and 48 for Kenya in 2005, on a scale of 0 for completely equal to 100 for completely unequal). Kyrgyzstan does have a slightly higher human development index (0.5 on a scale of 0 for lowest to 1 for highest HDI puts Kenya in the low category, while 0.6 pushes Kyrgyzstan into the medium category; both figures are from the 2014 report).¹³ However, beyond these numbers there are several contextual details that are important to understanding the case studies. The section below both sets the scene and outlines a selected few historical, cultural and political details that figure prominently in this work

a. Violence, Democracy, Ethnicity and Isolation

Geography, particularly the geography of physical isolation and political marginalization, is important in both case studies. In Kenya, this is the geography of the country's north, which is the site of both Isiolo, home to Waso Trustland, and Beliqo village. Isiolo is a frontier town in the literal sense: it is on the edge Kenya's of northern districts, the part of Kenya that was once administratively labeled 'The Northern Frontier District', yet the matatus (minibuses) and the paved road from Nairobi still reach it. It was once where the paved road ended, but recently thanks to a state contract with a Chinese company the pavement is being extended northward, pushing into what is referred to in Nairobi as "upcountry". Isiolo has the feel of a frontier town, dusty and chaotic with a mix of ethnic groups (Samburu, Meru, Somali, Gabbra, Borana) both in residence and passing through, herders moving flocks of goats, lorries thundering through loaded with cattle and people. The town of 80,000 is an administrative hub for Isiolo district,¹⁴ with concrete and brick government buildings tucked away from the main road, home to the elected county council and the array of agencies and offices dedicated to the "development" of this arid, pastoralist-based and drought-prone land.

¹³ Statistics retrieved from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Human Development Report, and the CIA World Factbook.

¹⁴ This was the administrative division in 2011, from 2013 Isiolo became the capital of Isiolo county.

The residents of northern Kenya feel themselves to be marginalized and ignored by Kenya's government, a marginalization that in the opinion of the people living in the north has emerged first out of a purposeful policy of the British, and then out of the Shifta War between the secessionist north and the Kenyatta government. The village of Beliqo (also spelled Biliqo), a six hour bus ride over a rutted unpaved road north from Isiolo, is living example of still simmering resentment towards this history and its legacy. Though the community of Beliqo receives a number of state benefits, many of the Borana feel marginalized by the Kenyan state. This marginalization stems from a combination of a present day lack of infrastructure and social services (no roads, no electricity, no cellphone signal, no clinic, no easily accessible secondary school) and a history of conflict and exclusion of the north by both the colonial and the post-independence leadership (Arero 2007).

The crux of this historic tension is the 1963-1968 Shifta War. The Shifta War pitted secessionists of the north (largely the Somali population and some though not all of the Borana) against the Kenyatta government (Dahl 1979). In response the government used measures including forced sedentarization into villages that functioned as concentration camps and confiscation or slaughter of herds of cattle (Whittaker 2008). The Borana see this as the first and most brutal step in a long history of political and economic exclusion and marginalization, crediting the roots of their current impoverishment to these policies and continued neglect by the state (Arero 2007). However, this is changing, both with Kenya's new constitution, which has inspired much lip service and some real policy changes in the north, and with the economic opportunities promised by newly independent and oil-rich South Sudan, which stirred talk of building a pipeline through northern Kenya. These are double-edged plans for local residents: they may lead to economic and infrastructural development, but they also inspire fears of land-grabbing and exclusion of local communities from new-found wealth.

Similarly to Kenya, Kyrgyzstan too has a north-south division. In this case, it is the north that is the seat of political and economic power in Bishkek, the capital, with a more

cosmopolitan, homogeneous and westernized culture. The south, separated from the north of the country by the mountains of the center, is far more religious and less urbanized, and is also beginning to be increasingly influenced by Islamist groups from Uzbekistan's Fergana valley. The south of the country also feels politically neglected and divided from the north. The seat of political power there is in Osh, the south's regional and political capital. This is a city of 200,000 (Kyrgyzstan's second largest), laid out around a river and filled with Soviet apartment blocks and administrative and university buildings. Most of Kyrgyzstan's Uzbek minority is based around Osh¹⁵ and it was here that the violent ethnic clashes in June 2010 between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks took place. The worst of the violence took place between the 9th and the 16th of June in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad; the numbers dead and injured have never been verified but are likely to be in the thousands, and displaced in the hundreds of thousands. The source of the conflict is contentious, but it is clear that the Kyrgyz police and security forces to some extent took part and colluded with the violence. These devastating clashes were still fresh in people's minds during my research in spring 2013, including in the village of Saro-Kamush. Though it is entirely Kyrgyz, Saro-Kamush is not far from where the violence took place.

In a parallel fashion, the pastoralist north of Kenya has long struggled with violence between ethnic groups, and was particularly prone to ethnic-based violence during my time in the field in the summer of 2011, as recurrent violent cattle-raiding and competition for pasture land between different ethnic groups was exacerbated by the 2011 drought. In both countries, this localised ethnic conflict over resources has taken place against a backdrop of suspicion about government corruption and broader political violence. In Kenya this was the 2007 post-election violence, starkly demonstrating the tensions between ethnic divides and over ethnically-linked political privileging (Brown 2012). In Kyrgyzstan, political violence erupted during the tulip revolutions of 2005 and 2010, both of which were popular movements protesting corruption and

¹⁵ The population of Kyrgyzstan is 73% Kyrgyz and 14% Uzbek, who are the country's biggest ethnic minority.

crony-capitalism in the political system, both forcing the resignation of then-acting presidents in the country.

b. History, Civil Society, Natural Resource Use and the Environment

Despite some of these political and social similarities, Kenya and Kyrgyzstan emerge out of very different historical and geo-political contexts. While both could be said to have emerged from colonial rule, the Soviet regime, especially in its later, developmentalist forms, was different in character from racialized colonial rule with an element of appropriation by settlers. Kenya also achieved political independence far earlier, in 1963, compared with 1991 for Kyrgyzstan. There is widespread nostalgia in Kyrgyzstan for the Soviet Union, nostalgia less frequently heard in Kenya for British colonialism. For the purposes of this work, Kenya has far older and more widely developed connections to international development institutions and global civil society, dating from the developmental state of the 1960s to the current plethora of state registered, internationally recognized civil society organizations working on development issues. These come in a variety of organizational forms, ranging from branches of international non-profits and state development agencies to formally registered NGOs to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) as well as a kaleidoscope of unregulated local organizations. Civil society organizations seem to be an escape route for the educated unemployed, and there is a good deal of cynicism amongst Kenyans about the propensity to start groups as a way to receive money from the government or international organizations. This scene is far newer in Kyrgyzstan. During the Soviet Union, associational life was rigidly controlled and happened within the purview of the Soviet state through women's councils, cultural and sports groups, and membership in local Party organizations. Civil society organizations interested in engaging with development, particularly with issues of democratic representation, environmentalism, poverty and women's rights began to emerge in the late 1990s (Buxton 2011). However, even now there is far less international attention and aid aimed at Kyrgyzstan – the most visible international aid

agencies and foundations in the country are USAID, GIZ (the German aid agency), Norwegian Aid, and the Aga Khan Foundation, while in Kenya the list would be too long to enumerate here.

Both Saro-Kamush and Beliqo are villages of semi-nomadic pastoralists, and thus in both cases environment and natural resource use, particularly of pasture land and water, were topics of frequent discussion and contention. This was heightened by exposure to natural disasters, which were linked to climate change by the international development organizations in both case studies. In Kenya, this was the severe drought of 2011. My fieldwork in Beliqo took place during the drought, which had decimated many of the cattle herds of the village residents and left three-quarters of the village reliant on food aid. Not only was the drought a recurrent theme in my interviews and a useful starting point for eliciting opinions about environmentalism and environmental change, but the staff at Waso Trustland explicitly linked the drought with climate change, and their work with Beliqo and its forest with drought mitigation, as well as adaptation. In a parallel way, natural disasters were a frequent theme in Saro-Kamush. Due to its position in a mountain valley, the village had repeatedly suffered mudslides and flooding due to glacial melts – only a few months before my time there, half the village was flooded. This was true throughout Kyrgyzstan, and was brought up not only in many different villages I visited, but also by MSDSP and AKF Kg. Both the staff of the climate change adaptation project and the working group in the village explicitly linked this experience with climate change.

Besides drought and floods, both communities were highly concerned with the conditions of and access to their pasture lands. Land rights form a particularly sensitive topic in the north of Kenya, where most of the land is communal land open to use and grazing by the pastoralist communities that survive off it, and held in trust by the elected county council. The Community Forest Association in Beliqo claimed that the forest they aimed to protect was being logged and burned for charcoal by other ethnic groups. At the same time, this also engendered scepticism and anger towards conservation efforts in the region, which had transformed some

pasture lands into national parks and game reserves. This was reflected in the controversy caused by the efforts of a Kenyan NGO, the Northern Rangelands Trust, to set up a Community Conservancy in the grasslands around Beliqo. Though the conservancy claimed not to exclude pastoralists, who in theory would be able to use the land and its springs freely, many in the community and in Isiolo (including Hassan Shano of Waso Trustland) were deeply suspicious of the organization. This suspicion was rooted both in a history of land dispossession in the name of conservation, and in ethnic distrust – Northern Rangeland Trust was started by a white Kenyan (himself the owner of a private game reserve) and run largely by people from the Samburu ethnic group, who have a history of violence, conflict and cattle rustling with the Borana. While the Community Conservancy was up and running while I was in Beliqo, during the summer of 2011 it was still deeply contentious in the village.

Likewise, since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of collectivized agriculture, pasture land in Kyrgyzstan has been accessible to communities through traditional use rights, with families paying a “tax” to the government based on the number of animals they keep on the land. Overgrazing has become a major issue in Kyrgyzstan and was mentioned repeatedly to me in Saro-Kamush. Many residents believe that others kept far too many animals for the pastures to support, in a classic tragedy of the commons scenario. Besides pasture and glacial melts, another frequent topic of environmental concern in Kyrgyzstan is the Kumtor goldmine. The mine is fully owned and operated by a Canadian company, which has been accused of a variety of environmental and social ills, from corruption to polluting the Naryn River to causing the melting of near-by glaciers. Local media frequently discussed the mine (and the possibility of other foreign-owned mining operations), keeping the environmental dialogue around it alive in peoples’ living rooms.

In both communities, the state is seen as having largely failed to engage with these environmental issues. In Kenya, the Kenyan Forest Service and the Kenya Wildlife Service are responsible for preventing logging and poaching – and, as will be discussed in more detail in the

chapters to come, both the staff of Waso Trustland and the residents of Beliqo see them as having failed to do so. Hassan Shano also blamed the state for an inappropriate response to the 2011 drought, and for not insuring just use of natural resources – both the trustlands of the north and the water of the Waso Niro River. However, the organization was making use of the 2005 Kenya Forests Act, which, in a tacit acknowledgement of the government's failure, allowed community control and supervision of local forests. The residents of Saro-Kamush expressed a similar level of distrust for the state, which they understood to be colluding with the environmental abuses of the Kumtor mine, and refusing to engage with the issue of overgrazing. As noted, both the 2005 and 2010 revolutions in Kyrgyzstan stemmed from popular disenchantment with the corruption and cronyism of the political system. Thus both communities perceived themselves as marginalised and dissident in relation to central authority and state power. As can be seen, the case study sites – despite being located in countries that are rarely mentioned in the same breath – share a variety of contextual features. These overlaps, as well as the remaining differences, will repeatedly serve to broaden the discussion in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four

Global Movements and International Foundations: Creating Transnational Knowledge

What role do international civil society organizations play in creating, spreading and utilizing the ideas of global (environmental) movements? How are these ideas influenced by the relationships of such organizations with national and local actors and groups?

“Global movements and discourses are the key – they are far more powerful than foundations”.
(Ken Wilson, Executive Director, The Christensen Fund)

“After the Soviet Union [fell apart], information became especially valuable [in Central Asia]. Access to information was hard enough to begin with, and information is power, and this mentality persists”. (David Boyer, Head of the Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment, Aga Khan Foundation, Geneva)

When thinking about the sources of knowledge and wielders of ideas within civil society knowledge networks, global advocacy movements and global development institutions are the obvious epistemic movers and pushers. While the overarching argument of this work proposes that all the nodes in civil society knowledge networks produce and shape ideas, the global node does have the most overt epistemic sway and influence. Global development institutions such as charitable foundations or international, Western-based NGOs are the primary source of resources in these networks. As such, they are actors with the explicit power to set the development agenda of networks of development institutions they engage with. The aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which this development agenda emerges out of the movements and epistemic communities that global development organizations both engage with and help create. However, this chapter will argue that this agenda or ‘knowledge commons’ also emerges out of a wide community comprising academia, inter-governmental organizations, international consultants, conferences and other ‘advisory’ organizations. Such a variety of links ties the epistemic content of global development institutions to a far broader range of actors and mechanisms for knowledge creation than the network itself.

These institutions are largely Western-based – in the case studies examined here, the Christensen Fund is headquartered in North America, and the Aga Khan Foundation has headquarters in Switzerland. But to call them simply Western would be simplistic and misleading, both in regards to their own self-conception and to the reality of their inner workings. The Aga Khan Foundation is funded in large part through the personal fortune of His Highness the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismaili community. The fortune has been amassed both through business ventures around the globe (particularly in East Africa), and through the tithes that many Ismaili Muslims resident around the globe pay to him – the New York Times estimated in a 2007 article that these tithes could add up to hundreds of millions of US dollars annually (Zachary 2007). At the same time, many other funders of AKF's programs are themselves global in scope, if Western in orientation, such as the World Bank and the UN. Though the Christensen Fund's finances are entirely from an American family foundation, the organization also lays claim to a global identity, pointing to the diversity of their staff members, many of whom are from the regions around the globe where the Foundation works. Both foundations also claim to be global because of the scope of their work – while they might be Western-based, they present themselves as globally oriented, with global reach. These geographical contentions and self-portrayals will be discussed in more detail below, but are worth noting here as both the Aga Khan Foundation and the Christensen Fund are referred to as simultaneously Western-based and global in this work.

This chapter examines global movements as well as the international development organizations that create, propagate and implement their ideas and interests. As described in Chapter Two, both the Christensen Fund and the Aga Khan Foundation participate in and adopt ideas from environmental movements, though they have contrasting approaches and philosophies. The Christensen Fund both supports the cluster of movements that Martinez-Alier calls 'The Environmentalism of the Poor' and has some affiliations with what he terms 'The Cult of Wilderness'. In contrast, the Aga Khan Foundation's environmental and natural resource

management programming sits squarely in what Martinez-Alier terms ‘The Gospel of Geo-Efficiency’. This chapter uses these affiliations to examine the relationship between global movements and the institutions that support and shape them, using the Christensen Fund as an example of the way global civil society institutions can foster and create global movements (in this case, biocultural diversity), and the Aga Khan Foundation as an example of the way that such institutions can ‘plug into’ and adopt established global movements (in particular, climate change adaptation).

While the focus of this work is on ideas around the relationship between natural resource use and development, it is impossible to ignore the many other global development discourses and practices these two foundations adopt and propagate: these ideas include participation, gender equity, civic engagement, indigenous knowledge and good governance. Indeed, this chapter examines how global foundations present themselves and how they are understood by others by looking closely at the development rhetoric that they adopt and insist upon: impact, accountability, sustainability, and participation. Much of this rhetoric is linked to the ways in which these foundations understand, speak about and forge relationships with the local as well as with the intermediary organizations they fund. A recurring theme in this chapter and indeed in all of the chapters to come is the relationship between presentation and practice, as well as the significance of this relationship in highlighting the epistemic interests and preferences of each network.

Both the Aga Khan Foundation and the Christensen Fund are embedded in a mesh of other global development agents. I argue that such transnational development institutions forge global epistemic communities not only by using funding to create connections to and from other global institutions (as demonstrated by the Aga Khan Foundation), but also by cultivating relationships with the academy and with intergovernmental institutions, particularly through the use of conferences, workshops and university networks. At the same time, both foundations attempt to build legitimacy by trying to forge connections to the grassroots – or at least to NGO

intermediaries – through field visits, workshops, trainings and (in the case of TCF) festivals. Intimately tied to the idea of legitimacy is power. Indeed, power is a recurring theme throughout this chapter, which argues that while the global nodes of each of the case study networks exercise overt power over the epistemic content, discourse and actions of the network as a whole, they are also dependant on the other nodes for knowledge and through it, legitimacy. This legitimacy is necessary both for relationship-building with other organizations in the development sphere, and also for “personal physiological motivations” such as self-respect, internal consistency and purpose (Cleaver 2001: 48). As such, TCF and AKF act both as epistemic gatekeepers, picking and choosing some norms and ideas over others, and as idea promoters, trying to promote their vision of development to other global actors and institutions.

I. Global Development Institutions and Global Movements: Creation or Adoption

a. The Christensen Fund

i. Creating and Connecting the Biocultural Diversity Movement

The Christensen Fund makes for a particularly useful study of the way global development institutions create and take part in transnational movements and epistemic communities because of its overt interest in building a transitional movement around biocultural diversity. The Fund has an explicit ‘Global Program’, which funds “international efforts to build global understanding of [biocultural diversity] issues” (The Christensen Fund 2002), and whose goal is to “catalyze a shift in the understanding of the interdependence of biological and cultural diversity, and the importance of local stewards and Indigenous Peoples in the maintenance of this diversity” (The Christensen Fund 2014). The aim of TCF on the global stage is to spread ideas and shift understandings in order to promote the concepts of biocultural diversity into the global mainstream development and environmental discourse. This includes both “legal and policy frameworks” that promote biocultural diversity and “raising public awareness” (The Christensen Fund 2002). Ken Wilson, the director of TCF, emphasized that global movements

and discourse are key for enacting change – and are far “more powerful than foundations” (Ken 16/04/2014). An important part of the Fund’s work is giving biocultural diversity “special attention in terms of knowledge building” (Ken 22/09/2011). In our conversation, Ken Wilson argued that discourse must come before action, that biocultural ideas first had to be developed and then broadened and applied. In other words, TCF acknowledges that biocultural diversity is not only the main aim of the projects they support, but also a paradigm that they hope to spread.

Indeed, Ken described TCF both as one of the first and few foundations to push the ideas of biocultural diversity in global forums such as the UN and academic communities, but also as having largely succeeded in doing so. He emphasized the impact of TCF in forging and giving voice to biocultural ideas – in his words, the absence of other funding has meant that TCF has a huge imprint as the main funder and organization behind biocultural diversity. Yet the staff at TCF were careful to portray biocultural diversity as an established and accepted global paradigm beyond the Christensen Fund: Ken told me that “there are many bio-cultural diversity movements”, all with their own different dynamics and languages, and TCF is not interested in managing this or “in ‘branding’ biocultural diversity *as* TCF” (Ken 03/10/2013). Both Ken and Tadasse, the program officer for TCF’s Rift Valley program, described to me the growing acceptance of biocultural diversity amongst global development institutions and the “global acknowledgement of local knowledge importance in environmental concerns” in both policy and scientific circles (Ken 22/09/2011). Tadasse mentioned the FAO, UNESCO, the University of Oxford, the Ford Foundation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature as some of the organizations that are giving biocultural diversity “more currency” (13/10/2011). Indeed, an important part of the way that TCF functions as a *global* node is that it understands itself as part of a global movement concerned with biocultural diversity that includes

organizations such as UNESCO,¹⁶ FAO,¹⁷ the Global Diversity Fund and the Ford Foundation (Ken 22/09/2011).

Both idea creation and spread are explicitly highlighted in TCF's rhetoric – their “Mission Explication” document states:

We seek not only to **co-create knowledge but to get it out from our organization into wider society**, deploying media and engaging in the professional associations and **networks of philanthropy**, and of the indigenous, environmental and arts communities. (*Understanding Christensen's Mission*, 2002, my emphasis)

Networks and knowledge creation are overtly acknowledged in this statement. Within these wider global networks, TCF plays the role of what a number of international relations and international law theorists term ‘norm entrepreneur’ (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998; Carpenter 2010; Carpenter 2007a; Carpenter 2007b), ‘meaning managers’ or ‘meaning architects’ (Lessig 1995), and ‘transnational moral entrepreneurs’ (Nadelmann 1990; Price 2003). These are agents that first construct problems into issues that warrant international attention, and then promote the acceptance of new transnational normative and moral standards and frameworks to address these issues. Yet if a norm is “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 891), then what is left unexplored by this literature is the crucial constitutive part of creating a new norm – defining and promoting its ideational content. Thus such transnational meaning architects must promote not simply new moral and normative standards, but a new set of knowledge and ideas that form the base for new policy or behaviors. This is exactly what the Christensen Fund aspires to do through its Global Program: promoting the idea of biocultural diversity and thus acting as an *idea* entrepreneur on the global stage.

However, TCF is able to create these successful global connections and utilize such networks in part by allowing the concept of biocultural diversity to be interpreted loosely and openly by the other institutions and movements that TCF connects with – and by adopting the language, rhetoric and concerns of other global movements, and linking TCF's work with these

¹⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

¹⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization

concerns. These “adopted” concerns range from climate change to indigenous knowledge, from conservation to resource rights. In TCF’s claim to be solving bigger problems than biocultural diversity – or to be using biocultural diversity to solve other issues – TCF programming is in fact similar to the broad range of programs adopted and adapted by the Aga Khan Foundation (discussed in more detail below). In this way the Christensen Fund is not only a meaning architect or idea entrepreneur, but also acts as a gatekeeper around what fits under the biocultural diversity umbrella. While the Fund promotes biocultural diversity to other transnational actors, it decides what organizations, individual and actions will receive TCF’s support – and thus be considered part of the set of ideas folded into biocultural diversity.

If TCF acts as gatekeeper, theirs is a swinging gate, opening for a wide variety of actors and interests. For instance, Ken Wilson tied TCF’s work with climate change concerns by pointing out that the link between climate change and biocultural diversity was becoming increasingly acknowledged in the public policy arena (Ken 22/9/2011). Besides climate change, both Ken and Tadasse frequently linked TCF’s work with broader indigenous movements. Ken linked TCF’s work to “an indigenous developmental vision”, which integrates rights, environmental concerns, and culture, and is becoming both increasingly globally widespread and has penetrated down to local communities thanks to the movement of ideas and experiences (Ken 22/09/2011). Indeed, Ken portrayed TCF’s work in Northern Kenya and Ethiopia as largely bringing this “indigeneity” movement to the communities there, to displace the old modernization approach to development. To Ken, modernization was a “contradictory way of engaging in the world” to the indigenous identity movements or a rights-based approach to development. In Ken’s vision, this shift away from modernization had already happened for the Maasai speaking peoples in Kenya’s south, whose indigenous organizations have become a “part of a global indigenous identity” that is highly engaged with “the outside world” and with “postmodern development discourse”. This shift was still missing in Ethiopia and Kenya’s north

– hence the space for TCF and its emphasis on the creation of “indigenous identity” (Ken 16/04/2014).

For TCF, “the range of options and relationships between people and nature” is vital for global wellbeing in the face of increasing ecological, economic and political uncertainty. TCF’s mission statement argues that focusing on both environmental and cultural diversity as well as the intersection of the two is a way to engage with broader global challenges. These challenges include “change (even breakdown) in the dominant system”, “uncertainty” and instability (particularly that brought by climate change) (TCF 2010). TCF makes the case that “ways of life and landscapes” would become a valuable resource in this unstable future (TCF 2010), where “resilience” (biological, ecological and cultural) is needed to adapt to such uncertainty (Ken 22/09/2011). Indeed, Tadasse linked biocultural diversity to the contribution of indigenous knowledge to the world, which includes not only knowledge of biological diversity, but even of alternative social and political systems. He argued that diversity is a positive force and a source of creativity, drawing the comparison to the diversity and the creativity of the San Francisco Bay Area, where TCF has its headquarters (13/10/2011). Tadasse clearly found the analogy valuable, although the reference to the Bay Area invokes a rather different, cosmopolitan and metropolitan based diversity that is not in the same way rooted in the indigenous local knowledge. Thus for TCF, biocultural diversity is both inherently valuable and a way to engage with broader global issues. This broader engagement in turn enables TCF to link to other funders and intergovernmental organizations that might not be directly invested in biocultural diversity – and be more persuasive as an idea entrepreneur.

Indeed, capacity and network building are also explicit goals of the Fund, with three different justifications and aims for such networking. All three demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of power within global movements and networks. The first is tapping into new financial and physical resources beyond TCF’s scope: in TCF’s words, “success requires the connected efforts of numerous institutions, including other funders far beyond Christensen...

[which] is so small that we are sure to fail unless we can influence the wider field of philanthropy and other resource-rich institutions” (TCF 2010). TCF becomes David versus Goliath in this vision, projecting a radical new vision despite its small size. But this is also a realist, utility-maximizing position, acknowledging the power and influence of resources, and the fact that there are far more powerful actors than TCF in the global realm. In Ken Wilson’s words, TCF has largely succeeded in this – because of their efforts biocultural diversity is now attached to big funding and such money now moves between the UN, universities and development agencies and local “radical groups” (Ken 03/10/2013). The second aim of such networking is creating new and syncretic knowledge by bringing “together different kinds of science and experience across and beyond the particularities of different communities and places” (TCF 2010). This is linked to the openness and flexibility of the biocultural diversity mission, which as argued above enables and encourages biocultural diversity to become part of other global movements and paradigms. The third aim of TCF’s explicit network building deals overtly with power dynamics, as TCF argues that building global partnerships and networks allows “the historically marginalized” to “find new sympathetic partners in powerful institutions”. TCF is part of a variety of philanthropic organizations (Ken 03/10/2013), and as will be discussed more below, actively uses international venues such as conferences to forge such partnerships, particularly with UN institutions and other intergovernmental development organizations.

However, there is an internal contradiction within TCF’s rhetoric. While the organization explicitly engages with building and taking part in wide-ranging global movements and development efforts, TCF also portrays itself as a radical outsider to the development mainstream. This is particularly evident in my interviews with TCF staff. Ken described TCF’s work as “questioning dominant Western narratives of wellbeing and development” (Ken 22/09/2011). In his words, not only is TCF outside such mainstream narratives, but they are also on the cutting edge or amongst the avant-garde of development actors, since TCF rejects “one factor development” and embraces “complexity”, “diversity”, “multi-factor systems” and

“systems thinking” in development (Ken 22/9/2011). This was echoed with even more vehemence by Tadasse, who contrasted the pastoral livelihoods and cultures that TCF supports in with market capitalism. “Their sustainability frightens the market” he said, and in his view it is the advent of market capitalism that has lead to food aid and dependency on global food markets.

Indeed, Tadasse lambasted not only market capitalism, but mainstream development practice as well. In his words, “NGOs brought the language of begging” to pastoralist communities (13/10/2011). Tadasse contrasted both market capitalism and such NGOs with the Christensen Fund, which understands and works with not only indigenous food markets, but also the true, deeper needs of indigenous communities. This is a drastically different perspective from the Aga Khan Foundation, which as will be explored below sees itself as part of mainstream development and market capitalism approaches. Tadasse illustrated his point through the example of a TCF visit to a Borana community in Northern Kenya (the same ethnic group as the residents of Beliqo, the local node of this case study). The community told TCF that what they really wanted was support for a trip to ethnically- and culturally-linked communities in Southern Ethiopia. Tadasse pointed out that this was not a physical need, but rather a spiritual and cultural need, linked to traditions, rituals and the arts (13/10/2011). In short, Tadasse made the argument that indigenous communities had what Inglehart (1981) would term post-material needs, and that these are in fact more significant than the material needs addressed by mainstream development agents. This not only reiterates the radical outsider position of the Christensen Fund, but also point to the issue of legitimacy and authenticity which recurs within TCF’s rhetoric. TCF must build legitimacy not only in the eyes of other organizations, especially those addressing connecting issues such as climate change and indigeneity, but also internal legitimacy by being consistent with its self-perception as a radical outsider to mainstream development, forging a novel path to address the ‘true’ needs of its grantees.

ii. *International Conferences: Mechanisms for Global-Local Connections*

Part of the Christensen Fund's role as an idea entrepreneur in creating and sustaining a global movement around biocultural diversity is nudging other organizations and activists towards ideas around biocultural diversity, conservation and indigenous culture. Tadasse highlighted that TCF not only plays a significant role in formulating and promulgating the global discourse of biocultural diversity, but also actively involves the grassroots in such global engagement. TCF does so by flying indigenous elders between different countries and conferences where they can interact with such global movements – and affirm their knowledge by seeing how it is valued at such conferences (13/10/2011). Indeed, Ken estimated that between a third and a quarter of TCF's grant-making is spent on “global” initiatives. The staff at TCF is cognizant of their role in this process, with Tadasse presenting it outright as a goal of the foundation. Ken Wilson argued that TCF has “enabled thousands of grassroots leaders to move around the world” by funding and arranging for them to attend global – though often Western-based or funded – conferences. Indeed, while I was in Kenya Dr. Hussein, the director of Kivulini, travelled to Mongolia for a world food festival and to Washington DC for a communication workshop, both in the space of a few months, and both arranged and funded by TCF. Ken openly admitted that the conferences and events TCF was concerned with were not necessarily focused on biocultural diversity, reemphasizing the above mentioned openness and flexibility (Ken 03/10/2013).

The TCF website also emphasizes the organization's goal of linking “grassroots stewards and activists with global institutions, thought leaders and policy processes” (TCF, 2014). Thus not only does the local have something to bring to the global, but “there are growing opportunities at the international level for tackling the threats and constraints faced by local communities seeking to maintain their relationships to their land and seascapes” (TCF, 2014). Despite critical or even anti-global rhetoric regarding “globalization's erosion of diversity” (The Christensen Fund 2002), TCF simultaneously pragmatically forges partnerships between the

global and Western and the local and indigenous. These advantages go beyond re-evaluation or affirmation of the worth of local cultural diversity. TCF is also concerned with the exchange of knowledge between the local and the global. Ken spoke of the ways in which attending conferences could give local activists “language and conceptual tools” to engage with issues they are concerned with within the broader rhetoric of diversity (22/9/2011), and Yeshe TekleMichael, a grant associate at TCF, spoke of international forums as showing communities “what’s possible” (07/10/2011). Thus TCF uses global forums such as conferences as venues where the local activists they fund and bring can pick up language, concepts and ideas to enable them to rework and present their concerns in ways that would be valued – and funded – by global movements.

Of course, for TCF exchange should go two-ways – they see the communities they work with as having much to share at global conferences and with Western actors that would “support learning and flow of ideas between different places or contribute towards the development of global knowledge and practice” (The Christensen Fund 2002). Syncretism is the ultimate goal of this exchange. As stated by TFC’s Mission Explication document:

...this involves creatively integrating the “old” and the “new” to find what works best, and deploying international instruments like World Heritage Sites and local initiatives like music festivals and locally conserved areas for wildlife and crop genetic diversity. (2002)

However, despite such syncretic aims for this knowledge exchange, TCF does acknowledge the power of global movements and Western institutions, not only in granting resources and voice, but also in conferring legitimacy. Ken described the bridging of “radical new ideas and the establishment” as a major contribution of TCF’s involvement with global conferences, and that “connection with global movements is crucial to... [the] sophistication of local movements” (03/10/2013). Yet Ken is careful to delineate what TCF does and does not do, and attempted to distinguish TFC from the hegemonic tendencies of most of just Western-based ‘global’ movements. When speaking about bringing local actors to international conferences and events, Ken emphasized that TCF works to create meetings and promote speakers, but does *not* directly

promote their own ideas or initiate resolutions, though it might play a big role in getting resolution passed and enabling local actors to be heard (03/10/2013). Though this fits neatly into the Fund's radical self-vision, these claims are in tension with TCF's role in promoting biocultural diversity as a global movement. Thus the Christensen Fund tries to navigate the fine line between control and facilitation, safeguarding their own legitimacy by emphasizing that they do not control or manipulate local actors, only empower them.

However, the control that TCF does have in these meetings and conferences is in fact substantive, even by Ken's own admission, particularly when it comes to selecting who and what gets voice at such meetings. TCF suggests whom to support at which conferences and moderates "the mix" both from the international and the grassroots sphere. For instance, TCF played an active role in helping groups of their grantees prepare for the UN's 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and funded travel for these groups to preparatory-meetings to create agendas for the conference (Ken 03/10/2013). Inevitably this affected the voices heard in the creation of the agenda itself. TCF played an even larger role at the World Parks Congress, particularly at the 2003 Congress in Durban, where TCF supported and funded the issue of indigenous control and protection of land. TCF not only selects who amongst the communities they support comes to these meetings, but in Ken's words, tries to "curate the outcomes at the meetings" (Ken 03/10/2013). In order to get indigenous or grassroots voices heard, TCF staff must do more than fund attendees –they must research and keep in touch with the sequence of global meetings, arrange the practicalities of presentations, facilitate informal introductions and, in Ken's terms, "broker" those interactions (Ken 03/10/2013). In other words, 'giving voice' is not a neutral process.

For Ken a success story was when the 2013 World Parks Congress focused on indigenous knowledge and land rights without any input from TCF. Yet even after achieving what it sees as success, the Fund still remains involved in bringing both old hands and new voices to the table (Ken 03/10/2013). Conferences and meetings are mechanisms through

which TCF facilitates the flow of people – largely from the Global South to the West – and thus the flow and mingling of ideas, values, and world views, and the creation of legitimacy for the actors they support. Through this process TCF gives currency and voice to certain ideas, groups and individuals, a process that will be described from the perspective of local actors in Chapter Six. Thus the roles that the Christensen Fund adopts range from norm entrepreneur (in relationship to other transnational organizations) to gate-opener (when it comes to providing a platform for grassroots groups and activists at various global venues), to gatekeeper (when deciding which issues and agents fit within their mandate). However, as much as TCF concerns itself with linking the Global South to the West at conferences, TCF is equally interested in creating global links and knowledge flows within the developing world. For this, rather than conferences they utilize cultural festivals and exchanges.

iii. Building South-South Links: Festivals and Exchanges

As much as Ken emphasized TCF's role in building global and local links, he also stressed the importance of South-South connections, and TCF's attempts to promote connections and knowledge transfers between their grantees and other organizations and individuals in the Global South. These are of course equally 'global' in scope to the connections forged at conferences in the West. Indeed, Ken saw this as another strategy for empowerment and legitimization of local groups: in his words, "horizontal connections" were essential "to overcome powerlessness in face of world players" – for instance, to fight off exploitation from resource extractive industries (03/10/2013). TCF's role is to expand the means for such networks and connections to form by maximizing the knowledge, awareness and information available to local actors – including of their analogues elsewhere (Ken 03/10/2013). The *mechanisms* through which TCF is able to do so are intentionally experiential. Such knowledge is shared through arranging exchanges between different communities working on similar issues – or communities sharing historic and cultural links, such as some of the peoples of northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. It is also shared

through music and cultural festivals – largely aimed at locals rather than tourists, though with a cross-festival exchange component – that TCF supports and funds in several of the regions where the Fund works.

Indeed, Ken Wilson spoke far more extensively and enthusiastically about festivals than conferences, perhaps in part because festivals fit more neatly into TCF's self-perception and self-promotion as being above all engaged with indigenous concerns and connections – and because besides forging knowledge-networks, these festivals also claim to promote local and traditional cultures. For Ken, such festivals are “axiomatic of what TCF supports” (03/10/2013). Like the conferences discussed above, these festivals are meant to generate interactions, transform values through conversations, and in so doing increase an “openness to transformation” while nurturing “lateral open-ended creativeness” (Ken 03/10/2013). Yet while nurturing creativity, syncretism and imagination, festivals are also connected to TCF's conservationist or revivalist bent: they are meant to revive indigenous languages, economies, and re-valuing of local flora and fauna.

This can be seen in the examples of the Blooming Apricot Festival in southern Kyrgyzstan, and the Kyrgyz Horse Festival. TCF was intimately involved in starting and funding the first, and while the second started without TCF involvement, TCF has funded and supported its expansion and growth. According to Ken, the Apricot Festival led to a turnaround in apricot production in the region, and the Horse Festivals brought back the almost extinct Kyrgyz horse and helped create a system for its breeding and preservation. This happened through self-organizing and local initiatives that grew out of the festivals – not through direct TCF interventions or funding of these conservation initiatives. For Ken, this is the perfect example of the “new energies and visions” that emerge through festivals to bring people together to solve communal problems. He also linked the results to the sustainability of local ownership – in his words, a local interest in breeding the Kyrgyz horse is far more sustainable “than TCF itself buying and breeding horses” (03/10/2013). This runs parallel to some of AKF's rhetoric around

ownership and sustainability, analyzed in more detail below, which they too see as the path to successful long-term impact.

Such local empowerment and ownership are closely linked with two effects of festivals: presence within public space, and connection with local government and the state. Ken stressed that festivals get attention and thus voice in the public arena, that publicity and attention from the press and air-time on television enables festivals and through them local cultures and concerns to “symbolically occupy public space” (03/10/2013). This in turn leads to greater confidence and legitimacy. Ken argued that it also leads to positive attention from the state, particularly local government. The Blooming Apricot Festival convinced the local government to support apricot production and marketing. According to Ken, the same happened at an Australian aboriginal cultural festival TCF supported, to which they “deliberately invited Australian elite” and were able to have “a big impact” (Ken 03/10/2013). Thus beyond bringing people together and reviving or conserving culture, languages and biodiversity, the festivals legitimize local groups, give them public voice and link them to partnership with local governments and markets – perhaps the very market-partnerships Tadasse criticized in his radical vision of TCF and the people it works with.

Festivals emphasize TCF’s radically pro-local stance, even towards global events. Ken compared TCF’s work with the Aga Khan Foundation’s, which also invests in culture, for instance in Central Asian music, but in Ken’s view focuses on bringing this music to the world stage – in contrast to TCF, which focuses on “internal” (i.e., South-South or even in-country) exchange (Ken 03/10/2013). However, Ken also told me that TCF works with the Aga Khan Foundation on festivals and music in the region, admitting to the pragmatic flexibility of the Fund. I attended one of the festivals – the 2012 Festival of a Thousand Stars in Arba Minch, in the south of Ethiopia. This festival epitomized the anti-international, pro-local stance voiced by Ken. There were very few tourists there – a few Israelis, some of whom had been hired to do the

sound for the festival,¹⁸ a small handful of tourists, and a delegation from the Christensen Fund. The festival had little publicity, almost none internationally, and most of the audience seemed to be local people. Indeed, it would have been almost impossible for a foreigner to find out about the festival, as there was no festival website or press release. Attendance was free, and the production of the festival itself felt unpolished but exuberant in the enthusiasm of the performers and the audience, many of whom – especially children – danced to the music. The performers were troupes from Southern Ethiopia and a few from Northern Kenya. Indeed, I had already met one of the north Kenyan groups. Waso Trustland had introduced them to me during my fieldwork in Kenya as a woman's group rather than a cultural troupe, which demonstrates the malleability of such development-institution focused labels. All the troupes preformed in traditional dress with their own (traditional) instruments – there was no obvious attempt to appeal to a global audience or develop a fusion of genres or styles. However, the one newspaper article in the Western press about the 2013 festival hints that the festival's local organizers hope that it will begin to draw tourists – hopes that seem divergent to TCF's approach (Fortin 2013).

The Christensen Fund thus has a strong and unifying agenda. Yet it is the malleability and varieties of its ideological commitments and levels of pragmatism that enable many of the interactions between the different organizations, communities and individuals in this civil society knowledge network. In the case of the Christensen Fund, these interactions are deeply linked to questions of power, norm-creation and gatekeeping. This is similar to many of the dynamics of the global Aga Khan Foundation.

¹⁸ The fact that Israelis were doing the sound was a discord with the local nature of the affair – surely there were Ethiopians who could have done the sound? – and perhaps demonstrates that the festival was less of a homespun project than TCF would like to think.

b. Aga Khan Foundation

i. Climate Change Adaptation

Unlike the Christensen Fund, the Aga Khan Foundation does not have an overt aim of pushing forward a global movement. They are adopters of environmental discourses, not creators – and reluctant adopters at that. The Aga Khan Foundation presents two inter-connected narratives about the way that climate change adaptation became an agenda for the foundation. The first is a pragmatic, resource-oriented, at times cynical one presented by David Boyer, head of the Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment (PSAFKE).¹⁹ David plays a key role in both conceptualizing and guiding AKF's environment-related programs, including the climate change adaptation program in Kyrgyzstan. David's initial response when asked why and how AKF became interested in climate change adaptation was straightforward:

Climate change is where the donor money has gone for both [natural resource management and disaster risk reduction]. Most things in both the environment and development world are donor driven, nothing more. (David Boyer, written communication, 04/02/2014)

This quote demonstrates the resource-oriented stance of AFK, motivated by the fact that it is increasingly relying on external funding – although it still presents itself as an implementing foundation with an endowment dedicated to funding its own programs (Mark Whitton, 14/02/2014). Despite the foundation's endowment and internal grant-making, AKF is eager to have its programs supported by external donors as well, which means they must align with donor interests. David emphasized the donor shift to climate change adaptation in our conversation, saying that AKF's interest started as a way to capture donor money, much “like the ‘gender lens’”, and that he wanted to develop AKF's work around it further “because that's where the funding is coming from” (06/02/2014).

Mark Whitton, the Geneva head of AKF's natural resource management (NRM) program, echoed David, albeit in a less blunt and pragmatically-focused fashion. Mark repeatedly told me that AFK's natural resource management program aimed to raise rural income and

¹⁹ As noted in Chapter Three, PSAFKE is a part of the Aga Khan Foundation which develops environmental programming, and is the funder of the second iteration of the climate change adaptation program in Kyrgyzstan

standards of living – and that environmental and sustainability concerns were second to achieving economic aims. Though he was quick to acknowledge that ecological costs and concerns were an integral (though not primary) part of this aim and that climate change did affect the future livelihoods of the communities AKF works with, Mark insisted that it is not a focus of AKF as a whole. However, in Mark’s words, climate change adaptation is “a new *lens* in which there is a lot of donor money” (14/02/2014) and AKF hoped to leverage more “big funders” such as the World Bank into its climate change adaption programming. Such pragmatic, rather than idealistic, interests make the Aga Khan Foundation particularly attuned to global movements and changing agendas in the development sphere. Thus AKF is forced to be aware of the interests and norms of the broader development community, while the Christensen Fund in contrast uses its own funds to further new interests and approaches. AKF is neither a gatekeeper nor an idea entrepreneur – rather the Foundation is one of the adopters that transforms new or marginal ideas and issues into widely accepted norms and knowledge, in a process that Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) call “norm cascade”.

Yet despite protests to the contrary, AKF does have its own agenda within the environmental realm: natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. AKF might have a fund that is broadly “for the environment”, but it is clear through the programming the fund supports that it is part of Martinez-Alier’s “Gospel of Eco-Efficiency”(Martínez-Alier 2002), with its focus on technological and economic solutions and a view of nature as resources to be efficiently managed. Both David and Mark repeatedly mentioned that AKF plans to mainstream climate change adaptation into its existing natural resource management and disaster risk reduction programs, rather than continuing it as a separate program (David 06/02/2014, Mark 14/02/2014). This means that, as David said, activities on the ground would not change, they would just have a more “intentional” climate change adaptation lens. The decision to mainstream climate change allows AKF to remain committed to their core interests and areas of work – agricultural and infrastructural development. Thus AKF is navigating the intellectual landscapes

and epistemic communities on the global level to reposition their programs as always part of an evolving set of norms and ideas – while still acting on the same fundamental concerns. Indeed, this continues through all levels of the network – as explored in the following chapter, AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP Kg follow a similar process of simultaneous intellectual rebranding and ideological continuity.

However, it would be a mistake to presume that such repositioning does not alter and shift AKF's ideas and programs. Both Mark and David made several assertions that belied the pragmatic view that climate change adaptation programming is simply a way to “dance to the donor tune” (David 06/02/2013). In fact, both David and Mark argued that mainstreaming climate change adaptation into other programs is the best way to approach the issue, implying that this is what anyone who wants to do adaptation should be doing.

Climate change and adaptation is not a separate program, but part of the development work... The focus is mainstreaming climate change, not treating it as a separate and distinct program, since **it really should not be [a separate program] in any organization** as all the work on this is embedded in other development work. (David Boyer, written communication, 04/02/2014, my emphasis)

Despite David's focus on resources, he has a normative idea about how climate change adaptations should be run in all organizations. He sees AKF as contributing to knowledge in the global development community on how to best implement climate change adaptation programming. This is echoed by Mark when he complained to me that there are not enough international organizations interested in mainstreaming climate change adaptation into other projects, that donors are currently funding a “confused portfolio of activities” in relationship to climate change, and that they need a different investment model – one that would fund mainstreaming. Thus Mark too saw AKF's approach to climate change adaptation as normative, as a way of doing things that should be disseminated and adopted in the global development realm. The combination of this normative approach together with a commitment to mainstreaming means that AKF has begun to view ecological and environmental concerns as a *technical problem* tied intimately to livelihood and long-term economic rural development. Despite David and Mark's assertions that the climate change adaptation program grew out of the shifting

epistemic interests of a global donor community beyond AFK, they also implicitly acknowledge that it has become part of the technical, expert approach to finding (and sharing) ‘solutions’ to the problems of the developing world.

At the same time, another narrative around the AKF’s interest in climate change adaptation emerges out of the organization’s written materials, both public and internal, on its environmental concerns. This narrative insists that ecological concerns are a vital part of AKF’s work, but at the same time goes out of its way to justify and promote the mainstreaming approach discussed above. Indeed, in AKF’s 2011 overview brochure, ‘AKF and AKDN: A Continuum of Development’, environmental work is listed as part of its core activities: “In most areas where it works, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) integrates activities in health, education, rural development, environment and civil society” (AKF 2011). Here environment is presented as one of the core five areas AKF works on – but it, along with everything else, is “integrated” – meaning that there is no pressure to have separated or dedicated environmental programming. This is justified in more detail in AKF’s brochure ‘Environment and Development’, published in 2006, where AKF states its environmental position: “The challenge of improving environmental conditions lies... in the penury of natural resources that often forces people to consume the few assets available to them... [this] require[s] integrated, multidisciplinary solutions” (AKF 2006). Again, this fits neatly into a broader cluster of environmental movements that look for economic and technological solutions to ecological problems (Martínez-Alier 2002). Environment is linked to poverty, and poverty is a technical problem with solutions that are, once again, “*integrated* into broad area development projects” (AKF 2006, my emphasis). In short, while AKF’s published material for the public claims that environmental concerns are central to the Foundation, it reinforces the institutional focus on technocratic solutions to poverty that deal with the environment incidentally, as a by-product, not a focus.

The existence of a small dedicated environmental fund – PSAKFE – within the Aga Khan Foundation ensures some environmental concerns are addressed in AKF programming,

particularly through “Natural Resource Management in fragile zones” (AKF 2006). In internal material and in power point presentations that David shared with me, PSAKFE advocated for the relevance of climate change for both conservation agriculture and disaster risk reduction (PSAKFE 2014). In conversation Mark, while repeatedly stressing that the natural resource management program of AKF is ultimately interested in economic development and infrastructure, also returned multiple times to the program’s interest in conservation agriculture. He stressed the importance of not “follow[ing] broken models” by automatically using mainstream methods of natural resource management (Mark 14/02/2014). At the same time he also reiterated the program’s commitment to these same models, saying that it is foolish to turn farmers away from fertilizers, but that one can also use alternative techniques that were both more sustainable *and* more profitable. But this, in his words, needs infrastructural investment and the involvement of larger companies and commodity traders. Even David, despite his insistence that climate change adaptation is “dancing to the donor tune”, later in our conversation told me that AKF must give “urgency” to climate change.

Thus in both of my interviews and in its published material AKF itself seems to be internally conflicted. This conflict and these contradictions point to the slow process of epistemic shift, the gradual adoption and growing interest and commitment to a new set of ideas and concerns. The rhetorical space between AKF’s assertions that environmental concerns are vital and its concurrent demurring from this very centrality and insistence that environmental concerns are encouraged by outside donors rather than internal high-level interest is the very space of idea up-take and organizational shift – and I would make the case that the normative assertions discussed above point towards slow organisation absorption of the ideas of the global epistemic community around climate change. At the same time, these contradictions illustrate Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) argument that international organizations choose to adopt new norms and ideas *both* to maximize utility (in other words, to get what they want) and to satisfy a “logic of appropriateness” (March & Olsen, 1998: 949) which follows out of a sense of duty,

responsibility or moral obligation. The way AKF explains its involvement in climate change adaptation shows that both realist and idealist motives are concurrently operating within the organization when it comes to its interest in environmental ideas and programming.

ii. Participation

While the Aga Khan Foundation's relationship with climate change adaptation and broader ecological concerns might be ambivalent, the organization is fully and unequivocally committed to another set of global norms and ideas: those around participatory development. Participation, local knowledge and local needs repeatedly came up unprompted during my interviews with staff at AKF's Geneva office. Indeed, both the foundation's public and private discourse emphasizes participation. Mark Whitton repeatedly referred to AKF's work as "community based", telling me that AKF focuses on what the communities want, respects community perspectives, and shifts its priorities with community priorities (14/02/2014). Indeed, Mark characterized AKF's mission as "working with communities to address *their* needs" – echoing the discourse of community needs-based approaches (Chambers 1983; Chambers 1986; Chambers 2004). He said the same of the natural resource management program he oversees – its priority is to respond to people's (economic) needs, and in the case of the climate change adaptation program, "community is central – climate change is second". The words 'community' and 'needs' came up over three dozen times in our two hour conversation, and Mark attributed this emphasis to the Aga Khan himself, who told the staff at AKF to build on community interests and to trust local knowledge and people (Mark 14/02/2014).

Mark applied this participation rhetoric specifically to the climate change adaptation program. In Mark's words, community participation in program management and planning is "done all along",²⁰ and AKF does not push fads onto communities or distort community needs. Pushing fads is how one loses community support, and Mark argued that this is the danger with

²⁰ The way this actually plays out on the ground is examined in Chapter Six.

climate change adaptation, and the reason that it must be integrated into “real concerns” – like pasture and water management. (This of course presumes that such management is what communities prefer to prioritize.) Indeed, Mark showed acute awareness of the weaknesses of development organizations when working with local communities – he spoke of the danger that development projects could distort people’s interests and form local groups that fall apart the minute a project ends (Mark Whitton 14/02/2014). The ideal of using pre-existing community-based organizations as a way of ensuring both participation and success was also echoed by David when he stressed that the climate change adaptation program uses “empowered village organizations”, and that this is the AKF ‘model’ – along with bottom up planning, which is a hope if not always a reality (David Boyer 06/02/2014). Indeed, participation and success seem to be synonymous in the rhetoric of AFK Geneva.

As shall be discussed in subsequent chapters, this vision of participation is quite different from the way the climate change adaption program currently runs on the ground – though the ideals and the rhetoric of participation exist throughout the network. However, the entire global organization is committed to this idea of participation and participatory development, despite also being committed to finding technical solutions to problems it deems largely economic, in contrast to TCF’s anti-market capitalist and radical stance. Its promotional material stresses that the foundation gives money to “local organizations interested in testing new solutions, in learning from experience and in being agents of lasting change” (AKF 2006). This is echoed in the Foundation’s 2006 annual report (the last available), which states that AKF focuses on “inclusive, community-based development approaches, in which local organizations identify priorities and implement projects with the Foundation’s assistance” (AKF Annual Report 2006). In short, while AKF embraces the ideas and rhetoric of participatory development, it remains ambivalent about adopting and participating in global environmental movements and epistemic communities – ambivalence that as we shall see is echoed throughout this case study network. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, these ideas are indeed echoed both in other civil society

organizations involved in the network and in action on the ground, but in ways that are far less straight forward than the rhetoric suggests.

iii. Global Structures and Connections: Networking, Fundraising, Conferences, and the Academy

The Aga Khan Foundation's global connections are quite different in scope from the Christensen Fund's. In part this is due to the structural difference between the two Foundations discussed both earlier in the chapter and in Chapter Five: in addition to its own endowment, AKF actively seeks external funding. In part because of this it is a far more "traditional" development institution, to use the term of one of its staff members (Laurie 13/3/2013). It is far more attuned to what multilateral agencies and big donors are interested in funding and thus to what is already in the epistemic mainstream in the development community. Unlike the Christensen Fund, AKF is less committed to pushing its own global agenda and creating a global epistemic community and international consensus. Yet this very financial dependence means that AKF creates relationships with other global funding agencies, ranging from the World Bank to a number of national development agencies (such as the Canadian International Development Agency) to faith based international-development agencies (such as the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation). In this way AKF forms global networks of its own through relationships with other international funders, contributing to global epistemic consensus. This happens not through a clear agenda that AKF propagates, but rather through the very mechanisms of funding calls and funding proposals. This process is diffuse – as described in Chapter Three, AKF's country branches participate in funding calls and proposal writing, and AKF has fundraising branches in the USA, UK and Canada to help channel these proposals and form relationships with donors. However, the Geneva office is the key player in integrating AKF into this global community, advising country branches, creating connections, and following up on funding opportunities. In Mark Whitton's words, it is the Geneva office's main function to "stay in touch with global best practices" and to "engage with international programs". It is

also the Geneva office's job to spread the epistemic content of these international programs and practices through trainings for country office staff and by bringing a few staff members from each country to a few international conferences or events every year (Mark 14/02/2014).

Though the foundation does not fund other international or large organizations (or, despite rhetoric to the contrary, even national or regional ones), they do see themselves as setting norms and creating ideas and communities of practice in international development. As AKF's 2006 Annual Report states:

The Foundation is committed to sharing lessons from its field experiences through collaboration, public dissemination and policy dialogue. Models that the Foundation has promoted have been adapted and replicated by governments and international donors across a spectrum of environments and economies. (AKF Annual Report 2006)

When I asked staff at AKF's Geneva office how this knowledge diffusion happens, the answers focused on the personality of His Highness the Aga Khan. Mark told me that His Highness is highly networked, and thinks 'globally' when setting the Foundation's strategy. According to Mark, networking and global thinking happens largely through personality politics – for instance, in fostering relationships with other individual that have large global foundations, such as Bill Gates or Prince Charles (Mark 14/02/2014). But the foundation is also institutionally engaged with global epistemic communities through technical global workshops and networks. Examples of this include the Global Innovation for Agriculture Forum and Conservation Agriculture global meetings. When I asked Mark whether AKF largely learned or largely taught at these events, the answer was both – sometimes staff members from Geneva speak at them, though they try to get people from the field to speak instead (more on this below) (Mark 14/02/2014).

Despite not being interested in propagating a particular perspective or agenda in the same way as the Christensen Fund, AKF is connected to academia and the academy in ways that sound quite similar to TCF. Both Mark and David spoke to me of an academic at Cornell University whose work on conservation agriculture has influenced AKF. Notably, both mentioned that this professor is Ismaili, and thus part of AKF's consciously forged ties to the Ismaili community, which parallels the highly personal networks that TCF forges to the academy.

Both David and Mark also emphasized the role of the nascent University of Central Asia in providing knowledge and research for the Aga Khan Foundations, particularly around climate change and adaptation (Mark 14/02/2014, David 06/02/2014). David saw the University of Central Asia as providing both “scientific” and “community” knowledge, by collecting both hard data (for instance, from weather stations) and community observations, as well as playing a role in spreading this knowledge through programs in local schools – a teaching role currently seen as part of the climate change adaptation’s mandate (David 06/02/2014).

Thus academia plays a role in providing information and services to AKF. While UCA could be seen as a special case, since it is being set up under the purview of the Aga Kahn in part specifically for this purpose, Mark provided another fascinating (and unprompted) example: Faisal Devji, a historian now at Oxford who wrote critically about the role of the Aga Khan Development Network and its effect on civil society and local politics during the 2012 political crisis in Khorog, Tajikistan (Devji 2012b; Devji 2012a).²¹ Mark believed that Devji’s criticism of AKF’s work and its effect of crowding out local institutions and de-politicizing development actually changed the organization – AKF responded to the critique and now strives to be more pluralistic and less politically involved, to create arm’s length institutions, support competing civil society organizations, urban projects and political dissent.²² Certain academics are thus part of the global epistemic community that influences the rhetoric and ideological content of the foundations. However, it is important to note that Devji is also Ismaili – he has been called “the world’s most prominent Ismaili intellectual” (Kucera 2013), and at one point headed the Aga Khan-funded Institute of Ismaili Studies, an Ismaili-focused research center in London. It is quite possible that this made the Foundation far more receptive to his criticism, or perhaps

²¹ Tensions have long existed between this ethnically distinct part of Tajikistan (the Pamirs) and the central government (particularly during Tajikistan’s civil war in the 1990s). After a high ranking Tajik military commander was killed near Khorog in July 2012, the government carried out a military operation against the town, making clear that autonomy would not be tolerated. Many citizens took up arms to resist the military operation. The Aga Khan and AKF used their authority in the region to broker a ceasefire and convince city residents to stop fighting (Kucera 2013).

²² When I interviewed Devji about this, he was surprised to hear that his work had influenced the foundation, which he perceived to typically take an offensive position towards any criticism (Devji Faisal 12/11/2014).

simply ensured that it reached AKF. Once again, Ismaili networks act as a connecting factor despite the foundation's insistence that they are a non-religious, non-sectarian (i.e., non-Ismaili) organization. In short, the Aga Khan Foundation is tied to global epistemic currents not only through its relationship to funders, but also through conferences and academic influence. However, much of this is depends on personal networks and communities, be it the connections of His Highness the Aga Khan or the inner circle of the Ismaili community.

II. Envisioning the Local: Building Relationships, Finding Legitimacy

a. The Christensen Fund

Despite having an explicitly global programming component and acknowledging the importance and the power of forging and nurturing international connections, the Christensen Fund insists that its focus is fundamentally on what happens at the local level – that “most of what TCF does is enabling local work” (Ken 03/10/2013). The Fund's publicity material and its staff both speak extensively to the relationship between local groups and activists and TCF. Three main themes run through this material: the tension between local autonomy versus the Fund's direction and influence; the power relationships that inevitably form around this tension and how they are resolved and understood by TCF; and the legitimacy of TCF's work and relationships with the local. The sub-sections below tease out all three of these themes from TCF's rhetoric and the mechanisms it employs to build connections and networks with the grassroots.

i. Directing or Empowering: The Tension between Autonomy and Change

Much like the Aga Khan Foundation, TCF uses the broad language of participation and locally-led development. Tadasse told me that decisions must be made from the bottom, with community involvement and ownership of projects and project resources, and that the emphasis of TCF's work must be on inclusion rather than marginalization (13/10/2011). Ken reiterated the point and linked it to the decentralized nature of the Fund, telling me that the program

officer for every region has their own unique strategy for funding distribution, which is “shaped by context, by what is important to people, and what they’d like to change” (16/04/2014). This emphasis on local needs and participation went as far as to efface and minimize the role of TCF itself in its rhetoric. In Ken’s words, “institutions are essential for mobilizing resources, but can make complications and difficulties for movements – movements, individuals and issues should be core [to our work], *not* funding institutions” (22/09/2011). Indeed, this is tied to the radical self-vision that TCF cultivates of itself, particularly in comparison to other international foundations. Ken stated that in trying to be “responsive to the goals and objectives of the leaders of [local] movements”, TCF is “fairly extreme” in its decentralized approach: not only are its program officers located “on the ground” – i.e., they reside in regions where they oversee funding²³ – but TCF’s programs “involve multiple initiatives and grantees evolving in context”, as opposed to the much larger initiatives of other foundations which are centralized (16/04/2014).

Yet along with TCF’s emphasis on local wants and needs, the Fund does still manage to cherry-pick those organizations and individuals that fit at least to some extent into its biocultural diversity mission. It does so by delineating and selecting the individuals and movements it works with through the concept of “stewards” or “custodians”. This is the ‘brand’ of local that TCF wants to work with:

These are the individuals, institutions and small communities whose role and passion it is to care for, embody, perform and explain knowledge, relationship, lands, species, art forms and indeed all manner of beautiful unusual biocultural things across the generations... Typically being a custodian is a responsibility towards something of collective benefit rather than a right over it. (The Christensen Fund 2002)

Through this vision the Fund manages to be selective in its local partners. The way in which TCF selects and finds such movements and partners is highly personal, based off existing networks and the knowledge of its staff members, who are often well connected to the regions they work in. Ken Wilson told me that TCF works with the grantees it knows: while the

²³ Though Tadasse is the exception to this, residing in Oxford, his replacement in 2014 resides in Nairobi, Kenya.

foundation does receive a few cold calls, this is rare, and instead TCF staff members know most of the possible “stewards” in the field and cultivate relationships with them, and then encourage them to apply for grants (Ken 03/10/2013). In this way, TCF cultivates and selects the local it seeks for.

If such organizations are scarce on the ground, TCF creates them. Ken maintained that organizations interested in issues connected to biocultural diversity often do not exist before TCF arrives – indeed, it is significant that the terms “stewards” or “custodians” seem to speak more to individuals than organizations or collectives. In Ken’s words, TCF either shapes existing organizations to fit TCF’s interest or the existence of such organizations is suggested to activists on the ground, to whom TCF then gives grants. TCF “plays an intimate role in the formation of organizations”, particularly through staff networking and personal connections, and there is a high continuity in its grantmaking, most of which goes to the same organizations over many years (Ken 03/10/2013). For instance, in TCF’s East Africa program in the early 2000s there were not many organizations that TCF could support, and “the program officer was initially building and encouraging organizations”. As a result the organizational landscape for TCF is now “very different, with many well-developed organizations, networks, plans and confidence” (Ken 16/04/2014). Once again, this feeds into the narrative of TCF exceptionalism. Ken Wilson argued that these personal relationships with grantees enable an intimate relationship that goes beyond money, where “unlike most foundations” TCF can help grantees with many different problems, such as board fights (03/10/2013).

Despite the rhetoric of local agency, TCF is not afraid to change its grantees through selection and personal relationships and involvement in their organizational formation. The staff members at TCF are aware of this power discrepancy, particularly Jeff Campbell, Director of Grantmaking until 2014. He spoke of the disruptive power of any development organization, particularly the disruptiveness of money, questioning whether it was possible to use development organizations without losing underlying traditional structures in local societies – for instance,

displacing traditional authority, or shifting leadership from elders to youth, which for him could be “part of an insidious modernization agenda”. However, Jeff argued that there was also a benefit to this disruption, that it could displace local power structures but also empower new structures, for instance women’s groups. At the same time, Jeff was the only staff member at any of the organizations in this case study that acknowledged the ability and agency of local groups to co-opt the opportunities afforded by development institutions. This too had a down side – Jeff acknowledged TCF’s complicity in supporting the tendency for communities to become “NGO-ized” in order to tempt funders (28/08/2012). Yet it builds on what Ken Wilson termed the ability of foundations to “attract attention and legitimacy to organizations and movements through money” and “level the playing field between locals and globalizing forces” (03/10/2013).

In short, TCF saw itself affecting its grantees not only via selection or organizational creation, but also through new knowledge, including knowledge about how to participate and co-opt the world of development institutions. Ken made this explicit: in his words, the relationships TCF nurtures with grass-roots groups have a “communication and learning component” that is meant not to “overwhelm grantees with a rigid framework” but does explicitly “tie back to TCF strategy – and hopefully enables more change within the timeframe of the budget of a project” (Ken 16/04/2014). TCF is thus able to influence local agenda as a project develops. In the case of Waso Trustland Project, Ken acknowledged that the organization was originally “focused on rights discourse” and that TCF does not support this, and instead supported the organization to shift to “indigenous counter-narratives” around the intersection of “conservation, development and culture” (Ken 22/9/2011). Not only does TCF acknowledge bringing ideas to its grantees about the Fund’s own interests and areas of focus, but TCF is also not afraid to get involved in the implementation of the projects it funds, for instance by “bringing its knowledge to crucial aspects [of the projects], and connections to other regions with similar projects” (Ken 16/04/2014).

However, this acknowledged influence lies in tension with the emphasis on bottom-up and grass-roots imperatives discussed above. Ken Wilson stressed that TCF “barely” introduces imperatives to the grassroots, but rather presents knowledge and offers “new horizons of what can be achieved and ways to achieve this” (22/09/2011). Indeed, TCF’s mission statement explication depicts the organization as a buttress:

The Fund is choosing to “buttress” these [grassroots] efforts, not just fund them – that is, we will back them, bolster them, support them and, in a **gentle solid** way, engage in co-creation at times, but not ourselves seeking to direct the process, just as the “buttress” on the wall of an ancient tower or rampart serves to secure and yet not dominate the crucial wall. (The Christensen Fund 2002)

The metaphor engages with this tension between local autonomy and TCF’s involvement – the organization rejects “direct[ing] the process” but acknowledges that its influence and involvement go beyond funding. I asked Ken directly if TCF changes its grantees, and his answer was “Yes, definitely”. He termed TCF’s involvement as “thick grant-making”, that “the program officer influences projects and organizations through dialogue, [he or she] probes, asks questions, pushes, brings information” (16/04/2014). Yet such involvement remains in fine balance with TCF’s protests that the Fund does not impinge on local autonomy. Yeshe TekleMichael, the grant associate at TCF who works under Tadasse, told me that Tadasse might push or encourage communities, but tries not to impose – in her words, he “just gives voice to what they want to do” (07/10/2011). Tadasse echoed this when he flatly told me that “we’re not telling them [i.e., the grantees] what to do” – that TCF’s goal is to work with the approaches in indigenous cultures to biodiversity, and thus TCF purposefully does not implement or operate any projects to this end, so that, in Tadasse’s words, these are “not *our* projects” (Tadasse 13/10/2011).

Ken expressed this balance by insisting that “TCF doesn’t or barely introduces new ideas to locals of what they want to do” – rather TCF focuses on introducing knowledge of “new horizons of what *can* be achieved and ways to achieve it” (22/9/2011). Thus “communities decide what’s important” – though Ken did admit that TCF often formulated this into arguments on an intellectual level, despite its reluctance to speak for indigenous groups

(22/9/2011). In short, while influence and knowledge might come from TCF, the Fund's rhetoric insists that autonomy and ownership remains with the local. Indeed, not being an operating or implementing foundation (unlike the Aga Khan Foundation) seemed a point of pride with Ken Wilson, even on pragmatic grounds. He argued that operating foundations such as AKF operate in a "closed circle" – they themselves "decide what's important, how to solve it, try to solve it themselves, and then evaluate". Ken claimed that this is inefficient, costs a lot more, and bypasses critical feedback. He depicted TCF as the opposite of a closed loop – by focusing on building capacity, it outsources the task of both finding and fixing problems (Ken 16/04/2014). Thus fundamentally TCF sees itself as promoting grassroots inputs into the biocultural diversity movements – picking up ideas and giving them voice and support. This does not fully counterbalance the power inequalities within the network: the global wields resources and voice, and from this privileged position it controls, filters and reformulates knowledge flows. Yet in spite of this, knowledge is constituted and flows throughout the network, in both directions. Indeed, TCF originally funded international organizations, but in Ken Wilson's words, "conservation is so politicized, that outsiders couldn't make a change" and locals are needed to do so (Ken 22/9/2011). Yet while TCF acknowledges its role in "pass[ing] resources and power to grantees and partners by making grants" (TCF 2010), nodding to the link between power and resources, the organization is somewhat more reluctant to admit the power it holds to fundamentally sway and influence the local.

ii. Forging Connections and Cultivating Legitimacy: Intermediaries and Mission Drift

TCF uses two practical mechanisms to create connections with the grassroots stewards it hopes to empower and support. The first is a philosophical pragmatism or openness within the biocultural diversity concept, mirrored by the Aga Khan Foundation's own openness in interpreting climate change adaptation and participation. Just as TCF connects to global movements concerned with issues ranging from climate change to indigenous rights, so they are

able to use a flexible and open interpretation of biocultural diversity to forge connections with grassroots activists and organizations with a range of concerns. This openness is used in part to justify the influence discussed above that TCF exerts over its grantees – Tadasse told me that while TCF might nudge the thematic focus of its grantees towards issues around biocultural diversity or conservation, TCF’s own approach was flexible and open, and not “a single thread” (13/10/2011). And Ken mentioned that not all of TCF’s grantees fall neatly within the biocultural diversity category – some might focus on conservation alone (23/09/2011). Indeed, Ken described TCF as being somewhere in the middle between openness and specificity: while TCF has strategies it tries to follow in its grantmaking, it is simultaneously open and flexible, allowing “lots of ragged edges and holes” in its strategies (03/10/2013).

The way that TCF negotiates this openness is illustrated in Ken Wilson’s response when I asked him if Waso Trustland’s engagement with conservation issues despite being a land-rights NGO (discussed more in Chapter Five) was a case of materially motivated mission drift. Wilson replied that mission drift *did* occur, but at the same time “community partners” had their own ideas and a holistic approach which included conservation, and that both of these led WTL to consider a broadening of rights discourse, which “clicked into place” under these circumstances. Ken Wilson also referenced Dr. Hussein’s²⁴ role in galvanizing a more “culturally and environmentally grounded approach” to many of the concerns in the Kenyan North (Ken 22/09/2011). Indeed, Ken portrayed the shift of Waso Trustland from rights to environmental and cultural concerns as part of a larger development trend in the region: in his words, “a more culturally and environmentally grounded approach seems to really work... [as an] alternative of standard development model that did not” and thus this new approach “captured intellectual energy” in the region (Ken 22/09/2011). This quote simultaneously reemphasizes TCF’s exceptionalism (as opposed to standard development models) and its involvement in broader

²⁴ Dr. Hussein is the head of Kivulini Trust – TCF’s intermediary partner in Nairobi – and also a former TCF program officer.

trends and movements. At the same time, Ken's three-tiered response to my question about mission drift shows that TCF is aware of its power to set the concerns of such a network as a whole, but interprets its mission broadly enough to allow other nodes to hold onto their own concerns, while broadening or shifting them to touch on over-arching concerns with cultural and/or biological diversity, broadly interpreted.

This flexibility allows Waso Trustland to remain a land-rights NGO while engaging with TCF and ideas of biocultural diversity. Similarly, many residents of Beliqo, the village that acts as the local node of this case study, are concerned less with preserving local traditions and biodiversity, and more with the livelihood impact of the forest conservation project that TCF funds there. While this contradicts some of Tadasse's claims around the centrality of 'post-material' needs such as cultural exchange, it does not in fact go entirely against the grain of TCF discourse. In describing their East Africa program, the TCF states that it backs communities' "efforts to **sustain and adapt their own livelihoods** and environmental management systems to advance their food sovereignty, resilience and sustainability by building upon their cultures and local knowledge" (TCF 2014, my emphasis). This fits closely with Martínez-Alier's (2002) delineation of an "environmentalism of the poor", with its concerns with securing livelihood while taking pride in indigenous sustainability and biodiversity. TCF's agro-ecology and pastoral livelihood programs aim to "strengthen", "diversify" and "enhance" livelihoods through approaches ranging from agro-ecosystem to eco-tourism, from natural resource management to crafts development (The Christensen Fund, 2014). Thus TCF manages to tie biocultural concerns with interests as wide-ranging as livelihood and food sovereignty, and in fact presents culture and local knowledge as mechanism for addressing livelihood concerns. Ken echoed these ideas when he maintained that TCF is concerned with the "evolution of indigenous economies" and "cash based livelihoods that aren't destructive" (16/04/2014). Thus the biocultural diversity concept envisioned by TCF is malleable enough to encompass material and livelihood concerns, and even claim them as part of its concerns.

Indeed, Ken and Tadasse argued that biocultural diversity's conceptual breadth was proof of its relevance and utility, and a defense against assertions that it is romantic conservationism, or even ethnocentric and thus divisive in its aims of identity building. Both Ken and Tadasse's rhetoric about indigenous knowledge presents the community in monolithic indigenous and rather static terms. When presented with this criticism Ken insisted that TCF is *not* preservationist – he stated that the romantic idea of indigenous social isolation is unrealistic, and one cannot stop change or cut people off from global processes (Ken 16/04/2014). Allowing change was Ken's solution for the problem of ethnocentricity. While there was a possibility of the re-emergence of local ethnic identities around claims to knowledge, TCF did not conceive of groups as static and Ken hoped that this fluidity would somehow resolve the tension between diversity and ethnocentricity.²⁵ This echoes Tadasse's claim that “creating hybrids is the underlying aim” of TCF (13/10/2011). Yet while Tadasse rejected a romantic, preservationist interpretation of biocultural diversity ideas, he simultaneously insisted on the utility of indigenous knowledge and biological and cultural diversity, arguing that “traditional lifestyles can offer a lot to the world, for instance animal and plant varieties” and that “when you rubbish traditions and systems, you lose that too”. In Tadasse's view “tradition” thus *is* worth preserving, since it “acts as reserves for us” and also gives ‘us’ (i.e., the developed world) alternative social, political or legal systems (13/10/2011). In short, TCF to some extent rests in contradictions, including that between encouraging preservation of ‘tradition’ and encouraging new ‘fluidities’ and syncretism. Yet it is the very fluidity and openness of the way TCF interprets its vision of biocultural diversity that allows it to successfully create connections with a diversity of needs, interests and actors on the ground.

Beside ‘mission’ fluidity, another tool that TCF uses to connect with the grassroots is intermediary organizations and individuals who can help forge and sustain such connections for

²⁵ This conversation happened in the context of discussing the ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, and Ken seemed to be speaking to that conflict, though he did not say so explicitly.

them. Such intermediary organizations are explicitly part of TCF's strategy – the Fund frames them as 'partners' and 'allies', as “unusual scientists, scholars, artists and advocacy groups” (TCF 2010) and states that:

We value allies because we find that there are an amazing variety of weird and wonderful outsiders out there on the ground making a big difference. And we value allies because they are often **the only way to get resources – financial and other – into the lives of the stewards** themselves. Meanwhile **stewards also have vision and know-how that the wider world needs to hear** also, and again, where appropriate, **allies can assist** this also. (*Understanding Christensen's Mission*, 2002, my emphasis)

The role of such allies in a knowledge network is made explicit here – both to pass resources (including knowledge resources) to the grassroots, and also to bring the perspectives and ideas of the local to 'the wider world'. Ken was realistic about TCF's ability to reach the communities it wants to work with, and saw the role of intermediary organizations (such as the Kivulini Trust in Nairobi) as a “facilitator, connector, generator; a factor of the wider movement of ideas” as well as a “way [for TCF] of getting to small local organizations... and deploying global resources” (22/9/2011). However, in its published material TCF claims that it focuses on “THEIR alliances” (TCF 2010), i.e., on partnerships that locals have chosen. This vision belies the reality of picking out regional activists and co-starting organizations with them (such as Kivulini) described above. Like AKF, TCF's rhetoric of local control does not always square with the practical barriers of reaching and working with local communities. As Yeshi notes, TCF tries to avoid “re-granting” (giving funds to intermediary organizations who then pass them on to grassroots projects), but this can be difficult as TCF “needs the capacity [of these intermediaries] to follow up with little organizations” (Yeshe 07/10/2011).

However, this is not to say that knowledge and power flows in one direction: TCF's assertion that intermediaries bring to light grassroots concerns is tied to TCF's quest for legitimacy. TCF needs worthy organizations and projects to apply for grants, and needs knowledge about what is happening on the ground. Only with this knowledge – with reports, photographs and “results” – does TCF gain legitimacy. This is the main argument of Ebrahim (2003), who points out that donors need NGOs for information that legitimizes their existence

and their funding decisions. Only with the help of intermediaries can this information overcome the physical, technological and linguistic barriers that separate Beliqo from TCF. Indeed, as will be argued in the following chapter, NGOs such as Kivulini and Waso Trustland are essential in creating a discursive bridge between global foundations such as TCF and grassroots civil society – not only through the transfer of knowledge, but also by translating the desires of the local into the lingua franca of grant applications.

iii. Legitimacy and Power: Staff Insiders and TCF Visits

‘Partners’ and ‘allies’ are not the only mechanism through which TCF attempts to forge close connections with the grassroots. When I asked Ken Wilson about the gap between the foundation and actors on the ground, he went out of his way to depict how TCF attempts to forge closer links with the grassroots by employing ethnic minority staff that themselves could be considered part of the movements and peoples TCF attempts to help. He made the case that program staff members were “tangled up in the movements they fund” and thus are ultimately “insiders” and participants (Ken 22/09/2011). This includes both the staff members (three program officers and two support staff) based in TCF’s programmatic regions outside of the Bay Area, and those, including Ken, based in the San Francisco office. Thus Ken Wilson seemed to be presenting TCF staff almost in an intermediary role, a position they are able to take up because they claim to belong to the grassroots. These claims seem somewhat tenuous, however, considering that the majority of TCF staff have been educated and now live in the West (The Christensen Fund, 2014) – for instance, though Yeshi is from Ethiopia, she has a Masters degree from the Institute of Social Science (ISS) in the Netherlands. Instead these assertions emphasize TCF’s desire to demonstrate its close connection to the grassroots, a connection that would legitimize the foundation’s discourse privileging the local as the authentic repository of indigenous knowledge and as the crux of the foundation’s work.

In an interview two years later, Ken reiterated the point, emphasizing the wide diversity of world views and perspectives and the “depth of knowledge” held by TCF staff, for instance of local languages and contexts, songs and plants. In Ken’s words, being a “staff-rich foundation” meant that TCF is able to “work on complex issues” (03/10/2013). Diversity of staff is thus linked with insider knowledge, and enabled the “human relationships between staff and communities” (Ken 22/9/2011). While Ken presented this as a positive and a strength of the organizations, this could be equally understood as the basis for personality politics and patronage networks in grantmaking – as seen earlier in the chapter, TCF’s funding is reliant on personal connections and involvement with local activists, and the way this takes place in this case study is depicted in detail in the next chapter. Thus the diversity of staff backgrounds is used by TCF both to demonstrate their closeness to the grassroots, and to justify the relational, personal nature of the way TCF chooses the individuals and organizations it funds.

Besides having staff who TCF can claim are themselves ‘indigenous’ and are integrated into grassroots movements, TCF also builds legitimacy and connections through in-person visits to the organizations and communities they fund. In my interviews with TCF staff, these visits became emblematic of TCF philosophy and self-perception. TCF aims to neither micro-manage its grantees nor be too distant – they are “not a sub-contractor but also not totally removed”. As such TCF tries to visit their grantee projects in each region about once a year, though sometimes every other year or even twice in one year (Ken 03/10/2013). These visits include trips to the festivals that TCF funds. Ken does not go alone – he is accompanied by the program officer for the region and often a handful of other staff members. The way these visits are described is telling – Yeshi told me that the visits were central, as this was an opportunity to shape views and continue dialogue and exchange with the grassroots (Yeshi TekleMichael 07/10/2011). However, Tadasse told me that TCF staff members speak publicly only at international festivals; when visiting communities they only listen and offer their thanks (13/10/2011). This contradiction echoes the organization’s insistence that they do not impose but rather only

empower the local, while admitting that they are deeply involved with the ideas and actions that emerge out of the projects they fund (and, through intermediaries, the shape of the projects themselves). In short, TCF hovers between the desire to forge involvement with communities and projects that shape and change local ideas, knowledge and actions, and at the same time the desire to gain legitimacy by allowing autonomy, flexibility and openness in the ways such relationships are formed.

b. Aga Khan Foundation

i. Legitimacy and the Local

When I tried to tease out the role of the head office of AKF with its staff members in Geneva, both Mark and David's response was to stress the agency of the country offices. Indeed, the autonomy of the country offices seemed a vital part of the participation discourse discussed above, and seemed to be a point of pride for the Foundation. Mark insisted that AKF programming is country driven, that "each country has a different story" (Mark 14/02/2014). For both Mark and David "the field" is where new ideas could be born and tried out, with the Geneva head office acting as a support mechanism and eventually formalizing these new ideas by bringing them for approval to the board (David 06/02/2014, Mark 14/02/2014). For David, the climate change adaptation project is an example of this autonomy and bottom-up idea generation – David credited Laurie with the impetus for its creation, with David's role in the project being to give input, explain what's fundable and link the project to other agencies and donors. David referred to this as an example of idea generation "on the ground", and was quick to add that country branches do not have to rely on him for funding advice, that AKF Kyrgyzstan also looks for its own funding (David 06/02/2014). However, Laurie herself is an American working in Kyrgyzstan, and the attribution of bottom-up, grassroots knowledge formation to her demonstrates more about the autonomy of other development institutions in this network than the uptake of local ideas. Thus David's narrative positions the head offices of AKF as an

epistemic filter, bringing ideas from the country office to the board (which includes the Aga Khan himself), and news of funding opportunities and broad (fundable) currents of thought in the funding communities to the AKF country branches.

This vision of country office autonomy ties into the participation narrative discussed above, and like it, gives legitimacy to AKF's claims to bottom-up development, to carrying out the Aga Khan's mandate of focusing on local concerns and interests. Indeed, AKF is able to achieve this even further by setting up in-country NGOs to implement their programming. These are their Support Programmes,²⁶ including the Mountain Society Development Support Programme Kyrgyzstan (MSDSP Kg). These are the organizations AKF "operates through" (AKF Annual Report 2006, p 20), which means that they can both function as independent NGOs and must align to AKF's oversight. This convenient duality can be seen in the 2006 Annual Report, which claims that

Most Foundation grants are made to local field-based organizations. When an appropriate partner for a programme does not exist, the Foundation will create one – such as its rural development programmes (AKF 2006 Annual Report: 8)

In reality the majority of the programming is done through the Support Programmes that AKF has set up, but since they carry the status of local non-profits the Foundation is able to derive legitimacy from working with "local" and "field-based" organizations, echoing the way Mark noted that AKF tries to bring "people from the field" to speak at global conferences. When asked about the relative autonomy of these operating NGOs, Mark stated that this varied greatly by country. Sometimes, such as in India, they become independent local organizations with their own local boards, while others (including, according to him, Kyrgyzstan's MSDSP) are much more closely tied to AKF. He insisted that MSDSP and its equivalent have "lots of freedom... to maneuver", while the Geneva head office "raises the profiles" of these organizations – while, admittedly, providing oversight of their activities. But he insisted that there must be room for

²⁶ A note on spellings: some of the organizations quoted in this work (such as the Christensen Fund) use American spellings, while others (such as the Aga Khan Foundation) use British. When using direct quotes or program names, I follow the convention of the organization or the nationality of the person in question. Otherwise this work consistently follows US English spelling conventions.

local innovations and freedom, and that the Geneva office tries to not be heavy-handed, but rather to nurture and support the imagination – i.e., the knowledge-creation – of local branches and implementing organizations (Mark 14/02/2014). This narrative leaves a lot of room for knowledge and ideas to travel *up* in the network, to emerge from what I term intermediary organizations rather than to be insisted on by the global node that controls much of the network's access to resources. It is indeed because of the plurality of funding sources in the AKF/Kyrgyzstan network that the intermediary institutions are able to create and adopt ideas not simply via the Geneva office, but by tapping into broader movements and epistemic communities.

Yet there are multiple narratives around the autonomy of country branches and Rural Development Programmes. During correspondence David insisted that the AKF Kyrgyzstan office is simply an extension of the AKF as a whole.²⁷ Mark pointed out that the strategy of the global foundation as a whole is set by the Aga Khan and the board (not the Geneva office itself), and that there are common threads connecting all of the country branches, which do run the same broad programs and themes everywhere. Indeed, the Geneva office does have a concrete epistemic role – according to Mark, besides gathering fundraising from donor boards at the AKF offices in USA, UK and Canada, it gives technical support to the country branches (meaning that it both suggests ideas and sharpens existing ones), provides measurement systems and synthesis for country programs, and provides governance and HR for the country offices. All three of these functions guide both the country branches' ideas and their implementation. While the country offices can propose new programs and ideas, the board can also push initiatives and sector and country expansions (Mark 14/02/2014). This epistemic closeness is maintained by country visits every few months by the staff of the Geneva office. The Geneva staff members were often on the road (David, written communication, 04/02/2014), or involved in trainings of

²⁷ The very premise of this thesis – as well as David's own later assertions – does position AKF Kyrgyzstan as a separate and semi-autonomous organizational node, as explained both in the previous chapter and the following one.

country-office staff in the Geneva office. This vision of centralized control speaks to unity rather than autonomy, to a contrasting vision of much stronger epistemic hold over the country offices. It points to gaps between aspirations and actual processes, and ties back to the tension experienced by both AFK and TCF between the epistemic control needed to promote a particular vision of development, and the legitimacy garnered by ceding control to more locally-connected organizations, as well as allowing some agenda setting by the local itself.

ii. Creating Knowledge Flows

This contrasting vision between central control and local (or at least regional) autonomy in the Aga Khan Foundation network also manifests itself in the Geneva office's own vision of AKF's role in creating and spreading knowledge. The Geneva office seems caught between two visions of its epistemic approach. One vision is of implementing and building on local knowledge, which is both in line with AKF's rhetoric of participation and community needs, and also builds the foundation's legitimacy to represent and aid communities in the developing world. At the same time, the staff at AKF did acknowledge that an essential part of the Foundations' work is spreading knowledge and ideas and bringing global, often Western expertise to these communities. Thus Mark admitted that while the Aga Khan wants AKF to build on local knowledge, this could also be too narrow a perspective for its work. He asserted that the foundation is not "slavish" to community knowledge, that it seeks to bring to communities "outside expertise" and "independent channels of information", and to *develop* knowledge and reduce ignorance (Mark 14/02/2014). Both Mark and David highlighted the process of spreading knowledge while implementing the ideals of bottom-up development as a challenge that AKF is actively struggling with. In David's words, using bottom-up planning is a hope for AKF, but the foundation relies heavily on Western knowledge (David 06/02/2014). Mark told me that AKF is "looking for new ways that knowledge and ideas are shared", and that this is a continuing struggle for AKF. He argued that filling broad knowledge gaps is a rocky and slow

process with “high costs of information transfers”. Mark argued that the Foundation is doing this by involving local institutions (linking back to its participatory rhetoric), as well as by providing overhead for “information transfer processes” which the foundation co-ordinates and facilitates (Mark 14/02/2014). Thus the global foundation openly acknowledges its role in creation and spread of information to the local.

The climate change adaptation program is a particularly clear example of this tension. Despite David’s protestations that climate change adaptation is done for the sake of donor money, he later told me that AKF must give urgency to the conceptual aspects of climate change, and that communities are skeptical of its importance and AKF is trying to change this. David linked this epistemic goal to the broader issue of long-term planning in development, arguing this it is difficult to integrate environmental issues in development projects as most development thinking is short term (David 06/02/2014). Thus for David the climate change adaptation program has a crucial epistemic aim, and is in fact trying to challenge aspects of the underlying temporal framework of development. Mark echoed the vital role of knowledge flows in the climate change adaptation program, telling me that it is particularly good at passing along concepts and information, and that this is working well in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, Mark framed epistemic transfers as an issue of responsibility – he told me that AKF does recognize “the responsibility to raise the [climate change] issue with the community” (Mark 14/02/2014). Thus for AKF spreading knowledge and ideas, particularly around climate change, becomes an essential responsibility as well as an opportunity to challenge development conventions.

III. AKF, TCF and the State

As we shall see in the following two chapters, knowledge of and about the state is an important facet of the civil society knowledge networks in both case studies. However, the importance of this knowledge largely emerges at the intermediary and local nodes of the networks. Neither TCF nor AKF had too much to say about their relationship with or views toward the governments of

the countries where they ran their programs. What they did say broadly supports the arguments developed in more detail later in this work – that civil society and the state are not in stark opposition, nor is civil society taking over the functions of the state, or entirely depoliticising people’s engagement with it. When pressed, both AKF and TCF acknowledged that the state is important, and that their institutions try to engage with it without alienating it. On several occasions Mark spoke of AKF’s interest in working with the state and of using government institutions within AKF’s development projects, in particular in bringing “national and international organizations and national government together”. Yet he also spoke of the problems with government institutions – they “struggle with bad management and habits” and “lack community engagement” (14/02/2014). At the same time, he did not want to circumvent the state entirely. When it came to the climate change adaptation project, both Mark and David Boyer stressed that the government must be brought in “as a stakeholder” (David 06/02/2014). Mark acknowledged that the state has scope that local communities do not – in his words, “too many mini-projects [in the climate change adaptation project] do not work”, and instead climate change adaptation should be “integrated into government projects” (14/02/2014). As such, it was the project’s role to “link local government and community to implement projects together, to build trust”. Mark admitted that building this trust is difficult. He told me that even AKF’s local staff “are cynical about government programs”, and complained about the government’s “tick-box approach”. In Mark’s view, some of this cynicism was justified, as the state is often “too poor” to build “productive infrastructure”, and it can be difficult for governments in the countries where AKF works to deliver on its promises, which means that communities have to fulfil some of its functions themselves (Mark 14/02/2014). Thus Mark saw AKF’s role as building bridges between communities and government by building trust and knowledge on both sides. Yet this relationship is decidedly ambivalent – he stressed both the limits of the state, and its importance. In a parallel fashion, he explained that AKF had “veered away from becoming a political organization” after Faisal Devji’s criticism described above, but at the same time noted

that AKDN and the Aga Khan himself have the power to “bring international pressure to national levels”, both through the organization and through personal connections in the diplomatic community (Mark 14/02/2014).

Ken Wilson echoed Mark’s sentiment towards building trust between the state and local communities. For him, this trust had to largely be built within the state – in his words, TCF “encouraged [governments] to be less frightened of people gaining rights and autonomy” (Ken 16/04/2014). To do this, TCF has to engage the state, but “carefully”, with an “informed relationship” that does not become oppositional to the state. TCF’s strategy to achieve this is to build the legitimacy of their grantees in the state’s eyes. This can be done by “transforming social capital” (Ken 16/04/2014). For instance, Ken told me that many minority ethnic groups in northern Kenya that were once not recognized by the local and national governments now are, as a result of TCF and TCF’s grantees’ efforts “on the ground”, which enabled local organizations and empowered communities (16/04/2014). Thus Ken sees TCF’s work as potentially transforming the state both by engaging with it, and by supporting grassroots empowerment (as long as it is not too confrontational). This echoes Ken’s vision of the power of festivals to change the perspective of local governments (Ken 03/10/2013). Indeed, for Ken the long-term goal of TCF is to enable their grantees to have a leading role in their nations and communities, to “change the mentality” of local institutions towards biological and cultural diversity, including the mentality of the state (16/04/2014). Yet the state is worth directly aiding as well. Ken pointed out that “governments are transforming” due to the “penetration of socio-economic forces” such as massive energy development. TCF does not aim to stop these processes, but rather to help local communities and national governments engage with these “global processes... on their own terms” (Ken 16/04/2014). Both AKF and TCF thus see their role as *educators* of the state, as passing the knowledge necessary to guide it towards greater engagement with both local communities and broader development processes without alienating it. They acknowledge that they cannot operate without state acquiescence, which makes them shy

away from contentious politics. Yet they do not shun the political entirely, as both want to have some engagement with the power of the state. This foreshadows the complicated and at times ambivalent knowledge-relationships between NGOs, communities and governments that will emerge in the chapters to come.

IV. In Conclusion: From Power to Legitimacy

A weakness of the term ‘network’ is that it can imply flatness and power parity between different nodes. This is not the case in these two case studies – in many ways, the global node has the most overt claims to power. Both the Aga Khan Foundation and the Christensen Fund have the advantage of leveraging almost all the financial resources in the networks, as well as having claims to expertise and authority, relationships with and knowledge of other transnational institutions, and political power. Yet despite their position as gatekeepers or as resourceful ‘norm entrepreneurs’ on the global realm, and their ability to set the discursive and ideational content of each case study network, it was not this exercise of power that seemed to interest or concern staff members at the two foundations. Instead, what was emphasized repeatedly was a search less for authority, and more for legitimacy and authenticity – a need to demonstrate that the foundations were responding to the real needs and desires of real people. Hence Tadasse’s example of the Borana community who wanted to visit southern Ethiopia (and thus demonstrate the post-material, cultural needs of such communities unaddressed by mainstream development), as well as Mark’s insistence that above all the Aga Khan Foundation was responding to community interests. This search for legitimacy goes beyond material interests in appealing to other funders and institutions – it points also to the ways that these global organizations and the actors within them are structurally bound within a set of ideas and moral motivations that they themselves help create and promulgate, be they specifically the values and key assumptions of biocultural diversity or the broader participatory development paradigm. To demonstrate this legitimacy and implement these ideas, organizations such as TCF and AKF need information

and knowledge of and from the grassroots. They are thus dependant on the buy-in and the ideas generated by the local they claim to be responding to – and as an access point and a stand-in for this, both organizations turn to civil society intermediaries.

Chapter Five

NGOs: Networks of Intermediaries

How do intermediary organizations in the networks transfer knowledge, and transform it along the way?

“We don’t go [to village communities] deliberately to teach, but to do anything you must know something: every task requires knowledge... We teach ways to package thoughts: we are *not* building capacity to get more grants, but rather to understand the environment, the bigger picture”. (Dr. Hussein, Director, Kivulini Trust)

“...we want to give people more knowledge [about climate change] – so they know background causes and future projections, what to expect ahead. There is very little information and knowledge in Kyrgyzstan – our goal is to spread it, and teach how to plan for [climate change caused] events”. (Pirjan Manasov, Climate Change Adaptation Project Manager, MSDSP Kg)

The previous chapter has demonstrated the power of international foundations and global movements to define ideas and discourse, to set the epistemic agenda of civil society knowledge networks through either the creation or adoption of wide development ideas. However, the foundations and intergovernmental organizations that both shape global discourses and hold the resources to transform ideas into action are less powerful than they might seem. For they are nothing without the legitimacy afforded to them by the communities and local people who enact their ideas and demonstrate that the knowledge and rhetoric of international foundations has impact. And it is the foundations’ sub-contractors – the NGOs that win their tenders or receive their grant money – that transform global ideas into action, and then spread these ideas to the local level.

Yet this process is far from simple or unidirectional. If the overarching argument of this work is that development institutions of all scales form epistemic networks that create, dispute and enact knowledge, then the core argument of this chapter is that intermediary organizations in the networks are essential in not only accessing, selecting and reshaping the ideas of the global nodes of the network, but also in having privileged access to the knowledge and the needs of the grassroots nodes. This chapter thus argues that NGOs, large and small, act as *idea intermediaries*,

connecting the global and local scales of knowledge and action while filtering and reshaping the ideas of both. The word ‘intermediary’ does not mean that these organizations are “mere conduits or tools” (Fechter and Hindman 2011: 4) – they are intermediary in their position between the global and the local, but they are ‘mediators’ in their ability to “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning... they are supposed to carry” (Latour 2005: 39). An essential part of the argument is that these intermediaries are heterogeneous in their aims and interests, and they both filter and reformulate ideas into their own ideologies and worldviews, which then influence the functioning of the network as a whole.

Such idea intermediaries can have widely disparate goals and organizational cultures, as demonstrated in the Kenyan case, or can be more tightly knit together as in Kyrgyzstan. In either case these organizational ‘nodes’ in the knowledge network forge relationships throughout the network through two simultaneous processes. First, these idea intermediaries implement the ideas and rhetoric of global movements to align themselves into one coherent knowledge network that facilitates the transfer of knowledge and resources and the transformation of ideas into action. Yet at the same time, these organizations and the individual actors within them create ideology and knowledge themselves. The disparate goals and cultures of each organization are not forgotten or subsumed – in fact these differences deeply affect the *ways* in which knowledge is transferred and transformed in the network. Nor, as will be repeatedly argued in this work, do the ideas flow one way: the intermediaries do hold power and influence over both international foundations and global movements, not simply by legitimizing and enacting the goals of the former, but also by contributing to the creation of the latter. One key way they do so is by claiming authenticity for their ideas by asserting that they are close to and thus reflect the needs of the grassroots.

Intermediaries wield power in these civil society knowledge networks through the ways they choose patrons and sponsors, as well as through their capacity to transform ideas into plans for action. NGOs help to define and designate expertise and authority, linking both back to

knowledge gained in seats of power in the West, but also validating experience gained in developing countries. I argue that this designation of expert and expertise – seen particularly in the case of Kyrgyzstan – not only gives in-country NGOs legitimacy with powerful Western actors, but also helps align the individual aims and goals of each node into a cohesive set of ideas that echoes the aims of global movements. Yet at the same time, these intermediary organizations are able to forge a connection, though admittedly sometimes a very surface-level one, to grassroots action and needs.

This chapter makes the case that NGOs and other intermediary organizations forge their connection to the grassroots using the very mechanism that gives them legitimacy on the level of international foundations and global movements. This mechanism is another global discourse: participatory development. In both Kenya and Kyrgyzstan it is through adopting the rhetoric, ideas and (to some extent) the practice of participatory development that NGOs find the point of engagement with the grassroots. Yet both case studies point to the adoption of this practice more as a point of entry with the local rather than deep or long-term engagement. To echo David Mosse's (2005) argument in *Cultivating Development*, participatory approaches become a way to legitimize development interventions, and discourse becomes the end rather than the means of development. In both the projects in Kenya and Kyrgyzstan the participatory element is at times difficult for intermediaries to maintain, though it is far deeper in the Kenyan case. Indeed, it is exactly the structural differences between the two that lead to the different enactments of participatory development. But both case study networks use participatory approaches to development, or claims to knowledge about the grassroots, are used by the networks to legitimize connections both to local and global actors. Thus participation itself becomes more of an idea rather than a practice, an epistemic tool used and spread within the network that in turn facilitates connection between the nodes.

These networks of idea intermediaries do not exist in a vacuum – factors ranging from global advocacy movements to local interests and desires all influence the network and provide

opportunities for intermediaries. This is perhaps most effectively demonstrated in the way that these development organizations pointedly engage with the state. Indeed, in both Kenya and Kyrgyzstan deliberate engagement with the state and government institutions demonstrates the ways NGO intermediaries seek to both supplement the functioning of the state, and to utilize state power and resources to bolster and sustain the main aim of the intermediary actors: the process of transforming ideas into action.

I. Disparate Nodes, One Network

The organizations that constitute each network are far from homogenous, and yet they are able to create the connections necessary to transmit ideas and unify behind one stated programmatic aim. The organizations in each network have a variety of goals and aims, both stated and demonstrated, not to mention very different institutional cultures. This heterogeneity has been largely ignored by conceptualizations of global civil society or activist networks, though it has been pointed out by some writing on the processes of global connection such as that of Benedict Anderson (2005). Particularly striking is the way that such disparate organizational cultures and aims are nevertheless able to provide coherent bridges for projects or partnerships across different institutional levels. I argue that this is not purely a result of strategic compromise, or materially-focused mission drift towards global aid resources, but largely a function of the very process of the transfer of knowledge and ideas, of engaging with global movements and adopting their ideas and discourse: in other words, the process of *organizational learning* (Argote & Miron-Spektor 2011; Brown & Duguid 1991; Dodgson 1993).

a. Kyrgyzstan: AKF Kg and MSDSP

i. Expats and Locals at AKF Kyrgyzstan: Power and Hidden Knowledge

Though Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan (AKF Kg) is in name a branch of a foundation, it functions more as a development NGO, albeit with vast access to resources and international clout. It competes for funding from IGOs and private foundations, sometimes in its own name

and sometimes in the name of MSDSP Kg, and runs programs in partnership with MSDSP Kg. AKF Kg terms the latter their “implementing NGO”, though in fact the implementation seems largely collaborative. Because of its relationship with the global Aga Khan Foundation (of which it is nominally a branch office) it is guaranteed internal funding for certain programs – funding which was referred to as “His Highness’ funding”. It is also well-placed to gain access to a range of international resources. Two-thirds of the funding is in fact external (Karl 13/03/2013), and the proportion is increasing in response to pressure from AKF headquarters (Jack 12/03/2013). Thus AKF Kyrgyzstan is constantly on the lookout for new sources of funding, and new projects or programs as well as ways to expand their current programs. However, because of their status as a formal part of the larger global Aga Khan Foundation, they are constrained in the sort of funding they are able to solicit, by both the mandate of the Aga Khan Foundation and the joint strategic plan of AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP Kg, which is supposed to be jointly decided on an annual retreat (Talant Aldashov 05/04/2013).

One of the most striking things about the offices of AKF Kg is that expats hold the three top positions in the organization: Karl, a German, is the CEO, Jack, a Canadian, is in charge of fundraising and grant-writing, and Nicolle, an American, is the head of the research and monitoring and evaluation unit. All three are development veterans, having worked for many years in development organizations in Africa or Southeast Asia before coming to AKF Kg. The culture of the organization is thus dominated by expat authority, and by the distinction between the expats and locals working in the organization. When I asked Karl how most of AKF Kg’s decisions are made, in particular those around creating programs for new grant applications, he said that this was done by Jack in conversation with himself and Nicolle (Karl 13/03/2013). Karl was not the only one who said this: during my interviews most of the Kyrgyz staff members at AKF Kg stated that Jack was the one creating ideas around programming (Nurgul 12/03/2013, Chinara 20/03/2014). As will be shown later, this is to some extent untrue (and Jack himself largely denies this (Jack 12/03/2013)), but there is a strong sense that a particular culture of

expats, all with years of experience working in the development sector, made decisions in Bishkek.

Expats and locals work closely together in AKF Kg, yet there is a strand of division and at times competitiveness between the two groups that points to underlying power dynamics: for instance, expats at AKF Kg complained about the material rather than idealistic motivations of the Kyrgyz staff, stating that “they are there for the salary”. This is tied to the broader issue of the way work in the development sector is conceptualized: local staff members saw working for AKF as a stable, prestigious and reasonably well-paid career, rather than an idealistic or altruistic way to effect positive change. After the collapse of the broad bureaucratic apparatus of the Soviet State, foreign-funded civil society has become one of the few paths into a stable administrative career (Buxton 2011). Yet the salaries of the expats are far higher than that of the Kyrgyz staff. Expats (or locals with excellent English skills who have been educated abroad) are largely in the positions of power (managerial and decision making) at AKF. They are the “development experts” – but what their complaints indicate is that their authority stems not simply from expertise, but a claim about altruistic motivations.

The expats at AKF Kg highlight the divisions between the two groups, particularly around knowledge sharing and creation. They are simultaneously resigned and frustrated at the lack of knowledge-sharing with and input from local staff members – both those at AKF Kg and at MSDSP. Jack told me that “local staff members that go for training outside [of Kyrgyzstan] don’t use the knowledge they gain... Staff are implementers, not researchers”. At the same time, Jack told me that while he “used to come up with most of programming ideas, now [he] wants managers to do so... [because he] needs buy-in” from these implementers (Jack 12/03/2013). Nicolle echoed Jack’s worry: “knowledge moves up, not down, because of communication barriers and language... knowledge moves up to donors or to the Geneva office, but staff on the ground don’t know *why* they’re doing what they are doing – there’s no ownership” (Nicolle

15/03/2013). Both Jack and Nicolle diagnose a lack of ‘ownership’ by the local staff as a failure of epistemic connection, a block in the networks of idea flows.

While Nicolle complained of knowledge failing to reach local staff members, she also painted a picture of stymied bottom-up and grassroots knowledge: both of programs that do not work, and of grassroots needs. In her words, “failures are not communicated – due to fears of losing one’s job or funding... MSDSP has strict reporting protocols, but not on failure” (Nicolle 15/03/2013). Tamana Zamir, the Canadian intern at AKF Kg, echoed this, saying that “research is the KGB in the perception of program officers, they feel attacked. This leads both to problems of reporting negative results and with the implementation of what the beneficiaries say” (Tamana 12/03/2013). Information that is *not* spread through the network points to the power dynamics within and between the two organizations. Indeed, this silence on the subject of ‘failures’ can be read in light of a “hidden transcript” (Scott 1990) of resistance to the power wielded in AKF Kg’s overt organizational hierarchies. Not only do these hierarchies thus dictate what information and ideas are created and communicated, but the circulation (or lack thereof) of ideas could itself be a way of quietly resisting the overt organizational hierarchies in the network.

ii. Pragmatism and Representation at AKF Kg

One of the outcomes of an organizational culture dominated by expat ‘development nomads’ (Chambers 2005) is that the overall aims and goals of AKF Kyrgyzstan seem largely pragmatic. This can be seen in the breadth and variety of its programs and funding sources, which mirror the great diversity of interests of the global Aga Khan Foundation, ranging from education to civil society, from disaster risk reduction to natural resource management, from livelihood to health. As the primary aim of AKF Kyrgyzstan is to find and secure funding and then to satisfy donor requirements, the staff there are largely concerned with four things: what programs His Highness’ funding will cover (and how staff at the AKF headquarters in Geneva will perceive the

fulfillment of the programs); what new programs can be created in response to calls for tenders or grant applications that would still be within the organizational mandate; how current programs can be re-imagined – or re-depicted – to fit new funding opportunities; and finally how programs that are carried out are to be depicted to donors. In Karl's words, "it is donors who have power over ideas – they have their own ideas about issues, and know the system" (Karl 15/03/2013), and Nicolle echoed this when she told me that "new ideas come externally" (Nicolle 15/03/2013).

Thus AKF Kg is largely concerned with what David Mosse terms "systems of representation as much as operational systems" (Mosse, 2006: 940). For example, AKF Kyrgyzstan applied for and received funding from the Christensen Fund for their kindergarten project. (That TCF funds some AKF programming is serendipitous – the research design of this work treats the two case study networks as separate despite several points of connection, for to tease out and analyze these points is beyond the scope and focus of this work. However, connections such as this one demonstrated the expansive nature of these networks: they are not isolated chains, but also have crosscutting connections, ultimately pulling an ever expanding number of actors into such networks.) AKF pitched the kindergarten project to appeal to TCF's interests by asking for funding to preserve local Kyrgyz folktales and teach them to children (thus helping preserve and continue local cultural diversity and heritage). When telling me about this, Jack was frank: "we just wanted funding for our kindergartens; preserving local folk tales is not the point" (12/03/2013). This is not to accuse AKF Kyrgyzstan of cynicism or manipulation, or to say that the money will not be used for teaching local folktales to nursery children. The program does this, but biocultural diversity is not the focus for AKF Kyrgyzstan, rather, they are on the lookout for whatever resources will enrich their kindergarten. AKF Kg's role becomes exactly what Mosse (2005, 2006) describes as endemic to development projects: the need to defend as well as create systems of representation that fulfill the expectations and

needs of global donors. These donors are themselves, as previously demonstrated, closely intertwined with global movements and development trends.

This pragmatic, representational approach is itself a way of knowing and understanding development – an epistemic stance. The ways in which AKF Kyrgyzstan discussed and understood the climate change adaptation project demonstrate such pragmatic epistemics. The climate change adaptation project is something of an outlier in the Bishkek office. This is demonstrated by the difficulty AKF Kg has had in characterizing the program and ‘placing’ it in an established programmatic division: AKF has no program area dedicated to the environment or for climate change, and in its three iterations the program has drifted between the Civil Society/Local Governance division, Natural Resource Management (which in fact mostly focuses on agriculture), and a recently created division called ‘Built Environment’ – which encompasses agricultural infrastructure, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The program has shifted through these divisions in its three iterations as the staff members at AKF Kg and MSDSP who wrote each of the three proposals struggled with the way that the program would be conceived internally and represented externally (Laurie 20/03/2013, Jack 12/03/2013, Pirjan 29/04/2013).

This representational struggle ties back to the argument of the previous chapter regarding the newness and gradual and growing acceptance of environmental ideas as part of the Aga Khan Foundation. It reflects AKF Kg’s resistance to engaging with new ideas and categories that the organizational networks they are part of have not yet accepted and internalized. This can be seen in the organization’s last annual report,²⁸ which *does* say that “improving climate change resilience [is a] cross-cutting theme” – but makes no other mention of ecology or environment, even in the Natural Resource Management section (MSDSP KG 2012). According to Laurie Ashley, another development nomad and the American consultant hired by AKF Kg to develop

²⁸ Published for the year 2011, and though titled as MSDSP KG’s Annual Report, was published jointly by the two organizations and prepared largely by the communication officer in AKF Kyrgyzstan – thus I understand it as an annual report for both organizations.

the climate change adaptation project, AKF Kyrgyzstan is influenced by AKF Geneva's "traditional" ideological stance in focusing on livelihood, health and education, rather than environment or ecology. Indeed, Laurie termed the Christensen Fund "unorthodox" and "avant-garde" for their focus on biocultural diversity (Laurie 13/03/2013) – echoing their own radical self-image.

Yet at the same time that AKF Kg engages in a representational struggle to align their programming with its "traditional" (in Laurie's words) focus, it must represent the aims of the network to donors, in such a way that the funding focus would seem a perfect fit for the programming (Jack 12/03/2013). This can be seen in the rhetoric of the first climate change adaptation project proposal (to the ICCO), which while nodding to "the impact of... climate change" spends much time talking of "environmental hazards" (i.e., disasters, which will be discussed more below) and "socio-economic vulnerabilities... [and] livelihoods" (AKF Kg 2010). It treads the fine line between trying to align with donor calls and the ongoing focus of AKF Kg on livelihoods and disaster prevention. Indeed, the wide-reaching influence of this representational challenge is demonstrated in the amount of resources, labor and time put in by AKF Kyrgyzstan (along with MSDSP) in creating proposals that depict program ideas – and AKF Kyrgyzstan itself – as being a perfect fit for a tender or grant proposal call. This can also be heard in Jack's description of the climate change adaptation project, when he stated:

Donors like the bottom-up approach, so we've started to **formulate** community-based input more. At the beginning of the [climate change adaptation] program we did a participatory rural appraisal, but didn't use the information. (Jack 12/03/2013, my emphasis)

The emphasis here is on formulation, not implementation. Pathways for knowledge-input from the grassroots are imagined, but not used. Nicolle echoed Jack's focus on formulation:

Needs are not formally communicated [to field staff]... There is no innovation in this – all [of AKF's projects include community] training, but there is no follow up, no one asks what peoples' *need* is. People know what NGOs want – that we're looking to fill indicators. (Nicolle 15/03/2013).

The focus on systems of representation is thus tied to the ways knowledge flows are stymied within the network of organizations and communities. At the same time, Nicolle gestures to a

self-awareness of how widespread this representational logic is – in her eyes, even communities know and fulfill this need.

AKF Kyrgyzstan's engagement with donors demonstrates pragmatic, utility-maximizing aspects of AKF Kyrgyzstan, that at times seem in tension with its representational one: Karl, the CEO, declared in a meeting that AKF Kyrgyzstan should work on climate change because this is where the money and the donor interest is, *and* because it is becoming an increasingly important focus area in development (Karl 08/03/2013). Jack's comment about the kindergarten folk-tale program funded by TCF shows a similar struggle between representation and pragmatism. This tension helps explain the contradiction between AKF's reluctance to label the climate change adaptation project as environmental or ecological programming and the fact that the second iteration of the project (the one this work examines most closely) is funded by the Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan Fund for the Environment (PSAKFE). However, compared to the overall program budget of the main Aga Khan Foundation, the Fund is in fact quite small. Resources reflect ideology and engagement – both the size of the fund and the sidelined nature of the climate change adaptation project and its ambiguous and shifting categorization acts as a reflection of the tenuous relationship of both the international Aga Khan Foundation and AKF Kg in Bishkek to global environmental movements and ideas.

iii. Conservation of Ideas at MSDSP KG

The network of intermediary institutions in Kyrgyzstan contrasts with the network in Kenya in that its disparate parts or nodes do not and in fact cannot function without the others or as independent entities with entirely different connections. The Mountain Society Development Program Kyrgyzstan (MSDSP KG) is registered as a Kyrgyz NGO that can independently apply for funding and theoretically create and execute its own programming, has almost entirely Kyrgyz staff members, and is strategically based in the city of Osh on the opposite side of the country. Yet in reality MSDSP is structurally integrated into the Aga Khan Foundation,

particularly the Bishkek office. Talant Aldashov, the director of MSDSP, is in Bishkek at least three or four times a month for meetings at AKF Kg, and many of the department/program heads as well as the Reporting Officer are in Bishkek hardly less often. All reports produced by MSDSP are filtered through AKF in Bishkek, and the programmatic decisions are handed down from Bishkek. Key MSDSP staff members are also hired and fired by AKF Kg. Unlike the Kenyan case discussed below, this is an overtly hierarchical system, where roles are clearly defined – and the stated role of MSDSP is *implementation*.

The staff members of MSDSP are the ones that must get a program up and running, and as a result have conservative views about what they want to do and how they want to do it. These views are not expressed directly or vocally, but rather in the way programs are implemented. If AKF Kyrgyzstan is pragmatic in searching for funding, MSDSP is pragmatic in seeing their expertise as existing in a few areas, and reformatting the actual implementation of each program into one of these established areas. My conversations and observations at MSDSP demonstrated that AKF Kg's pursuit of a wide variety of funding opportunities did not lead to mission drift²⁹ in MSDSP's programming, because the actual areas of implementation by MSDSP remain largely constrained to what it already knew and did.

In the case of the climate change adaptation project, this means that though the program certainly contains elements focused on teaching the meaning and impact of climate change and the concept of adaptation, once the two training sessions have been completed, the program shifts to creating and implementing an infrastructure project. In the case of the project at Sarokamush, this is the upkeep of a canal, while for other villages this could be a bridge over a river, or digging wells or water reservoirs or a pit for dead animals. These kinds of projects all fall within MSDSP's areas of expertise and established practice. Despite the participatory and community-based rhetoric of AKF Geneva, MSDSP is largely focused on something akin to the

²⁹ Mission drift is “a diversion of time, energy, and money away from a nonprofit’s mission” (Jones 2007: 300), or “losing sight of the organisation’s core purpose” (Chu and Luke 2012: 1042), often to follow the possibility of receiving funding by taking on other areas of work.

“high modernist project” described by Scott (1998). MSDSP has long running expertise in infrastructure projects such as canal-building – they even have an in-house civil engineer to design their infrastructure projects. Pirjan, the manager of the climate change adaptation project, suggests ‘best practices’ to village residents during adaptation training and planning sessions (Pirjan 29/04/2013), guiding them toward creating infrastructure-based projects of the sort that MSDSP feels most comfortable in delivering. Talant, the director of MSDSP, also made a similar point, stating that “earlier we were already doing [similar programming to the climate change adaptation project] – in 2005-6 we were rehabilitating canals to improve water management and crop production”. Talant supported Nicole’s comment that people know what NGOs want when, in response to my query about responding to grassroots needs and knowledge, he mentioned that “people do come to MSDSP with ideas – mostly around infrastructure rehabilitation” (Talant 01/04/2013). Talant is implying that not only is infrastructure MSDSP’s area of long-term expertise, but that people know that this is what MSDSP does, and have come to predict that this is the kind of development work MSDSP will be willing to engage with. Thus the “needs” of local people are shaped by their perception of what intermediary organizations could offer (Mosse 2001).

Yet the climate change adaptation project staff who were based at AKF’s Bishkek office (Laurie and Rahat) insisted that the adaptation ideas could and should be creative and original, and even carried out on a family-level, not just on the village level (Laurie and Rahat 02/05/2013). However, once the program shifted into the ‘mini-grant’ phase neither climate change nor adaptation were referenced any longer – instead the focus was very much on executing the project.³⁰ This echoes the pragmatic approach of AKF Kg, but without the added representational focus. Because AKF Kg takes care of representing the program to donors, MSDSP can focus on reformatting and integrating the climate change adaptation project with

³⁰ I not only observed this during my time in the villages where the project was run, but this has also been noted by Mike Igoe, an American doctoral researcher that worked with and evaluated the first iteration of the program (Igoe 2011).

their existing interests and knowledge – of shifting the epistemic focus of the program to something they already know and value.

At the same time, conducting ‘trainings’ is a core part of MSDSP’s work. For MSDSP trainings are the key tool for formalized knowledge transfers to the grassroots. Several people at MSDSP told me that trainings, workshops and “communicating information” were a large and standard part of MSDSP’s work (Ika 01/04/2013, Alibek Mukambaev 28/03/2013, Talant 01/04/2013). Talant even complained about the fact that trainings are undervalued in the communities where MSDSP works:

People ask to decrease [time spent in] trainings [because] people don’t see the effects of behavioral change, they see only physical changes. A balance between physical and behavioral changes is needed, so we still do trainings, because problems come out of behaviors. For example, in pasture management [people need to learn to value] quality over quantity. We do lots of training because behavior influences the physical [realm]. (01/04/2013)

Talant here explicitly acknowledges the role of knowledge transfers in changing the way people act in the world, and emphasizes their transformational potential. Yet while Talant blames the people MSDSP works with for wanting to decrease training time, Laurie in discussing the same thing put the blame on MSDSP. She stated that “MSDSP isn’t fantastic at engaging in the field: for instance, they cut village resilience assessments [for the climate change adaptation project, which consist of small group discussions,] from three days to one day... they lost nuance” (Laurie 13/03/2013). Yet shortening the assessments could be reinterpreted to actually show MSDSP’s responsiveness to local needs. As shown by Talant’s statement above, time is a key local need and bargaining tool. It is NGOs that must battle for the sustained time and interest of local residents, an aspect of programming not readily acknowledged in grant applications or participatory rhetoric. Indeed, cutting the program from three days to one could be MSDSP acquiescing to local needs for time and efficiency – and thus in fact be responding directly to local needs.

However, Talant justified Laurie’s perspective: earlier in our conversation he dismissed the very same trainings he praised, saying that “people just show up for the free lunch” and that

in the climate change adaptation project there is “little effect on people post-training – they shift to a more practical approach” (Talant 01/04/2013). Yet despite these contradictions and moments of skepticism, trainings remain the key tool that MSDSP employs to formally transfer knowledge and ideas. I would argue that this is both because MSDSP ultimately understands its programming to be as concerned with knowledge and idea transfer as with physical changes and investments, and because trainings are the most obvious and easiest way to attempt to spread ideas and concepts.

Yet trainings end up transferring not only the epistemic content championed (or dictated) by the global nodes, but also the ideas and expertise of intermediary organizations such as AKF Kg and MSDSP. The climate change adaptation trainings themselves focus on natural disasters and disaster risk reduction through the entry point of climate change, rather than climate change per se. Most of the examples and discussions in the three trainings I observed directly were of floods, droughts, mudslides, extreme winds and even earthquakes. Granted, the increasing frequency and intensity of many such disasters are indeed closely linked to climate change (Ashley & Ershova 2011). Yet it is telling that Pirjan chose to repeatedly emphasize natural disasters in the trainings, and that it was disaster risk reduction that was recalled by attendees rather than climate change, as will be analyzed further in the following chapter. MSDSP and the AKF network more broadly have wide experience running different types of disaster risk reduction programs, and I would argue that linking climate change closely with disaster risk reduction is another way for MSDSP to reshape programs to fit their areas of expertise around infrastructure development and disaster risk reduction.

MSDSP did indeed deliver material to villages about climate change and adaptation – material developed by Laurie – and thus did spread knowledge of climate change adaptation, though with varied success, as will be discussed in the following chapter. However, the end outcome of the program seemed more focused on disaster risk reduction, particularly through the completion of the infrastructure-focused mini-project, rather than the very fact of climate

change adaptation.³¹ I had a revealing conversation with Talant after I had returned from the village of Saro-Kamush. After discussing some of my preliminary findings, Talant, who in fact is one of the original creators and writers of the climate change program, wondered out loud whether the climate change adaptation paradigm is useful, and whether it might not be better to simply run an infrastructure or disaster risk reduction program in villages without bothering to talk at people about climate change and adaptation (Talant 30/04/2013). He went on to justify this position by admitting that he was not surprised to hear my view that understandings of climate change and adaptation did not seem to be spread effectively amongst the local community by the project. Talant ultimately sees infrastructure/disaster risk reduction ideas as the key epistemic contribution of the program, and thus the mini-project as its end good. He believes that it would not only be more effective and efficient to focus on what MSDSP has long done and has expertise in, but also that tangible *things* or *results* (such as a new canal) rather than intangible *ideas* or *processes* (such as learning about climate change or formulating a plan) are more central to MSDSP's work.

This implementation-focused approach was particularly visible in my observations of Pirjan's work at Saro-Kamush. Once the workshops and trainings had been finished at the village, Pirjan saw the remainder of his work as getting the mini-grant project off the ground and executed. This consisted of meetings with the working group and with Nurmat, the man in the village running the mini-project, to sort out logistics and give and receive updates on the work, without further discussions of its relationship to the climate change adaptation plan or the role that the working group should take within the program. Yet both the grant application of the climate change adaptation project and Laurie, who designed the program, insisted that the end goal is not to have the working groups successfully implement a mini-project, but rather to educate people about climate change, to empower locals to tackle problems, and most

³¹ This is also echoed in the research carried out by Alibek (Alibek 08/05/2013).

importantly to create a ‘living’ adaptation plan that would be repeatedly updated and referred to in the village and local government when planning any sort of development projects for the village (AKF Kg 2010, Laurie 20/03/2013). Laurie’s ultimate vision is to capture the *sustained* interest of local communities.

Laurie directly disagreed with Talant’s perspective, insisting that knowledge of climate change and adaptation is important and central to the project, as knowledge in itself is empowering (Laurie 02/05/2013). This disagreement is indicative of the different aims of AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP. AKF Kyrgyzstan’s combination of pragmatic and representational aims make it focus more on the interests and ideas of the donor community, of global movements and international development discourse, while MSDSP’s implementation-focused role underpins its aims of ultimately carrying out the interventions in which they have established expertise, within the framework of whatever the over-arching project happens to be.

At the same time, MSDSP is very good at adapting the discourses and the new ideas of the programs created by the AKF office in Bishkek.³² Though Pirjan was very focused on getting the mini-grant off the ground when in the field, in my interview with him he echoed both Laurie and the climate change adaptation project material by insisting “there is very little knowledge in Kyrgyzstan, and [the program’s] goal is to spread it” (Pirjan 29/04/2013). One factor behind this adaptability is the wide-ranging experience of MSDSP’s Kyrgyz staff in the development sector. I included professional histories in my interviews with a dozen current and former staff members of MSDSP, and found that the Kyrgyz staff members of organizations such as MSDSP are in fact as much or even more ‘development nomads’ than the expats – but within Kyrgyzstan. Erkin, the project manager of the first iteration of the climate change adaptation project, and Pirjan, the project manager of the second iteration, are both excellent examples of the way development expertise and careers develop amongst local staff.

³² To be precise, new programs are created in the Bishkek office but with some input from certain MSDSP staff members, such as Talant and Laila, the MSDSP Reporting Officer, discussed in more detail below.

Erkin pursued a career in the military when Kyrgyzstan was still part of the Soviet Union, and then transitioned to working for the Kyrgyz government in the Ministry of Emergency Situations. His experience there enabled him to move into the aid/non-profit sector, specializing first in disaster risk reduction and then climate change. He spent a year working on the climate change adaptation project for MSDSP, and once the contract ended began working for another environmentally/climate-change oriented NGO (Erkin, 30/04/2013).³³ Pirjan is a biologist by training with the equivalent of a doctoral degree. He worked as a lecturer and biologist in an Osh university, but then switched to the non-profit world (in part because it pays more). Though he calls himself an environmentalist, his work has been in quite a few different areas in the Kyrgyz development sector. At one time he was running the national school debate program funded by the Soros Foundation, at another he free-lanced as a civic activism trainer. He also co-founded an environmental NGO (Pirjan 29/04/2013). Both of these men's careers point to not only the history of the growth of the development sector in Kyrgyzstan over the last two decades (and the fact that it is one of the most viable career options in Kyrgyzstan for people with an education and no taste for business), but also the structural factors of "the era of short-term, project-based aid work" (Fechter and Hindman 2011: 7) that enforces such variety and nomadism. In particular, many staff members both in MSDSP and other non-profits are hired for a specific project lasting a few years, and once the length of the particular project or the funding is over they switch to a new project and in many cases a new organization.

The fact that the Kyrgyz staff in this network emerge out of a wide collection of experience in the Kyrgyz aid community and that there is a continual movement between organizations and programs creates a cohesion of organizational cultures throughout Kyrgyz development-focused civil society. Due to this breadth of experience and exposure to a variety of global movements, trends and international discourses, Kyrgyz staff members are familiar

³³ This NGO is UNISON, a local NGO, which, though it is well-known in southern Kyrgyzstan, does not have any international institutional support, and thus much more financially precarious than MSDSP. When I visited to interview Erkin they were not running any projects due to lack of funding.

with the discourses and ideas of global movements. Unlike the AKF staff, their experience is limited to the former Soviet world, but especially since the early 1990s this has become porous to international development discourses.

This musical chairs pattern in NGO staffing could be enabled by a marginal role for distinct ideas and ideology in Kyrgyz organizations – if most organizations function from the same with the same general ethos, moving between them becomes far easier than having to adapt to new ideas and worldviews. As demonstrated by Pirjan, MSDSP staff members are able to find the thread between MSDSP's drive to continue doing the activities that they have done in the past and where they have expertise – such as infrastructure building – and adapting this expertise to a variety of new ideas and discourses, such as climate change adaptation. When I pressed Pirjan on the epistemic links between climate change and infrastructure building, he had no problem justifying any of the mini-projects:

Canal building is climate change adaptation, and mitigation too: it will stop mudslides from carrying off soil from the hillsides, and will provide water for watering, so it's an instrument against drought. [The project] will also give access for vehicles/technology over [the canal's] bridge to fields – which will help increase yields. (Pirjan 29/04/2013)

Yet at the same time, in a candid moment during an interview Pirjan admitted that “the mini-grant *motivates* [people] – they forget about climate change but the grant keeps them stimulated” (Pirjan 29/04/2013). Once again, acquiring the buy-in and the time and energy of the local is a central concern for intermediary actors.

Pirjan was able to juggle the on-the-ground realities with both the interests of MSDSP in continuing infrastructure building and the focus on AKF Kg on climate change. Pirjan was able to execute this balance perfectly in large part because of his previous experience as a trainer and from working on civil-society building projects. He began the project in ‘trainer’ mode (learned through previous experience running training projects and working as a university lecturer) to build engagement with new ideas and information, but at the once this was accomplished he switched to a pragmatic focused on getting the program executed and a community-based action

off the ground (helped by his earlier work with non-profit projects and local civil society groups, and urged on by MSDSP's pragmatic stance).

iv. Aligning the Network: Tools of Consensus Building

Thus far this chapter has argued that the case-study network in Kyrgyzstan (as we shall see, much like in Kenya) is comprised of organizations that pursue disparate goals, ones that do not necessarily align with the overarching aims of the global movements or even with the stated aims of the program itself. AKF Kg in itself has staff members with different orientations. Yet I argue that these organizations *are* able to function as one cohesive knowledge-network that creates, utilizes and most importantly transmits ideas and knowledge within itself and to and from the local and the global nodes. In Kyrgyzstan, unlike in Kenya, this ability emerges in part out of the tight-knit structure of the network of intermediaries: AKF Kyrgyzstan is officially a branch of the global Aga Khan Foundation, MSDSP was created specifically to serve as AKF Kg's implementing organization, and, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, in the village of Saro-Kamush both the working group and Zhalgiz Alma were created or revived by the climate change adaptation project specifically to help implement and connect the program to the village. As each organization is to some degree an offspring of another, they are forced to align themselves to one another to a certain extent, both in their rhetoric and their programming. Yet the organizations are also able to align by conceptualizing their different aims as part of one unifying rhetoric. I argue that this is fostered by precisely a process of knowledge creation and knowledge transfer between different parts of the network, but particularly amongst these intermediary organizations.

In Kyrgyzstan this happens through a number of techniques implemented by AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP. One of these is the use of trainings and workshops. This means not only the trainings around climate change, adaptation, and development- project creation taught by Pirjan in villages, but trainings and workshops of the staff members of the climate change

adaptation project. Pirjan, Aizada Bekboeva (the program specialist based in Naryn) and other MSDSP and AKF Kyrgyzstan staff attended several workshops around climate change and adaptation, both run by and open to other non-profit development organizations. This included a multi-day workshop on climate change run by GIZ (the German development agency) in Bishkek, which was open to other NGOs, and a climate change workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan attended by Pirjan. Thus transnational knowledge held by the ‘experts’ of the global climate change adaptation and mitigation movements is purposefully injected into the network through workshops for the intermediaries. (I could find no signs of intermediaries running workshops for the global nodes in either of the case studies.) Thus these intermediaries become part of larger epistemic communities, participating in, enlarging, and spreading transnationally held ideas (Adler & Haas 1992).

AKF Kyrgyzstan scouted out and paid for staff attendance to these workshops, showing the organization’s awareness of the need to facilitate such transnational knowledge transfers in order to create a coherent knowledge-pool accessible by the network of intermediary organizations in Kyrgyzstan. AKF Kyrgyzstan also holds frequent workshops for its own and MSDSP staff (pointing to the close integration of the two organizations), mostly run by its own expats (pointing to delineations of expertise that will be discussed further later in the chapter), on topics ranging from Excel use to report writing, spreading skills as well as a knowledge base through the network. Indeed, workshops and trainings are used by global foundations and organizations as a formal way of aligning the intermediaries with their global knowledge and aims: AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP staff members are flown to Switzerland to receive trainings at the AKF head offices in Geneva. At the same time, flying Kyrgyz staff to international workshops and conferences harks back to Mark Whitton’s comments about presenting local views in global arenas discussed in the preceding chapter: it allows AKF to put the face of local staff members onto the approaches and ideas of the head office. It can also be read as a form of

patronage, both as a perk and a reward of working for MSDSP – indeed, I heard rumors of Kyrgyz staff members taking relatives with them to Europe on such training trips.

As Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) point out, “professional training does more than simply transfer technical knowledge; it actively socializes people to value certain things above others” (905). Thus a shared knowledge commons (Hess & Ostrom 2007) is created throughout the network, enabling intermediaries with a variety of institutional cultures and aims to align and communicate both on the basis of commonly held rhetoric and language. Indeed, there were words in ‘development lingo’ I encountered repeatedly at AKF Kg, at the three MSDSP offices where I spent time, and in AKF Kg’s and MSDSP’s program materials. These range from “beneficiaries” to “local governance” and “civil society”, from “livelihood” to “participation”, not to mention the constant use of “climate change” and “adaptation” amongst specific program staff. This development lingo was both in English and Russian (and I can only presume in Kyrgyz as well). It was particularly striking to hear it translated or sometimes, when no appropriate translation could be found, even transliterated into Russian, as these were words I had almost never heard anyone use before in conversational Russian and had the ring of translation out of English rather than natural use. The diction of development thus slips across languages and creates familiarity and organizational cohesion around key ideas and their expression.

This does not mean that the workshops or transnational knowledge transfers smooth away the disparate aims discussed above: as Marchand argues, knowledge consists of “the particular dynamics that animate nested communities of practice within larger social groupings” (Marchand, 2010: s3). Thus each intermediary in the network is its own ‘community of practice,’ with its own institutional culture, preferences, goals and organizational priorities. But these communities are ‘nested’ in the larger grouping of the network, and held together in part by the workshops and trainings that serve as “pathways to knowing” (Rapport & Harris 2007), creating common pools of knowledge that link the network to transnational epistemic communities.

The network of intermediaries is also dependent on formalized mechanisms that are intended to gather and pass up knowledge as to what happens at the local level: the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, this is the only *formalized* way that the villages where programs are being run are able to transfer concerns and information through the network.³⁴ These systems are largely put in place by AKF Kg to fulfill their representational role: donors want and expect accountability systems such as impact assessments or surveys to demonstrate that the program is indeed running the way it should (Laila Zulkaphil 05/04/2013, Jack 12/03/2013). Indeed, donors need such knowledge of what happens on the ground to buttress their own legitimacy by demonstrating the importance and necessity of the programs they fund – and thus their own existence (Ebrahim 2003). The knowledge-creation of program monitoring and evaluation is thus an existential necessity for multiple nodes of the network.

Nicolle, whose position as the head of the Research, Evaluation and Learning Unit at AKF Kyrgyzstan makes her responsible for overseeing most of the monitoring and evaluation for both AKF Kg and MSDSP, claimed that AKF and MSDSP are both reluctant to deeply or honestly engage with monitoring and evaluation. They conduct surveys or run impact assessments simply to fulfill their donor requirements. Indeed, despite the name of the unit she claims that there is little learning going on through such formal mechanisms (Nicolle 15/03/2013). This was also emphasized by the fact that despite utilizing the rhetoric of participatory needs assessments (as discussed earlier in the chapter) both Jack and Alibek Mukambaev (one of MSDSP's monitoring and evaluation coordinators) confessed that MSDSP carried out needs assessments *after* a program was approved and received funding, not before (Jack 12/03/2013, Alibek 27/03/2013).³⁵ Thus programs – including the climate change adaptation project – were justified post hoc as part of carrying out the program design rather than as part of the program creation. Others at MSDSP, such as Talant (01/04/2013) and

³⁴ The informal mechanisms of this will be discussed in the following chapter.

³⁵ This links back to the financial pragmatism of AFK Kg – after all, who would pay for staff and time needed to carry out the needs assessment if the program in question did not win funding?

Kambarbek Adishov (29/04/2013), the natural resource management program manager at MSDSP, gave me more measured responses, seeming to take it for granted that monitoring and evaluation is an effective way to keep track of programs. However, many of the staff members saw monitoring as a chore necessary to pacify donors.

Yet despite earlier criticisms of the ineffectiveness of its monitoring and evaluation systems, Tamana, the Canadian intern working under Nicolle, stated that “MSDSP is the only [Kyrgyz] organization trusted in donor community” (12/03/2013). This is in part because regardless of impact on actual programs, monitoring and evaluation gives the entire network of intermediary organizations an *evidence-based shared narrative* of what is happening on the ground and what the status of the programming is, even if that narrative is at times a critical one. Though programming is usually not changed on the basis of this monitoring and evaluation, it does unite the different goals and organizational cultures of AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP around a set of shared understandings, both of the achievements and the shortfalls of their programming.

In the case of the climate change adaptation project, Alibek conducted surveys and focus groups (designed by Laurie and Nicolle) and found several weaknesses in the program, discussed in greater detail in the next chapter (Alibek 04/05/2013). This did not result in changes to or even a deep reassessment of the current program. Both Laurie and Talant seemed to hold the perception that it was too late, and indeed that the monitoring was done less to change the current program than to inform the organizations’ understanding. When both MSDSP and AKF staff gathered to discuss the next (third) iteration of the program, Alibek’s report did not lead to any startling changes in the programming, but rather was received as a background understanding of what shape the current programming was taking on the ground, pointing to certain weaknesses to look out for in the next round (Climate Change Adaptation Project Planning Meeting 03/05/2013). In short, while formal monitoring and evaluation forms a

common pool of understanding and rhetoric within the case study network, this knowledge is used for representational rather than corrective ends.

The ideas and knowledge of MSDSP's field staff – the staff members that sit in the field offices of MSDSP and have the most contact with the communities where programs are run – have no mechanisms through which they can be shared across the network. Indeed, there is an interesting dissonance around the topic of field staff expertise. While both Nicolle and Tamana praised the expertise and commitment of the staff in MSDSP's field offices (Tamana 12/03/2013, Nicolle 15/03/2013), multiple staff member at MSDSP argued that the views and perspectives of the field staff have no impact on the way the programs are run because they are focused on the details of executing the program rather than the bigger picture – though they would be quick to add that of course field staff could and did express their opinions and share knowledge with the other organizations in the network (Ika 01/04/2013, Jyldyz Suleimanova 02/04/2013 and others). Yet Kubanich, the head of the MSDSP's Kara-Kulja field office, complained bitterly to me that the field office had many program ideas and knowledge from the ground, but that this was ignored by those above him (Kubanich 08/04/2013). In short, the Kyrgyz network *does* have mechanisms to learn and spread knowledge of what goes on in the communities where they work, but this information is used to create a pool of common understandings that aligns the network, rather than impacting the way programs are created or run on the ground. Indeed, this can be broadly attributed to the mechanisms the network of intermediaries has created to forge connections to the grassroots: having field offices and staff that are deeply engaged with communities and carrying out monitoring and evaluation can both be understood to be ways of attempting to align the different actors involved into a shared understanding and rhetoric of overarching programmatic aims.

Due to the close institutional connections and hierarchies between AKF Kyrgyzstan, MSDSP and the local institutions they themselves set up in the villages where they work, the 'image' of the network in Kyrgyzstan is cohesive and controlled. This is also in part due to the

history and background of the Kyrgyz staff – Talant once stated that MSDSP staff members “look to the top for all decisions, which is a Soviet relic of organizational culture” (01/04/2013). Yet part of this was also the structural factors of the AKF network. Outside of grant proposals, tenders and donor reports, which are quite another matter and fall into the representational categories already discussed, MSDSP and AKF Kyrgyzstan are both succinctly summarized on the global AKF website, and publish one annual report. Nominally this is the MSDSP Annual Report, but as AKF has no other and as MSDSP activities are closely coordinated by AKF the report is in fact meant to stand for both organizations. Indeed, the report as well as all other public output of *both* AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP is under the purview of one person: Mavluda. Though technically a MSDSP staff member, Mavluda sits in the AKF office in Bishkek, demonstrating the interknit nature of the two organizations and the interlinked way in which they present themselves. Mavluda takes over whenever there is any need for visibility, including interacting with the press at any MSDSP location (I ran into her leading local press around in the Naryn office). She creates publicity and even educational material (calendars, videos used during training, press releases, etc). Mavluda coordinated the creation of the climate change adaptation video used during the program’s training (Mavluda 20/03/2013).

Because there is one person controlling the message, the public message is uniform: as noted above, MSDSP’s annual report briefly mentions climate change adaptation, though the focus is very much on the themes of livelihood, education, civil society and health set by the global Aga Khan Foundation, and mirrors the structure of the global AKF website. The same is true of MSDSP and AKF Kyrgyzstan’s annual strategic plan (developed collectively and approved by AKF staff from Geneva). The plan states that “improving climate change resilience will remain a cross-cutting theme”, and after this nod to climate change the rest of the document is focused on “interventions in natural resource management, education, and health, [which] converge in villages and are implemented in collaboration with and between community-based groups and local government” (MSDSP Kg and AKF Kg 2011: 5). Thus the intermediaries send

a univocal external signal: climate change adaptation is important and noted, and thus a part of their rhetoric and approach, but the over-arching focus lies in the core program areas of the global Aga Khan Foundation. This is another way of forming coherence in a network of different organizations with different aims: since the network has one coherent externally-oriented message, this becomes a knowledge commons in itself, a shared set of ideas for the network as a whole.

v. Beyond the Networks: Relationships with the State

Relationships with the agents and organizations of the state permeate both of the case study networks. Indeed, there are startling similarities in the way intermediary organizations engage with the state both in Kyrgyzstan and in Kenya: both Waso Trustland in Kenya and MSDSP in Kyrgyzstan do so in an explicit and goal-oriented way. Also parallel is the level of distrust and ambivalence towards the state at the local level, discussed more in the following chapter, and the way that intermediary organizations in the network fail to appease this distrust, but do manage to *teach* the villages how to tap into the resources and promises of the state. However, both motivations and methods vary between the two. In Kenya, Waso Trustland itself is highly suspicious and disdainful of the state. In Kyrgyzstan, both MSDSP and AKF Kg do not voice any reservations about the state, and indeed make state inclusion and utilization in their programming an overt goal. In both cases, the engagement of civil society networks with the state both illustrates and nuances the good governance critique by Chandhoke (2003) that the state itself is becoming networked and pluralized through its reliance on civil society actors.

Waso Trustland's relationship with the state is central to its work and self-perception, and thus is woven into the sections below. However, while AKF KG and MSDSP have a coherent stance on their relationship with the state, building this relationship is delegated to particular programs and people, and thus necessitates a separate discussion. Both AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP are explicit about wanting to work with the state and to incorporate

state structures and state resources into their programming. AKF Kyrgyzstan cultivates strong ties with the Kyrgyz government on the national level, helped by the AKDN office in Bishkek:³⁶ I sat in on one meeting in Bishkek where Karl and AKDN staff discussed meetings with parliamentarians and the parliamentary perceptions of AKF's work (14/03/2013). Talant told me that "AKF has a good relationship with the government, including at the national level". This is because, in his words, "MSDSP has continuity [in its programming], it doesn't have to follow the money the way most NGOs do – the government appreciates this" (01/04/2013). Yet this positive relationship also emerges out of the explicit efforts of AKF Kg and AKDN. To maintain this relationship, AKDN, AKF Kg and MSDSP do not take advocacy positions in opposition to or in criticism of the state. Instead, AKF Kg and MSDSP understand themselves to be aiding the state, particularly at the local governance level.

MSDSP runs projects under the umbrella of local governance that are specifically designed to work with the Kyrgyz government on the local (village and village-district) level. Though the local governance program has its own staff in Osh and in the field offices as well as dedicated projects, the MSDSP strategy document also states that it is an over-arching theme that is supposed to be addressed throughout all of MSDSP's programming (MSDSP KG & AKF Kg 2011). Not only is the aim of working with government structures integrated throughout the work of the two organizations, but it is also interwoven with MSDSP's work on civil society development – indeed both local governance and civil society are bundled into the same program with the same staff members working on both. Arslan Miiashhev, the local governance program officer at MSDSP, said that the goal of the program is "to increase potential of local governance and civil society and link with local population, to involve them. [The program] works *both* with local government and civil society" (03/04/2013). Thus though the program is supposed to be strengthening local government institutions, it also creates bridges between these

³⁶ This is something like the embassy of the Aga Khan, with the overt role of maintaining diplomatic relationships between the Aga Khan's various agencies and businesses and the countries they work in.

institutions and local civil society organizations.³⁷ Indeed, it is telling that programming dealing with local governance and with civil society is so closely interwoven and interlinked. In Tamana's words, the AKF Kg and MSDSP try to set up civil society associations and structures that "work hand in hand with the government" and are "eventually used by the government" (12/03/2013). AKF Kg and MSDSP's view of the role of civil society is not to question or critique, but rather to work with and aid the state.

A large part of the local governance programming focuses around workshops and trainings for local government officials (Arslan 03/04/2013). For Arslan, MSDSP provides a link between people, civil society and government by promulgating and spreading ideas. Arslan stated that

There is a lack of trust for government, and thus it's very difficult to mobilize people, to get **information flowing...** [but MSDSP] tries to create links between all sides, **links of information**. We get government to give information to the people and to create participatory governance linked with people and civil society... **MSDSP pushes for the government to take people's opinions into account.** (3/04/2013, my emphasis)

For instance, this could involve encouraging local government institutions to hold public hearings when developing the local development strategy. This also ties into MSDSP's interest in local participation, discussed earlier in this chapter. Talant echoed Arslan, saying MSDSP "addresses the miscommunication between government and people" (01/04/2013). The underlying assumption is that providing information will be a way to build trust in the state. Running workshops for local government officials is also a reflection of MSDSP's power and influence – workshops are after all a claim of superior expertise.

The climate change adaptation project is a clear example of MSDSP's two-way influence on both state and local civil society organizations. The project's initial proposal states that the project will "enhance the capacity of local authorities, and government representatives" (AKF Kg 2010). When I asked Arslan what climate change adaptation had to do with local government, he told me that the first iteration of the program was "oriented on building

³⁷ Civil society in this usage is narrowly defined by MSDSP (both in documents and by staff in everyday usage) as registered CBOs, for instance savings or water-management groups.

relationships... and the potential of local government in dealing with climate change” (03/04/2013). Indeed, in her initial report on climate change adaptation for AKF Kyrgyzstan, Laurie wrote that one of the goals of AKF Kg/MSDSP’s climate change adaptation strategy would be to “share climate change adaptation experience and lessons learned to encourage replication and **influence policy**” (Ashley 2011, my emphasis). A major part of the project has been making presentations about climate change adaptation and local impact assessments to government officials on the village and village-district levels, influencing policy locally. One of the aims of the project that both Laurie and Pirjan mentioned repeatedly is to get villages’ climate change adaptation plans to become part of the village-districts’ development plans (Laurie 20/03/2013, Pirjan 29/04/2013).³⁸ At the same time, it is through the program that MSDSP has become a member of Kyrgyzstan’s Climate Change Network, a collection of civil society bodies lobbying and engaging with the government’s policies. Most importantly, examining the program in practice demonstrates the way it relies on and interweaves the role of local officials – and to some extent national ministries such as the ministry for emergency situations – in the way it functions.

The climate change adaptation project is also an excellent example of the way that AKF Kg and MSDSP’s programming (both within and outside of the local governance program) explicitly aims to access the resources of the state. Because the program explicitly involves local government institutions throughout – for instance by running workshops on climate change adaptation for local officials – once the working group starts implementing the adaptation mini-project, MSDSP is able to utilize state resources to help the project – and through this process inadvertently teach local people how state resources can be accessed. Pirjan told me that when approving the mini-project MSDSP shows the plan to local government officials and pressures

³⁸ Every village-district (Ail-Okrug) is supposed to have and be following an economic and social development plan.

them to agree to help in various ways: for example, the local council agreed to lend Saro-Kamush their excavator for the project and to provide gasoline.

Accessing state resources is not always easy: a neighboring local council promised sizable financial assistance to another climate change adaptation mini-project that involved building a bridge over a flooding river that is seasonally crossed by herders. When it came time to hand over the money officials balked at doing so (Pirjan 18/04/2013). After this Pirjan declared that from that point on he would put all such promises in writing. For Saro-Kamush's mini-project he asked for written and signed promises to lend the excavator and provide gasoline. As will be discussed further in the following chapter, locals are deeply distrustful of the state and see it as neglecting its responsibility, but learn through this process how to access state resources. MSDSP is aware of this process, and is attempting to create "links of information" (Arslan 03/04/2013) between government, civil society organizations and locals.

Through this process the state itself becomes pluralized and networked – its responsibilities are fulfilled not simply through its own operations but also through organizations such as AKF Kg and MSDSP, who ultimately teach local residents how to take on responsibilities in the areas where the state is inadequate or remiss. This echoes but also furthers and refines the good governance critique. Proponents of good governance argue that the state is just one organization of many that fulfill a particular role or need (such as protecting forests or digging canals). The good governance agenda posits that civil society plays a key role in insuring a society with well-functioning markets, wide-reaching social services and a responsive state (Lewis 2002). Critics of this perspective point out that in such a scenario "state institutions **network** with other organizations that were formerly contained within the non-state sphere of civil society" (Chandhoke 2003: 2960, my emphasis, see also Jayal 1997). State responsibilities are subcontracted to civil society organizations (such as those discussed here) until the state becomes a pluralized "networking polity" (Chandhoke 2003: 2963). Chandhoke (2003) argues that this blurring of the line between state and civil society becomes a problem because of the lack of

accountability and representation. Citizens can theoretically protest the negligence of the state through votes and demonstrations, but are unable to do so when the same responsibilities are transferred to NGOs, who are not democratically elected, and thus not directly accountable to citizens.

Yet the civil society organizations in both case study networks are not simply handmaidens of the state – they decide on their own agenda. Often this agenda is indeed to bolster the areas where the state has failed, and in the case of MSDSP's local governance program, local state institutions are actually asked how MSDSP could help them (Arslan 03/04/2013). At the same time, intermediary civil society organizations are able to create connections between the local and the state, giving both ways of accessing the other. Arslan claimed that "MSDSP pushes the government to take people's opinions into account" (03/04/2013). Thus beyond simply acting as nodes of the networked state, organizations such as MSDSP and Waso Trustland play a key role in spreading knowledge about both state services and resources *and* local needs and desires.

However, these programs are also intimately tied with the desires and interests of the international funders – and their global movement of choice – who underwrite the intermediaries, as well as the intermediaries' own goals. When I specifically brought up the good governance critique to Talant at MSDSP, his response was that:

Time matters – the government can't do many things because of resource limitation, constraints... Funding the government directly is ineffective because of low quality government workers, poorer human resources. NGOs **are exposed to something new, [through] international exchanges we have exposure to information.** (01/04/2013, my emphasis)

The crux of the argument here is that intermediary NGOs such as MSDSP are able to innovate in a way that the government cannot – not only because of a lack of resources, but specifically because of the ways that MSDSP is linked to flows of ideas and knowledge. In this vision NGOs become the research and development wing of the state. State and civil society are not in opposition (Ferguson 1998), but neither is the development-focused civil society in this case simply a handmaiden of the state. AKF Kg and MSDSP do more than fill the functions of the

state – they redefine these functions in light of external ideas and approaches that state official might either have little access to or choose to ignore.

b. Kenya: Kivulini Heritage Trust and Waso Trustland Project

i. The Kivulini Heritage Trust: Fostering Biocultural Diversity in Nairobi

The Kivulini Heritage Trust plays two vital roles in forming biocultural diversity discourse – and thus ecological knowledge flows – between Beliqo, Waso Trustland and TCF. First, Kivulini helps other organizations (such as WTL) and local communities package their problems and project proposals to fit into the grant requirements of TCF. Second, Kivulini enables TCF to understand what is happening on the ground, to get a sense of the ‘indigenous knowledge’ that they are choosing to value, and thus to develop their sense of legitimacy and purpose. Indeed, Hassan Roba, a local consultant for Kivulini and Dr. Hussein’s co-worker at the National Museum of Kenya, himself referred to Kivulini as “a middle man” (Roba 21/07/2011), one that serves both the local and the global. Dr. Hussein, the founder and director of Kivulini, was also acutely aware of Kivulini’s role as an intermediary. Not only does Kivulini act as an intermediary in passing up grants proposals and passing down funds from TCF, but the organization sparks and then shapes ideas on the community level into a form palatable to TCF: it “teaches ways to package thoughts” (Hussein 13/07/2011).

Kivulini’s purpose statement is in many ways an echo of TCF’s: to support “communities’ endeavors to sustain environmental and cultural vitality and prosperity” (Kivulini Heritage Trust 2011). Both the formal vision and mission statement of Kivulini echo this dual emphasis on both culture and natural environment. Yet while the main aim of Kivulini is the broader one of biocultural diversity, Dr. Hussein linked Kivulini’s work with broader, global environmental concerns. Dr. Hussein saw biocultural diversity not as Kivulini’s sole focus, but as a way to engage with the challenges of northern Kenya’s pastoralist population around ecological and cultural degradation. At the same time, Dr. Hussein extrapolated from the tie between

culture and local ecology to broader, global environmental concerns such as climate change, for instance in conversation linking climate change with changes in flow levels of the Ewaso Niro River that flows through Beliqo (13/07/2011). In the words of Dr. Hussein, Kivulini's broader aim is to "solve big problems through the right routes" (11/07/2011). One begins with "empowering the communities themselves, giving them voice", which would enable them to engage with institutions bigger than themselves, be they the state or transnational organizations (11/07/2011). In Dr. Hussein's view, this is done by making sure that communities are "proud, both of their culture and themselves". This pride does not in Dr. Hussein's view mean a rejection of western culture or western knowledge. These communities can "use western culture to enrich [their] own culture" by no longer self-labeling their own culture as "primitive" but rather embracing both "their own knowledge and western knowledge at the same time" (11/07/2011).

Dr. Hussein argued that this is the route to sustainable management of natural resources, a type of management where people do not become the "enemy of nature and wildlife" (as in the fortress conservation approach) but instead are able to "utilize their environment, the land and soil" while still ensuring its survival (11/07/2011). Dr. Hussein's example of this was sacred sites, where communities cannot kill animals or cut trees because of the cultural value of a space. Thus Dr. Hussein saw Kivulini's main contribution to the communities with which it works as highlighting the relationship between culture and nature via the promotion of indigenous knowledge: in his words, one must have a sense of the "bigger picture to protect smaller details" (13/07/2011). The link between culture and environment seemed almost obvious in Dr. Hussein's terms: "nature acts on culture, and impacts us" just as people act on nature. In conversations with Dr. Hussein indigenous culture was the example most commonly used to demonstrate this relationship: be it the ritual use of plants, the relationship between the honey-guide bird and the people that depend on it, or the relationship between wild and cultivated plants and livestock. Indigenous knowledge was the way in which this relationship was

highlighted and acknowledged – Dr. Hussein referred to community elders who “have [their] own way of addressing ecological issues, [which are] deeper, more relevant, and stem from experience, examples, and proverbs” (Hussein 13/07/2011). Dr. Hussein has a sophisticated awareness of his own role in promoting this view. Indeed, he headed off a critique of romanticism without me ever voicing it, stating flatly that “we preserve pastoralism *not* out of romanticism, but for survival of people” (13/07/2011). Indigenous knowledge and its link to cultural and ecological preservation were thus existential necessities in Dr. Hussein’s view.

Yet Dr. Hussein made it clear that indigenous knowledge combined with civil society alone was not enough. Political involvement and innovative approaches and new ideas were also vital. When asked what was needed to strengthen pastoralism, he responded that it is necessary to “add value, through new technologies and tools” as well as through better “marketing of animals and animal products” from the pastoralist communities of the north to the rest of the country (11/7/2011). He pointed out that a focus on biocultural diversity preservation could bring tourist benefits but these are dependent on not only protecting cultural and natural diversity, but also on transportation infrastructure – in his words, “tourism needs roads”. Roads are dependent on the state, and thus politics (11/07/2011). Thus biocultural diversity did have an instrumental value to indigenous communities, but one that relied on markets, new ideas and infrastructure provided by the state.

At the same time as Kivulini privileged indigenous knowledge in their discourse, outside knowledge was also valued, and indeed depicted as crucial. Hassan Roba used the word “information” repeatedly in conjunction with engagement with the challenges of change on the local level. In his view, local communities in Kenya for the most part lacked the capacity to engage with change due to a lack of information. In his words, “culture and the environment are declining because of change – and [communities] need information to *manage* change” (21/07/2011). This information is not only about the world outside local communities, but also about practical ways to engage with that world. Kivulini’s role in helping community groups

write proposals was understood by Hassan Roba as fulfilling this information gap, while at the same time creating ties with communities and as an end result creating projects that were the brainchild of both Kivulini and the communities where they were implemented (Roba 21/07/2011).

Hassan Roba acknowledged that interactions between the local, the national, and international are vital, and he noted that they are created “via shared values and interests” (Roba 21/07/2011) – and a shared discourse that expresses these. Kivulini staff is clear about the role they play in creating this point of connection to the grassroots, as well as leading communities to adopt the sorts of ideas and lexicon that would fit into the broader global discourse of biocultural diversity that TCF upholds. Dr. Hussein described Kivulini’s role in knowledge spread as “dropping an idea in front of the community, and the community takes it up” (Hussein 11/07/2011). Dr. Hussein acknowledged the tension between the discourse of indigenous knowledge and participation as one of the essential aspects of Kivulini’s (and TCF’s) identity on the one hand, and the fact that Kivulini acts as a filter for groups, choosing groups on the basis of seeing if they would invest TCF money “in the way we want, in the way we will help them” (Hussein 11/07/2011). If Kivulini sees a community or a need they think will be translatable into the discourse (and practice) of biocultural diversity, then in the words of Fatuma, “Kivulini encourages CBO formation and registration” so that they can financially support programs. They also choose to work with already formed groups, as long as the groups are willing to be tweaked or even transformed to fit the grant requirements (Fatuma 10/07/2011).

This position of vetting and guiding CBOs implies the exercise of external authority, which seems at odds with the overt valuing of local knowledge and agency in the rhetoric of Kivulini. Kivulini thus takes on the role of ‘filtering’ local perspectives through the sieve of its shared discourse of the global. Yet Dr. Hussein insisted that Kivulini is not a gatekeeper, but rather an upward link:

We teach proposal writing, and make people understand the importance [of their concerns] – they don't **make the link to global importance**, so we link local to global... We sit for hours until vision comes out of [locals]. **We're not teaching, but sharing some relevant information, knowledge.** For instance, we don't talk of emissions, but of the fact that flowers are being farmed upriver [which pollute or divert the water] or dams are being built. We choose what to talk about, we're realists. (19/07/2011, my emphasis)

Throughout our conversations, Dr. Hussein repeatedly refused to see his role as that of teaching or telling people what to prioritize, but rather as a conduit of knowledge and languages. Yet here he is acknowledging the power inherent in this translator role, which creates the issues that both communities and global donors engage with. This reflects John Meyer's (1999, 2010) argument of civil society organizations as 'consultants' and 'advisors' manipulating the knowledge and direction of actors through advice and input from the sidelines. In Meyer's work these actors tend to be states, but I would argue that this is a case where Kivulini as a civil society 'consultant' is shaping both actors on the ground and the actors controlling resources in the global node. Yet Kivulini's role goes beyond giving advice: Dr. Hussein does not lack agency and action, but rather straddles the insider-outsider divide, partly because of his background, discussed in more detail below, of being both from a pastoralist community in Northern Kenya, and Western-educated.

There is some ambivalence in Kivulini's view of and relationship with local community-based organizations. Dr. Hussein acknowledged that local civil society groups were instrumentalised as a way to gain income and employment, pointing out that groups were formed if it was clear that there was the possibility for funding for a project (19/07/2011). Hassan Roba echoed this view, describing the multitude of CBOs in Kenya as formed to look for money – money to address problems “real or imagined” (21/07/2011). But this was not brought up as a critique by either of the two men, more as the reality behind the proliferation of CBOs in Kenya. Hassan Roba painted a picture of Kivulini's role in this proliferation of civil society organizations as serving to both “vet and guide CBOs”, to broaden the benefits and scope of CBO's work, diversify their ways of thinking, and insure financial sustainability of their operations (21/07/2011). While Dr. Hussein did critique some CBOs for being no more than

“just activities backed by NGOs”, the implication was that this was the NGOs’ fault, and that “CBOs shouldn’t be used as field assistants by NGOs, should know *why* what they’re doing is important”. To this end, “Kivulini asks why, and creates a vision for CBOs, be it [one of] equality, or environment” (19/07/2011). Thus Dr. Hussein acknowledged Kivulini’s role in pushing an agenda and a long-term vision while at the same time engaging both individual interest and the entire community.

One of the words that was most commonly repeated throughout the series of conversations I had with Dr. Hussein was “vision”: its importance, the fact that many communities and even civil society organizations in Kenya lacked it, the importance of Kivulini’s and TCF’s vision, and the tension between emphasizing a community’s own goals, vision and participation and bringing in Kivulini’s values. Dr. Hussein engaged with this tension by stating that:

We don’t go deliberately to teach, but to do anything you must know something: any task requires knowledge... [Kivulini] teaches ways to package thoughts, *not* for building capacity to get more grants, but rather to understand the environment, the bigger picture. Kivulini asks the bigger picture questions... by sharing a vision with the community, we bring it higher. (19/07/2011)

Thus Kivulini does teach, but it teaches how to “package” ideas so that they link to bigger, often global question and issues. Dr. Hussein’s conception of the usual pattern of interaction between international or national-level organizations and local communities was that “people with money have the bigger vision” (in his examples, environmental protection or global warming) and they give money to Nairobi-based organizations with a smaller environmental vision (for instance, planting trees), who in turn give money to CBOs to act as “laborers” carrying out the activity in question, such as planting trees. Dr. Hussein sees Kivulini as unique in “challenging” CBOs and communities to have a broader vision of their own, as otherwise “they are themselves limited by the donor’s vision” (Hussein 13/07/2011).

Dr. Hussein is very open about the fact that Kivulini does not have the capacity to be on the ground, and in his perspective, if Kivulini is to encourage communities to take up a project, Kivulini must make it “the community’s proposal” (Hussein 29/08/2011). Dr. Hussein

conceptualized this collaboration between the community and Kivulini very much as a use and a *valuing* of local knowledge and collaboratively being able to apply this knowledge to local problems. The ideas are ideally “community proposed” and are then “Kivulini enriched” (Hussein 11/07/2011). This kind of relationship is of course an ideal, communicated to me in conversation rather than seen in the field. But the way that Dr. Hussein speaks of the relationship between local-level organizations and Kivulini is a large part of understanding the role that Kivulini plays in linking the local into the global, in particular in bringing in biocultural diversity values and understandings, while at the same time encouraging local ownership of the projects through a process of valuing local knowledge.

Despite having a strong sense of its unique role in “empowering” communities, Kivulini is very much aware of its connection to the Christensen Fund. Dr. Hussein did admit that TCF requires community projects to combine biodiversity and culture (11/07/2011, 29/08/2011). Dr. Hussein’s view of Kivulini as translating TCF’s vision of biocultural diversity into the projects adopted by the communities seems to lie in tension with his insistence on allowing the communities voice and choice when it came to matters of importance to them, a tension he never resolved directly. Dr. Hussein made no secret of the ways in which Kivulini’s and the Christensen Fund’s ideas and values align – he stated directly that “the line between TCF and Kivulini is very thin” (29/08/2011). At the same time, Hassan Roba argued that one “can’t push values downwards” onto communities, that organizations such as Kivulini “must build off what’s there” (Roba 21/07/2011).

Hassan Roba highlighted the pitfalls of ignoring community-held values when speaking about controversy surrounding the Northern Rangelands Trust’s work in creating a community-conservancy around Beliqo,³⁹ particularly the tension between wildlife protection (and ecology more broadly) and pastoralist livelihoods which depend on grazing on conservancy land. Hassan

³⁹ See Chapter Three for more details on the Northern Rangelands Trust and the controversy over the community conservancy project in Beliqo and Isiolo.

Roba said that in Beliqo the problem was “a matter of packaging, of [the gap between] perception and intention – the community feels pushed, there’s no ownership” (21/07/2011). Hassan Roba made the case that action must be embedded in values that, even if they were brought from an outside institution, must speak to the people engaged on the local level. For Hassan Roba, if a community feels pushed, with no ownership of the project, or the aims or values involved, then the project can rarely succeed. Like MSDSP, Hassan Roba implicitly acknowledge that a project must capture the sustained interest and attention of a community, and to do so must build on local values, perspectives and interests.

This is the closest to the rhetoric of participation that both Hassan Roba and Dr. Hussein came in my conversations with them. At the same time, Kivulini clearly had an acknowledged top-down role to play. In one interview Dr. Hussein spoke of Kivulini’s role as being to “create the cause” (Hussein 19/07/2011), achieved by his method of going out in his car to the far-flung communities of northern Kenya that Kivulini works with, spending an entire day with each the groups, eating, sitting, “walking through the landscape” together while having discussions about the value of the place and the traditions of the people. He always brings what he terms a “portable office” – a laptop, camera and portable printer – and writes up a grant proposal then and there (11/07/2011). After this a project is, in Dr. Hussein’s view, mutually constructed between the community and Kivulini. In other words, Dr. Hussein directly described his role as “teach[ing] proposal writing in order to make people understand importance” (Hussein 19/07/2011), be it the importance of certain cultural practices or of landscapes and ecologies. Kivulini thus sees itself as not simply finding or even creating community level projects that fulfill its own and TCF’s vision, but also as being part of the creation of values in these communities, values that then form the foundations of such programs.

Dr. Hussein stated that Kivulini aims to “validate” and “streamline” indigenous knowledge into “current” or more widely accepted ways of understanding (Hussein

11/07/2011). Thus it is not only bringing the broader biodiversity discourse to projects funded by TCF, but also puts into practice TCF's (and Kivulini's) rhetoric of valuing indigenous knowledge and local participation. Dr. Hussein spoke of outsiders discounting local knowledge because of differences of language and articulation, since local knowledge tends to be presented in unfamiliar ways and takes forms that are not valued in the Global North. Recognizing and valuing local knowledge is vital, but the only way we can do so is by "unpatterning", by shifting our culturally set expectations about 'legitimate' forms of knowledge (Hussein 29/08/2011). Again, this seems to deny the agency and capabilities of locals to fend for themselves – Dr. Hussein here seems to be arguing that it is necessary for organizations such as his own to exist in order to translate from the local to the global. At the same time, Dr. Hussein also reiterated the role of Kivulini staff in "bringing awareness", particularly environmental awareness, to local groups, who "can't do it alone" (Hussein 13/07/2011). When Kivulini brought information during trips to communities in Northern Kenya, it would "change perceptions", and that would often change action, such as the behavior of giraffe poachers who come to learn of the potential income from conserving wildlife. Kivulini's role is to ask "why?", to "*lead* communities to knowledge". Dr. Hussein argued that the key is to understand not *who* is cutting the tree, but rather what led to that action and what will happen as a result, and to then act on this knowledge. In short, by enabling a common discourse and understanding between the local and the global, Kivulini sees itself as facilitating "a meeting point of knowledge transfers", from both above and below (Hussein 19/07/2011). A key site for understanding this melting and its effects is one of the local NGOs in the north of the country that Kivulini has partnered with: the Waso Trustland Project.

ii. Waso Trustland Project Motivations: Rights, Access and Ethnic Conflict

Waso Trustland exemplifies the ways that nodes in civil society knowledge networks are able to hold on to their core ideological commitments, even when these do not square neatly with the

ideational content of the network as a whole. For Waso Trustland, this ideological commitment centers on its relationship to the Kenyan state. This relationship has long been both adversarial and demanding. Its founder and head, Hassan Shano, has a history as a human rights activist, and has indeed been jailed on charges of ‘incitement’ during a protest. This history has lent him a critical perspective on the role of the state in social projects, including conservation. He stated that WTL should not rely on the government, and often expressed anger at the way that the Kenyan government was handling the ongoing severe drought in the north of Kenya in 2011, claiming that the “ministers were missing in action” and “ignoring the issue” (28/07/2011). WTL also criticized the claimed mismanagement and corruption in the local council’s management of the district’s game reserves. Shano argued that if the community had direct control of the reserves the benefits would be better managed and equitably distributed (25/07/2014). WTL has not hesitated to take government ministries to court over perceived corruption or mismanagement.

At the same time, the staff at WTL did acknowledge the role and usefulness, both potential and realized, of state actors, particularly when it came to conservation and environmental issues. In particular, one of the key mechanisms enabling the existence of the forest conservation movement in Beliqo is the 2005 Kenya Forests Act, which grants legal community control of local forests through the creation of community forest associations – and WTL acknowledged that this was a government policy that legitimized and gave structure to local movements. Hassan Shano was also willing to cede that there were some government agencies that were doing good work – one of these was the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (Arid Lands for short), which Shano referred to as “a small office, but it has done a lot” (27/07/2011). In short, although WTL’s relationship with the state seemed both fraught and adversarial, the organization acknowledged the power and influence of state actors, from the local level to the national.

A particularly telling anecdote was the evolution of the relationship between Hassan Shano and Councilor Golicha, the elected county councilor for the Beliqo area. WTL campaigned hard against the establishment of the community nature conservancy that Golicha had supported, accusing Golicha of being a puppet, fooled, or out for personal gain, and Shano spoke of the councilor with great bitterness. Golicha had never visited the WTL office, and Shano claimed that he avoided WTL staff in order to avoid confrontation. At the same time, Shano acknowledged that he would prefer to have the councilor working with WTL, and that though they differed on the conservancy question, they might in fact be of similar views and be able to work together on different issues. During my own time at the WTL office, I set up an interview with the councilor, and he ended up coming to the WTL office (for the first time). Shano joined us at the end of the interview and began a conversation about my research and presence in the organization. By the end of the conversation, Councilor Golicha and Hassan Shano were shaking hands, smiling and asking me to take photographs of the two of them together. Hassan Shano affirmed that they should be working together and that they shared the same concerns. After the Councilor left, Hassan Shano turned to me and thanked me for being the mechanism via which the rift between the Councilor and WTL was healed (29/07/2011), and continued to mention the incident for several weeks afterwards. This is a demonstration not simply of the role of my own positionality and participation in the research, however inadvertent, but also that despite its adversarial position, WTL saw the advantages of cooperation with local state actors.

WTL has expanded its attention from land-rights advocacy to resource rights, ecological activism and grass-roots conservation efforts. Yet the way that WTL talks about environmentalism is still centered on the language of rights and access. In explaining that WTL is willing to work with any pastoralist group in the north, WTL's administrative assistant (and jack-of-all-trades) Liban declared that "the environment doesn't have *boundaries*" (Liban 27/07/2011, his emphasis). In rhetoric such as this, it is clear that WTL is concerned with boundaries and

land tenure – Liban went on to explain that many of the issues and conflicts that WTL deals with are a result of differences in land tenure between different districts and ethnic groups. In neighboring Meru district land is privately owned, and both Shano and Liban brought up the Meru ethnic group repeatedly as the perpetrators that hoped to log and sell off the riverine forest around Beliqo village (Shano 26/07/2011, Shano and Liban 27/07/2011). Thus ideas and rhetoric around ownership and rights to access form the backbone of WTL’s approach to environmentalism.

Indeed, WTL’s involvement with conservation around Beliqo Village originated in its concern with water rights and the use and misuse of the Waso River. WTL became involved in the emerging conflict between the farmers of central Kenya, who were diverting the water upriver for agriculture, and the pastoralists downstream in northern Kenya, who rely on the river to water their livestock. From this concern with the misuse of water, WTL became aware of similar concerns surrounding the riverine forest in the vicinity of Beliqo village (Shano and Liban 25/07/2011). Indeed, the ecologically-focused conversations I had at WTL were almost always related either to access rights or to conflict. As Shano described it, much conflict in the region comes from tensions over land access, and natural resource use also was a major source of conflict. In recounting the way that WTL became interested in the conservation of the Ewaso Niro river and the forest around it, conflict was a prominent theme – not only conflict between the farmers upstream and the pastoralists downstream, but also competition with other river users and with ethnic outsiders who were accused of trying to destroy the forest around the river for personal gain (Shano 26/07/2011). Like Shano and Liban, the chairman of WTL’s board blamed the Meru ethnic group as the source of ecological problems in Beliqo, describing them as “outsiders with power saws” who cannot be held accountable to Borana law. In his words, formal state mechanisms to stop these outsiders were not working “due to corruption”, and because the government was “never serious about the environment” (Gira Huka 27/08/2011).

WTL's view of the connections state neglect, ethnic conflict and ecological ownership became clear in a discussion between Shano, Liban and Maulit, a WTL legal intern provided by the Kenya Land Alliance, one of Waso Trustland's partner NGOs. They discussed Maulit's discovery of ecological degradation caused by deforestation and the diversion of rivers and springs for farming in a neighboring district. In this conversation all three were incensed with the state's apathy and neglect and planned to lobby various local government offices. They also associated the drying up of the river with deforestation, and blamed Meru farmers for inciting tree cutting, diverting the river and encouraging herders in the area to start doing the same, thus endangering the ecology of the region and the future of the herders who need these water sources for their livestock (Liban, Maulit, Shano 21/08/2011). This conversation highlighted a number of themes: WTL's tense relationship with the state, which is both an important actor and a negative, corrupt and neglectful one; the ethnic tensions that emerge out of different modes of resource use; the tension over who has legitimate access to these resources; and the central importance of herding for the pastoralist community.

Thus in WTL's lexicon, resources rights and access are intertwined with inter-ethnic conflict, and the ecological is linked with political and economic issues, particularly land rights and state corruption. Throughout my time with WTL this remained the organization's focus, even when engaged with the biocultural diversity rhetoric of the global node and the conservation work on the ground with CFA. Yet for WTL, conservation is not mission drift: as will be outlined in more detail below, WTL is able to forge a viable connection between their emphasis on land rights, government accountability and conflict on the one hand, and a broader focus on biocultural diversity and conservation on the other.

iii. Waso Trustland and the Creation of Knowledge Networks: Connecting to Global Concerns

WTL plays the crucial role in ensuring that the individual aims of each node in this case study network are reformatted to fit within the discourse of the network as a whole. WTL is adept at

doing this, particularly in addressing its own interest in land rights and CFA's interest in livelihood by creating a link between the two and conservation activities. WTL forges this link not only through its rhetoric, but also by both spreading information – 'sensitization' in the words of Shano (25/07/2011) – and by gathering information from the local. WTL thus becomes a mediator between its own interests, local village concerns, and the broader discourses of conservation and local knowledge.

Though Hassan Shano and Liban are primarily interested in land rights, they are clear about wanting to engage with the environment and with conservation. They see this both as a way to preempt what they perceive to be 'land-grabs' by outsiders under the guise of wildlife conservation and as a way to ensure present and future resource rights. From a concern with land rights, they explained, it is a short leap to a concern with what's *on* and *in* the land – in other words, resource rights. In the words of Hassan Shano, one "can't eat the land" (Shano 26/07/2011). A focus on land is not enough, one must also focus on "resources that come out of the land" and the environment is "another resource", one that was "very fragile in Isiolo" (Liban 25/07/2011). They linked this view with community involvement and the spread of information. They spoke of wanting to "sensitize" and "inform" (Shano and Liban 25/07/2011) communities about the conservation of the environment, and of vegetation in particular, but at the same time *not* privilege wildlife or the natural world over human life and livelihood. Thus, though WTL has expanded its work into the realm of conservation, its focus has remained on humans. They pointed out that humans and livestock have long co-existed successfully with wildlife, and Shano stated that it is "traditional knowledge" that enables such co-existence, that "Borana always had indigenous knowledge to co-exist with nature" and have been "doing it from time immemorial" (Shano 21/08/2011). This is a perfect echo of biocultural diversity discourse.

Indeed, in a tell-tale reference during the same conversation, the two of them referenced "Western language" as "misplacing" people and livestock in conservation efforts. Shano repeatedly voiced frustrations with these efforts, passionately stating that the indigenous people

of Isiolo district have repeatedly given land to wildlife but have received “minimal benefit” and that the land in question is “our property, our rights”. What pastoralists demand and need is “information [and] knowledge on how to conserve all resources” (Shano 21/08/2011). This undermines Tadasse’s arguments in the previous chapter that the key needs of pastoralists are not material, but also undermines Inglehart’s (1981, 1995) argument that ecological awareness can only come once material needs have been satisfied. Waso Trustland *is* materially focused, but does not see this as a contradiction with conservation. For Shano material benefits and land rights become fused with ecology and indigenous knowledge, allowing WTL to create a network that spans both TCF and CFA, uniting their goals into a broad discourse that creates the links needed for the network to function as a whole.

Though Liban and Shano utilized the words “conservation” and “biodiversity”, they see the end goal of conservation as “benefiting the community” in an immediate, material sense (Shano and Liban 25/07/2011), and this contrasts with the broader emphasis of global environmental movements upon long-term benefits of maintaining biodiversity or mitigating climate change. These more immediate benefits included the possibility of ecological and cultural tourism that would “bring in resources”, as well as the ability to continue and profit from pastoralist methods of livestock rearing. Shano mentioned that what they needed was “information on how it is possible to have both livestock and wildlife and tourism *together*” (Shano 21/08/2011). Thus WTL’s discursive focus on ‘conservation’ is both more narrow and more broad than that of the biocultural diversity movement: narrower in terms of the location and time scale of expected benefits, and broader in the sense that they spoke of conserving not only the environment and “culture”, but also any other “resources that benefit communities” (Shano and Liban 27/08/2011).

WTL’s rhetoric is able to link the ecological to its foundational concerns with land rights and community ownership. As Shano stated more than once, “what belongs to everybody, belongs to nobody” (28/07/2011) – a statement seemingly in tension with the communal land

tenure of northern Kenya that WTL strives so hard to protect. Yet Shano supported community ownership and responsibility for communal land. Indeed, the formation of CFA in Beliqo can be understood as the formalization of this goal of shifting environmental awareness and values to include a sense of community ownership and responsibility. This echoes the literature that has arisen in response to Hardin's (1968) assertion of the inevitable tragedy of the commons. WTL's and CFA's assertions of community ownership echoes the arguments of scholars such as Ostrom (1990), who suggests that the user-managed commons need not end in a tragedy, and recognizes community self-determination as an essential part of effective governance of the commons. In Ostrom's 2002 edited book, Berkes and Young both reaffirm the argument that connections and relationships between different scales of institutions (often civil society institutions) is essential to contemporary governance of the commons (Berkes 2002, Young 2002). This is precisely the process that Waso Trustland is deeply engaged with through their connection both to Kivulini and the Christensen Fund as well as grassroots village groups.

The Waso Trustland Project is primarily funded by the Christensen Fund, and to receive funding WTL must facilitate projects that fit within the particular vision and understanding of TCF, and equally importantly it must be able to utilize discourse and rhetoric within its grant applications that shows enough familiarity and overlap with TCF's mission. The way that WTL worded their initial grant application to TCF demonstrates their awareness of the need to use a particular rhetoric or discourse to fit their imagined project into the global discourse of biocultural diversity. The grant application refers to global environmental goals, standards and mechanisms, including the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Forest Principles of the Earth Summit, Millennium Development Goal 7, ILO Convention 169. It also speaks of "endangered indigenous tree species highly valued.... at international levels" (Waso Trustland Project 2009).⁴⁰ Indeed, the proposal states that "the project intends to address the issue of universal changes of

⁴⁰ Though what these species are and how many there are was never stated.

climatic patterns” demonstrating a calculated decision to link the project with the global climate change movement. All of these quotes show a developed awareness, perhaps surprising of a tiny land-rights focused NGO, of international legal instruments and standards relating to environmentalism. This awareness could also point to the help and involvement of Dr. Hussein and Tadasse in the grant-writing process – itself a form of teaching or knowledge transfer.

Not only did the grant application purposefully tie the proposal to the rhetoric of the global environmental concerns, it also tailored the project to fit into the more niche concern of biocultural diversity. In the grant application, WTL writes about the “traditional community system of managing and regulating resource use” (WTL 2009). Several of the activities outlined for the project link traditional cultural practices with conservation, including collecting oral histories of the ecosystem, as well as identifying “culturally important” and “culturally useful” plants. Indeed, the application emphasizes that many of the plants in the forest have medicinal and ceremonial uses, and states that the project seeks to “incorporate the vast knowledge of the indigenous people” (WTL 2009), in a direct echo of the indigenous knowledge rhetoric of Kivulini and TCF.

The application was edited by and written with the advice of Dr. Hussein at Kivulini, who helped hone the application to reflect the focus and even the language of TCF and the biocultural diversity movement they are a part of. Shano highlighted the connection between WTL and Dr. Hussein, explaining that Hussein is well known in the region, not as the head of Kivulini, but rather as an individual active in the civil society sphere, and that Hussein acts “as the contact person” for TCF in Kenya (27/07/2011). The grant approval letter sent to Waso Trustland from TCF (but used generically for all grant approvals) also reinforces the way that WTL fits into TCF’s place in the biodiversity movement, referencing an end goal of an “awareness of the importance of biological and cultural diversity in your... community”. Strangely, when the Christensen Fund described WTL’s grant in their approval letter, the only reference to the project called it “community education about Ewaso Nyiro conservation in

northern Kenya”, and failed to mention the conservation aspect which lay at the crux of the project (The Christensen Fund 2009). Indeed, when I asked Hassan Shano what the main focus of TCF was, he replied not with environmentalism or biodiversity, but rather “culture” (26/07/2011) – demonstrating an awareness of the unique dimension of the biocultural diversity discourse within the broader environmental movement.

The relationship between Hassan Shano and some of the staff at the Christensen Fund is close – in particular with Wolde Tadasse, the program officer for TCF. I observed Hassan Shano calling Tadasse in the UK to ask a quick question regarding a grant application for another source of funding, and Shano spoke of him as a resource and a support for WTL. The link between WTL and TCF – and through TCF, the broader biocultural diversity movement – is also forged via TCF’s visits. TCF staff members, including Ken Wilson, have visited WTL and the project in Beliqo. This visit came up repeatedly in conversation at WTL. Hassan Shano pointed out that

TCF’s contribution is that they take the time to visit us, they even visited the [Ewaso Niro] river. Unlike other donors they take [local NGO] partners as real partners. They give suggestions, hold discussion and debates. (26/8/2011)

Indeed, Hassan Shano went so far as to say that TCF are “the right people for us” because they “come down to our villages” in order to “see the conditions of our people” (26/07/2011). Hassan Shano noted that this behavior was unlike that of other international and national organizations that have funded WTL, which have included the Ford Foundation (which has given one-off funding for community education), the FAO’s indigenous fund for agricultural development, UNDP and a number of national NGOs (25/07/2011, 26/07/2011). The visit thus both validated and gave a sense of equality and inclusion to WTL. This highlights the relationship between TCF’s discourse and practice of privileging community action, participatory development and indigenous knowledge. WTL understood TCF’s visit to be a reflection of their privileging of local action and knowledge, and as such the visit legitimized TCF’s biocultural diversity perspective and focus in WTL’s eyes.

This legitimization is not automatic. Hassan Shano made it clear that biocultural diversity, or even broader conservation and environmental concerns, were not what WTL originally sought to engage with. This can be seen in the give and take surrounding the protection of the Ewaso Niro River when WTL was originally seeking funding from TCF. WTL wanted TCF to assist with advocacy and awareness about river use and the diversion of river water by big farms up-stream, in an attempt to “get people to stand and fight for their rights from the government” (26/07/2011). Indeed, Hassan Shano noted with regret that both Kivulini and TCF initially believed that the river must be dealt with by the government, not by civil society, and that the issue of resource rights was too wide to be dealt with by a regional NGO. But Hassan Shano kept on insisting, arguing that the river was so central to the livelihood of the Borana people that it could not be ignored, that “there must be people on the ground talking about this” (Shano 27/11/2011). Shano and TCF finally agreed that what would be appropriate for the use of TCF funds and WTL interests would be to work on protecting the forest on the banks of the river, rather than the river itself, changing the focus not only from the river to the forest, but from advocacy to conservation. This demonstrates the difference between WTL’s and TCF’s understanding of the role of civil society. Like AKF, TCF seems to view the purpose of on-the-ground civil society organizations to be project *implementers*, while WTL understands itself to be primarily interested in advocacy and activism.

As a result, TCF de-politicizes WTL’s agenda: from an organization positioned *against* and in criticism of the state, TCF has convinced WTL to engage with natural resource management in a way that is far less politically contentious, and indeed work with the provisions of the state (including the 2005 Kenya Forests Act). Much like Ferguson argues in *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), global development institutions thus become ideologically and politically moderating. Yet when switching focus to ecological concerns, Shano held on to his activist approach. The north of Kenya was experiencing a particularly heavy drought during my fieldwork there in the summer of 2011, and Shano agitated for a government response. During

my time at the WTL office, Shano called up a TV station and argued passionately about the lack of appropriate state action (28/07/2011). He also told me that “everyone **must stand and fight** [climate change], climate must be protected at any expense” (28/07/2011, my emphasis). Even with a change in focus, Shano did not become entirely de-politicized. Thus, in Waso Trustland’s case, TCF is unable to fully succeed in “rendering contentious issues technical” (Li 2007: 10).

The back and forth between TCF and WTL demonstrates that the links between the global and the regional/local are not entirely monolithic or unidirectional. Shano stated that he plans to continue to recommend to TCF that they expand their focus (and funding) to advocacy, and not just cultural and environmental projects. Though this is unlikely to happen, Hassan Shano’s description of why TCF agreed to fund a project that still engaged with resource rights is telling: Shano described it as a product of TCF respect for the organization. In Shano’s words, “the [Christensen Fund] has recognized our efforts, seen for themselves our problems” (26/07/2011). Thus personal (and organizational) relationships become vital in the way that projects are negotiated and values become formed.

This back and forth is also reflected in Shano’s simultaneous respect for and engagement with global and Western knowledge (often from the scientific epistemic community around climate change) and local ideas and values. The 2011 drought became a way for me to engage with my interviewees on their view of climate change and ecological degradation. Hassan Shano not only linked climate change with the recurrent drought in the region, stating that “climate change really affects us – rains used to come twice [a year], now only once” (21/08/2011) but he also readily equated the heavy drought with ecological damage in the area, stating that “the drought is caused by destruction of fragile environment” (27/07/2011). He equated this knowledge with a broader, scientific knowledge that is missing among local communities, stating that “locals say [the drought] is natural... but science doesn’t believe in natural” (27/07/2011). Yet while he included himself with this scientific knowledge or scientific community, he fused regional beliefs and scientific consensus. Shano mentioned that “the trees bring rain”

(26/08/2011) (an idea widespread in the region, and discussed more in the next chapter) and that “climate depends on the trees” and that in the face of the destruction of trees the land would become “arid” and “climate changes for the worse” (26/07/2011).

Yet though Shano attributed knowledge of climate change and its link to the drought to a scientific community outside of local knowledge, he also blamed the outside world for it, and privileged local knowledge in responding to and preventing ecological issues. Shano stated that

Some change from industrial countries destroyed the climate. We were caught unawares. There is no way... we can stop talking about the environment. That's why pastoralists don't destroy trees: they know trees are important for water and a cool climate. To know is just the basics: we have to share... [this knowledge]. Environment is big knowledge, so we create a strategy because local knowledge is limited. (27/07/2011)

This quote holds a number of contradictions – while Shano links knowledge of climate change with scientific knowledge, and acknowledged the limits of local knowledge, he highlighted in the very same interview highlighted the ecological knowledge of indigenous communities in Kenya's north. Shano was quick to credit the Beliqo community with knowledge of the river and forest, linking this knowledge with the use of natural resources, a use that in his view give locals “true perspective” (28/07/2011). Yet the role for WTL, as for Kivulini, was “sensitizing people, make people aware of climate change” (28/07/2011). In many ways Shano reflects the internal contradictions of the Christensen Fund, and more broadly the writings around indigenous knowledge or colonial knowledge. This is the contradiction between the privileging of local knowledge and the occasional utility or even necessity of global or Western knowledge (Beinart et al. 2009; Beinart 2000), and in our conversations Shano repeatedly attempted to construct a synthesis between the two.

iv. WTL and the Communities of Isiolo District: Transmitting and Acquiring Knowledge

Waso Trustland is very much integrated into the local community, both in Isiolo town and beyond. A steady stream of visitors came through the WTL office every day, for the most part turbaned Borana elders, their beards dyed orange with henna, who sat in Hassan Shano's office, arguing and discussing politics and pieces of news or old unresolved issues. Sometimes young

men would come, very occasionally women. They spoke with Shano about local events, perceived injustices, political gossip and the like. WTL depends on a network of willing visitors and informers to keep abreast with the issues in the district, and is able to do so because Shano has a dual identity as both a Borana insider, an elder, and as the head of an NGO connected to the world of international and national development organizations. While WTL's rhetoric of indigenous knowledge seems to be an echo (at least in the particular discourse used) of a broader global concept of the same, WTL actively relies on actual on-the-ground knowledge, in contrast to MSDSP, which lacks this kind of informal access to local communities. In the words of Hassan Shano (and an echo of Dr. Hussein), WTL staff and communities "discuss" issues first and only then "try to draw a way forward" (27/07/2011). Of course, this does not mean that WTL does not select for or seek out certain types of information, privileging some forms of knowledge over others, particularly as informed by both their own aims and the aims of the agencies that fund them. Yet in practice WTL does rely on information brought by community members, and in fact goes out "into the field" – that is, into village communities in the district – to "sit with the communities" (Shano and Liban 25/7/2011), gather information and to inform constituents about the issues WTL works on.

Shano discussed his knowledge-relationship with the communities around Isiolo as bidirectional: its purpose was both gaining information and in spreading information and knowledge, or "sensitizing" the people. Even Hassan Shano's afternoon visits to a local social club in Isiolo were playfully presented in that light – he would speak to me of going to play chess in order to "sensitize [the] old men" (26/07/2011). This idea of the role of civil society being to sensitize or to bring knowledge was brought up several times by Hassan Shano (25, 26, 27 and 28/07/2011), who lamented the fact that people in the villages were "disconnected" and "ignorant", and directly portrayed civil society organizations as the only link to "information regarding rights, water, education [and] provisions" (26/07/2011). Shano and Liban spoke overtly about WTL's role in influencing local understanding and action. Shano said that he told

local communities where WTL worked that “we built your minds so that you can build the project for yourself” (26/07/2011). “Building the mind” involves not only community education around issues such as conservation, but also structural knowledge, knowledge about the way in which these issues can be engaged with on the community level. Hassan Shano envisioned both local civil society organizations and broader networks of regional and national NGOs as “mouthpieces” and “points of sensitization” for local communities: both “having the courage” to highlight injustices and voice community demands to leaders and to create knowledge and “understanding” in local communities (25/07/2011).

As such, WTL is not simply a partner of national-level NGOs such as Kivulini, but is also part of broader networks which connect it with other small NGOs with similar regional and thematic focus, such as the Kenya Land Alliance. Hassan Shano spoke of forming “national networks” around issues of land rights and around conservation. In Shano’s view, if WTL was to be a “mouthpiece” for the community, then they had to have “members and partners”, including individuals, communities and organizations, forming a broad network throughout the north (26/07/2011). Hassan Shano described this network as stretching both up to the international level (necessarily so in the search for funding) and down to the grassroots (necessarily so in the search for issues, problem areas and the creation of projects). He argued that it is only through this kind of network – and the information and the resources it provides – that “injustices” can be highlighted and advocated against (Shano 27/07/2011). Yet Shano’s interactions with other organizations highlight that different NGOs consider the grassroots to lie at different levels – for instance, the policy-focused Kenya Land Alliance would send interns to WTL because they considered WTL to be grassroots, while WTL staff would go out into the villages of the district to support what they deemed to be the real grassroots activism. This is a key facet of the way civil society knowledge networks function: through a construction of geographic categories, and with them, construction of categories of knowledge.

For Waso Trustland a large part of forming these networks was not only forging connections to other organizations, but indeed encouraging the formation of grassroots CBOs in the villages. Though many of the researchers and INGO workers I spoke with in Nairobi regarded village-level CBOs with great cynicism, viewing them as mechanisms for personal gain or job creation that were often ineffective in terms of community-based action, Shano expressed great belief in the power and usefulness of such local civil society organizations. Indeed, he directly spoke of WTL utilizing CBOs as mechanisms through which knowledge could be both spread and collected. CBOs in Shano's view were the "entry points for sensitization" of local people, teaching community members to "stand up for their rights", as well as be "local mouth pieces" who have to be empowered to "have the courage to ask government leaders regarding social issues" (25/07/2011). However, Shano did echo some of the skepticism towards CBOs as well, explaining that many do not work properly or have the knowledge to ever get funding (Shano 25/07/2011). In other words, in Shano's view the ineffectiveness of CBO is linked not to cynicism or mismanagement, but rather to lack of knowledge.

When asked why so many CBOs existed in Kenya in general (and in Beliqu in particular, as will be discussed the next chapter), Shano explained that "when marginalization is so heavy it is necessary to have a legitimate voice for a community" (27/7/2011), and creating a formal organizational structure legitimizes such voices. As such, "CBOs are the most common in marginalized areas", and are the structures "that people run to" (Shano 27/7/2011) – though at the same time many registered CBOs are "dormant" because they have no funding. At the same time, Shano highlighted the knowledge-based role of CBOs in relation to environmental concerns. In his view, "when there's poverty, concern for the environment goes" (27/07/2011). Since "local knowledge is limited" (Shano 27/07/2011) it is through partnerships between civil society institutions like WTL together with grassroots CBOs that "priorities" can be decided upon and then "strategies" for working on these priorities can be worked out. These priorities are not necessarily directly ecologically-focused – for instance, in Shano's view "if the

infrastructure was there [such as roads, gas pipes or electricity grids], trees wouldn't be cut [by the community] for fuel" (27/07/2011).

There is a tension within WTL's narrative of how the organization became involved with forest conservation around Beliqo. On the one hand Hassan Shano credited his own history as a resource rights activist for his interest in the right to use of the Ewaso Niro River, along with TCF for shifting his ideas from the river itself to what was happening to the forest on its banks (and the ecosystem more broadly). On the other, both Shano and Liban claimed that it was the information provided by the people of Beliqo that spurred WTL's interest and concern in the river and forest: the "the community gave [WTL] knowledge about the river" (Shano 28/07/2011). Long before the project began, WTL had mechanisms in place to deliberately transfer information both ways – both from WTL to the grassroots, and from the grassroots to WTL. These structures have been inbuilt into the way WTL operates. Shano describes the process:

We go into the communities to discuss new land laws and policies. In the last year we went several times, five or six times depending on funds... For community workshops we call people from different villages... WTL talks about current issues, and invites people to ask questions, to contribute, do group work. [We ask:] What can we do? Who can assist us? Then we follow up and establish a committee to follow up. That's how the Beliqo project got started. (27/07/2011)

This is a symbiotic relationship, where information is shared and knowledge, very deliberately, flows both ways. Without such a structure, WTL simply could not operate – nor would it be useful to organizations such as Kivulini and TCF, who so heavily rely of WTL as a way to connect to the grassroots.

The description that Shano and Liban gave of the role of the Beliqo community in sparking the forest conservation project is varied and at times even contradictory, but perfectly illustrates this symbiotic knowledge relationship. Another element of the story is that WTL took note of erupting inter-ethnic conflict in the region:

We started off dealing with land, but you can't eat land. We saw conflict coming about due to lack of water, saw the river drying up, so we investigated. We see misuse [of the river]... water is the key problem, and eventually we heard about destruction of trees. People come and informed us. (Shano and Liban 26/07/2011).

In this version it is WTL's investigation (rather than community concerns or TCF prompting) that first sparked the Beliqo project, but it also rides on people volunteering information about the destruction of trees. When WTL saw how important the issue was to locals it helped structure CFA to "put together all the stakeholders" who were "concerned with [river and forest] resources in some way" (Shano 27/07/2011). What these versions of the birth of CFA and the conservation project share is the way that WTL relied on locals for information and project formation. Though TCF seems to have pushed WTL into a certain direction or perspective, it is local knowledge and concerns (together with global funds and broader ideologies in combination with national structures) that served as the impetus for the creation of CFA.

Shano and Liban's emphasis the role of local knowledge in their operations echoes TCF's focus on indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Hassan Shano termed this "the true perspective of Waso [Trustland Project]" (28/07/2011) – learning the concerns and problems of remote northern communities and passing such knowledge to organizations such as TCF that could enable action. This not only echoes TCF and Kivulini's concerns with local-level ideas and interests, but also builds WTL's authenticity and legitimacy. Yet the local ideas the WTL acted on inevitably seemed to fit its interest in campaigning for land and resource rights. Despite my questions and promptings, Shano and Liban never brought up specific indigenous ideas around the river or pasture or trees (other than that trees bring rain) of the sort highlighted and valued by TCF and academic writing on biocultural diversity. Shano never mentioned the possible medicinal, religious, or symbolic significance of ecological resources – unlike Dr. Hussein, there was no talk of sacred sites, or the importance of the honeybird. As can be seen throughout this chapter, Shano's ideas continued to revolve around access, ownership, usage rights and livelihoods, even after referencing biocultural ideas and concepts in his grant application to TCF.

II. *Typologies of Knowledge: Designating Expertise, Searching for Authenticity*

A key role of the knowledge intermediaries such as AKF Kyrgyzstan and MSDSP, or Kivulini and Waso Trustland, is the way that they create and designate two typologies of knowledge: expert and local knowledge. Expertise points to a position of authority and power within the network: not only the power to set the terms of engagement with global movements and funders, but also the power to transform ideas and knowledge into action. The two networks share some similarities in the way expertise is designated and created: *international* expertise, or more particularly expertise founded on education or experience in the West, denotes power and authority. Yet the two case studies also point to variation: in Kenya expertise can also be created on the basis of local respect or traditional authority, while in Kyrgyzstan the very structure of the network limits the boundaries of expertise, both linguistically (to the English language) and geographically (to Europe and North America). At the same time, the organizations and individuals in both cases prize not only the authority of expert knowledge, but also the authenticity of local or indigenous knowledge – even if, as in the Kyrgyz case, little of it is actually accessed by the networks. Both sets of intermediaries delineate these two knowledge typologies for their own legitimacy, and for the legitimacy of their global partners. At the same time, the designation of expertise within the two networks illustrates how knowledge, be it knowledge from the global, the local, or knowledge created and shared by intermediary organizations themselves, is transformed and formalized into plans for action. Who participates in this process points to the way that power is distributed within these intermediary organizations. Indeed, the ways in which expertise can be gained and obtained also illustrates how intermediaries work to keep the networks functioning as a coherent whole.

a. Kyrgyzstan: Labeling Expertise, Searching for the Local

This chapter has already discussed the expat culture at AKF's Bishkek office, arguing that expatriates working at AKF Kyrgyzstan hold the positions of power and epistemic influence in

the organization. Such influence is bound up not simply in the organizational structure of the network, but also in the ways that expertise is understood and designated in the network. Kyrgyz staff at MSDSP explicitly reference expat expertise, in particular when describing the role of Laurie in the climate change adaptation project. Pirjan, Aizada and Talant on multiple occasions mentioned “the international consultant” or “reports prepared by an international consultant” or some fact “according to the international consultant” – although it was clear that I knew Laurie by name and her role in the program. Mentioning the ‘*international* consultant’ gave legitimacy and gravitas to whatever fact, argument or piece of work they were mentioning, in a way that mentioning the specific person (Laurie) who did the work did not.

The very word ‘international’ ascribes authority to the knowledge produced by this figure (and Laurie’s role was largely producing knowledge – reports, training manuals, syntheses of village assessments). ‘International’ here is largely a stand in for Western – yet the nomadism of the expats in AKF Kg lends further authority to their ‘expert’ knowledge, as well as the sheen of cross-cultural internationalism. When I would ask Kyrgyz staff members at MSDSP and at AKF Kg whether they had any decision making power in the selection and design of new programs, they largely ceded it to Jack (together with Nicolle, Karl, and in the case of the climate change adaptation project, Laurie). However, they did insist that the programs had to conform to the current strategic plan of the organization, and that they had a role in deciding what the strategic plan contained at the annual retreat and meeting of the two organizations. Yet even here it is significant that these meetings were attended by Western staff from AKF Geneva, and that the new strategic plan had to be approved by the AFK Geneva office. In short, even when key decision making *was* nominally given to local staff, it was still controlled, and indeed even controlled directly by the global node of the Kyrgyz network.

The weight and authority given to “experts” from abroad (i.e., the West) is echoed in the background and educations of the local staff members that *are* allowed to take on powerful roles in Kyrgyzstan’s intermediate organizations. Almost all the staff members of AKF Kyrgyzstan

and at MSDSP's head office in Osh are fluent in English, not a common thing even amongst Kyrgyzstan's highly educated. Nicolle once complained to me (in an informal conversation) that staff hired in Bishkek and Osh are selected on their language abilities (many actually had English Language as their university degree) as opposed to their knowledge or skills in development – demonstrating that these organizations prize the ability of their staff to connect with expat authorities as well as global partners (many staff members are sent abroad for trainings, which are inevitably held in English). Pirjan is one of the few staff members who did *not* speak English, whose experience and abilities over-rode this requirement when he was being hired. Pirjan mentioned to me on several occasions that he felt disadvantaged by this fact: it was difficult for him to communicate with Laurie and to attend joint AKF-MSDSP meetings, and in fact the job advertisement both for his job and for the coordinator of the third iteration of the climate change adaptation (a job he applied for and did not get) explicitly stated that English fluency was required.

Indeed, positions with decision-making power at the AKF's Bishkek office and MSDSP's Osh office that *are* held by locals are often given to locals with extensive education or experience in Europe or North America. Rahat, the new coordinator for the third iteration of the climate change adaptation project, has a Master's degree from Manchester. Laila Zulkaphil, the reporting manager for MSDSP – which is the one position at MSDSP besides that of Talant, the director, that involved communicating with donor organizations outside of Kyrgyzstan – did her Master's in Washington DC and worked there for several years. Mavluda, the communications manager at AKF, lived for several years in New York. All three of these staff members are key in the way the actions and ideas of the intermediaries are presented to outsiders (Mavluda and Laila) or in the way programming is transformed into action (Rahat).

Of course, there are exceptions to the power held by Western-based knowledge in the organizations. The kick-off meeting for the third iteration of the climate change adaptation project was attended by over a dozen staff members, including several who could not speak

English and several expats, including Laurie, who could not speak Russian. Though the meeting started in English, Laurie insisted that it switch to Russian so that all the local staff could understand and participate in the discussions, and the discussion itself was a lively one, with proposals from MSDSP staff that actually changed some of the details in the way the program was implemented. However, I was later told by multiple staff members that this was the exception rather than the norm, and that usually such meetings were dull and achieved little. Perhaps the meeting differed from the norm because I was there, or perhaps because it was the first time Laurie insisted that it be conducted in Russian. Yet even in this open meeting the various suggestion put forward by local staff went through a filtering process when they were translated by Talant to Laurie (who then actually chose which ones to implement), as Talant privileged some suggestions over others in his translation and funneled them into his own vision of how the program should look. So despite (or even within) such exceptions, knowledge of English or experience in the West ultimately grants power and control over the process that transforms ideas into practice.

Even amongst Kyrgyz staff members that do not have a background or experience in the West, AKF/MSDSP creates expertise by sending them to trainings and workshops held by AKF global staff from Geneva, or by other transnational organizations (such as the climate change training held by GIZ that Pirjan attended) or even sending them all the way to Geneva for trainings in the AKF head office. For instance, Leonora, the human resources manager at MSDSP, went to Geneva for training during my time at MSDSP. This begs the question: what can be taught or transmitted about human resources in Switzerland that cannot be explained or understood in Kyrgyzstan? This chapter has already made the case that such trainings abroad are another kind of glue, joining the disparate organizational nodes into one network, as well an attempt by the global to deepen control over what goes on at the intermediary (and thus the local) nodes, as well as to impress Kyrgyz staff with the wealth of Geneva and AKF's office

there. They also create “local” expertise, which echoes the ideas and knowledge of the Western-based, global organizations in the network.

Yet the intermediaries in Kyrgyzstan are also deeply interested in participatory, locally-generated knowledge, as echoed in the rhetoric of participation that exists throughout the network. Indeed, it goes beyond just the intermediary organizations discussed here – this rhetoric permeates the global nodes and the way the program is run at the local level (as illustrated in the previous and the coming chapters). AKF Kg and MSDSP staff repeatedly made references to the term participation. Mavluda mentioned the “active participation of grassroots knowledge” (19/03/2013) in the educational films AKF Kg created. Alibek spoke of running “participatory information sessions” during evaluations of the climate change adaptation project (21/03/2013). Jyldyz Suleimanova, the regional manager of the Osh MSDSP office, stressed MSDSP’s use of participatory mapping instruments (02/04/2013). This rhetoric seems in place largely to conform to the interest in participatory approaches voiced by AKF in Geneva, as well as other donors. For instance, the climate change adaptation project’s proposal for the Prince Sadruddin Fund for Environment states that:

Since women’s and men’s **priorities for climate change adaptation** may differ, project activities will be inclusive so adaptation measures are relevant to the full community. MSDSP KG will take specific steps to ensure that women and men **participate, contribute**, and benefit. For example, women will compose 30% or more of participants in all assessment, planning, and implementation activities. (AKF Kg 2011, my emphasis)

The participatory reality of the program is far more subtle than what is promised in the proposal. Yet the proposal is emblematic of the way that the rhetoric of participation is diffused throughout the programs and staff of AKF Kg and MSDSP and its field branches. In this case the proposal stresses not only local priorities, participation and contributions, but also uses the rhetoric of gendered participation, which also demonstrates AKF Kg’s awareness of the concerns with gender in development amongst international funders. Participation cropped up repeatedly in conversations about the climate change adaptation project: Talant insisted that the “main [climate change adaptation] project approach is participatory” and its success rode on the

interest of local people (01/04/2013), and Laurie emphasized the importance of the participation of marginalized groups in the climate change adaptation project (02/05/2013).

Such participatory rhetoric seems in tension with the privileging of foreign expert knowledge discussed above. Yet the two serve to balance each other – expert knowledge gives the intermediary nodes authority, while focusing on participation brings authenticity, enabling MSDSP to claim to be responding and integrating the ideas and genuine needs of the people it serves. MSDSP can respond to the critique that NGOs are unrepresentative by pointing to its participatory ideals. It also placates the participatory and local focus of the global institutions that fund AKF Kg and MSDSP's work, such as that discussed in the previous chapter. Participation thus becomes an ideal to aspire to and a rhetoric to unite behind. At the same time, the emphasis on local reality gives MSDSP – and through them, the Aga Khan Foundation – claim to authentic knowledge and experience.

b. Kenya: Universities and Knowledge Commons Setting the Network Agenda

In the case of Kenya, expert and local knowledge is also delineated and privileged. In this case study network, spaces of academic and professional interaction – in particular conferences and universities – play a key role in this process. Such spaces function as knowledge commons – spaces where knowledge is pooled and shared (Joranson 2008) in this civil society network. Such spaces both connect nodes – particularly global nodes such as the Christensen Fund with NGO intermediaries such as Kivulini and Waso Trustland – but also privilege and spread particular types of knowledge. These spaces facilitate not only the exchange of ideas and knowledge and the creation of values, but also the creation of *personal* relationships between the leading figures at each of the nodes of the network. These in turn play a key role in the way that institutional relationships unfold – and the way that both people and organizations influence one another.

For instance, universities play a key part in the Kivulini creation narrative, according to Dr. Hussein (Kivulini's founder and director) and Ken Wilson (the executive director of the

Christensen Fund) – narratives that were also echoed by the staff of Waso Trustland. Dr. Hussein and Ken Wilson were friends at Oxford in the mid-1980s. After falling out of touch, they reconnected at a conference in Europe, at a time when Wilson was working for the Christensen Fund and Dr. Hussein was working for the National Museum of Kenya. It was at this conference that Wilson urged Dr. Hussein to become directly involved with the communities in the north of Kenya. Though this first led Dr. Hussein to work for the Christensen Fund in East Africa, Wilson urged him to start his own organization to engage directly with communities, and Kivulini was born (Dr. Hussein 11/07/2011). Dr. Hussein is not only Kenyan, but originally from the very same village of Beliqo that is part of our case study, and the fact that he ended up studying at Oxford is itself an exceptional circumstance. Thus it becomes a story of coincidences, rare access and chance encounters building personal relationships that link together people, places and institutions in our network. Not only Dr. Hussein and Ken Wilson, but also Wolde Tadasse (the Christensen Fund's East Africa Program Manager, himself based in Oxford), Hassan Shano (the director of Waso Trustland) and Hassan Roba (a local consultant at Kivulini) mentioned this 'birthing' story, with references to the shared experience at Oxford and reconnection at an international conference. It illustrates the role that such mechanisms play in forging the links in this knowledge network, creating the kind of connections that enable certain actors, such as Ken Wilson, to influence the values and actions of others, such as Dr. Hussein, and to provide them structural support. Yet the role of formalized spaces for knowledge sharing in creating values, spreading knowledge and influencing action is perhaps even more clearly illustrated in the case of Hassan Shano and the work and relationships of Waso Trustland Project.

Unlike Kivulini, Waso Trustland Project was founded long before it formed a relationship with the Christensen Fund or Kivulini. But the pivotal moment in Shano's narrative of how WTL shifted from its focus on land rights advocacy towards environmental and cultural diversity was the 2005 World Conference on Ecological Restoration held in Zaragoza, Spain. Dr.

Hussein brought him to this conference to speak as an ‘indigenous elder’ on the role of indigenous knowledge in environmental restoration. Hassan Shano credited this conference with two vital occurrences: the start of his interest in the environment, and the beginning of Waso Trustland’s relationship with the Christensen Fund (Shano 26/07/2011).

This relationship began with an in-person meeting between Hassan Shano and Ken Wilson at the conference, facilitated by Dr. Hussein. Gira Huka, the chairman of the board of Waso Trustland, credited the conference with the start of the “connection” between Waso Trustland and the Christensen Fund, specifically referencing the personal interaction that this space enabled. Gira described the event as an opportunity to generate the “interest” from which Waso Trustland’s relationship with the Christensen Fund emerged (Gira Huka, 29/08/2011). Thus conferences act as spaces where different levels of knowledge networks meet, and where the relationships on which the network is built are formed, outside of the formal mechanisms of grant applications and funding agreements. They are also where a seemingly bidirectional – but unequal – exchange of knowledge takes place. Hassan Shano attended the conference with the intention of sharing indigenous knowledge and perspectives, but his own knowledge expanded there; he admitted that attending the conference changed his values and actions, bringing his attention to the environmental priorities and knowledge lauded and privileged by the conference.

Hassan Shano has also attended four of the UN Conferences on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, and his experience there illustrates the role knowledge commons such as conferences play in spreading and creating discourse and knowledge. When I questioned Hassan Shano as to *why* a rights-focused organization such as Waso Trustland is interested in indigenous knowledge (as portrayed in their grant proposals to the Christensen Fund, who require an emphasis on indigenous knowledge to align their grant-making with their mission and interests), Shano credited these conferences for making him realize the centrality of culture as “another resource” to protect. Hassan Shano described the first time he attended the conference in Geneva, where during a day of cultural sharing Maasai delegates from Kenya came with “marvelous” traditional

dress and performances. Hassan Shano described how he felt “embarrassed” that he did not have the same cultural artifacts to share, asking himself “What about our Borana culture?” (Shano 26/07/2011). Shano credited this moment of shame, brought about by the exposure afforded by an international conference, with awakening his awareness of the significance of culture in the global realm, strengthened in turn by the Christensen Fund’s emphasis on biocultural diversity.

Particularly startling in this story is the fact that Shano had to travel all the way to Switzerland in order to realize the value (globally) ascribed to cultural expression. Thus international conferences act not only as an avenue for exposure to knowledge – such as seeing Maasai culture presented – but also to the value and uses ascribed to such knowledge by the international community. Conferences are in themselves an aspect of the global node of the network, helping to forge the interpersonal connections that then create the institutional relationships upon which the network is based while also privileging certain types of knowledge and discourse that then become an integral part of the over-arching discourse of the network.

Relationships and the spaces – such as conferences and universities – where personal and institutional relationships are built and knowledge is shared are crucial in building civil society knowledge networks. These spaces are not just mediated by powerful Western-based actors (such as the University of Oxford, or the UN). Personal relationships between “middlemen” such as Kivulini and Waso Trustland and the people of Beliqo are also crucial – not only does Hassan Shano make a point of visiting Beliqo frequently to implement and aid the Community Forest Association, but he also hosts an annual “partner’s meeting” of the grassroots communities and organizations Waso Trustland works with. Indeed, Waso Trustland pays for the expenses of these partners to attend the meeting,⁴¹ much the way the Christensen Fund pays for the expenses of “middlemen” NGOs to attend conferences and meetings in the West. At the

⁴¹ Many have to travel a long ways, contending with terrible roads, insecure conditions and a lack of public transit in the region.

same time, personal relationships and histories also play a major part – it is no coincidence that Kivulini's director Dr. Hussein is originally from Beliqo, and is well-known and remembered there. Indeed, personality politics play a major role in the functioning of such a network – both Dr. Hussein and Hassan Shano are “big men” well known in Beliqo for personal characteristics as much as their role in creating the Community Forest Association.

The variety of such spaces and relationships also point to the variety and fluidity of different types of knowledge implemented in the networks, and the way that such knowledge is perceived and utilized by the nodes. As argued in the Kyrgyz case, some types of knowledge are seen as more crucial than others, because they are designated either as ‘expert’ knowledge or ‘privileged’, ‘authentic’ knowledge. This is a subtle distinction, and in the case of TCF and the Kenyan organizations, often a fluid one. In Beliqo, Hassan Shano of Waso Trustland is a source of ‘expert’ knowledge, bringing information about not only ways to protect and conserve the local forest, but also knowledge of state and global legal mechanisms and financial resources to do so. It was Hassan Shano who suggested forming a Community Forest Association in the village and who continues to guide it and find it resources. Indeed, even before the forest conservation project, Hassan Shano travelled around the villages of the district, holding workshops and spreading information on land and ecological rights. Thus in this context Shano is an activist with access to ‘expert knowledge.’

However, as described earlier, Shano was first invited to a conference in Europe in the role of an ‘indigenous elder,’ and asked to speak because of his privileged access to local, indigenous knowledge and traditions. He thus brings authenticity and local representation to such events. Yet in our conversation about this Shano seemed to be ambivalent about being presented in this role, and gave the impression that he was more comfortable in the role of activist, bringing ‘expert’ knowledge to the local. His ambivalence points to the fluidity of such categories of knowledge, especially amongst intermediary actors in the networks – Shano is able

to both utilize such categories and shed them, adopting different ones on different occasions for authority or legitimacy with different nodes and different audiences.

Dr. Hussein of Kivulini, who first brought Hassan Shano in the capacity of an indigenous elder to the conference in Spain, is himself from the village of Beliqo (and thus could be classified under the indigenous label), and old enough to be considered an elder. Yet he felt he could not (or did not want to) take the role of indigenous elder himself, be it because of his Oxford education, his residence in Nairobi, or his job at Kenya's National Museum, and preferred to continue with the role of 'expert' and advisor to Waso Trustland. Thus these categories are not only fluid, but influenced by a myriad of factors, such as personal histories, institutional relationships, context, and the particular nodes to which the knowledge is transmitted.

The fluidity of such categories is precisely where the model of civil society knowledge networks diverges from the idea of epistemic communities, with their presumption of recognized expertise and "an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge" (Haas 1990, 1992: 3). What is missing in the epistemic community model is a critique of what (and who) constitutes an expert. As the case study networks demonstrate, 'communities of knowledge' are peopled not only by recognized professionals (a culturally biased and elitist vision of epistemic authority), but by any agents involved in generating a cohesive transnational discourse around a particular issue (Toke 1999). In our case study, this was Hassan Shano while speaking in Spain, but also Kivulini when helping Waso Trustland shape a new program. All transmit expert knowledge not only to policy makers outside the network but also to each other, to the knowledge network as a whole, and as will be examined in more detail in the following chapter, to those living in Beliqo at whom the aims of the network are focused.

III. In Conclusion: Epistemic Independence, Epistemic Conformity

The structure of the network in Kenya is in many ways different than in Kyrgyzstan – which makes the similarities in the ways such networks of development organizations function all the more telling. The intermediary organizations in Kenya are far less inter-dependent, and their ties are far less organizational – and instead are ties of discourse and ideas. Nevertheless, despite being knit together by epistemic rather than structural ties, the organizations in Kenya are motivated by disparate aims and goals, ranging from land rights to cultural conservation. The fact that the organizations are able to alight behind the discourse of biocultural diversity points not only to the broad flexibility of the idea, but also to the ways in which becoming part of a civil society network can shift and turn the ideology and practice of the organizations involved, as is the case with Waso Trustland. Yet WTL holds on to its ideas and politics, while still aligning with and adopting concepts from the network as a whole – particularly ideas about the value of both environment and culture.

In a similar fashion, each of the development organizations working on the climate change adaptation project in Kyrgyzstan not only plays a different part in the network, but also understands and connects to the others in different ways, ranging from formalized institutional relationships to personality politics. Each participates in climate change adaptation for a variety of different reasons. If AKF Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek serves as an intermediary between the global Aga Khan Network and the broader movement around climate change adaptation by acting both on *fiscally pragmatic* and *representational* aims, then MSDSP adapts AKF Kyrgyzstan's representational formulations to fit its own aims of fulfilling and maintaining its areas of expertise. It is helped in this by the organizational nomadism of locals working in the developing sector in Kyrgyzstan, which allows them to adapt a variety of global discourses and ideas to MSDSP's concrete areas of action and expertise. Yet their relationship to each other and the program as a whole creates a network that broadly shares an understanding of climate change adaptation, as well as of the kinds of programs that enable the transformation of knowledge into action, enabling the network to function as a whole. Each of these organizations have disparate

goals and aims that are dictated by their organizational histories, entrenched ideas and positions in the network, and these goals and aims follow the internal logic of these histories and organizational cultures. Yet despite having a variety of different aims and goals, they connect in one network that both creates and transmits ideas and transforms them into action.

The patterns that emerge from the interactions and relationships between these organizations and individuals show that these intermediaries are more than mediators – they themselves decide and conduct the processes by which ideas and knowledge are created and spread in the networks. While the structures and power disparities in these networks certainly matter, and affect which ideas are privileged over others, at the same time the individual actors *in* institutions also matter. Laurie, Prijan and Talant; Dr. Hussein and Hassan Shano – these individuals also influence the processes by which certain ideas are privileged, transformed or ignored. Yet at the same time, institutional processes and events ranging from monitoring surveys to trainings and conferences also shape the ways in which knowledge and ideas are created, transmitted and *who* they are transmitted to. External, non-civil society also play a role – in both networks cultivating a particular understanding of (and thus relationship with) the state is a major project for the organizations involved, which in turn affects which ideas they privilege and which projects they pursue.

One of the most telling ways this affects knowledge production is the way typologies of knowledge are created amongst the intermediary organizations and individuals in these two networks in order to grant legitimacy to ideas and the ways in which they are implemented. While expert, usually foreign- and Western-based knowledge of consultants and development nomads denotes epistemic authority, this alone is not enough. The organizations in these networks also go out of their way to delineate local or indigenous knowledge. This not only connects them to the interest of both global nodes in participatory approaches and grassroots knowledge, but serves to give the work and ideas of these organizations authenticity as reflecting local needs and interests. Yet these labels are fluid – Hassan Shano can move from being a

development expert in the villages of northern Kenya to an indigenous elder at a conference in Spain. In the same way, MSDSP or WTL might be considered “local” organizations by the global organizations that fund them, but they themselves see the village communities to whom they pass on both funds and ideas as the true grassroots.

Chapter Six

Knowledge at the Grassroots

How do civil society networks create epistemic links within the grassroots? How do local communities accept – or reject, build on or alter and adapt – global ideas and discourses, and how are these ideas transformed into practice?

How does the grassroots affect the functioning of the network as a whole?

“If we only knew deeply the importance of trees, we wouldn’t cut them down. But circumstances [of the drought] force us to some extent. [To reconcile this] I’m against taking the whole tree – should take a branch, not the whole tree... CFA brought this knowledge and ideas to many... CFA educated us by giving seedlings to plant, by caring [for the forest]”. (Hadija Jillo Shane, shopkeeper, livestock trader, widow and sole provider for six children, member of Bismilahi Women’s Self-Help Group, Beliqo).

“I’ve heard of the climate change adaptation project, I went to two days of their workshops... because the village elder told us to come. They told us about ecology, changes, floods, strong winds. Also about a project, something to do with the canal, and saving the school by building an embankment. There was something about climate change, but I don’t remember what...”. (Maksut Matrasimav, livestock owner, Saro-Kamush)

The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that networks of development institutions establish epistemic connections that reach directly into parts of the world where few other global connections are so prevalent, direct and knowledge-focused. Thus development-focused civil society deeply affects the way people think, act and understand the world around them: be it their relationship with the state, with the environment or with each other. This chapter comes to the heart of this argument – it examines the way that local communities interact with the knowledge and rhetoric of epistemic networks of development institutions. If global institutions create and propagate ecological ‘movements’, and intermediary organizations selectively use the ideas of these movements to effect action, what occurs at the level of the communities where this action takes place?

As the previous two chapters have shown, the goals of both global development institutions and of NGO intermediaries – indeed, the very aim of the interaction between the two – can be divided into three broad categories. The first is to propagate knowledge: that is, to create and spread ideas (such as climate change or biocultural diversity) that are propagated by

development interventions in local communities in the developing world. The second is implementation itself – to see ideas transformed first into action, and then into ‘impact’ on communities and individuals, and to see these ideas have a transformative effect, as promised both in grant applications and in the rhetoric of international movements. Finally, the third broad aim is to use what these institutions understand to be participatory, inclusive methodology, and to attempt to incorporate local needs and local ideas into both program design and even global movements. This third goal is intimately linked to the second, as it is motivated partly by the desire to develop effective and sustainable impacts, and partly by the global interest in participatory development.

This chapter is focused around examining the way these three goals play out on the grassroots level. The argument here is two-sided: it teases out the ways in which local communities are affected by being a part of epistemic civil society networks, and at the same time play a role in constituting these networks. To trace the dynamics of both of these processes, this chapter first focuses on understanding the ways in which being part of global knowledge networks via development institutions changes the epistemic, political and even spatial geography of each village in our case studies. In other words, this chapter explores impact of such networks on the connectedness – spatial, technological, epistemic, economic, political – of local communities. I argue that it is precisely by examining such civil-society connections that this thesis can expand on Castells’ (2005) ideas of a network society: development institutions can and do forge connections – epistemic and otherwise – where Castells admits that a technologically-based network society fails to reach.

Building on the argument of institutionally-facilitated connectedness, the chapter then looks in detail at the epistemic content of these connections. In particular, the focus here is on the interaction between knowledge, discourse and practice (or action) in the two villages in the case studies. In both Kenya and Kyrgyzstan it is not only ecological knowledge and practice that are formed and spread by different nodes in the case-study networks. Indeed, far more prevalent

are process-focused ideas about participation, inclusivity, local agency and local knowledge. The central question here is how ideas, both about the content of ecologically-focused interventions and about the participatory processes of these interventions, are taken up, disputed, ignored and shaped by the village communities in the two countries.

The two epistemic networks examined here approach knowledge propagation, implementation and grassroots participation with significant differences in emphasis and priorities. Both the differences and the similarities between the two case studies point out the underlying mechanisms that constitute the way civil society knowledge networks form and function. This is particularly obvious at the grassroots level. Though the villages of Saro-Kamush in Kyrgyzstan and Beliqo in Kenya are both communities of semi-nomadic pastoralists at the spatial, economic and political peripheries of their countries, they are quite different in their existing national and international connections, the extent to which they already participate in a variety of civil society organizations, and their expectations from and knowledge of national and international development organizations. These very differences allow us to tease out the ways knowledge, values and rhetoric are transferred, contested and reshaped between the global, the intermediary, and the grassroots, furthering the case that it is civil society connections that pull such communities into national and global epistemic currents.

I. Civil Society Connections: The Spread of Ideas

a. Kenya: Remoteness, Connection and Civil Society Participation

i. Spatial, Technological and Political Barriers

The village of Beliqo serves as a particularly effective prism for examining the inner workings of civil society-based knowledge networks. This is because of the simultaneous remoteness – physical, geographical, technological, political – and interconnectedness of the village. This work in no way claims that Beliqo is entirely isolated or spatially separate (Gupta & Ferguson 1992). Yet at first glance, Beliqo does seem to be disconnected in crucial ways. The nearest major town

is Isiolo, and to reach Beliqo one must either endure a crowded seven hour bus ride over a boulder-strewn unpaved road, timing the journey to coincide with the fact that the bus travels only every-other day, or, if like for most of Beliqo's residents the journey is far too expensive, pay less to hop on top of a lorry carrying cattle. The journey is not undertaken lightly, even by local residents. To get to other villages or small towns in the area, one can crowd into a flat-bed pick-up truck, which is notoriously prone to accidents. During my month at Beliqo, a very select number of people left the village to head to other villages or towns (as opposed to those who left on a regular basis to herd animals). Mobility seemed linked to disposable income and a higher level of education – and as will be discussed in detail below, most who were able to leave either held government jobs or leadership positions in active civil society organizations.

This remoteness is not simply physical; it can also be seen as technological. Without a cellphone network and electricity, Beliqo is outside of the technologically-based “network society” described by Castells (2005). The residents of Beliqo are largely removed from exposure to the media and to what Castells describes as “self-directed mass communication” through “virtuality” and “new forms of socialized communication” (Castells 2005: 13). The lack of a cellphone network was a recurring complaint in the village. Amina Isaac, a busy middle-aged woman running a small shop, discussed out-migration from the village and the draw of town life, part of which was “stimulation” in the form of “TV, radio and phones” (Amina Isaac 04/08/2011). Chief Dima also repeatedly brought up the lack of a mobile network and the many schemes he was considering to bring a network to the village (Chief Dima 06/08/2011). Asana, a young woman who was one of the few in the village pursuing secondary education, spoke vehemently about leaving the village so that she could have access to television and phones and be aware of events in the outside world (Asana 16/08/2011).

Thus the centrality of technological connectedness and its lack in Beliqo was felt by many of those I spoke with in the village, particularly those with a slightly higher level of education and those involved in the civil or political life of the village (Amina had and was

planning to run for local office). This ties into Castells' own assertion that the communications technology-based network society, while spreading across the globe, is uneven and more people are excluded from it than are included. For Castells this is a question of the "penetration" (Castells 2005: 5), rather than the breadth, of a global network society. In Castells' view Beliqo would be a part of the globe that has not yet been penetrated by the social, political and cultural networks made possible by new technology. This is precisely why Beliqo forms the backbone of this case study: as will be discussed below, while Beliqo could be considered remote and disconnected in many of the ways described by Castells and other theorists of global networks or world polity, it is connected in vital ways through its role in civil society networks. However, there is one more aspect of disconnection in Beliqo that must be discussed – perceived political marginalization.

The people of Beliqo understand themselves to be isolated from broader national and transnational communities not only technologically and geographically, but also politically and historically. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Borana were involved in the Shifta War between the Kenyan state and secessionist movements in the north of the country shortly after independence (Whittaker 2008). Many of those I interviewed remembered parents or grandparents being interned in the camps set up by the Kenyan government during the war, and having cattle, a major source of Borana wealth, confiscated or slaughtered by the state. Ibrahim Boru, a man in his thirties who describes himself as a "pastoralist" and is the organizing secretary for CFA, argued that the Borana people who live in the North are not recognized by the government as Kenyan – that the government "doesn't bother with us" (Ibrahim Boru 14/08/2011). He told me that it was the government that was to blame for Borana impoverishment – that the Borana once had "plenty" of animals and that they were either killed by the government during the Shifta War or killed by the lack of good grazing, which Ibrahim also attributed to the government. Ibrahim's grievance with the state was both historical and contemporary, both with the larger Kenyan state and the local county council, which he saw as

complicit with the current state. His sense that Northern Kenya was not simply neglected but actually robbed by the Kenyan state was echoed repeatedly in my conversations in Beliqo.

Indeed, this political marginalization could be understood as a struggle for citizenship, an example of the struggle described by Manby (2009). Manby specifically refers to the treatment of pastoralists and residents of the northeast in her depiction of the Kenyan state's uneven apportioning of ID cards. The same people who fought for autonomy now fight for inclusion in the state and its provisions. Yet it was not primarily ID cards, but rather the lack of resources from the state, together with a history of conflict and deprivation that I heard about repeatedly in Beliqo, echoed by everyone from the Chief to the water pump attendant in the village. Guracha Sirman, a young livestock owner and youth activist, stated that the Borana of the region have been "marginalized, left behind since the 1960s", when people were put in camps and their livestock taken. In his view, since then "we have been neglected, and schools have passed us by" and that it is due to state marginalization that the community does not have money to collect rain water in a cistern (Guracha Sirman 08/08/2011). Abdi Abkula, a middle-aged herder whose livestock had been wiped out by the 2011 drought, stated that for the past five decades the people of the region have been forgotten, and that the poverty of the region was brought about by the government (Abdi Abkula 11/08/2011). This is a powerful collective narrative of victimhood, one that emerges out of real grievances (Dahl 1979; Arero 2007), but also presents the Borana as people in need and perhaps aids in conveying these grievances and attracting attention from civil society institutions.

Coupled with this perceived marginalization seems to be a feeling that the state is failing at any attempt to rectify the situation, or indeed to control what happens in the North. This was evident when I asked people in Beliqo their opinion of the role and work of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). What I heard was largely derision. An elder named Galgalo Jarso said that KFS and KWS cannot reach a remote area like Beliqo, and thus need the help of the community to do their job (01/08/2011). Dabaso Godo, another elder,

stated more strongly that “KFS and KWS are never seen in the region, and don’t seem to exist in the area” (Dabaso Godo 01/08/2011). Others were more embittered, telling me that KFS “doesn’t care about us” (Hussein Buke 04/08/2011) and “abandoned the area” (Asana Wario 14/08/2011). Beliqo’s grievances with the Kenyan state fit into broader themes around governance and state capture by particular groups, questions that are outside of the scope of this work. What is essential here is that the perceived neglect by KFS and KWS is not only a reflection of the neglect by the state of the region and the Borana people, but also demonstrates the response to such state neglect: the ever more prevalent role of civil society organizations, both local and external. Indeed, I would argue that while Beliqo can be understood to be on the geographic, technological and political periphery, it is connected – often in the same realms that demonstrate Beliqo’s remoteness – in a very substantial way through networks of civil society organizations.

ii. Building Connectedness via Civil Society

Despite the many ways in which Beliqo is understood both by its residents and by outsiders as “remote”, characterizing Beliqo as pure periphery is too simple. Beliqo has a rich civil society landscape with multiple connections to organizations outside the village, not only regional organizations (such as WTL) but also national and international organizations and funding sources. These organizations bring not only epistemic currents and connections, but bridges over physical, technological and political barriers experienced by Beliqo residents. The minority of Beliqo residents that were able to overcome Beliqo’s geographic remoteness and physical disconnectedness from urban centers were enabled to do so by their connections to government or civil society – a fact that not only points to Beliqo’s remoteness, but also the central role of government and civil society in the ways that it is connected to the outside world. As noted earlier in the chapter, amongst the strata of people actively involved in civil society groups in the village, a number travelled outside the village while I was there, including a handful from CFA

whose travel expenses were underwritten by CFA's budget (Wako Wada 11/08/2011) or WTL (for a partners' meeting). These included the village chiefs, the chairman of CFA and to a much smaller extent other members of the CFA executive committee, such as Habiba, my host in the village and the secretary of CFA. When these members of the community left the village the expense of it was largely underwritten by government or civil society institutions – for instance WTL paid for three members of CFA to come to Isiolo to attend WTL's partners meeting. Others that left the village during my time there seemed to be largely government workers such as the chiefs, or involved in other civil society organizations with outside sponsorship. Not only did civil society involvement provide the resources needed to overcome the geographic and physical barriers to leaving the village, but they also provided a legitimate reason to leave – such as to attend a meeting or planning session. Personal reasons often piggy-backed on the so-called “official” trips – Habiba, the secretary of CFA, used the WTL partners' meeting as a reason to also visit her relatives in a nearby town.

Civil society organizations were not only a route out of the village, but also a major reason outsiders (non-family members) came to the village. Because Beliqo has such a rich landscape of civil society connections, a variety of civil society actors from without – ranging from workshop leaders to project initiators to funders – visited the village. These organizations will be detailed below, but they included Liban and Hassan Shano from WTL, who during my time in the village spent a few days organizing and running a meeting with CFA. The previous spring Dr. Hussein along with several staff members from TCF (including Ken Wilson, the executive director) visited the village to see the work of CFA that they were funding. Thus it is not surprising that everyone I spoke with in the village was sure that I was working for or somehow connected to an outside NGO or charitable foundation, that I was there to bring funds or identify problems. Not even having Hassan Shano introduce me to the community as a student could disabuse most of the people I spoke with of that notion.

In the same way, civil society was the most frequent antidote to the technological and thus informational and media isolation in the village. Indeed, as a result of these networks, the people of Beliqo were far from technologically ignorant. Many owned cellphones, useless though they were in the village, and many were well aware of the internet, and some, like Chief Dima or some of the secondary-school educated youth even had email addresses. They utilized this technology when they were able to leave the village, and in fact I have received a number of emails from Chief Dima after leaving Beliqo. Thus utilization of communication technology is interlinked with geographic mobility, which as discussed above is facilitated by civil society involvement. Internet use is even more strongly tied to civil society participation, as outside civil society organizations like WTL did a lot of internet research and emailing on behalf of grassroots groups in the village to help them search and apply for funds. As Halkano, a young man who worked as a forest scout for the CFA, stated, “we have no access to internet, but via WTL we can be heard elsewhere” (12/08/2011).

More generally, civil society networks connected the village with broader news, happenings and events and brought the possibility of involvement in the wider political and economic processes of the nation. Indeed, this is one of WTL’s mandates – to hold workshops in remote communities regarding both national and regional news around resource and land rights and general political developments. Crucially, the civil society connections are also the way that Beliqo is able to get information about what is happening locally, be it news of about “drilling for oil by Chinese near-by” (Halkano 12/08/2011) or “tree logging” (Mohammed Adan 02/08/2011). Indeed, much of the local news around resource use in Beliqo was an echo of what I heard discussed at WTL’s office – for instance, Shano mentioned the drilling of oil by a Chinese firm (25/07/2011). Such information exchange is how the partnership between CFA and WTL sprang up, and as described in the previous chapter, the way CFA was formed.

Of course, civil society is not the only source of connection in the village – a couple of the wealthier people had petrol-powered generators, I spotted one battery-powered television

during my month in the village, and it was also possible to use hand-held radios (though I did not see any while living there). The same is true for Beliqo's physical remoteness. Despite the difficulties, residents did make the expensive and exhausting (and to some even dangerous) trip to Isiolo and other urban centers. They do so for three primary reasons: economic (to look for work, to sell or buy livestock and to check on livestock cared for by hired herders), educational (there was no secondary school in the village, so the few children that went on to secondary school went to boarding schools), and personal (for instance, to visit relatives). Yet it is predominantly civil society networks that provide reasons and ways for people to leave the village and utilize communication technology, and for outside organizations like WTL to bring in the news and developments that they are able to access via information technology and media, and to bring out local concerns onto the global arena, facilitated by their own access to phones and the internet.

Beliqo demonstrates that even pockets of the world like Beliqo, that are outside of the reach of electricity grids and mobile networks, are at least somewhat drawn into "horizontal" "self-directed mass communication" (Castells 2005: 13) precisely because civil society networks can allow people access to socialized communication either directly or through an intermediary acting on their behalf. Thus I make the case for a widening of Castells' network society, from a technologically-based network affecting but not penetrating the majority of the globe, to a network that is technologically facilitated, but is based on social structures in which the interlinking geographies of civil society networks play a vital role, particularly in those parts of the world not yet penetrated by technological diffusion. In these pockets of the network, civil society organizations are crucial in linking the local with the national and global – not only through the dispersal of knowledge and information, as the bulk of this work argues, but also through creating forms of connections that overcome geographical, technological, and even, as discussed below, political isolation.

The longer I stayed in Beliqo the more I came to realize that despite the almost universal feelings of abandonment and marginalization by the state, the civil society landscape of the village wove in the mechanisms and institutions of the state. Perhaps the most obvious example is the use of the 2005 Kenya Forests Act by CFA. The Forests Act devolves the protection of Kenya's forests to local communities, and gives communities the legal mandate to set up local organizations to protect forests from unsustainable exploitation by both outsiders and community members. Without WTL being aware of changes in national laws and opportunities afforded by such legislation, and without Hassan Shano and Liban integrating this awareness into their work with Beliqo's civil society groups, Beliqo residents could not have known about the legal mandate provided by the state to protect the local forest from logging. Once more, we see the centrality of civil society in creating networks that connect different geographies of knowledge. And it is outside civil society organizations like WTL that bring in the savvy needed to work with state mechanisms – despite WTL's overt distrust of and antagonistic position towards the state. It is WTL that told Beliqo residents about the Forest Act, and even facilitated exchange visits to other Community Forest Associations to observe the way they were taking advantage of the Act's provisions.

Thus the state is still essential to both Beliqo residents and, as described in the previous chapter, to WTL itself. Indeed, the fact that the state retained a central role, even if in a negative sense, in the conversations I had in Beliqo points to the limits of the role of civil society and the continued reliance on and expectations of the state. This echoes the criticism that Chandhoke (2003) levels against the good governance model, arguing that civil society cannot fulfill all of the mechanisms of the nation state. Yet while knowledge of the 2005 Kenya Forest Act (not to mention the various legal mechanisms around creating state-recognized civil society groups such as registered CBOs and NGOs) is the basis of CFA, it is also this kind of knowledge that allows the residents of Beliqo – with WTL encouragement and TCF support – to circumvent the state,

to bypass the neglect of the KWS and the KFS. This contradictory relationship of criticism and reliance is a theme that weaves itself through this case study.

Besides the village school and the two chiefs, it is the civil society organizations in the village that utilize the state most heavily. This includes not simply state legal mechanisms, but also having the know-how to tap various state agencies for resources. For instance, the chairman of CFA was away most of the month I spent in the village, trying to receive funds for CFA from regional government offices. The Ewaso Niro Development Authority (ENDA) gave CFA roots and seedlings for its tree nursery (Ibrahim Boru 14/08/2011), and has given a farming group in the village tools (Ali Wako, 01/08/2011) while Arid Lands, another government agency, gave another group a water pump (Osman Halake 16/08/2011). The pump broke and was never repaired or replaced, perhaps telling of the fragility of government support. Yet what is most important to note is that this sort of government aid came not to individuals or even the local government of the village. Instead, it went to formalized, registered civil society groups, often through the help of other civil society intermediaries like WTL. This reflects the debates around ‘good governance’ and the network state mentioned in the previous chapter. In Chandhoke’s words, when the state has “subcontracted” services to NGOs and other voluntary groups, “state structures have been loosened, they have been disaggregated, and they have spanned out” (2003: 2959). This is precisely what is happening in Beliqo – residents feel neglected and isolated by the state and turn to civil society instead, and the state itself willingly utilizes civil society groups to replace or augment its role. Civil society cannot do so entirely, and its “emancipatory potential” (Rieff 1999) is curtailed both by its continued reliance on some state mechanisms and by the limits of its inclusiveness. Yet civil society and its development interventions is more than a depoliticizing “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1994). In the case of Waso Trustland and Beliqo, civil society becomes a way to prod the state and gain access to its resources.

When I interviewed people in the village about why it was that Beliqo had so many civil society organizations (more than twenty in a village of less than two thousand people) and why

people chose to join them (the majority, though certainly not all, of my interviewees were members of two or more civil society groups), I was told that outside assistance, government or NGO sourced, was always aimed at recognized groups, not individuals (Osman Halake 16/08/2011). For instance, Malicha, a herder who lived in a neighboring hut to me in the village and himself was not a member of any group because he had no time to spare from herding, stated that Beliqo had many groups as a way to seek outside aid (Malicha 17/08/2011). Thus civil society is a way for Beliqo to attempt to overcome its experience of state marginalization, by providing at least one avenue (though in practice often a difficult or unsuccessful one) by which village residents can access state or NGO resources.

iii. Livelihood as Impetus for Civil Society Involvement

Despite its small size and relative remoteness, Beliqo has a rich associational landscape. This includes not only a number of associations ignored by external development agents, such as the village mosque and madrasa, as well as government-facilitated groups such as the district peace committees, but organizations formally registered as community groups, that can receive aid from external NGOs. Indeed, there are a number of outside NGOs, big and small, that run programs in the village. These include not simply Waso Trustland and the Northern Rangelands Trust (which funds and helps run the Beliqo-Bulesa Community Conservancy), but also Merti Integrated Development Programme (MID-P) and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium (VSF), both based in Merti, a larger village about a two hour bus ride North. MID-P is a midsized NGO that was started and initially funded by Action Aid, an international NGO, to replace their presence in the region, and now runs and fundraises independently from Action Aid (who no longer works in the area). Though I visited MID-P offices in Merti and there was told that they ran active education and livelihood projects in Beliqo, their presence was hardly felt in the village. However, VSF, a branch of the large international NGO which reported to Kenya headquarters in Nairobi, ran a plethora of programs in Beliqo. Finally, perhaps the most overt

way that an external civil society organization impacted the village was through the World Food Programme, which delivered the food aid more than two-thirds of the village relied on (Chief Dima 23/08/2011).

Hassan Shano and Waso Trustland are closely linked with MID-P – when we arrived in the region together, Hassan Shano went out of his way to visit Merti, to catch up with the staff of MID-P and introduce me, and we even stayed in the home of MID-P's founder. However, Waso Trustland had little connection with VSF, perhaps because in large part their interventions seemed technocratic. During my time in the village VSF ran animal vaccinations and holistic grazing workshops facilitated by an external “expert” – Simon, a Kenyan-born Englishman hired by VSF. I attended the workshop, and I was struck by Simon's emphasis both on inclusion and on collective action, and on his linking of the drought and loss of grazing with herding practices. He repeatedly told his audience that “bare [overgrazed] land brings drought, not the other way around” (Simon Keily 14/8/2011). However, though there were some exceptions, on the whole few of the points Simon made would later come up in interviews, even when I asked direct questions about the drought and possible ways humans could have contributed to it.

The village also has over twenty home-grown grassroots civil society organizations, most registered as Community-Based Organizations. These groups range from the funded and well-known to those that exist in name only. Indeed, most exist without funding and yet carry on, trying to involve participants in everything from savings groups to cultural workshops, and hoping that funding will someday come. Fatuma Dida, a middle-aged woman who runs a store on the main road, gave me a detailed history of the appearance and growth of such groups in the village. According to her, one of the first groups in the village was Jabesa, a women's group started in the mid-1990s at the urging and with the support of Action Aid, which at the time had an office in Merti. When the group started Action Aid gave each of the members a small loan, which they used to start a small business trading in livestock as well as to purchase a plot of land in the village on which they built a house which the group now rents out as the offices of the

Beliquo-Bulesa Community Conservancy. Other groups formed when they saw the success and support given to Jabesa. The group has carried on, despite the fact that Action Aid left in the late 90s and the funding was cut-off. In an interesting aside, Fatuma noted that Action Aid's work in the area was handed over to MID-P. Fatuma told me that MID-P had let down local groups like Jabesa by failing to continue Action Aid's programs and by failing to respond to Jabesa's proposals. Fatuma attributed this failure to the fact that the organization had "gone in the hands of Africans", as opposed to Action Aid, which she understood to be run by foreigners (Fatuma Dida, 07/08/2011). This shows a high level of trust in foreigners and the tendency by locals to privilege global civil society institutions to regional ones. A similar sentiment was expressed by Quocha Naka, a 73 year-old man who compared colonial and post-colonial rule, and was very disparaging towards the latter. He linked his favorable view of colonial rule to his opinion of development projects and civil society in the present – all the "good" or "successful" projects seem to him to have Westerners involved (Quocha Naka, 18/08/2011).

When I asked residents why they participated in civil society groups, they cited a mix of pragmatic and idealistic motives. Fatuma Dida, a young woman who is a member of two groups, stated that "where we expect fruit, we join" and that groups are created to "make the capital needed to uplift one another" (Fatuma Dida 07/08/2011). Jamila, an assistant school teacher and a member of both a women's group and a youth group, stated that the former was started so that women could "help themselves", and that she joined the two groups so that she "had knowledge" of what was happening in the community and possibly access to extra funds (Jamila 18/08/2011). Muhammed Jira, an elderly man who walked with a heavy limp and described himself as disabled, told me that he participated in a group for disabled people together with several others because he did not want to sit idle, and wanted to make sure that if one group fails he has others to aid him in improving his livelihood (Muhammed Jira 11/08/2011). Thus CBOs seem to be new collective forms replacing older forms of shared social security.

Indeed, the activities of most of these groups are focused around income generation. Though members of almost every group told me that they hoped for external funding, most acknowledged that this funding might never come. Without funding these groups have little hope of impacting their members' lives (in contrast to the well-funded CFA, as shall be discussed below). Many collected small fees from the members into a savings account, and invested these fees into some kind of income generating venture, often the buying and selling of livestock, or made the savings available to members on a rotating basis (Fatuma Dida 07/08/2011; Muhammed Jira 11/08/2011). The livelihood focus was evident even in groups whose overt mission was not economic. For instance, members of the cultural group Bada, whose stated aim is to preserve cultural traditions, told me they hoped to one day benefit from cultural tourism. In short, though idealistic motives – saving the environment, uplifting youth, preserving Borana culture – were also reasons cited for joining civil society, an overwhelming number of Beliqo residents referred to livelihood as their motivating factor for getting involved in civil society, and the two were not seen in opposition to each other.

iv. Participation and Inclusiveness: Socioeconomics Matter

Despite a richness and diversity of grassroots civil society organizations in Beliqo, my interviews, which cut across socioeconomic class, age, education and even geographic location of residence in the village, point to a distinction in level of participation in civil society based on economics and age (though not gender). The very elderly, as well as those that seemed to be visibly economically disadvantaged or described themselves as such, were much less likely to be a member of civil society groups or even to have much knowledge about the possibility or opportunity to be involved. For instance, Kule, a wizened elderly lady, told me that she never joined a group in the village because “elders like me are not invited”, and that she is never told about the existence of groups or the possibility to join them (Kule 14/08/2011). This sentiment was echoed by the majority of the very elderly people I spoke with. And while the elderly did not

join civil society groups because of a lack of knowledge or invitation, the economically disadvantaged residents of Beliqo often (but far from always) felt unable to join because of a lack of time. As in the Kyrgyz case, time (and attention) is a major commodity of the local, and time-poverty (Blackden & Wodon 2006) is a key barrier to participation in development programming. Malicha, who herds his livestock himself (as opposed to slightly wealthier members of the village, who can pay others to look after their animals), is often gone from the village with the herd, and thus simply had no time to be part of a group (Malicha 17/08/2011). Such exclusion on the basis of socioeconomics and age point to the transformatory limits of civil society: despite rhetoric of community decision making and community participation within CFA, participation is to be limited to those with time and the social capital in the village. Indeed, this observation on the limits of the emancipatory potential of grassroots civil society is tied to the critiques of the limit of the participatory approach that echoes through the conversations I had in every node of the network (Robinson 1998; Hickey & Mohan 2004; Gaventa 2004). Participation is thus clearly connected to social power dynamics, power that is tied to gradations of wealth and leisure in the village (even few residents could be termed wealthy in national terms), as well as status and social engagement.

However, though participation in civil society in Beliqo was in many ways limited, awareness of civil society activity and the effect of such awareness on knowledge and values was not. This was particularly the case with CFA, which was very active and thus a very prominent part of the village. The awareness of CFA activities was prominent even to people who seemed, for economic or social reasons, to be on the fringe of the community. For instance, Dahabo, a young woman who only moved permanently into the village eight months before I interviewed her (before this she had been following her family's herds out in the grazing lands, but had to become too poor to survive by doing so) and who herself was not involved in any of the village's groups, knew of CFA because she "saw them planting trees" and constructing a tree nursery (Dahabo 18/08/2011). Quocha Naka, a 73 year-old gnarled old man with one blind eye, lived on

the edge of town and was not sure what “groups” there were because the elderly “stay as we are, remembering past life”, but at the same time spoke about a group he noticed that is planting trees (18/08/2011) – therefore demonstrating the prominence of CFA activities, even to those removed from or not active in the community life of the village. While it is crucial to trace the boundaries around participation in civil society within Beliqo, the reach of the network within the local is not bound to participation alone. Awareness, and from awareness, knowledge can also spread outwards throughout a non-participating community.

v. CFA, Environmental Activism and Community Motivations

The same emphasis on livelihood featured in the ecological understanding of Beliqo residents, as well as their understanding of and reasons for participating in the conservation activities of the Community Forest Association (CFA). There are clear material reasons to participate in CFA activities. Not only does CFA give employment to its field officer, Habiba Ibrahim, and to three youths who work as forest scouts, but members of CFA told me of hopes that tourists would eventually come to camp in the forest and see the wildlife. CFA also wants to integrate an income-generating aspect to its activities in the years to come, and outlined this in the new grant-proposals they brainstormed with my and WTL’s help. These included starting a beekeeping operation and setting up fish ponds. These activities seem outside CFA’s stated aims of conserving the forest, but to the members of the organization (as well as to WTL staff) making the community more self-sufficient was a natural part of any civil society project. This view reflects the broader connection between civil society participation and livelihood described above.

Yet such immediate, livelihood-focused reasoning is only a part of the story, and idealistic motivations played a role as well. When I asked about the reasons to conserve the forest, some community members added nostalgic or aesthetic explanations – such as the desire for one’s children to see the forest or the animals that reside in it (Wako Wada 11/08/2011). Of

course this has a material dimension as well – the practical desire for one’s children to be able to make a livelihood from the natural resources of the forest in the future (Ibrahim Born 14/08/2011). Indeed, the latter reason to preserve the forest is connected to what I below argue is a key contribution of civil society to ecological thinking in Beliqo – that of enabling a shift in time frames from immediate concerns to more long term thinking.

At times these pragmatic and idealistic motivations were able to coexist comfortably side-by-side, and at others they were in tension with one another. One example of these tensions were the several farming groups in Beliqo, who were a part of the CFA umbrella, and yet had cleared trees in the forest not far from the river in order to plant a small amount of crops within reach of water. Dabaso Godo, a village elder in his 60s and a part of a farming group called Befi, was frank:

We were cutting trees, and [CFA] told us not to. We explained our problems to them, we combined [organizations], and now we plant more trees together... Circumstances forced us to cut trees before for the farm. We knew trees were important, but had no choice. (01/08/2011)

He did not try to dismiss the contradiction between clearing trees for farming and saving trees for the forest. For Dabaso this was simply the tension that one had to straddle between what one wished to do in the ideal case and what one had to do when forced by need and circumstances. Dabaso was enthusiastic about the impact of both groups, but while he admired CFA for their commitment to the forest, he also dwelled on the fact that “CFA helped Befi acquire a new water tank” (01/08/2011).

Indeed, a pragmatic emphasis was evident in what CFA *did* in the community, rather than what they talked about or claimed on grant applications. The three key actions that CFA was known for throughout Beliqo was “planting trees” from a tree nursery they formed (Kula 18/08/2011), “building a social hall” for the community’s use (Abdi 02/08/2011), and “catching loggers” (Abdi Hussein 06/08/2011). Many of the trees grown in CFA’s tree nurseries and planted by CFA were fruit trees rather than indigenous trees (though indigenous trees were also planted), revealing the emphasis on material gain together with ecological conservation. The

social hall was a clear material gain for the village, largely unrelated to conservation objectives. The loggers, who were outsiders, were understood to be taking away the material resources of the village – when they were caught, they were not prosecuted, but their wood was confiscated and used to build a new madrasa. Indeed, when I asked why CFA’s work in conserving trees was important, Beliqo residents thought the answer was obvious and elementary. In Guracha Sirman’s words, “without vegetation there is no life” (Guracha Sirman 08/08/2011). I was told that the forest provided building material, protection from wind and erosion, and fodder for browsing animal (Halkano Kuntulo 01/08/2011). Indeed, most of the people I spoke with credited their ability to survive through the severe drought that summer to the existence of the forest, where their goats could browse, while the cattle died off due to lack of grass (Abdi Abkula 11/08/2011). Reliance on the forest for current survival was also mixed with the practical desire for one’s children to be able to make a livelihood from the natural resources of the forest in the future (Ibrahim Born 14/08/2011).

Such materially-based ecological reasoning belies post-materialist understandings of environmental activism, such as Ronald Inglehart’s argument that environmental awareness and activism are luxuries available only to societies that have already ensured the basic material needs of their citizens (Inglehart 1971, 1981, 1995). What I heard in Beliqo contradicted Inglehart’s argument, and points to the many critiques and counter-examples to this idea have developed despite the dominance of this view (Guha & Martínez-Alier 2000). The ecological concerns of the people of Beliqo, both those involved in CFA and conservation activities and those observing CFA’s work, were materialist – they repeatedly stated that as pastoralists they depended on the ecology that surrounded them for their livelihood. Indeed, CFA grew out of the grassroots group REAR-Charri, whose explicit goal was the “reclamation” and “exploitation” of natural resources (Habiba Ibrahim 01/08/2011). Authors such as Reimann (2005) assume that civil society organizations that adopt such a materialist-based approach are focused only on personal gain. Yet the idealistic and pragmatic reasons behind ecological conservation co-exist in

Beligo and in CFA. This observation of pragmatic and ideal is echoed in the literature on African civil society by authors such as Harbeson (Harbeson et al. 1994). Thus Beligo residents have their own unique goals in the civil society knowledge network, and yet connect with the global by participating in the over-arching discourse of the network as a whole. One of the mechanisms that enable this connection is the uptake and use of development rhetoric, particularly by members of CFA.

vi. CFA's Development Rhetoric

The development parlance I heard most often within CFA meetings, on CFA grant applications and when talking to CFA members was that of participation, inclusiveness and financial sustainability. This rhetoric was certainly not formed independently, but rather through the help of WTL, as discussed in the preceding chapter. A clear instance of this was developing the language of financial sustainability. CFA's conservation work is intermingled with an interest in promoting livelihood in the village. Waso Trustland Project was able to present these hopes for income generation very concretely in grant applications as a way for projects to eventually be financially "self-sustaining" – not inherently through their conservation activities, which WTL did not expect to generate any income, but through side projects that would generate income for the village. Part of this income would then somehow (through a mechanism that Liban never made explicit to me or on the grant applications) be reinvested in conservation efforts. Thus with WTL's help CFA could transform its livelihood aims into the language of financial sustainability, despite a weak connection between livelihood activities and conservation.

This use of the rhetoric of financial sustainability was coupled with a particular attention within CFA's structure to the demands of participation, transparency and inclusiveness. CFA has been able to generate a broad base of support from most of the other civil society actors in the village, because of the way CFA has been structured. CFA has a four person management committee, made up of members of REAR-Charri, the group out of which CFA was born, and then 17 more members, each one a representative of a civil society group in the village. As such,

only one or two groups had no representatives in CFA. Speaking to these representatives and other members of their groups, I heard mixed reviews. Some said that the representatives told their groups nothing about the goings on of CFA, and some representatives hinted that they did not really have any say in CFA, and most decisions were made via CFA's executive committee and Waso Trustland. Yet many praised CFA for being open and inclusive, involving a range of actors throughout the village. For instance, Muhammed Kampicha, the talkative and enthusiastic pump attendant who was one of the original members of REAR-Charri but not on the management committee itself, spoke of the 17 representative members of CFA as having "voice" and that at the general meetings of CFA "anyone can share ideas" (Muhammed Kampicha 01/08/2011).

However, at the CFA general meeting that I attended these seventeen members were quite silent. Abdi Hussein, chairman of a youth group in the village, had quite scathing and impassioned words for CFA, claiming that there is no consultation with community members and no transparency about CFA decisions (Abdi Hussein 06/08/2011). But his view was certainly a minority one of those I heard. The consensus seemed to hover somewhere between the two, with almost all interviewees being aware of three of the most visible CFA activities – tree planting from their nursery, constructing the social hall, and catching loggers in the forest – and that members of their respective groups were on the committee, but not knowing much about the group and its decisions or aims beyond that. But because of its structure, it can lay claim to being inclusive and participatory, and often does so – its member often referenced the wants of the "community" and the good of the "community", as if representing the (monolithic) thoughts and desires of the entire village (Cleaver 2001). Thus CFA is able to build on existing ecological understandings in Beliqo, its own activities, and the use of broad development rhetoric to fit CFA's work into the broader biocultural diversity discourse of the civil society network.

b. Kyrgyzstan: Forging Institutional Connections

i. Civil Society in Saro-Kamush

Compared to Beliqo, the village of Saro-Kamush is far less technologically, physically and politically remote. Mobile phones work (though somewhat intermittently) in the village, electricity is in almost every house and cut no more than one or two times a week, and every family I visited, even the poorest, has a television. Maksat, my translator, once mentioned the possibility of getting a computer and a mobile internet connection, and I did meet one family – one of the wealthiest in the village – whose visiting eldest son sat in front of a laptop tinkering with a mobile internet connection. While the connection did not actually work during my visit, and this family is certainly the exception rather than the rule, internet is not entirely unheard of in the village.

Though the village nestles in a high mountain valley and is at the very opposite side of the country from Bishkek, it is not prohibitively difficult to leave the village, at least to travel to the nearest administrative center. This is Kara-Kulja, itself considered (administratively) a large village, and the seat of both the local government for the area and, significantly, the local office of MSDSP. Getting to Kara-Kulja from Saro-Kamush is a mere twenty minute car ride, and though there is no public transport and a ride is not always easy to find, it is possible for residents of the village to occasionally make the trip without excessive difficulty or expense, though this depended on the financial situation of the family and family member in question. Maksat, my translator, travelled to Kara-Kulja at least once a week, but she was quite well-off, and multiple people (such as Eliza, my host) depicted this rate of travel out of the village as surprising or even excessive. For contrast, Eliza never once left the village in the month I spent there (she once complained bitterly to me of this); her mother-in-law left once (to visit her daughter in Kara-Kulja). In short, frequency of travel varies based of social position and economic means – for some leaving was easy, for others difficult and expensive. Yet while Saro-

Kamush lies on the geographic and political periphery of Kyrgyzstan, it is far less technologically and spatially isolated than the Kenyan case.

Yet despite the relative spatial and technological connectedness of the village in contrast to Beliqo, the village has a very different organizational and civil society environment, both in terms of local civil society organizations and connections to external ones. The Aga Khan Foundation's climate change adaptation project was the second or third externally funded non-profit program in the village's history: Save the Children had run a disaster risk reduction and awareness program for the village school children a few years previously. Before the Aga Khan Foundation this was the sole international NGO involved in the village. ARIS, a regional NGO, had partly funded a project to build a public bathhouse in the village,⁴² but during my time there the project was at a standstill because of a misplanned heating system (Mishaev Abdertashet 18/04/2013). Though there was much talk about collecting money from the community and finishing it off, the project seemed to have foundered. As will be analyzed later in the chapter, these delays are a significant indicator of the crucial role of external civil society institutions in both propagating and promoting collective projects in the village, in contrast to the self-perceived inability (often in fact belied by reality) of the village to self-fund and organize its own civil projects.

As well as few external development organizations, Saro-Kamush has far fewer local civil society organizations than Beliqo – at least the kinds of civil society organizations that are recognized by the state and by large NGOs like MSDSP. A number were remnants of institutions from the Soviet era, such as the Women's Council, the Women's Committee (the former was made-up of older women and advised the latter) and the Youth Committee. Others were part of the slow burgeoning of local CBOs, most of which took the form of savings/micro-credit groups. One of these was Saraul, an active local organization run by Burmat, the village

⁴² A community bath house is vital to Saro-Kamush, as no one has running water and the vast majority of residents do not have their own bathing facilities of any sort.

nurse, which consisted of eight families she invited to join, and was both a micro-credit, savings and a women's handicraft group (Abdukaar Urhekov 11/04/2013). However, the vast majority of the village residents I interviewed were not a part of any externally recognized local group. When asked why not, most people told me that they "never heard about them" (Sharipa Baltabaeva 8/04/2013) and "had not been invited to join" (Azim Bakaev 18/04/2013) – indeed, unlike Beliqo, the few groups that did exist seem to be heavily based on family networks for membership (Gulnara Erkebaeva 08/04/2013). My respondents often added that they did not have the time, or that they were in a group already but that it was inactive because of a lack of leadership and interest (Shalatov Alim 10/04/2013).

In large part the difference in the civil society landscape between Beliqo and Sarokamush can be explained by the difference in their histories. The aid and development industries have been present in Kenya for far longer than in Kyrgyzstan (Buxton 2011; Matanga 2010). Indeed, the density of civil society organizations in a village as far removed from urban centers as Beliqo, particularly organizations that are well equipped to suit the taste and needs of donors and NGOs, point to a long history of interaction with and savviness regarding development institutions. In Kyrgyzstan the Soviet state not only organized and controlled any civil society organizations, but also provided services and prevented any other international or non-state actors from doing so. As a result development aid in all of its ubiquitous forms has appeared in the country only in the last two decades, after the fall of the Soviet Union (Buxton 2011).

The current existence of grassroots civil society organizations in the village demonstrates a kind of knowledge transfer, an organizational form that arrived with international aid and development organizations. Prior to the breakup of the USSR the Soviet Union had very different ideas of the forms that civil society should take, if any – most were "party sponsored and dominated organizations" (Evans, Jr. 2006; Weigle and Butterfield 1992: 9), such as cultural and sports clubs or women's committees. While some of the grassroots organizations in Sarokamush still mirror the Soviet model, new organizational ideas are slowly creeping in. Such a

transformation is partly encouraged by the Kyrgyz state, which since the 1990s has had a formal registration process for CBOs which enable donors to make donations and set up programs via such organizations – this connection between the state and civil society will be explored in greater detail later in the chapter. The Climate Change Adaptation Working Group is itself yet another organizational form, a conceptualization and embodiment of ideas about the way civil society should work and be structured, as thought-up by international consultants (i.e., Laurie) and brought by a regional NGO (MSDSP) to the village.

However, despite the relative newness of the kinds of civil society organizations acknowledged by the state and by international and national donors, this does not mean that the village lacks a rich associational life. Both the mosque and the school are hubs of social interactions, celebrations and social debate. Indeed, the village *does* have a history of pulling together around a couple of community projects – namely a small new mosque in the village, as well as a new kindergarten building for the village children. Neither of these projects are funded by external development institutions, but rather in part by the village residents and in part by a major donation from a wealthy community member no longer living in the village (Maksat 09/04/2013). Thus civil society is not limited to simply state-registered groups that can be partnered with NGOs like MSDSP. However, even these community projects, which at first glance seem to be propelled without outside agents like national or international NGOs, are still to some extent externally motivated by the material possibilities of outside agents.

Despite the glaring examples of the mosque and the kindergarten, the residents of Saro-Kamush perceive such internally motivated projects as extremely rare and unlikely. When I asked what problems the village faced, in particular ecological problems (the focus of the climate change adaptation project), there were plenty of answers. Some were very similar to what Pirjan focused on in the climate change trainings: droughts, heavy rains, flooding, mudslides, a lack of infrastructure to deal with this. Others were new: pasture degeneration, the pile of trash in the village that was never picked up. I asked all of my respondents in the village why external

organizations like the Aga Khan Foundation were necessary in the village – why the village residents did not self-organize and fundraise to fix their infrastructural and social problems. The most common answer was that the village lacked the leader and the leadership needed to do such a project: that the problem was “internal dissent” (Akbermet Jenaleyeva 27/04/2013) or “all talk and no action” (Sharipa Baltabaeva 8/04/2013) or “laziness” (Irean Kudeva 18/04/2013). I was told time and time again that external organization and help was necessary to create momentum and lead such a project (Kaniyc Osmokulova 18/04/2013). The mosque and kindergarten school were seen as the exceptions rather than the rule: they benefit most of the village residents evenly and are therefore less political than pasture management that would involve self-sacrifice or the building of infrastructure that might benefit some but not others. In fact, the climate change adaptation project’s canal mini-project *does* only benefit one side of the village, which validates the village’s self-diagnoses of needing external motivation to mobilize around certain types of projects. This perceived need of strong leadership points to a pre-existing expectation of the way social projects in the village unfold – either through the force of particular individuals, or through the intervention of outside agents.⁴³

In short, though civil society came in many forms in Saro-Kamush, the village is far less associationally rich than Beliqo – in part because of history, in part because of lack of funding and connection with external development institutions. Both of these explanations ultimately point to a lack of epistemic connection to national and international development institutions in Saro Kamush. This demonstrates that such epistemic connections transfer not only substantive knowledge about the ecological and developmental issues that networks of development institutions overtly engage with, but also knowledge about institutional and organizational forms to the grassroots. The climate change adaptation project run by MSDSP and the Aga Khan Foundation is one of the first and certainly the widest in scope and ambition of externally run

⁴³This is also reinforced by the village residents’ perception of and expectations from the state, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

projects in the village. In contrast to Beliqo, it was the only development project during the time that I was there. Yet much like Community Forest Association in Beliqo (which Waso Trustland evolved out of REAR-Charri), Pirjan very purposefully decided to align the project in Saro-Kamush with an already-existing CBO, building on local institutions and connections.

ii. Building Knowledge Links: Zhalgiz Alma and the Village School

This already-existing CBO is Zhalgiz Alma (Single Apple), a savings group started by Nurmat, my host in Saro-Kamush and a man in his thirties who had the reputation in the village of being an activist. Besides working as the physical education teacher in the village school, he had several years ago served as the elected village elder⁴⁴ and had run for the local council (and lost). He had started Zhalgiz Alma nearly a decade ago, and had even registered it as a CBO with the state. Both he and other members of Zhalgiz Alma told me that it was once a thriving and active group under Nurmat's leadership (Nurmat 08/04/2013). Indeed, even people in the village who had never been part of the group would bring it up when I asked about civil society groups in the village. However, everyone I spoke with gave me a similar history of the organization: it was once very effective and popular, but when Nurmat left to work in Bishkek and abroad it disintegrated (though it was never formally disbanded). The person who took over for Nurmat mismanaged and embezzled some of the organization's money. When Nurmat returned Zhalgiz Alma remained inactive, though it was still registered with a list of members with the state (Gulnara Erkebaeva 08/04/2014).

The formalized nature of the organization and its recognition by the state made Zhalgiz Alma the obvious way for the climate change adaptation project to deliver money and an infrastructure project to the village. Thus state mechanisms such as the registration of civil society institutions play a key role in the formation of epistemic development networks, in large

⁴⁴ A local government position equivalent to a village chief, but elected for a limited term. Though called an elder and mostly filled by elderly men, age and gender is actually not a requirement for the position.

part because of their importance to intermediary NGOs and donors. During the first part of the CCA project, which focused on the delivery of knowledge around climate change and adaptation, Nurmat was not involved at all – indeed he actually did not attend any of the workshops or trainings around climate change and adaptation, and during my conversations with him could tell me very little about either. He became involved with the program much later, at the stage when all the training was done and the working group for the mini-grant project was formed. It was then that the members of the working group asked him to get involved on the basis of his past leadership and even more crucially because of his knowledge of running a CBO – knowledge that included managing money, recruiting members and registering projects. Simultaneously Pirjan was on the look-out for a pre-existing state-registered CBO in the village to use as a vehicle for the mini-grant, making the transfer of money and control of the project far easier (Chinara Kozuemna 9/04/2013, Pirjan 30/04/2013). In Saro-Kamush Nurmat and Zhalgiz Alma fit the bill – and thus Nurmat became the de facto leader of the mini-grant project of the climate change adaptation project in the village, despite the fact that he had entirely missed the formalized environmental knowledge transfer aspect of the program. This process illustrates the role of both state mechanisms and knowledge of local power dynamics in the way the climate change adaptation project is implemented. Yet at the same time, it also illuminates the role of Pirjan's own acquired knowledge of the grassroots – of village politics, existing institutions and interpersonal dynamics in the village.

Indeed, the way in which Nurmat became the central character in the work of the climate change adaptation project in Saro-Kamush is emblematic of the way civil society epistemic networks form connections with the grassroots. These connections are both structurally pragmatic (building on existing structures and relationships) and ideologically idealistic (focusing on ideologies of participation and accessibility). They also rely on building knowledge of and connections with the grassroots, without which Pirjan could not have discovered the existence of Zhalgiz Alma and Nurmat. Though the program is structured in such a way that wide

participation is encouraged, and the program proposal pays particular attention to involving youth, elders and women, in practice Pirjan makes strategic decisions about who to involve – and to what extent – in the project. Pirjan’s initial approach in each village where he runs the program is to connect with the village elder, and expect him to spread the word about the workshops, but in the weeks I spent with Pirjan he often expressed his frustration with this tactic, as frequently very few people showed up to the program’s workshops, and even fewer came to more than one of the different sessions (Pirjan 29/03/2013). I was able to see this first hand during the time I spent with Pirjan in the small town of Naryn in the center of the country, where Pirjan was running a two-day adaptation-planning workshop in surrounding villages.⁴⁵ In both of the villages we visited together attendance was sparse (under ten people in the first one, under 15 in the second), the vast majority of those who attended did not attend the previous session, and even attendance between the two days of the workshop was very uneven. In both cases Pirjan blamed the village elder, and told me that he generally attempted to not rely on the elder exclusively, but also to speak to the “most active people in the village” – who are the school teachers, village nurse, councilmen (if any) and water management committee or pasture committee members (Pirjan 29/03/2013).

Pirjan did exactly this in Saro-Kamush. Besides speaking to the village elder, Pirjan spoke with Chinara, the principal of the village school – and it was she who gathered the most participants for the project (Pirjan 18/04/2013). Indeed, when I asked those of my respondents in Saro-Kamush who had gone to the workshops how they heard about the program, most told me that they had some connection to the school and had been told to come by a member of staff of the school. Every person involved in the working group, almost everyone attending the program sessions, and nearly everyone that knew about the climate change adaptation project was in some way connected to the village school, be it through the janitor, the lunch ladies or the

⁴⁵ These villages had already had the initial assessments and the first climate change information session.

teachers. The meetings of the mini-project working group were held in the school, the training sessions run by Pirjan were at the village school, and when Pirjan returned to the village he held meetings and updates in empty classrooms. The school became the climate change ‘knowledge hub’ of the village, and this underlies the high participation rates in Saro-Kamush relative to the villages I visited around Naryn, where there was no institutional hub for the program. This was due both to history and to individual agents: not only has the school received the attention of international NGOs before, but several of the teachers have a reputation for being “activists” in the community. In sum, though Pirjan took advantage of very particular institutional forms of civil society that are recognized by the state, he also built on his knowledge of the local to engage with associational life in the village that was outside both these formalized local institutions and state actors such as the village elder.

Thus while the climate change program’s design and proposal explicitly uses the rhetoric of participation, the reality of the way the program is run is much more deliberate and far less open and flat. Though anyone can attend the trainings and workshops of the program, Pirjan makes sure that the institutional hubs of the villages – the clinics, schools, local administrative and resource-managing bodies⁴⁶ – hear and spread the word about the program. Though, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, intermediary institutions have adopted and spread the rhetoric of inclusivity and participation, the practice is much more complex: while principles of participation and inclusive development hold, the program also relies on detailed and particular knowledge of grassroots dynamics, institutions and personalities. As demonstrated by the preceding chapters, global and intermediary organizations of both case studies presume within their participatory rhetoric that local agents are *eager* to participate, but are stymied by hierarchical or other barriers unthinkingly erected by the program design. However, both Beliqo and Saro-Kamush demonstrate that people can lack time, interest or energy to get involved in

⁴⁶ Such as the pasture committee, or the water management committee that exist in most villages.

development programming, and must be persuaded either by the program or by powerful figures in their social circle. Pirjan seems well aware of this barrier. Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that participatory approaches and rhetoric presumes communities which are “homogeneous, static and harmonious units within which people share common interests and need” (6). Yet the way that Pirjan implements the climate change adaptation project in Saro-Kamush points to a far more nuanced understanding of power and influence in the village, an understanding based on detailed knowledge of the local. In villages such as Saro-Kamush, where Pirjan had a deep awareness of local politics and people, the program draws far more people than in those where he is unable to collect knowledge of and thus connect with local institutions. Thus the rhetoric and ideas of participatory development themselves are spread – but altered – by such epistemic development networks, interacting with the knowledge that intermediary organizations hold of local politics and social dynamics. This leads not to a perfect but rather a pragmatic model of participatory development, practiced in some instances but not in others.

iii. Missing Links in the Network

Pirjan (and, for initial assessments, Laurie) is not the only actor from MSDSP who is responsible in creating epistemic connections – and, ultimately, transferring knowledge – to the village. Only twenty minutes away by car is the local MSDSP office, occupying a few rooms in an administrative building in Kara-Kulja. The regional office both facilitates administrative convenience – for instance Nurmat occasionally travelled there to sign papers and agreements regarding the mini-project – but is also as a way to forge and maintain close connections with the villages in the region where MSDSP works. However, in the case of the climate change adaptation project the office seems to largely fail in this role, with key implications for the way that the program is run in the village.

Alibek, who works on the monitoring and evaluation team of MSDSP and who conducted surveys for an initial monitoring report of the climate change adaptation project, drew

a comparison between the involvement of the regional MSDSP office in their local governance programs and in the climate change adaptation project. The local governance program, he explained to me, was largely run out of the regional office, with a regional manager playing a large and active role in administering the program (which was not run in Saro-Kamush, but rather in more outlying villages in the district). Alibek told me that people dropped in to the Kara-Kulja MSDSP office to chat to the local governance program manager about the program, and the manager of the program was well known in the villages where it was run, both amongst local government officials and amongst the residents of the villages. However, there was no such involvement of a staff member at the Kara-Kulja office in the climate change adaptation project, in part because there was no natural resource program manager in the office, and in part because Aizada, the coordinator for the project, was based in the Naryn regional office (Alibek 18/04/2013).

Alibek argued that it was the Kara-Kulja MSDSP office's involvement in the programs that was responsible for the contrast he found in his monitoring – he found that very few people in the villages he surveyed understood the climate change project, while his surveys of the local governance program demonstrated far greater reach, understanding and participation (Alibek 18/04/2013). Thus internal institutional structures also linked to participation – or lack thereof – in the project. Indeed, the non-involvement of the local MSDSP office in the climate change adaptation project in the region is also reflected by the institutional attribution in Saro-Kamush – most of the people I spoke with said the program was funded or run by “the Aga Khan” (Gulnara Erkebaeva 08/04/2013) (indeed, it was unclear if they referred to the Foundation or the person), while no one mentioned MSDSP – in contrast to the situation in Beliqo, where it was Waso Trustland that people associated with the Community Forest Program, and very few had heard of the Christensen Fund despite their visit.

In sum, epistemic connections to the village were forged through a combination of pragmatic considerations, local social dynamics and pre-existing civil society structures tied to

state mechanisms. The depth of the transfers and the content of such epistemic connections was deeply intertwined with the institutional structures of intermediary organizations such as MSDSP. Unlike Beliqo, Saro-Kamush did not have pre-existing civil society structures waiting to be linked into national and international networks of development institutions. Nevertheless, Pirjan went out of his way to link up with one of the few existing state-recognized institutions, despite of the fact that this was originally a micro-savings group that had nothing to do with climate change or ecological interventions – and despite the fact that Nurmat, the leader of the group who became the leader of the mini-project, did not actually attend any of Pirjan’s training sessions on climate change and adaptation planning. Civil society knowledge networks forge connections to the grassroots not simply via a straightforward approach of formal ‘teaching’ through workshops or lectures. Instead, what Saro-Kamush demonstrates is that epistemic links to the grassroots are deeply intertwined with the local politics of civil society organizations, with local state-sponsored institutions, and with existing social structures and social networks of each place.

II. Knowledge and Practice in the Villages: An Environmentalism of the Poor?

a. Kenya: Ecology, Tradition and Action in Beliqo

i. Pre-Existing Ecological Awareness

While forest conservation and ecological engagement in Beliqo is linked with livelihood, CFA presents their work, both within the village and to the outside world, in the rhetoric of ecological engagement and cultural tradition. A large part of this presentation is the result of the efforts of Waso Trustland Project, discussed in the previous chapter. But WTL is only able to create this discourse on the basis of ecological rhetoric and understandings that already exist in the village itself. These include oral ecological histories of degradation and climatic change in the region along with traditional aspects of conservation, both of which fit into the ideas and global discourse around biocultural diversity and indigenous knowledge. This discourse is not purely

instrumentalised: it also affects the actions and projects of CFA. While CFA is motivated by material and livelihood reasons, it nevertheless works to conserve and replant the forest, and thus has affected ecological attitudes and actions in Beliqo.

One of the most striking patterns in the 73 interviews I conducted in Beliqo was the homogeneity in the discourse that people employed in describing this ecological history. The stories that people told focused on an idealization of the past and despair about of the present, a pattern that seems to be obvious to all and thus to have existed long before civil society became involved in conservation. Almost all my interviewees, but particularly the older ones, would describe the past as an ecological ideal that has progressively deteriorated, especially in regards to forest cover, pasture quality and rainfall. This narrative recurred across ages and levels of civil society involvement.

Wako Wado, the 37 year-old chairman of CFA, told me that “twenty years ago we had rain come twice a year, but now all has changed” (Wako Wado 11/08/2011). Sophia Adan, a young woman in her early 20s, told me that the rains have nearly stopped coming, and said she noticed this radical change five or six years ago, “when people started cutting down the trees” (Sophia Adan 08/08/2011). Quarfa Halake, a 90 year-old woman who lived on the fringes of the village and did not participate in any village civil society, told me that “the world has changed”, because in her youth the forest was rich with indigenous fruit trees that kept the people and animals fed, and now the forest has shrunk and “all the fruit trees have turned into poles that don’t even give shade” (Quarfa Halake 16/08/2011). Such ecological oral histories were prevalent through the village, and reflect the assertions of scholars such as Crate (2008), Salik and Ross (2009) and Lauer and Aswani (2010), who argue on the basis of such awareness that indigenous cultures often have a heightened knowledge of climate change – arguments that, as demonstrated later in the chapter, are extensively utilized by the global nodes in the network to justify the shared biocultural diversity discourse. It is possible that climate change is not the primary reason for the decline of the forest and pasture, but that this decline is linked to patterns

of use and increasing numbers of people and animals (Beinart 2003). Yet the ecological awareness of a changing climate and forest echoes Gramsci's metaphor of an organic intellectual (Gramsci 1970), demonstrating that knowledge is not necessarily held or created by acknowledged experts, despite the assertions of some of the epistemic community literature (Haas 1992).

This ecological narrative is reinforced by a belief that “trees bring rain”. This was a claim echoed throughout my interviews (Halkano Kuntulo 01/08/2011, Muhammed Kampicha 01/08/2011, Muhammed Hassan 04/08/2011 and many more). When I would ask where this idea came from, I was told it was “taught to us” – taught either by civil society organizations (Hussein Buke 04/08/2011) or, for a few younger and more privileged members of the community, by the schools (Asana 16/08/2011). Indeed, the words had the ring of rote repetition, and the idea that trees bring rain is an old one – it was widely discussed in Europe and the US by the start of the 19th century (Kutzleb 1971; Kollmorgen & Kollmorgen 1973), and is perhaps a hold out of colonial science and environmentalism, and colonial knowledge production more broadly, as it can now be heard in communities throughout the African continent (Ikeogu et al. 2013; Eguavoen 2013). To my surprise, despite connecting trees and rain, very few of the people extended that connection to drought. And yet this connection between trees and rain was an ecological awareness that CFA could utilize to justify its activities both in the village's eyes and within the broader network under the conservation category. The clear sense of climatic change over time, often tied with a perceived history of progressive degradation and an idea of the connection between forest and climate, provides a link between the attitude of Beliqo residents and wider views of climate change and biodiversity loss. Even though the outward language of climate change was not spoken in Beliqo, the residents of the village were aware of a climate that changes, and linked this awareness with loss of forest.

ii. Conservation, Culture and Religion

This link between climatic change and ecological degradation is often coupled with a discussion of conservation within Borana cultural tradition. For instance, Chief Dima once told me that the Borana have “traditional taboos against the cutting of our trees” (2/8/2011), and the village shopkeeper Jarso Hassan said that “our tradition forbids aimless tree cutting. It’s a great sin for Borana [people] to cut a big acacia tree” (13/8/2011). This connection between tradition and conservation places the understandings and discussion around the environment in Beliqo squarely within the bounds of the biocultural diversity discourse and its assertion of the link between cultural and biological diversity. Though the beliefs mentioned hark to Borana-specific traditions, I also heard it within Muslim religious rhetoric. Halima Haro told me that cutting trees was a sin, and that the drought was God’s punishment for the logging. She described killing trees as a loss of respect for Borana society (Halima Haro 07/08/2011). Such sentiment echoes the rhetoric of biocultural diversity, with its emphasis on indigenous knowledge, religious practices and the role of sacred spaces in traditional modes of conservation.⁴⁷ Indeed, it somewhat justifies the perspective voiced by TCF that conservation and ecological action can be based on local traditions and customs, though I would contend that it is just one in a constellation of drivers of attitudes towards natural resource use.

Residents of the village described cutting trees as a modern phenomenon introduced by ethnic outsiders. As Habiba stated, “Merus come here with power saws and cut our trees for timber. Finally the community said *no*, brought timber [confiscated from caught loggers] to the community to build the madrasa. We’ve gotten Merus to stop cutting now: very few do, especially after [the activism of] CFA” (01/08/2013). This is an echo of the narrative of outsiders convincing village youth to cut down trees with power saws, discussed in the previous chapter, except that here the fault lies entirely with outsiders. In this way the community links modernity, symbolized by the power saw, with a loss of tradition and ecological degradation,

⁴⁷ See for instance Maffi 2005; Negi 2005; Pilgrim et al. 2009; Wild and McLeod 2008.

fitting into the biocultural diversity discourse by privileging traditional practices as ecologically aware (Berkes et al. 2000; Speranza et al. 2009). Thus CFA has a fertile ground of local ecological narrative in the village on which to build a connection between their work and wider environmental concern, despite an underlying focus on livelihood. CFA was also able to do this through cultivating an awareness of broader development terms and practices, and incorporating them into their internal lexicon and the way that the group was run – thus fitting their work into the expectations of the global donor community.

Towards the end of every interview, after talking about trees and the forest and the importance of both to the community, we would discuss the then-current 2011 drought. I would ask whether it was particularly bad that year, why the person I was speaking to thought this was, and why the droughts in general had been worsening (as nearly everyone stated they were). These questions were typically answered with an incredulous look or a smile, as if I was asking the sort of obvious question one would ask a small child, and the response would be something along the lines of “it’s God’s case” (Abdi Abkula 11/08/2011) and “only God knows the reason behind the drought” (Ibrahim Born 14/08/2011), or “only God knows why” (Buke Kangu 15/08/2011). When I persisted and asked what could be done about the drought, whether to stop or mitigate it, I would receive a similar reaction, with the stated answer either being “nothing, only God can make rain” (Osman Halake 06/08/2011) or “we can only pray” (Ibrahim Ali 15/08/2011). This sort of fatalism is both intriguing and surprising in the face of CFA activism as well as the existing conceptual link between ecology and climate, in particular the belief that trees bring rain. The contradiction reaffirms the rote, memorized nature of the “trees bring rain” idea – no one thought to extend it to linking human behavior and droughts. The production of knowledge is not undifferentiated or static – as this chapter demonstrates repeatedly, ideas are accepted and internalized to various and different degrees. While the presence of CFA and other ecologically-focused civil society groups has certainly affected the way that people understand, talk about, and act towards the environment, it has done so much

more in the immediate, micro scale, rather than a wider, more macro understanding of climate change. Indeed, the relationship between local ecology, environmental action and climate change was never brought up by the active members of CFA, other than the chairman, Wako Wado (Wako Wado 11/08/2011).

Perhaps the most complex and telling conversation I had about religion and ecology was with the local Imam, Muhammed Hassan, himself a proud member of CFA as well as the village preacher and a teacher of the village children in Beliqo's one-room after-school madrasa. Sheik Muhammed echoed many of the ideas around of the importance of the forest voiced by most community members. He went even further, explicitly stating that the forest is good for the weather due to a connection between trees and stopping the winds. He also explained that part of his religious understanding and religious teaching is that "it's bad to destroy nature, because nature is part of God's creation" and that the Koran explicitly speaks of conservation, arguing that God made the natural world good, and it is the devil that leads to misuse of nature. Indeed, he both echoed much of Waso Trustland's land-rights rhetoric and encapsulated this work's argument by stating that "nothing is valuable or durable except land, other than knowledge – nothing is more durable than resources". Yet at the same time he insisted that the rain is in God's hands and the drought a punishment for the lack of fearing God. When I asked if anything could be done by people to stop or soften the drought, he initially surprised me by firmly stating that yes, indeed there could. He then went on to describe a mass prayer that could be undertaken as a community, which by apologizing and imploring to God would make the drought go (Muhammed Hassan 04/08/2011). He created a bridge between the secular cosmology of "trees bring rain" and the religious fatalism of "it's in God's hands", presenting an activist vision of ecological intervention that nevertheless retains the crux of the idea that nature and weather is beyond human intervention other than by supplication. His approach does not connect easily with the secular, humanist perspectives of international foundations, even with the Christensen Fund's lauding of biocultural diversity. Yet it is also a view that is unlikely to be

static, and indeed could represent an evolving process of fitting together religious, ecological, traditional and activist ideas from a variety of sources, civil society networks amongst them.

iii. Ecological Values and Actions: Ownership and a Shift in Time Scale

The adoption of a common discourse is critical to Beliqo's ability to participate in this civil society network. However, this adoption is not merely instrumental. The effect of belonging to this network is much more than merely receiving resources in exchange for adopting new rhetoric: it also includes internalizing and implementing the beliefs and the values of the network as a whole. This section argues that CFA's participation in the network has in several essential ways changed how people in Beliqo understand and interact with the environment. These changes entail not only the obvious redirection of attention and resources towards conservation, but also more subtle shifts in the way people understand ecological ownership and responsibility and the time scales with which they evaluate ecological behaviors.

My respondents in Beliqo frequently referenced ecological ownership and described it in a historical arc – something that once existed, then was replaced by state mechanisms such as the KFS, and now has returned once more as awareness engendered in the community by CFA, and through CFA, WTL. Dabaso Godo, an elderly farmer, told me that the Beliqo community has “learned from CFA” that “we are owners of the trees”, and after this realization agreed to jointly care for them (Dabaso Godo 01/08/2011). This ownership was presented in stark contrast to the policies of the state, which before the 2005 Forests Act simultaneously took away the impetus of ecological caretaking from the community and failed to fulfill this role. Adan Muhamed told me that people used to think that the forest belonged to the government, in care of the KFS, but that “the KFS has ignored local problems”. Adan argued that since people thought the environment was government property, they felt free to destroy the forest for personal gain. (Adan was one of the few Beliqo resident I spoke with who did not bother to put the blame for logging onto ethnic outsiders.) He made the case that now the community has “learned ownership” from CFA and now sees that the forest “belongs to us” (Adan Muhamed

08/08/2011). In this narrative, the government's claim to ownership and control over the local ecology undermined the Borana traditions which in the village's communal memory held people responsible for preventing the destruction of the natural world. It is then the knowledge passed on through the civil society network that precipitates a resurgence of a sense of ownership and a motivation for action – ironically enough by working with a new mandate given by the government in the 2005 Forests Act.

Along with inducing a renewed sense of ecological ownership, the civil society network has encouraged a shift in the time frames with which people in Beliqo consider environmental decisions from immediate concerns to more long-term thinking. The awareness that the forest was important for future community wellbeing was well developed in most of the people I spoke with in Beliqo. In Ibrahim Born's words, what CFA brought was "ideas" about how the world is changing and the necessity to act on these changes so that outsiders cannot unfairly take advantage of the area's natural resources. Indeed, in discussing the importance of thinking about the future, Ibrahim echoed the rights-based language of Waso Trustland, bringing up the fact that the area was a "trustland" and mentioning "exploitation" and corruption as a way for outsiders to gain control over the land, and CFA as a way of maintaining local access and control over the future (Born 14/08/2011). Hadija Jillo Shane explained that the cutting of trees was a problem because the drought made people desperate and forced them to think about immediate survival. Hadija argued that though people might acknowledge the necessity of trees, CFA enforced "deep" knowledge of their importance, forcing people to overcome "circumstances" and to think differently about resource use – her example, echoed by many others, was the shift between cutting one branch of a tree rather than the entire tree, be it for charcoal or for building (Hadija Jillo Shane 19/08/2011).

Though material reasons for preserving the forest existed before CFA, CFA's work and visible presence encourages (by growing and distributing seedlings) and enforces (by policing of the forest and catching loggers) a shift in values and culture of privileging the future of the forest

over the immediacy of material necessity. This shift in values and actions is less visible than CFA's overt efforts to catch loggers and plant trees, but it is a significant outcome of CFA's presence in Beliqo. Once again, this echoes some of the writings around indigenous knowledge and conservation, particularly the work of Berkes (2004, 2007), who writes about the advantages and difficulties of community conservation efforts. He acknowledges a plurality of objectives and argues for involving "networks and linkages across various levels of organization" that use pluralistic frameworks and "acknowledges processes at multiple levels" (Berkes 2007: 15188, 15192). Indeed, Berkes' argument around the complexity of institutions and objectives that coexist in community conservation efforts in a "globalized world" (15188) is precisely what the ideas and actions of CFA and Beliqo residents demonstrate.

b. Kyrgyzstan

i. Pre-Existing Attitudes and Knowledge: A Moral and Political Cosmology of Ecological Degeneration

Just as is the case in Kenya, the ideas brought by the climate change adaptation project to Saro-Kamush are far from entirely new. Though the program does not have the explicit focus on pre-existing ecological values and awareness of Waso Trustland's grant application to the Christensen Fund, there is a provision for investigating the knowledge of people in the villages where the program is running. Unlike the Christensen Fund, the emphasis here is certainly not on preserving local knowledge or building a program around it, but rather having a baseline from which to design and justify a program that brings new knowledge and action to the villages (AKF Kg 2011; AKF Kg 2010). Thus Laurie and Erkin conducted initial assessments of potential villages where the climate change adaptation project would be run, and the knowledge regarding climate change and adaptation already in the villages formed part of the initial assessment.

Laurie's reports, my conversations regarding the baseline assessments with Laurie, and the interviews in Saro-Kamush make it clear that the residents of Saro-Kamush are well aware that the climate has changed over recent decades. In particular, most of my interviewees who were over the age of 30, whether they were participants in the climate change adaptation

workshops or not, noted long-term changes in seasonal weather patterns. They spoke about “far colder winters” when they were children, in which the river froze over to the point of them being able to skate on it – as opposed to now, when the river did not freeze at all in the winter (Bedel Akutoba 10/04/2013, Mishaev Abdertashet 18/04/2013). They also spoke about the ways that the rains had changed – the usual narrative was that the rains were once far more predictable, both in frequency and intensity – and that now “there is either too much or too little of it, uneven distribution. Now the rains were far more intense, causing frequent flooding” (Shalatov Alim 10/04/2013), but at the same time came too seldom (Sharipa Baltaeva 8/04/2013). Some, such as Chinara, the school director, even told me about the melting glaciers in the mountains (Chinara Kozuemna 09/04/2013).

When I asked the reasons behind the change in climate, most of my informants simply stated that they did not know (Azim Bakaev 18/04/2013). Others attributed the changing climate to god (Belekova Sharbu 10/04/2013). However, a significant minority did have a theory. They told me that society and people have degenerated over the past two decades – people have become greedy, individualistic and selfish with the disintegration of the Soviet Union – and nature or the environment has mimicked the same degeneration (Satarov Mamajan 10/04/2013, Mishaev Abdertashet 18/04/2013). When I probed for the causal factor in this connection, asking if this was because people treated the environment more carelessly or because of some other behavioral change towards the environment, the answer would be no. People either said that nature mirrors human kind through some sort of undefined (or perhaps supernatural or mystical) mechanism, or they would directly attribute it to god (Tatugul Chudueva 27/04/2013). While there seems to be an implicit critique of the capitalist world system which Kyrgyzstan entered with the fall of the Soviet in this view, no one made the connection explicit. Indeed, Saro-Kamush residents were silent on the appearance of international and national NGOs just at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the start of this moral and ecological degradation. I was left wondering if this was a deliberate, self-

censored silence, a hidden transcript (Scott 1990) linked to resident's perception of my own association with AKF and MSDSP and to some extent as another "development expert".

This view of social and individual decay after the end of the Soviet Union could also be part of wider-spread post-socialist nostalgia (Yurchak 2006; Nadkarni & Shevchenko 2004). Yet I would argue that it is more than this: the perceived link between disturbances in the social and ecological sphere echoes those made in other societies at moments of crisis, and suggests an underlying level of understanding of ecological issues as integrated into a broader human system and affected by political, economic and social change. It points to a broader moral cosmology that connects ecological degradation with personal and social degeneration. The climate change adaptation project thus fits into a social logic about the relationship between nature, society and individuals.

Though the themes and goals of the climate change program fit into the pre-existing moral and ecological cosmology of Saro-Kamush residents, this broader perspective was not an intentional part of the program design. MSDSP and AKF were uncritical of larger systemic factors behind ecological change, and certainly did not attempt to engage with them through the climate change adaptation project. Indeed, the contrast between the apolitical or pro-government position of MSDSP and the politicized and structurally aware perception of the residents of Saro-Kamush and other villages was also evident in another common topic of conversation in my interviews: Kumtor. When I would ask about ecological degradation and climate change, many of my informants would talk to me about the ecological impact of Kyrgyzstan's main mine, the Canadian-owned goldmine of Kumtor. Both in the villages around Naryn, which is close to the mine, and even in Saro-Kamush, which is at the opposite side of the country, many people would bring up Kumtor and their worries of ecological degradation resulting from the mining, ranging from pollution in the Naryn River to the movement and the melting of glaciers in the mountains around the mine (Bolotpek 27/03/2013, Kaniyc Osmokulova 18/04/2013). Aizada, the climate change adaptation project officer in the Naryn office, complained to me in

exasperation that villagers kept on talking to her about Kumtor when she wanted to talk to them about climate change without understanding the difference between the two (Aizada 26/03/2013).

I would argue that this is an example of MSDSP and AKF Kg's preference towards engaging the apolitical ecological interventions: climate change adaptation does not threaten or even engage with any state policies, and indeed the program overtly attempts to work alongside local government. Engaging with the ecological implications of the Kumtor mine, though this is something the villagers were highly concerned about, would have been much too politically contentious, in clear opposition to AKF's goals of working alongside and enhancing the functioning of the state. In an echo of Ferguson's (1994) argument this de-politicization of ecological and civil society engagement, presented as an apolitical position, mirrors the stance of the Christensen Fund, which also explicitly refuses to engage in political activism (such as the land-rights activism of the Waso Trustland Project). However, as is the case with CFA and WTL in Beliqo, involvement in development-focused civil society does not entirely remove the political. It is certainly true that civil society organizations in both of the case studies move away from deeply controversial, contentious issues, such as land rights or mining rights. Yet, as will be discussed in more detail below, such organizations demonstrate to village residents pathways to accessing state resources and state attention, which itself is a politicizing process.

Besides a perception of ecological degradation that coincided with the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of capitalism, and concerns about the ecological degradation caused by Kumtor, some of the people in Saro-Kamush were also well aware of man-made ecological degradation that had occurred in the area in the last fifty years. The most frequent concerns that I heard about were the erosion caused by the widening river and the degradation of the communal pastures. Those who complained to me about the ever-widening river – which had

eaten up arable land⁴⁸ and forced the village to move up to the top of the bluff overlooking the river canyon – either did not know why the river had changed so dramatically or blamed the Soviet regime. Indeed, one of my interviewees, a middle-aged herder and livestock-owner who did not give his name, told me that it was all the Soviet Union's fault, as the Soviet state had dammed the river in order to build a cement factory, causing it to widen out and eat into its banks. Even the promised employment opportunities of this factory ended up being a lie, as it was built shortly before the transition to capitalism, and ended up closing not long after it began operating. Indeed, this man described the ecology of the valley before the arrival of the Soviets as a “paradise”, told me that it was the Soviets that ruined it with overgrazing, due to the explicit Soviet policy of dramatically increasing meat production in Central Asia (27/04/2013).

Though this perspective echoes historical work on Soviet environmental policy (Josephson 2007; Josephson et al. 2013), this was the minority perception. While overgrazing and the degradation of communal pasture lands was a frequent topic of conversation when I would ask people in Saro-Kamush about their ecological concerns, most of the village residents talked about this as beginning after the fall of the Soviet Union. They told me that overgrazing was caused by human greed, by selfishness and the equivalent of the tragedy of the commons: while land is still held communally by the village, everyone started to think only of themselves and increasing their wealth once the Soviet restrictions on property ownership were lifted (Irean Kudeva 18/04/2013). This echoes the perception of interlinked ecological and social and moral degradation in the post-Soviet period discussed above: even those who acknowledged that the Soviet regime caused ecological degradation still stressed the destructive selfishness in present-day overgrazing on communal pastures.

The village has institutions that were created to engage with the issue – like nearly all Kyrgyz villages, there was a grazing committee, whose main duty was to see that everyone paid

⁴⁸ During the late Soviet period rice had been grown on its banks.

the appropriate level of taxes on their use of the communal land,⁴⁹ but which was also responsible for the general oversight of pasture land. However, when I asked village residents why the pasture committee did not control the overgrazing, people would shrug their shoulders and tell me that the committee was not interested, or was corrupt, or was only interested in collecting taxes (Mishaev Abdertashet 18/04/2013). When I asked members of the pasture committee why they could not stop overgrazing, their response was that they did not have the power or authority, or that it was outside their responsibility, or that there needed to be stronger laws (Azim Bakaev 18/04/2013). This is a standard ‘tragedy of the commons’ narrative (Hardin 1968), which saw the only solution as a stronger central authority with enforcing power. Yet this response from both sides of the question also echoes what people told me when I asked about collective action in the village more broadly – that people were apathetic, that the village lacked activists and leaders, that no one was organized enough, that everyone was too selfish. The belief implied is that if only community ties and moral rules were strong enough, this tragedy need not happen, echoing Elinor Ostrom’s view of collective action and social dilemmas and her revision of Hardin’s argument (though she does argue that such ties and rules generally often exist) (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 2007; Ostrom et al. 2002). The residents of Saro-Kamush seemed to think that while community ties and moral rules once were strong enough for ecological governance, now this had degraded to the point that external agents – be they organizations like the Aga Khan Foundation, the government or stronger legal structures – needed to intervene in the village to fix communal problems.

ii. Climate Change, Disasters and Adaptation Trainings

The climate change adaptation project by its very nature circumvented the ecological issues that most people in the village discussed with me – and thus any danger of politically contentious politics or campaigns, be they grazing rights or mining. Because the program is about adaptation,

⁴⁹ Since the land is held communally, the level of tax depends on the number of animals on the pastures.

not mitigation, and climate change, not ecological degradation more broadly, it is designed to exist in a neutral, politically-disconnected space. Yet the result of such political neutrality was that most people in the village failed to realize that the program had anything to do with the environment at all. My expectation in coming to Saro-Kamush was that the program and its workshops would have shifted the way people understood the environment in predictable ways – that it would make them aware of and engaged with the implications of climate change. Yet while the presence of the climate change program certainly changed people’s ideas, knowledge and actions, it did so in far less obvious and predictable ways.

Despite the fact that Pirjan had run three multiple-day workshops in the village, all of which included lectures on climate change and on adaptation, the direct message did not get across. Few of the people who attended the workshops could tell me anything about climate change, or about adaptation – even when I used different terms, or when I started explaining the concept to them. When I asked what the workshops had been about, nearly everyone told me the same thing: disasters (Sharipa Baltabaeva 08/04/2013). The general perception was that the program was about disaster risk reduction. My informants came away with the sense that disasters, especially water-related ones such as mudslides, floods and droughts were increasing in frequency and intensity, and this was corroborated by their own experience (Bisalvada 08/04/2013). They had the sense the Aga Khan’s program was there to engage with these increasing disasters in some way. This fit neatly onto the previously-discussed moral cosmology of many village residents that linked the increasing individually-focused post-Soviet political economy with social, moral and ecological degeneration. Yet one of the stated goals of the program – increasing awareness of climate change, as a pre-condition for increasing people’s adaptation to its effects – was certainly not taking place, as shown not only by my interviews but by Alibek’s surveys, which happened at just about the same time, and concluded that “the main parts of the [climate change adaptation] plans are related to social and DRR [disaster risk reduction] problems not the climate change issue itself” (Mukambaev 2013). This is surely linked

not only with the ways in which the program was structured and run, and the way knowledge is transmitted (or not) in climate change workshops, but also the conceptual, removed and global scope of climate change concepts, as opposed to the much more material and immediate understanding of disaster (Beinart & Brown 2013).

Yet if people in Saro-Kamush were not learning about climate change or adaptation through the program, what were they learning? What knowledge was ultimately coming down to the local through this civil society knowledge network?

During my interviews, it became clear that the program was transforming the thinking and ideas of the people in Saro-Kamush – only in terms of neither climate change nor adaptation. As discussed above, in practice the climate change adaptation project became a disaster risk reduction program – interestingly enough, something the Aga Khan Foundation is very interested in and that they are doing explicitly in other parts of the country. This dovetails with the argument of the previous two chapters: both global foundations and NGO intermediaries act pragmatically, and are skilled at taking up new knowledge and rhetoric while still integrating their original aims and programs. Thus the workshops and trainings were transferring knowledge – but the knowledge was far less conceptual, and far more pragmatic than the way these workshops were originally planned. Indeed, I would argue that the greatest transformative potential of these workshops lay in the second part of peoples’ responses when I asked what they had learned. The trainings, and indeed the program as a whole, presented a route for residents of the village to engage in constructive collective action, to access both the material but also the epistemic and organizational resources needed to execute a physical intervention in the village.

This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that everyone in the village knew about and were committed to the mini-project part of the program – even those who did not know about the program in any other way. Those who attended the climate change adaptation project’s workshops rarely spread any of the information that Pirjan had formally taught to their family,

friends or neighbors. This was obvious both from interviewing their family members, and from asking them if they had conversations about what they learned in the workshops at home. Mukai Omurzavok, a middle-aged builder who had attended four days of climate change adaptation workshops and found them both well-taught and interesting, stated that he did not discuss what he learned at the workshops with anyone else, and that he did not see “the use” of doing so (16/04/2013). Yet everyone I spoke with in the village knew about “the canal project”. As described in Chapter Three, this is the climate change adaptation mini-project that is the final component of the climate change adaptation project. In the case of Saro-Kamush this is a project to clean out and rebuild a canal, together with laying a pipe and a road over one portion of it. Not only did everyone I spoke with in Saro-Kamush know about the project, but everyone was invested in it, at least publicly and rhetorically. Because the project was only partially funded by MSDSP (they contribute USD 4000), everyone in the village was expected to financially contribute to the canal (in proportion to the number of people in each family).

Everyone I spoke with told me that they were happy to do this, that they either had already given the money or were about to, and that the chance to fix the canal “was the best part of the AKF project” (Kudayberdiev Orazdai 10/04/2013). When I asked people why they were willing to contribute to the program, they told me that the project was for the good of the village, that they needed the canal to control flooding and get water to the fields where they grew fodder for their animals’ winter feed, and the road over it to get vehicles into the fields (Azim Bakaev 18/04/2013). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, even families whose fields were on the side of the village that did not benefit from the canal project said the same, explaining that the canal will be a communal good, and that water is a key resource that must be ensured to the village (Gulzam So’oronova 10/04/2013). One of my respondents also linked it to religious reciprocity, saying that “Muslims believe that all must give – [we have a saying that] if all spit, then we get the sea” (Jumakaul Makerimova 26/04/2013). Thus when it came to the actual project, the program had no problems getting buy-in and commitment from Saro-Kamush

residents. Such buy-in is not only due to the pragmatic, material benefits of the mini-grant, though these are certainly there: a middle-aged man named Satarov Mamajan told me quite frankly that “civil society can only change people’s minds through money – that’s our mentality” (10/04/2013). Interest and commitment is also there because the project builds both on the existing moral cosmology of social and ecological degeneration (via the focus on disasters) and on expectations of external motivation and strong internal leadership for the project.

Indeed, the program was far more effective at mobilizing village residents around this mini-project than transferring knowledge about climate change and adaptation per se. And much of the mobilizing happened outside of the program’s formal structures: Nurmat and many others told me that people were told about and agreed to the canal project at village-wide meetings held and organized by Nurmat, which were not a part of MSDSP’s program at all (Nurmat 09/04/2013, Mishaev Abdertashet 18/04/2013). A large part of this disconnect between knowledge of climate change and adaptation and knowledge of the mini-project is a result of the program’s structure. The teaching and learning happens quite separately in the program: first the workshops and trainings are held, and then, right at the very end (and often with quite different people) the mini-project and the grant are brought up and the working group is formed. As discussed above, this is exactly what happened in Saro-Kamush – Nurmat attended none of the climate change workshops, but leads the canal project because of his skill and prior civil-society experience (and pre-existing, state-approved CBO).

Yet I would also argue that the program’s structure is not the only factor in the knowledge gap between climate change adaptation and canal building. Much like in Beliqo, it is ultimately livelihoods that are priorities. Indeed, just like in Beliqo, the appeal of the climate change adaptation project is that it provides more security for the livestock of these pastoralists: while in Beliqo the goal became to conserve a forest that provided fodder during drought, in Saro-Kamush the project provided the necessary infrastructure to manage the water needed for growing winter fodder (beside providing more protection from flooding and mudslides). Thus

the epistemic transfers between NGO intermediaries like MSDSP and AKF Kg and the actual people in Saro-Kamush are not about climate change or adaptation per se; instead they are based to some degree on local collective knowledge and environmental priorities. These have a more instrumental element, with a focus on conservation and management of environmental resources. These knowledge transfers become ultimately about the knowledge needed to execute a collective project – in particular the knowledge needed to access national and international civil society (and, as will be argued below, state) resources. Thus the case of Saro-Kamush demonstrates the ways in which civil society based epistemic networks enable collective action, not only through material, but also through epistemic resources. Part of this process is one of framing: of enabling collective problems to be reframed in ways that fit into the interests – and knowledge – of development institutions (Carpenter 2007b; Joachim 2003). Environmental concerns are just one possible vehicle for this process, but a particularly flexible one – both ideas of conservation (and indeed, biocultural diversity) in Beliqo and climate change adaptation in Saro-Kamush are able to be utilized to promote livelihood, infrastructure building or disaster risk reduction.

iii. Knowledge and Practice: From Climate Change Adaptation to Infrastructure Building

The course of the climate change adaptation project in Saro-Kamush points to the transformations which both knowledge and practice undergo between the rhetoric of global movements, the designs of intermediary organizations and the knowledge and practice in villages where the program is run. As argued above, it was the mini-project that captured the imagination of most of the residents of Saro-Kamush. Indeed, much of the original structure of the project that was put in place by AKF and MSDSP seemed to fade away in practice. For instance, the design of the climate change adaptation project specified that the working group in each village should create an adaptation plan based on the discussion of the participants in the last of Pirjan's workshops, integrate the plan into the village development plan, and keep working on the plan

over time. The working group is also meant to select one part of the adaptation plan and turn it into a proposal for a mini-project, which AKF and MSDSP would consider funding. But, at least for Laurie, this was supposed to be only one small part of the working group's role. Laurie once said to me that the ideal example of a successful climate change adaptation project was a village where the program was run but where their proposal for a mini-project was unsuccessful with AKF Kg. This village decided to use their proposal to apply for other sources of funding with other international and national NGOs – and ended up getting the mini-project funded from other civil society sources. For Laurie this was the ideal, as it both showed agency and independence of the village, as well as deep interest and commitment to adaptation (Laurie Ashley 07/05/2013).

On the one hand, Laurie's ideal village demonstrates once more one of the core arguments of this chapter. The knowledge transferred by environmental projects such as the climate change adaptation project is as much about ways for the local to connect with and utilize international and national development institutions as it is about environmental concepts such as climate change. Yet at the same time, it also shows that for Laurie the key aspect of the program is about putting ideas of adaptation into practice, not about carrying out an AKF Kg funded mini-project. Indeed Laurie said so directly – for her it is integrating climate change adaptation into what the village did and how it planned that is key (Laurie Ashley 07/05/2013, Pirjan 27/03/2013). As such, there is a transformation between the emphasis of AKF on adaptation planning and the focus of the residents Saro-Kamush on executing the mini-project. Few of the members of the working group knew anything about the climate change adaptation plan that they were supposed to draft and update – only when I brought up the last training session run by Pirjan and the chart that all of the participants created there (which is meant to be a draft of the adaptation plan that the working group would build off) would working group members remember something about any such plan (Maksat 20/04/2013, Chinara 09/04/2013). None of them saw their role as developing the plan or updating it – most told me that they were part of

the group to support and supervise Nurmat's work on the canal-building mini-project (Abdukaar Urhekov 11/04/2013). In short, the intent of NGO intermediaries such as AKF Kg and MSDSP to transform knowledge about climate change into climate change adaptation projects in practice shifted to an emphasis on the actual mini-project.

However, the execution of the canal-building mini-project itself built on and brought a collection of ideas and concepts to the village – even if these were not climate change or adaptation. While Nurmat was not simply the leader of the working group, but largely ran the project alone, the project required community knowledge, involvement and mobilization. Everyone in the village had to agree to pitch money and labor into the project. This was not simple, and Nurmat could not do it alone. It required the village meetings to talk about the project, convened with the help of the village elder, as well as members of the working group (organized by Nurmat) to go door to door to collect monetary contributions for the project from village residents. MSDSP was not involved in any of these processes – and thus one of the knowledge transfers of the program was local community organizing skills. As discussed earlier in the chapter, many village residents are deeply skeptical about the ability of the village to instigate and run a community project, and the execution of the mini-project required just such ability.

To execute the mini-project, Nurmat also had to wade into the local politics and power dynamics of the village. In the case of Saro-Kamush, because it was the village school rather than the village elder that had become the heart of the climate change adaptation project, the village elder, while vaguely supportive, did not take an active role in the project. Nurmat complained bitterly about this when it came time to actually work on the canal. Though everyone in the village that I spoke with told me that they would contribute labor, no men actually showed up on the first morning of work – and Nurmat attributed this in our casual conversations to the village elder's neglect at mobilizing the men to work. In fact, that first morning of work was done by Nurmat and the people he *could* easily mobilize – senior boys from the village school who were

Nurmat's PE students! When Nurmat discussed this with me, I could not hide my indignation and concern, and perhaps partly in response to this he vowed that it would not happen again. And indeed, the second day of work was in fact carried out by a team of village men. Yet it demonstrates that negotiating village politics was a key part of transforming knowledge to action – a part that NGO intermediaries such as MSDSP left to local actors. This might lead to mixed results, but also was the most deeply 'participatory' aspect of the program. And it was not just local politics that played a role in creating action out of the epistemic of the project – a core aspect of the epistemic impact of the project was the connections it created with the Kyrgyz state.

iv. Building State and Civil Society Connections

Just as in Kenya, the residents of Saro-Kamush spoke to me extensively about their perception of the Kyrgyz state. Though their views emerge from a far different history, they largely echo the views of Beliqo residents. When I asked people in Saro-Kamush why the government did not build the canal that they were building themselves with the help of the Aga Khan, I was told over and over again that the Kyrgyz state was corrupt and unreliable with “no power or strength” (Eliza 19/04/2013), that it did nothing for them, and that they cannot count on it to provide even the most basic services (Baisalvada 08/04/2013). Examples of state failure ranged from the lack of trash pickup⁵⁰ (Shalatov Alim 10/04/2013) to the absence of aid after the flooding that had been happening regularly for the past few years (Kaniyc Osmokulova 18/04/2013). When I asked why this was, most people told me that the state was corrupt, that it did not care about the people, and those that went into government were greedy and did so for their own gains – that “the government doesn't want to hear from simple people, only rich people or those with money” (Nurmat 08/04/2013).

⁵⁰ Village residents dumped their trash down the side of the cliff that marked one of the village boundaries and then burned it.

However, almost everyone in the village knew that the state *was* in fact helping – though quite minimally – with the canal project. The local government promised to lend the project an excavator and some petrol, and under pressure from Pirjan even signed a contract to do so⁵¹. This state involvement was intentionally brought about by MSDSP and the program design, which as mentioned above and in the previous chapter explicitly looked for state involvement. While the other state-focused aim of the program – to integrate the climate change adaptation plan into the village and regional development plan – was largely unheard of and unknown in the village, the physical contribution of the state to the canal mini-project was widely acknowledged and appreciated (Azim Bakaev 18/04/2013). I would argue that, just as in Kenya, this is an epistemic contribution of the project and the civil society network in itself. The canal mini-project does not simply replace the functioning or responsibility of the state (as argued in Chandhoke's model of the networked state), but demonstrates how to access state-resources to the disenchanted residents of Saro-Kamush. Thus the climate change adaptation project is not simply taking on the functions of the state by building the canal: it is simultaneously inadvertently providing knowledge of alternative pathways to state resources.

State resources are not the only thing village residents learn to access because of the canal mini-project – another pathway that they learn about is the use of civil society itself. While Beliqo residents were already well aware of the ways that aid, information and resources could be sought from external development institutions, this knowledge was still slowly making its mark on Saro-Kamush. The climate change adaptation project played a big and purposeful part in this learning. The program demonstrated both the sort of resources and connections that such institutions could bring, as well as the utility of having pre-existing state-recognized, development-focused civil society organizations in the village. Most interestingly, the program explicitly taught and encouraged village residents to look for the resources and involvement of

⁵¹ As noted earlier, Pirjan came up with the idea of the contract due to the experience of a mini-project in another village, where local officials were rescinding on promised government funding for the work.

other development institutions besides MSDSP and the Aga Khan Foundation: a solution radically different from the normal course of either a private company or the state! Pirjan not only taught residents how to write a project proposal (which they had to do to apply for funding for the mini-project), but told them about other grants that could fund the mini-project should MSDSP decide not to do so (Pirjan 29/03/2013). The impact of this new knowledge can be seen in the fact that no one in the village had applied for an external grant before the climate change adaptation project. As Irlean Kudeva stated, “we do hear of international organizations, we just don’t know how to get access to the funds” (18/04/2013). After the project they became more ambitious. Chinara (the school principal and a member of the working group) said to me that “if the [mini-project] is successful, we will write more project grants” (09/04/2013). Indeed, Nurmat told me that he was thinking of applying for a grant from the Norwegian Development Agency (Nurmat 24/04/2013). He had learned about the funding call from Pirjan, but I would argue that his decision to seek resources from other international development institutions demonstrates a conceptual shift amongst at least some of the residents. National and international development institutions are now alternative pathways to resources and aid beyond the perceived failure of the Kyrgyz state.

III. In Conclusion: Exercising Power and Knowledge within the Networks

The power dynamics within civil society knowledge networks might at first glance seem obvious. International donors, plugged into global epistemic communities around ecology and environmentalism, set the agenda – be it climate change adaptation or biocultural diversity – and both NGO intermediaries and grassroots activists follow the money, so to speak. Yet the evidence presented above and in the previous chapter suggests is far more complex relationships. While global development organizations wield power by virtue of controlling resources, both intermediary and grassroots nodes are able to pursue their own objectives – and are able to shape the knowledge circulating within the networks by filtering the knowledge that comes up from the

grassroots. Indeed, this knowledge is needed by global development institutions to legitimize their work. As such, the grassroots too wields epistemic power, though often in indirect and unacknowledged ways.

It is clear in the Kenyan case that the residents of Beliqo are not simply subject to Waso Trustland, Kivulini and the Christensen Fund's ideas. It is those ideas that speak to their concerns, that fit into their secular and religious cosmology (particularly around the relationship between social factors and ecology), that are adopted and implemented in the village, be it using the legal power and structures granted by the 2005 Kenya Forests Acts despite deep distrust of state mechanisms, deciding forest ownership lay with the village residents, or declaring that logging and burning trees for charcoal was no longer acceptable in the forest. Yet tensions exist in the subjective and selective ways these ideas were implemented and ignored – for instance, members of a farming-group in Beliqo voiced conservation values and ideas, and yet admitted that *some* trees do need to be cut down to make clearings. And while the biocultural ideas that drive the Christensen Fund and Kivulini might lead them to imagine that the tree nurseries planted by CFA were of native species, in fact many of these were fruit-bearing trees such as mangos that could supplement income or food security. Thus while few concrete ideas or suggestions made by Beliqo residents reach Kivulini, much less the Christensen Fund, neither CFA nor others in Beliqo are simply recipients of the knowledge that external civil society organizations attempt to impart. While they are changed by ideas, they also adapt or adopt knowledge as it suits to their interests and needs.

Unlike CFA in Beliqo, the climate change adaptation project cannot make a case for having grown directly out of local interests and needs. Of course, since participatory development is itself a global development paradigm that is embedded in the rhetoric and ideas of the Aga Khan Foundation, the project contains many elements that are dependent on local knowledge. Indeed, even Laurie's 'expert' reports on the importance of climate change adaptation in Kyrgyzstan are based in part on her baseline assessments in several Kyrgyz villages.

Ideas around citizen knowledge are deeply embedded into the rhetoric around the program – not only in the climate change adaptation project itself, but also in Laurie and David Boyer’s plans to integrate local observations and even weather stations in village schools into the climate change adaptation project (David Boyer 6/2/2014).

Yet throughout these conversations the emphasis remained on knowledge around climate change that was ‘scientific’ or ‘expert’ – local observations would provide the extracted *information* or raw data necessary to generate scientific knowledge, but the ideas would come from either the staff at AKF or at the Aga Khan’s nascent University of Central Asia, which David hoped to link into the program (David Boyer 6/2/2014). Besides Laurie’s initial assessments, MSDSP and AKF also collect ‘data’ and feedback from the grassroots by conducting surveys in the villages. This monitoring and evaluation work feels somewhat cursory – survey-based rather than in-depth interviews, just enough respondents for the results to be statistically meaningful, and designed with little room for the input or opinions of the locals (Alibek 27 and 28/03/2013). The reports that Alibek wrote based on these surveys did influence the way that the program was run, but did so by highlighting what local residents did not know about or were not doing – rather than by highlighting their interests or desires.

And yet as demonstrated above, the residents of Saro-Kamush were still able to exercise power and agency within the program, shaping it to their own desires and interests and fitting it into their own understanding of the political, the communal and the ecological. They not only are able to do this in the material sense with the canal project, but also by adapting and adopting the rhetoric and structures of the climate change adaptation project to fit with their social relations and community structures. Indeed, the climate change adaptation project itself must in implementation adapt itself to the local realities, power dynamics and social structure of the village – as demonstrated by Pirjan’s use of the school community and of Nurmat’s leadership and pre-existing CBO in Saro-Kamush. Even without explicit pathways for knowledge to move from village residents to the organizations involved in the program, locals are able to shape the

way the program is implemented and used in Saro-Kamush. As argued earlier, it also provides new routes and pathways for residents of the village to present their concerns and desires to both the state and to international development institutions. It is through these indirect mechanisms and delicate power negotiations, through the complex interplay of local interests and desires, intermediary organizations' previous practice and global epistemic attention that the epistemic content of the civil society knowledge networks shifts and changes to incorporate local knowledge and perspective.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Civil Society as Knowledge Networks

This thesis began with a visualization of the two case study networks. These networks of organizations, individuals and communities link together high-rise offices in San Francisco and Geneva with villages on the northern Kenyan grasslands and the mountain valleys of southern Kyrgyzstan. The interconnection between such contrasting places relies on interwoven institutions that affect a range of geographies, from the village-scale to the transnational, pulling them into global flows and exchanges of information, knowledge and values that encourage negotiations and hybridity (Fernando 2003). This project conceptualized civil society as points of contact in these global flows, pulling in knowledge from above and below, shaping or reformulating its content and discourse, and then dispersing knowledge into both the global and local, and the institutions and people along the way. This shared knowledge is verbalized as discourse and transformed into values, which in turn influence practice. In essence, this project attempted a case study of the relationship between the universal and the particular, an exploration of the way globalization is in part “an artifact manufactured and received in the local” (Burawoy 2001: 148). Communities such as Beliqo or Saro-Kamush may have limited access to global economic or media networks, yet are in many ways embedded in world society via the rise and spread of NGOs throughout the developing world over the past two decades (Reimann 2005). This is the “informational model of development” – development occurring via the diffusion of technology and human resources (Castells 2005: 16), though utilizing NGOs rather than internet cables to do so.

The core inquiry of this work is then the ways in which development institutions function as networks that create, spread and modify ideas. This thesis makes the case that networks of development institutions create connections that can be as profoundly transformative as technology, media, the state, economic transformation, and the like. Resources flow through such networks, but so ideas, knowledge and values – and it is these epistemic flows

that enable transformation. One of the reasons for their transformative potential is a matter of conscious intention: development institutions penetrate in a more *deliberate* and systematic way than, say, technology or external cultural content – they explicitly aim to teach and to change. Yet despite the complex dynamics of power within such networks of institutions, as well as the many external factors (such as the state) that play a role in the functioning and the effect of such networks, no one organization or individual is able to control or streamline the various goals and ideas of the agents involved in the network. These knowledge networks weave together a variety of knowledges, and are far from dominated by the discourse of their global nodes. They function through implicit categories of knowledge, including normative ideas about local knowledge (which is deeply linked with the rhetoric and practices of participatory development) and ‘expert’ knowledge. At the same time, even each node is not fully in control of the knowledge and ideas it transmits to the others. This is reflected both in the relationship of global foundations with NGO intermediaries, and of these NGOs with local communities. These organizations not only deliberately strive to transfer information, expertise, values and knowledge (for instance, by teaching), but inadvertently spread more than that – for instance, knowledge of the state and of the values of the global arena of international development. As a result, these links and networks do not so much spread information about the environment (though they do do some of this), but rather spread ways of understanding the concept of the environment and how it can be used to gain access to resources (be they state or non-profit resources).

I. Independent Nodes, One Network

a. Diversity and Alignment

The past three chapters have detailed the ways in which knowledge creation and influence occurs at all points along the network. Every organization in the network is involved in knowledge diffusion and formation, including funding organizations with global reach, national-scaled NGOs, grassroots-oriented CBOs and the local communities where the NGOs’ projects take

place. While all of these actors shape and are shaped by knowledge flows, intermediary NGOs have a uniquely active role in facilitating these flows as their reach spans both the local and the global scale. They are able to move resources and discourse from the global to the local and information and ideas from the local to the global. Yet they are more than just mediators. They themselves pursue their own goals and ideas, and as such influence not only the grassroots but also the global. This is demonstrated most clearly by Waso Trustland, which despite pressure and financial incentives continues to be a land-rights advocacy NGO. Even when taking on projects that Kivulini and the Christensen Fund understand to be related to ecology and cultural diversity, Waso Trustland insistently places these same projects in a framework of rights, access and ownership. While Waso Trustland wrote about preserving cultural heritage in its grant application to the Christensen Fund, and even internalized such ideas (as evidenced by Hassan Shano's discussions of the importance of indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity and his attendance and experience at indigenous peoples' conferences), their project in Beliqo remained focused on ecological rights and ownership. They are able to do so by contending that ecology and culture too are resources, and are simply extensions of land rights. WTL demonstrates the way these civil society knowledge networks are held together by not only shared discourse and language, but also the malleability and reinterpretability of concepts, including the willingness of the organizations and actors involved in the networks to allow such malleability. After all, Dr. Hussein of Kivulini spent almost as much time speaking about land rights and trustlands as about biocultural diversity, giving the impression that he had been as influenced by Hassan Shano as Shano had been by him.

This work has shown that it is the use of a common discourse – in the Kenyan case, the discourse of biocultural diversity and indigenous knowledge – that allows the networks to function at least temporarily as wholes, sharing not only resources, but also knowledge (including ecological knowledge) that affects values and action. This shared discourse is constructed out of already held knowledge, goals and values at every node, enabling a hybrid of ecological

understandings and attitudes to emerge out of the network as a whole. Yet each node remains in many ways independent, holding on to its individual goals and perspective. In Kenya this includes Kivulini's interest in ecology as a key aspect of cultural richness and diversity, Waso Trustland's focus on claiming ownership of ecological resources, and CFA and Beliqo residents' view of ecology as central to ensuring livelihoods.

The Kyrgyz case study also demonstrates a similar ability of the network as a whole to align behind key ideas while having individual nodes reinterpret and imbibe these ideas with diverse meanings. Indeed, this individual agency is all the more striking in the Kyrgyz case, as this network is far more hierarchical, structurally integrated and disciplined than in the Kenyan case. After all, AKF created AKF Kg and MSDSP, rather than connecting to largely independent organizations as in Kenya. Nevertheless, both AKF Kg and MSDSP have distinct roles and epistemic contributions to make to the network. They pursue a mix of idealistic and pragmatic interests, and as such their understanding of the climate change adaptation project ranges from resource mobilization to education and local involvement to infrastructure building. While a large swathe of the discourse and ideas of these organizations are, as argued by David Mosse (2005; 2006), representational and focused on building relationships, others reflect the inner values, interests and knowledge of the institutions and actors involved. Indeed, it is not only organizations, but also actors and individual personalities that play a large role in both networks. Hassan Shano and Dr. Hussein, Laurie and Talant are not just institutional pawns. While they are institutionally constrained and influenced, they are actors in their own rights, themselves pursuing a mix of pragmatic and ideal goals, influenced by their personal understandings, ideas and aims. Indeed, the civil society knowledge networks they find themselves in give them large scope to do so, while also influencing the values and norms they choose to adopt and pursue.

b. Sites of Connection-Building

The civil society knowledge networks in our case studies function in large part through the personal and institutional relationships between such agents. It is these relationships – often formed and nurtured in person – that set and spread the discursive content of the network, which in turn facilitates the creation and sharing of knowledge through the network. While every node is able, within constraints, to pursue its own aims and generate its own ideas, there are particular points of connection and alignment in the networks that forge epistemic cohesion. These are conferences, universities, workshops, and meetings. It is at these points of connection and knowledge transfer that many of the power dynamics within the case study network emerge.

Spaces of academic and professional interaction play an integral role in creating connections between geographically dispersed civil society agents, as well as in creating and disseminating the knowledge and discourse within the case study network. These spaces function as knowledge commons where knowledge is pooled and shared (Joranson 2008) in this civil society network. They connect nodes – particularly global nodes such as the Christensen Fund or AKF with NGO intermediaries – while also privileging and spreading particular types of knowledge. Alongside the exchange of ideas, knowledge and values, these spaces enable the creation of *personal* relationships and interpersonal trust between the key figures at each of the nodes of the network, which are vital to the way that institutional relationships unfold. In other words, formalized spaces of knowledge exchange not only enable knowledge sharing between many of the organizations in the network, but also serve as sites for personal interface, which in turn leads to continued interaction and knowledge sharing beyond the formalized spaces of the knowledge commons.

As the global node, TCF wields power in the network by controlling not only the resources that enable the network to function, but also access to formalized knowledge commons such as Western universities and ‘international’ conferences hosted by Western institutions. By granting local agents access to these spaces, TCF acts as gatekeeper over

privileged issues and discourse, as demonstrated by Hassan Shano's experience of realizing the value of traditional culture at a conference in Europe, the same conference where he forged a personal connection with TCF. In a similar fashion, the Aga Khan Foundation in Geneva runs workshops for Kyrgyz staff, at times flying them to Geneva. These workshops forge cohesion and transfer knowledge within the network, yet they can also create relationships of patronage and compliance.

c. Agency and Ideas at the Local

Understanding the geography of knowledge using the networks model risks having a flattening effect: it may appear as though it fails to take into account the power disparities and structural inequalities that affect both the creation and transmission of knowledge in the network. Our case study network is no exception: it too contains disparities of power. Yet I would argue that the network model can itself be a guide to power dynamics. Each node in the network must be understood to possess varying degrees of power relative to its neighbors. Indeed, as Foucault has pointed out,

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a **chain**. It is never localised here or there... Power is employed and exercised through a **net-like organisation**. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of **simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power**. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. (1980: 98, my emphasis)

The chain, net or network model demonstrates the way power resides not only in resource-rich and Western-based 'global' nodes. Power also lies in the middlemen and local nodes too, as they are essential for constituting, participating in and legitimizing such a network.

Despite power dynamics and resource and knowledge imbalances, each node is an agent, not subject. This includes the local nodes. While acknowledging the complexities and power inequalities within such networks, this work has argued that the local communities in these networks are not simply passive recipients of global knowledge flows but themselves challenge, ignore or shape these flows. It is the local that legitimizes the very existence of the network as a

whole, by providing essential ‘authentic’ knowledge about both the interests and needs and the transformations occurring in local communities (Ebrahim 2003). The knowledge and ideas created and transferred by the networks are reinterpreted by the local to fit into local needs and desires, but also into the secular and religious cosmology of these communities. Both the climate change adaptation project in Saro-Kamush and the forest conservation project in Beliqo fit into a local social logic about the relationship between nature, society and individuals.

While the individuals and organizations in these case studies are constrained by the power of the global, they are free to pursue their own goals within the discursive framework set by the network. The local is transformed by development interventions and institutions, but often in unplanned and unexpected ways. The knowledge that remains might not be the knowledge the institutions involved set out to teach. Ideas are not simply adopted by the local – they are ignored, adapted or transformed to suit local interests and needs, be they livelihood concerns, resource rights, or infrastructure building and upkeep. Thus while local ideas might not in fact be transforming the global, or even reaching it, they are transforming what happens to global ideas at the local node. This is a demonstration of Ferguson’s (2006) critique of the assumptions of power and hierarchy between the local and global, a critique in which he points to the global savvy and connections exhibited by grassroots organizations – much like the connections and the savvy to use them exhibited by CFA and to a lesser extent by the climate change working group and Nurmat. In both the case studies, what the local gains is less the substantive knowledge about the ecological and developmental issues that networks of development institutions overtly engage with, but more knowledge of resources that they might access from both the state and development organizations by using the discourse promulgated by the network. In Saro-Kamush, the mini-project is able to borrow equipment from local government structures, and begins to dream of applying to funds from Norwegian Aid. In Beliqo, the Community Forest Association not only gets protective rights over the local forest, but also small grants from government departments. Other grassroots groups in Beliqo have

little efficacy without being embedded in global networks, and seem to be waiting for such opportunities. In both cases, these communities learn that it is by becoming involved in networks of development institutions that they are able to forge ties and access resources.

d. Outside the Network: Connections with the State

Indeed, creating knowledge of and connections to the state emerged as a key theme in both case studies. It was not one that was originally planned – the state does not fit neatly into civil society knowledge networks or a model of the way knowledge is created and spread. It sits outside the networks, but emerged again and again as a key concern for both the intermediary and the local nodes. The contradictory nature, sometimes hostile, sometimes demanding and sometimes reliant, of the relationship between actors within this network and the state is a theme that recurs throughout the analysis of these three chapters. The state thus plays the role of a key paranodal agent in these networks. It rarely directly interferes or involves itself in the projects examined here, yet its laws, bureaucracy and resources play a key role in the way the networks function. For instance, laws about the sort of organizational forms recognized as civil society groups give such groups legitimacy and the ability to accept funds. Without such laws, Pirjan would not have pinned his hopes on Nurmat and Zhalgiz-Alma to lead the climate change working group. Legislation about access and resource rights, such as the Kenya Forests Act, gave the Community Forest Association of Beliqo the necessary legal power to claim control over the nearby forest. And local government officials provided resources such as the excavator to the climate change adaptation working group for canal-building.

Much of the knowledge and ideas shared by the case study networks concerns how legal frameworks and resources of the state can be put to use and accessed by the local nodes. Even Waso Trustland – which, unlike MSDSP and AKF Kg, is deeply hostile and distrustful of the state – takes on this role. However, while the networks do create knowledge and relationships with the state, they are able to do so in part by taking a less contentious political stance. Kivulini

and the Christensen Fund turn Waso Trustland away – at least in part – from campaigning for land rights toward the far less contentious issue of community forestry, even if they are themselves slightly influenced by Waso Trustland's political stance. The climate change adaptation program is explicitly apolitical, ignoring the politically contentious concerns of local communities such as the impact of the Kumtor mine – or even the strain of overgrazing. Such politically contentious ideas counter AKF's, AKF Kg's and MSDSP's goals of working with the state and of integrating government bodies in their projects.

At the same time, the state itself is not a passive agent in this process. In both of the cases state organizations and agencies seem to welcome the opportunity to reassign some of the responsibilities to local populations and various civil society organizations. Kenya did this very consciously by creating the 2005 Kenya Forest Act, transferring primary responsibility for forests from the Kenya Forest Service to local communities. The act includes possibilities for communities to gain access to state resources while doing so, but these opportunities are not common knowledge – and it is organizations such as Waso Trustland or MSDSP that are able to bring knowledge and expertise about how to make use of these resources.

In sum, the organizations that comprise these networks not only make use of the state for resources in exchange for services rendered, but wield considerable bargaining power through their privileged access to and knowledge of the local. Indeed, John Meyer argues for a similar understanding of the role of civil society as institutions that maintain systems of actors (for him this is particularly the state, but here can be understood as village residents as well), and that create and stabilize these systems by embedding them through cultural content and normative material (Meyer 2010; Meyer 1999). Meyer argues that civil society serves the role of advisors to actors such as states, spreading the norms, knowledge and expectations that influence the way that states take action, simultaneously constraining and empowering them. The civil society institutions in these two case studies certainly do so; indeed, they wield power through the very fact that the state turns to them rather than to individual citizens to engage with issues

and problems at the grassroots. Yet these institutions are themselves also actors, with their own agency and purpose. They do not simply advise, normalize or goad the state into action, but enact their own agenda, often making use of state resources in the process, or passing knowledge and information between themselves, the state, and the grassroots. Thus the interaction between development and the state results in neither simply an anti-politics machine (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007) or a network state (Chandhoke 2003). While the civil society knowledge networks do at times take on the role of the state and at other times promote a de-politicizing agenda, they also create links to and knowledge about the resources and workings of the state. The relationships between local communities, NGOs and the state thus become pluralized and heterogeneous.

e. A Networked Civil Society Geography

The diversity and heterogeneity within civil society knowledge networks is precisely what is ignored by alternative conceptualizations of civil society's operations on a global scale, such as the concept of 'global civil society'. If global civil society consists of "the mechanisms through which individuals negotiate and renegotiate social contracts or political bargains on a global level" (Kaldor 2003: 78), then this is very much what civil society knowledge networks can do as a whole. However, what is missing in the idea of a global civil society is the level of complexity and diversity that civil society knowledge networks embody, as well as the way this diversity is organized via the internal structures and dynamics of the networks. Many of the organizations in our case study are not entirely global themselves – it is by being connected into transnational civic networks that the Community Forest Association in Beliqo and the working group in Saro-Kamush or Waso Trustland in Isiolo and MSDSP in Osh connect to the global. In this sense, the case study networks function in many ways like a transnational advocacy network, as "actors working internationally on an issue... bound together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck & Sikkink 1999: 89). Yet as demonstrated by the case studies, the actors in civil society knowledge networks are not all working

internationally, or even working on the same issue and sharing the same values (though they do learn a common discourse). Instead, it is only the network as a whole which has both international and local reach. Linking to other civil society organizations, who in turn link to other organizations with global reach, allows local concerns to receive global attention and support, and global knowledge and campaigns to influence what happens at the village level. What these case studies demonstrate is that these inter-spatial networks need not only serve to connect individuals to political bargaining on the global level – indeed, they can connect local actors to the state, or regional actors with the global (exemplified by Hassan Shano and Dr. Hussein travelling to, learning, and speaking at international conferences). By proposing both an institutional and a network framework, this thesis has reworked the global civil society concept into inter-spatial civil society networks, networks that not only connect the local to the global, but also the global to the local – and all the geographies in between.

II. Creating Knowledge Typologies

a. Expert and Local Knowledge: The Search for Authority and Authenticity

Heterogeneity is a key characteristic of civil society knowledge networks – not only heterogeneity of the organizations involved, but heterogeneity of different types of knowledge, and the way that such knowledge is perceived and utilized by the nodes of the network. The last three chapters have illustrated the way both global nodes and NGO intermediaries create typologies of knowledge in their search for legitimacy, authority and authenticity. In particular, they have designated certain ways of knowing as either ‘expert’ knowledge or privileged, authentic ‘local’ knowledge. This distinction echoes the contrast James C. Scott (1998) paints between ‘*techne*’, formal ‘epistemic knowledge’, and ‘*metis*’, practical knowledge that arises from the “vernacular and local” (312).

For our case study networks, expert knowledge is global in scope and typically Western in origin. It is rooted in a common language (not only English, but also the particular discourse

of transnational movements) and its practitioners bear insignia of authority such as Western degrees and international experience. For instance, Laurie Ashley acts as a source of such knowledge – and of authority and legitimacy – for MSDSP and the climate change adaptation project. Project staff repeatedly referred to her authority, and emphasized her position as an “international consultant”. The individuals and organizations that are the source of such expert knowledge constitute epistemic communities “with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge” (Haas 1992: 3). Yet these experts do not only attempt to influence states, as is commonly asserted in the epistemic community literature (Haas 1992), but rather act as mechanisms for translating knowledge into action, and thus influencing both collective and individual action on the transnational and local scales. Epistemic communities such as the networks described in this work thus “create reality, but not as they wish” (Adler and Hass 1992, 381) by influencing not only states, but also communities and individuals, and themselves taking on projects and actions. Expert knowledge is used to give legitimacy and authority to already existing development practice as much as to develop new knowledge and new ideas. It reproduces the epistemic and discursive consensus of transnational movements, and often incorporates academic knowledge. It has its own spaces of consensus building, such as the conferences, workshops and trainings discussed earlier – indeed, both knowledge building and knowledge transfer is a important goal of such ‘experts’.

The two case study networks also prize another form of knowledge: ‘local’ (also ‘citizen’, ‘grassroots’, ‘indigenous’ or ‘traditional’) knowledge. This knowledge emerges out of local leaders, participatory rural appraisals and partnerships with grassroots organizations and activists. The development actors that cherish such knowledge understand it to be locally-tied and spatially bound (Fernando 2003), and “time, place and culture specific” (Ifejika Speranza et al. 2009: 296). The Christensen Fund values people like Hassan Shano as repositories of this ‘privileged’ knowledge, knowledge that is difficult for Western-based organizations to access. The people and institutions such as Hassan Shano that provide such knowledge are as much

‘advisors’ and harbingers of legitimacy to development institutions as the ‘experts’, but rather than being part of global epistemic communities and movements, they symbolize the authentic needs and perspectives of the individuals and communities with whom organizations such as TCF and AKF hope to engage. The case study networks’ focus on such ‘knowledge from below’ reflects the rise of participatory approaches to development over the last two decades (Chambers 1986; Chambers 2004; Hickey & Mohan 2004), and the largely discursive nature of this focus echoes many key critiques of participation (Cooke & Kothari 2001a). Beyond granting legitimacy (as does expert knowledge) to development practice, I have argued that local knowledge also grants the perception of *authenticity* to global development-focused civil society by seeming to move it out of Western-centred transnational movements and approaches to the perspectives and desires of development ‘recipients’.

b. Blurring the Categories

The global and intermediary nodes of the two networks simultaneously privilege and prize both expert and local knowledge typologies, and struggle to reconcile the two. This reflects the contradictions between the privileging of local knowledge and the occasional utility or even necessity of global or Western knowledge (Beinart et al. 2009; Beinart 2000). Staff at both the Aga Khan Foundation in Geneva and the Christensen Fund reluctantly agreed to this point in the midst of their enthusiasm for bottom-up, local knowledge. Mark and David at the Aga Khan Foundation admitted that some knowledge, such as that of climate change, must be explained or transferred to the local, and even Ken Wilson acknowledged a similar tension in expecting local communities to know everything. At the same time, even the way that these two categories of knowledge are delineated by different actors in the case studies points to their fluidity. Different organizations at different points in the network categorize the source of ‘local’ knowledge in divergent ways. The Christensen Fund wants WTL staff to speak as indigenous voices at international conferences, while WTL staff members go out into the villages of the district to

support what they deem to be real grassroots activism. AKF in Geneva might refer to MSDSP Kg as their local partner NGO, with 'local' staff members, but MSDSP hires staff for their experience and authority with a variety of international development organizations and projects.

The logic behind these shifting categories emerges out of the interactions and relationships within the framework of a civil society knowledge network. Such malleability of knowledge categories also extends the above critique of the epistemic community concept. The epistemic community model leaves no room for people or institutions to fill both roles, nor does it explain *why* the same person is an expert in one context, but a source of local knowledge in another. Indeed, the concept fails to interrogate why certain agents are able to claim authoritative expertise, as well as the value ascribed to participatory or local knowledge. Civil society knowledge networks not only make sense of these dynamics via the context and relationships of the network, but also broaden the idea of an epistemic community into 'communities of knowledge' which encompass a variety of geographies and agents that all take part in the creation, transmission and adaption of shared ideas and discourse.

An essential aspect of this work has been to challenge the very spatial categories that it utilizes, to question the line between local and global, universalist and indigenous. Geertz (1992) argues against the dichotomy of local and universal, pointing out that not only is local a highly relative term, but while little is purely local, even less is entirely universal. One of the overarching themes of this work has been to examine within the case studies how the two interpenetrate, and the role that networks of civil society organizations play in helping to blur the boundaries between the two. The way these networks create typologies of knowledge is a case in point. Expert knowledge both gains legitimacy from local knowledge and local knowledge itself can be constituted by global movements, such as those which privilege traditional culture or indigenous rights. At the same time, the case studies partially vindicate the utility of the two categories. A variety of patterns emerge out of the relationships, power dynamics and knowledge transfers between these spatial categories. These consistent relational patterns lend meaning to the terms

global and local that extends beyond spatiality, that references the characteristics and abilities of institutions and individuals.

While the development project creates, relies on and privileges both expert and local knowledge, power and knowledge remain intertwined – not only does knowledge grant power, but power enables the shaping of knowledge. The West is able to exercise power over the local in the South in part due to a distribution of resources and historical power, but in part because the West justifies and explains this very distribution by laying claim to global or universalizing discourse. Thus expert knowledge becomes global knowledge, and this global claim is bolstered and authenticated by the rhetoric of local participation and citizen knowledge. This brings us back to the Enlightenment paradigm of universal, scientific knowledge – now represented as ‘expert’ knowledge, which continues to play a key role in the development project, despite the apologetics of the particularism and relativism of the local. Of course, as Beinart, Brown and Gilfoyle (2009) point out, there is utility in both, and to divorce the two would be simplistic. Perhaps one of the staff members at MSDSP Kg highlights the point – the organization has its own in-house civil engineer to plan and help build its infrastructure projects. This is a Kyrgyz man who has never left the country, was educated locally and speaks no English. He has nothing to do with international organizations (other than getting his salary ultimately from one), and does not have to speak the language of grant-writing. His does not fit the typology of ‘expert’ knowledge, yet his knowledge of civil engineering is in a sense truly global: there is largely global consensus on how to build an irrigation canal or lay a pipe. Typologies of knowledge and their uses in international development lie in tension and often in contradiction: and yet they play a crucial role in development institutions’ epistemic search for authority and authenticity.

c. Nodes in the Network Society

Networks of development-focused civil society organizations are thus a major harbinger of ideas, not just from above, but, within constraints, from below. These networks can penetrate deeper,

further and in very different ways from the technological networks described by Castells (1997; 2005). I have argued that Castells is limited in considering a global network society to be purely technologically constituted. Communication and information technology certainly plays a crucial role in enabling this network to function, but even more essential are networks of civil society organizations themselves that reach into the gaps ignored by Castells' technologically-based networks. As Lewis and Mosse (2006) have argued, development shapes people's lives not through repression, Western hegemony (Escobar 1995), or bureaucratic or military control (Scott 1998). Instead, it does so via far subtler methods, through norms, values and ideas within which "people constitute their aspirations and interests" (Lewis and Mosse 2006: 3). This project has traced the ways these ideas are in themselves created and contested, both from above and from below.

This research asks broad questions, and while using a case study approach to unravel them allows for depth and richness, it leaves space for a more extensive engagement with these questions. It remains to be seen if the concept of civil society knowledge networks is useful more generally, beyond the two case studies described here. There are also several strands of research in this work that could be expanded into their own lines of inquiry. One is the relationship between the state and the civil society network, a complex and often contradictory relationship that is touched on repeatedly in this thesis. This relationship has its own rich literature (see for instance Harbeson et al. 1994), and its role within such civil society networks could be a research theme in and of itself. The role of gender in these networks is another variable beyond the scope of this work, which could prove an interesting lens onto the way knowledge and power interact in the networks. Connected to this is the theme of personality politics, which would provide a new and equally insightful lens into the way such networks function. Another approach would be to look more closely at spaces of interconnection, at what exactly happens at workshops, conferences and academic institutions in order to better understand how points of connection and exchange function.

The two networks in our tale span wide gaps of distance, culture, resources, scale and goals. Yet they are able to build bridges that connect San Francisco, Nairobi, Isiolo and Beliqo; as well as Geneva, Bishkek, Osh and Saro-Kamush. These are bridges not simply of resources or even aims or norms: they are bridges of knowledge and ideas, of epistemic connections and intellectual influence. They create what Appadurai (1990, 1996) calls 'ideoscapes': the epistemic landscape which emerges out of flows and interconnections of ideas, terms and concepts. These connections form in personal and institutional relationships, at spaces that serve as knowledge commons and through chains of circumstances, personal histories and connections. The spread of knowledge through civil society networks is an uneven and complex process, exemplifying not only disparities of power and access, but also the different typologies of knowledge that are privileged or ignored depending upon the circumstance. Often the knowledge that is spread and created is not what one would expect from the stated aims of the development interventions that take place in these networks, reflecting instead the interests of the actors and communities involved. Civil society knowledge networks spatially and conceptually extend Castell's network society, reaching via civil society organizations into parts of the world like Beliqo where information technology is still uncommon. Such networks also nuance the concept of global civil society, demonstrating the way organizations which are not at all global in scope can become part of institutional networks with global reach. They expand on the epistemic community literature, demonstrating the fluidity of the label of 'expert' and what can constitute such a community. In short, this work is a first step towards understanding the ways in which civil society organizations create their own geography of knowledge, building bridges between local and global through the creation, contestation and spread of ideas.

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71. 19/08/2011 – Hadija Jillo Shane
72. 19/08/2011 – Salad Choki
73. 19/08/2011 – Ambia

V. Aga Khan Foundation Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

1. 06/02/2013 – David Boyer (via Skype)
2. 14/02/2014 – Mark Whitton
3. 12/11/2014 – Devji Faisal (Oxford, United Kingdom)

VI. Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan, AKDN and the Mountain Society Research Centre (MSRC), Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

1. 12/03/2013 – Nurgul Alybaeva
2. 12/03/2013 – Tamana Zamir
3. 12/03/2013 – Chad Dear
4. 12/03/2013 – Jack
5. 13/03/2013 – Karl Goeppert
6. 13/03/2013 – Laurie Ashley
7. 14/03/2013 – Chad Dear
8. 15/03/2013 – Karl Goeppert
9. 15/03/2013 – Chad Dear
10. 15/03/2013 – Nicolle Nelson
11. 20/03/2013 – Mavluda Djaparova
12. 20/03/2014 – Chinara Saparova
13. 20/03/2013 – Laurie Ashley
14. 22/03/2013 – Horst Weyerhaeuser
15. 25/03/2014 – Altaaf, AKDN

16. 02/05/2013 – Laurie Ashley and Rahat Yusubalieva
17. 02/05/2013 – Laurie Ashley
18. 07/05/2013 – Laurie Ashley

VII. Mountain Society Development Support Programme (MSDSP) Head Office, and UNISON Head Office, Osh, Kyrgyzstan

1. 21/03/2013 – Alibek Mukambaev
2. 25/03/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
3. 27/03/2013 – Alibek Mukambaev
4. 27/03/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
5. 28/03/2013 – Alibek Mukambaev
6. 29/03/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
7. 01/04/2013 – Abdur Asuljan
8. 01/04/2013 – Talant Aldashov
9. 01/04/2013 – Ika
10. 02/04/2013 – Jyldyz Suleimanova
11. 02/04/2013 – Ulukbek
12. 02/04/2013 – Ourbek
13. 03/04/2013 – Arslan Miiashhev
14. 03/04/2013 – Baturbaek
15. 05/04/2013 – Talant Aldashov
16. 18/04/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
17. 18/04/2013 – Alibek Mukambaev
18. 29/04/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
19. 29/04/2013 – Kambarbek Adishov
20. 30/04/2013 – Pirjan Manasov
21. 30/04/2013 – Erkin Beisheev
22. 30/04/2013 – Talant Aldashov
23. 04/05/2013 – Laila Zulkaphil

VIII. MSDSP Naryn Office and Naryn District Villages, Naryn and Environs, Kyrgyzstan

1. 25/03/2013 – Melis Berdibekov
2. 26/03/2013 – Aizada Bekboeva
3. 27/03/2013 – Bolotpek
4. 29/03/2013 – Melis Berdibekov

IX. MSDSP Kara-Kulja Office, Kara-Kulja, Kyrgyzstan

1. 08/04/2013 – Kubanich

X. Saro-Kamush Village, Kyrgyzstan

1. 08/04/2013 – Sharipa Baltabaeva
2. 08/04/2013 – Gulnara Erkebaeva
3. 08/04/2013 – Nurmat Tolumbaiulo
4. 08/04/2013 – Bisalvada
5. 09/04/2013 – Chinara Kozuemna

6. 09/04/2013 – Maksat Kazubekova
7. 10/04/2013 – Bedel Akutoba
8. 10/04/2013 – Kudayberdiev Orazdaii
9. 10/04/2013 – Satarov Mamajan
10. 10/04/2013 – Shalatov Alim
11. 10/04/2013 – Belekova Sharbu
12. 10/04/2013 – Ernst Omoshev
13. 10/04/2013 – Gulzam So'oronova
14. 11/04/2013 – Zhakiip Kaparov
15. 11/04/2013 – Kanake Yemikbayava
16. 11/04/2013 – Abdukaar Urhekov
17. 11/04/2013 – Kapar Kurdakunov
18. 11/04/2013 – Kumbatpek Kurdakunov
19. 11/04/2013 – Tokar Bak'eev
20. 12/04/2013 – Torunbek Kankoev
21. 12/04/2013 – Isalkum Kumanaliva
22. 15/04/2013 – Zamerbek Turumbayev
23. 15/04/2013 – Mananbek Turumbayev
24. 15/04/2013 – Dusepek Mamteminov
25. 15/04/2013 – Sapargul Ormonova
26. 16/04/2013 – Gulbara Karabekova
27. 16/04/2013 – Sulman Kudaiiberdiev
28. 16/04/2013 – Mukai Omurzavok
29. 16/04/2013 – Nurkamel Rumakey
30. 17/04/2013 – Talaybek Uldoshov
31. 17/04/2013 – Irken Ibraimov
32. 18/04/2013 – Mishaev Abdertashet
33. 18/04/2013 – Azim Bakaev
34. 18/04/2013 – Kaniyc Osmokulova
35. 18/04/2013 – Irlean Kudeva
36. 19/04/2013 – Eliza Tolumbaiulova
37. 20/04/2013 – Nurmat Tolumbaiulo
38. 20/04/2013 – Maksut Matrasimov
39. 20/04/2013 – Uruntsa Karaeva
40. 20/04/2013 – Rayjob Kankoeva
41. 20/04/2013 – Jamalbek Mateme
42. 20/04/2013 – Maksat Kazubekova
43. 21/04/2013 – Burmat Chambekora
44. 21/04/2013 – Askarbek Kaledaev
45. 21/04/2013 – Zameer Abazavna
46. 21/04/2013 – Nurmat Tolumbaiulo
47. 22/04/2013 – Shair Ismailova
48. 22/04/2013 – Tobakel Joldoshev
49. 23/04/2013 – Kubanichbek Hobayev
50. 24/04/2013 – Chinara Kozuemna

51. 24/04/2013 – Nurmat Tolumbaiulo
52. 25/04/2013 – Nazgul Nurzabekva Shaibekovna
53. 25/04/2013 – Chekirov Abdekarem
54. 25/04/2013 – Ibrahim Kenduev
55. 26/04/2013 – Jusev Otokulov
56. 26/04/2013 – Jumakaul Makerimova
57. 27/04/2013 – Akbermet Jenaleyeva
58. 27/04/2013 – Tatugul Chudueva
59. 27/04/2013 – Anonymous

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