Participation, Authority, and Distributive Equity in East Timorese Development

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Abstract The anthropology of development seeks to understand the complex encounter between international and national development regimes and local patterns of livelihood and being. As science and development move objects, at once material and discursive, through the networks of the social to reach "impoverished" others, local groups reach out to development actors to evaluate and appropriate their resources and accept or redirect those efforts. In a political interplay of disciplinary measures and localizing translations, development projects are re-invented, or aspects thereof refused, just as development actors strain to keep projects on track. With input from science and technology studies, this article explores the participatory, authoritative, and distributive dimensions to agricultural development in East Timor. Across four cases studies—a dairy, a greenhouse, a seed development program, and a permanent farming initiative—the politics of projects are compared and discussed within the broader context of colonial and postcolonial development. The article is based on a total of 1 year of fieldwork conducted in 2003, 2008, and 2009.

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> "Our dream was to be self-governing, but now our dream is to develop, to become a developed nation."[1]
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> Xanana Gusmão

1 Introduction

Development in independent East Timor has followed much the same patterns as contemporary development regimes throughout the "underdeveloped south." Over the past decade, the familiar array of development actors—multilateral, bilateral, and NGO actors—have established themselves in Dili, with interventionary action radiating to every district. While multilateral agents such as the World Bank have attempted to fashion East Timor to suit the market "imperatives" of neoliberal capitalism, the large contingent of NGO actors have, with some success, contested economic development policy as much as they have been bound to enter into its very structures and the donor dependencies thereby created. For their part, bilateral agents have looked for both market and non-market possibilities, seeking to reinforce a state system, which has bumbled its way through oftentimes contradictory policy options. In sum, development in East Timor must be seen to comprise a single language with a number of registers—conventional and alternative—that together posit a wide range of deficiencies in agricultural production, infrastructure, health, communications, and education *inter alia*, in which development is set to remedy (Crush 1995).

Yet while all development is an intersection of more or less standardized ("global") interventions and numerous local contingencies (Scott 1998), development in East Timor has some exceptional sides. The development industry came to East Timor with a degree of fervor rarely witnessed. Development's legitimacy was magnified immeasurably by the half-island's prior subjection to Indonesian occupation, the violence and destruction that followed the majority vote for independence, and the mix of optimism and political instability that have emerged since. Reconstruction, security, state-building, and development came together in a way that recalls the Marshall Plan of 1949; just as the Marshall Plan became a model for American style postwar reconstruction and development, it was hoped that East Timor would serve the United Nations with a model for future state-building enterprises. International business interests converged with armies, UN governance machinery, and the ubiquitous presence of suppliers of foreign aid. International NGOs arrived, local NGOs sprang up to meet demand, and organizations not previously involved in development, such as municipalities and churches abroad, jumped in to help. Friendship groups connecting East Timorese districts and

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[1] Xanana Gusmão, shortly after independence, cited in *Timor Lorosa'e 2020. Ita Nia Nasaun, Ita Nia Futuru.* Komisaun Dili, 2002. P. 3.

overseas organizations were created, and fair-trade principles introduced aid to a new moral entrepreneurship (Grenfell 1997).

The density of development actors operating and overlapping on the same terrain is astonishing (see Trembath and Grenfell 2008). Dubbed by one as the "development invasion" (Brunnstrom 2003), this density is coupled with the pervasive presence of development ideology in political and public discourse. But besides building the very apparatus of state, development has also been deployed to lend substance to a new national identity based on a collective hope for a peaceful and prosperous future, a transformation from the colonial to the postcolonial, and it is arguable, a renewed submission to state and even "non-governmental" authority (Castro Seixas 2006).[2] While the claim that through independence "the people of East Timor finally have control over their own destiny" (Hill and Saldanha 2003:33) must ring true against the backdrop of Portuguese and Indonesian colonization, it has been the "external" agents of development that have given the nation–state its current shape, both though the transitional administration and in the subsequent 6 years of independence. Indeed, East Timor may stand as the archetypal instance of where, as James Ferguson (1990) has put it, development is an instrument for the depoliticization of governance. Not just through institutional network-building but also through subject constitution, development has delivered a subtle field of power and knowledge (Escobar 1995) to which the repatriating, post-revolutionary elite (Aditjondro 2001)[3] could only be beholden rather than in command of.

The idea that after 1999 East Timor had to be invented from scratch (Traub 2000) had appeal as much for the national elite keen to move beyond a position of notable marginality as for the international inventory of development agents and policy advisors called upon to execute their modernity-making skills with the urgency warranted by a stateless people. With a focus on the formal structures of governance, outsiders and insiders saw a vacuum and looked elsewhere for tips on how to build a functional democratic state (Hill and Saldanha 2003). As the gaze shifted inward and upward, to the ethnolinguistically diverse highlands, the impression was one of unfortunate peoples bound to subsistence livelihoods and "traditional" practices. Developers could bring together understandings on rural poverty, the technoimaginary of the green revolution, and the promise of plenty, linking rural progress with a vitalized market economy. They could therefore draw "tradition" into the ambit of "state," just as the East Timorese state was being formed within broader spheres of political and economic power.

Across rural spaces, agriculture was upheld as "the key to East Timor's development and social progress" and "the greatest potential contributor to GDP" (Hill and Saldanha 2003:24). As in the rest of the world where small-scale agriculture prevailed, agriculture in East Timor was seen to be the "least developed" (Hill and Saldanha 2003:24). Yet if the state needed the rural population, the rural population was assumed to need the state for its location as "underdeveloped." Despite their "need," most uplanders were yet to learn, or be puzzled by, what this

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[2] At the same time, East Timor provided Portugal with an opportunity for colonial nostalgia (de Almeida 2004), just as it allowed Australia to assert its identity as an economic and "humanitarian" force in the region (Dalrymple 2003).
[3] Aditjondro draws heavily on the works of Franz Fanon.

development was. They were yet to be trained in development thinking, not just in agriculture but also in education, health, gender equality, and all manner of things that they were seen to defy, neglect, or know nothing about. They were yet to discover just how useful, or not, all these activities called development could be as they adjusted their expectations of what development entailed after a quarter century of Indonesian rule.

This paper is intended to make a contribution to our appreciation of development in East Timor for which no significant ethnographic study has yet emerged as it has for Indonesia and, specifically, for West Timor (McWilliam 2002). Beyond Timor, the anthropology of development is now a prolific field of inquiry (Blaser et al. 2004; Ferguson 2006; Gelles 2000; Gow 2008; Grillo and Stirrat 1997; Gupta 1998; Scott 1998; Whittaker 2000). In its longing for ever more nuanced empirical study of development, it has tried to distance itself from discourse critiques of development (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995; Sachs 1992) as well as from approaches that have tended to essentialize the internal/external relationship (Hobart 1993). The anthropology of development has also needed to define its theoretical and methodological objectives in relation to its more instrumental twin, applied development anthropology (Ferguson 1997).

Development is not a simple entity but a broad constellation of technologies, activities, stories, categories, idea(l)s, distributions, and power relationships—elements that coalesce more or less in different combinations according to the nature of the intervention. As a critical aspect of "postcolonial technoscience," which examines the "changing political economies of capitalism and science, the mutual reorganizing of the global and the local, the increasing transnational traffic of people, practices [and] technologies" (Anderson 2002:643), development is often made to appear a hegemonic imposition from above (Escobar 1995). Yet while all development is brought in from above, it inevitably forms a local negotiating space as agents look for places to make their projects and "beneficiaries" or "participants" to make them with.

The aim of this essay is to illuminate some key aspects of these many local layers of negotiation that inhere in participation, authority, and distributive equity (Okereke 2008). In comparing four cases studies—a dairy, a greenhouse, a seed development program, and a permanent farming initiative—differences in the politics of the execution of development projects are discussed vis-à-vis authority and knowledge. Against these notions, I frame "participation," refusing the simplicity of the postdevelopment position on participation as discursive manufacturing (Sachs 1992), strategies of cooptation (Crush 1995), or concealment of real politics[4] but looking to the situated quality of participating, participating how and on whose terms (see Long 2001; Shrum 2000; Woost 1997). Participation is best viewed as emergent, contested, fractured, and negotiated rather than stable or given; its parameters are conditioned by distributions in authority and notions of equity. Although the case studies are presented in brevity and do not reflect the complexity of the situations to which they refer, they are sufficient to show that authority and equity fall together in unique ways according to the nature of the intervention, the

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[4] Read also McGregor (2007) as an attempt, in the context of East Timor, to rescue participatory "bottom-up" development from postdevelopment.

local circumstances, and the dynamic political interplay of various, often competing, interests. The case studies are preceded by some historical background and followed by a discussion which ties them together.

The article is based on several months of fieldwork conducted in East Timor in 2003 and a further 10 months in 2008 and 2009. During this time, I looked at the activities of four development bodies and followed them into their areas of intervention. I occasionally resided for periods of up to 1 or 2 weeks on farms or in communities. Data were collected via participant observation across six districts of the East Timorese highlands—Lautém, Aileu, Manatuto, Baucau, Liquiça, and Bobonaro. At the time of writing, fieldwork is ongoing.

2 Histories

Building on earlier colonial notions of what it meant to be "uncivilized" and "backward" (Traube 1986), yet offering possibilities for the "cultural evolution" of indigenous colonial subjects, Timor drew its status as underdeveloped from the West in the 1950s. When Dutch geographer Dr. F. J. Ormeling (1956) conducted his "geographical study of an underdeveloped island," old West Timorese problems were reconstituted as the new "Timor Problem." Twenty years later, German geographer Joachim Metzner (1977) teased out the many reasons for East Timor's underdevelopment—cultural, climatic, demographic, environmental, technical, and colonial—and signaled the failure of the Portuguese rulers to ameliorate the problems. Notwithstanding the new developmentalism that began to emerge, albeit only in pockets, in the final decade of Portuguese rule, the inertia of a centuries-long tradition of colonial extraction coupled with a neglect of indigenous welfare meant that little came of the new postwar ideology (Metzner 1977). Portugal withdrew from East Timor in 1974.

Indonesia invaded in 1975. Under the Indonesians, development took a dramatic turn. This turn needs to be understood in view of a number of factors: the great disruption wrought on East Timor following the invasion, the usefulness of development to legitimize Indonesian annexation where there was ever more international concern for human rights, the pressure to integrate the East Timorese into an Indonesian system that prioritized Indonesian interests, and the inevitable militarization of development politics.

For the first 5 years of occupation (1975–1980), the East Timorese were besieged. A third of the indigenous population was wiped out (Kohen 1999; Taylor 1999). As the Indonesians burnt crops to starve out the guerrilla, the resistance organized the cultivation and the distribution of food (Kohen 1999). Nevertheless, agricultural production fell by two thirds. As the predominantly rural population was brought under control, dissident East Timorese uplanders were forcibly relocated to some 50 concentration camps situated mainly in accessible coastal precincts (Kohen 1999). Under Indonesian direction, their agriculture was limited to local food gardens, which were often unable to cover the basic necessities, thereby inducing sickness and death (McWilliam 2007).

In the 1980s, overall production began to recover. On the more fertile lands, new "settlements" were created. Sponsored by international aid agencies and banks

(whose appeals to be "on the ground" were generally declined), these were geared toward the production of cash crops in places that had previously been farmed by hamlet groups (Taylor 1999). Cash cropping proliferated, and alongside a province-wide campaign to develop agriculture, forestry, health, education, and infrastructure, enabled Jakarta to quell international concern about the dire conditions of East Timorese (see Mubyarto et al. 1990–1991). Indeed, the successes of development in East Timor were enthusiastically disseminated by Jakarta and were met with approval among its cold-war allies and neighbors.[5]

There is no question that Indonesian integration and development brought many material benefits to the East Timorese. In principle, no one was excluded from education, and agricultural extension services were available to all. At the same time, however, development not only sought to strengthen military control over the territory but also to privilege non-Timorese groups and businesses, particularly those with links to the military (Aditjondro 2001; Carey 1995). Development also went hand in hand with the Indonesian transmigration scheme, which was intended to reduce population pressure in the more densely populated areas, dilute the dissident ethnicities of some outlying provinces, and spread Javanese-nationalist ideology. To this effect, Balinese farmers were brought in and granted lands and resources, and although the Balinese were preferred to the Javanese, locals found themselves displaced. It was also held that Balinese rice farming methods and technologies were superior, and so agricultural extension also privileged immigrant farmers (Aditjondro 1994) and rice cultivation over local staples (Moxham 2005). Meanwhile, "potentially seditious" swidden or shifting agriculture, which had been around for centuries, was prohibited because of its distributed and mobile character (McWilliam 2003a, b), and all upland communities found themselves re-organized into *desas* that prescribed the use of space and land. Where large irrigation systems were constructed, some with financial backing of the World Bank, the East Timorese were only rarely the beneficiaries.

Development therefore contributed little to an indigenous feeling of belonging to Indonesia (Anderson 1993). On the contrary, it has been suggested that the impacts of integration-oriented development bolstered opposition to the Indonesian presence (Traube 1995). While the battle for independence, and ultimate victory, is primarily construed as resulting from a confluence of relentless internal struggle, international political mobilization, and a coincident release of authoritarian pressure in Indonesia as of 1997 (see Amir 2009), it is conceivable that a more equitable and genuinely participatory Indonesian development agenda in East Timor could have changed the course of history. As it was, the violence during the lead-up to the referendum in 1999 and thereafter showed just how polarized the East Timorese had become—the majority was opposed to "autonomy" (i.e., continued political subjection to Indonesia), while a sizeable minority was incited to fiercely defend it. Indeed, this minority was impelled to trash the province when the referendum resulted in ITS disfavour: 70% of all infrastructure was destroyed, over a thousand people were massacred, and a third of the population was herded to West Timor.

When calm had been restored following the pro-integrationist paramilitary backlash to the independence vote in 1999, most crops had failed, seed had been

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[5] See for example, Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Information (1984). See also Gunn (2007).

lost, and livestock had been slaughtered or stolen. Nevertheless, amid a great number of emergency aid and reconstruction initiatives, a new "global" development ideology began to take shape, promising a forthcoming era of freedom and modernization. By the time the state of East Timor or *Timor-Leste* was ushered in (May 2002), the World Bank–ADB–IMF neoliberal position had come to dominate economic development policy and became constitutionally codified in the newly established institutions of government (Gunn 2003). Indeed, a particular kind of development ideology provided the conceptual apparatus for how to organize socioeconomic and political relations in East Timor, along which lines to build a common sense of nation, and under what terms the state was to pursue integration into broader markets and "the global community" (Borgerhoff 2006).

Although these politico-economic constructs were contested at various levels of society, including from within the UN itself (Gunn 2007), their powerful position as a *sine qua non* of development and national politics recalls Ferguson's (1990) idea of development as an "anti-politics machine." The idea of "anti-politics" comes into its own in the case of East Timor in particular, given the high degree of foreign administration of home affairs and the much vaunted marginalization of local people in that process. Those professional Timorese who had gained experience as agricultural extensionists and researchers in the Indonesian era, for example, attained at best mid-level positions within development organizations, and were left to mediate between foreign development professionals of higher ranking and local beneficiary groups. Despite the rhetoric of "consultation" and "Timorisation," their role was to implement rather than to control, just as select beneficiary groups were, for the most part, invited to participate in the reception of projects rather than to participate in their design.

The dominant discourse centered on "the market." Use of proper agricultural technology was coupled with the demand for a privatized agricultural sector. This should consist of private monopolies (where possible), a user-pays strategy for agricultural extension services, all within an open-market economic system free of governmental subsidy and replete with incentives to attract foreign investment, with production geared toward export (JICA 2002; World Bank 1999). Much of this push for privatization was covertly organized by international actors, in private negotiation with a few powerful East Timorese politicians and stake-holders (Aditjondro 2001). It was understood that this would aggravate a dual economy of dynamic market producers on the one hand and the majority of marginal subsistence farmers on the other (Anderson 2003; Fox 2003). Shifting forest agriculture, the most common form of food production across the highlands, had no role in any of this development—rather it was construed as one of the principal causes of underdevelopment.[6]

Nevertheless, within the constraints of anti-politics, development is always political and politicized in new ways. Most conspicuous are the contestations of civil society groups, particularly those of NGOs, of government or private development strategies. Different development models and ethical commitments are pitted against each other, and other actors like corporate entities, land owners, and academics are drawn into the fray to debate issues pertaining to food policy, technology transfer, plantation agriculture, labor, hunger, environmental impacts, the contents of leaked MoUs, sustainability, culture, and oil revenue among many others. Negotiations are

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[6] Compare Jessup (1992).

played out in public fora, in parliament, in the media, in political meetings and "alternative hearings," and between and among different development actors including the state and the UN. In an ongoing interplay of representation, argument, political maneuvering, and intervention, development remains multifaceted, multivocal, and frequently politically contentious (Grillo and Stirrat 1997).

Certainly, government and international sponsors continue to work hard to attract foreign investment, but as the case studies of this article reflect, the agricultural development terrain is much more variegated than this. Whatever the nature of the intervention, beneath the most visible political dimensions to development are less visible layers of "cultural politics" that twist around the ongoing dialogical technosocial interfaces between development actors and local beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, and different classes of local actors—bureaucrats, village leaders and elders, ordinary villagers, men, women, and children. As the case studies presented below reveal, there are always tensions within the development encounter. But how deep these tensions become, why and how these are managed, and to what effect vary greatly. These variations need to be understood in terms of power relations.

3 A Dairy

In 2003, I spent some time at an agricultural college in rural East Timor where a "model" dairy was being set up. Constructed by the Portuguese in the 1950s and left defunct after the Indonesian invasion, the college was revived in 1986 by the Catholic Church under pressure from the Indonesian government. Unlike much of the sub-district in which the college was located, it had escaped the torching of 1999. Caught in the excitement for a free East Timor, various charitable Australian social, corporate, and research entities came together in 2001 to permit an entire milking apparatus to be disassembled in the Australian state of Victoria and freighted to the college. A truck, feed, milk vats, power tools, and two dozen livestock specially bred for the tropics were also shipped in. Under the direction of Australian dairy experts, the "intensive" system was reassembled and made operational by late 2002. But after some initial success, milk production went into decline. Many climatic and topographical "adversities" peculiar to the tropics proved to be more troublesome than expected. In addition, the dairy continued to rely on foreign technical assistance and the replenishment of heifers, bulls, and livestock feed inter alia imported from abroad. And some of the farmhands seemed not to accept the new regime of protocols that in an Australian-style dairy was standard practice. Record-keeping and sanitary measures were neglected, and milking and feeding schedules were not strictly adhered to (Shepherd and Gibbs 2006).

If there had been some early optimism that the model dairy, once implemented on the college grounds, could provide a precedent for the diffusion of dairies to small-scale farmers across East Timor, that optimism soon faded. Australian sponsors and experts feared that even in the controlled experimental environment of the college, the dairy would not develop into a self-sustaining system. Still, the experts saw that some level of dominion over this strange tropical environment had been achieved, and they remained hopeful that what they qualified as local ineptitude would

gradually succumb to modern dairy logic. In defense of the locals, they appreciated that long-standing "extensive" livestock practice had to be "un-learned." And the experts also remained forgiving of what they saw as the disabling pride and recalcitrance of the East Timorese, who over 450 years of colonial subjection "[had] never learned to think for themselves" (Shepherd and Gibbs 2006).

Over time, the situation became more difficult. New problems presented themselves that were simultaneously natural and social. While the experts were on leave, the farm manager began to "lapse back" to some of the extensive practices that this project had intended to replace. Higher up the catholic hierarchy, Fathers were defaulting on their commitment to fund an irrigation system, deemed "urgent" by the experts; and privileges that the experts had seen as their natural right (e.g., to have access to the milk truck for personal use) were denied them. Tense relations were exacerbated by drought. Ill will had set in, mothers-in-law in Australia had become involved, and letters to the Vatican had been dispatched. One college Father complained that "[the Australians] expect us to work *now* like they do in Australia—but this is not Australia, it is East Timor."

Back in Australia, there was great concern for the success of the project. In 2005, one of Australia's leading tropical dairy experts was sent in to do an assessment. New livestock and equipment were imported, new training courses were conducted for the locals, and strained relationships were patched up. Although I was no longer there to see what was going on, one possibility is that the local farmhands and Fathers were finally learning to "think for themselves"—they were dairying in a way that resembled Australian practice and they were following scientific instruction. But more likely, the project just continued to muddle along, producing some milk but never enough, winning and losing battles in the fight against the tropics, dealing with constant ups and downs with sometimes-compliant and sometimes-defiant locals, and forever caught between the old, yet uncomfortably present, "extensive livestock practices" and the new, yet disconcertingly compromised, "intensive dairy."

What was uncomfortable for the Australians, such as declining productivity, was surely not so for locals. What caused the locals anxiety was, it appeared, being ordered about. What for the Australians remained an inefficient dairy by Australian standards was quite acceptable to the locals. If foreign experts sought to iron out these differences and bring the dairy into line with its modern Victorian counterpart, the locals did not have the same, equally dichotomous, appreciation of difference. The locals were left battling with the issues of just how, and how much, they could accommodate this new regime of technosocial practice.

4 A Greenhouse

In the central highlands of East Timor lives a community of some 90 families. Members of a large etholinguistic group, the Mambae, the community scrapes together a livelihood by cultivating a few vegetable crops and keeping a few animals—buffalo, horses, goats, pigs, and poultry. In 1999, after the inhabitants returned to the community from their mountain hideouts, it was some years before the community encountered a new developmentalism that, as it transpired, had far-reaching plans for them—a grand modern nursery and hydroponic greenhouse installation that would be the first

of its type in East Timor and would herald the beginnings of industrial horticulture. The greenhouse would supply capsicum and tomato for the Dili market. Equally important to the project would be outdoor gardens of lettuce, coriander, broccoli, chinese cabbage, and other foods. These would be grown in netting houses, in plastic tunnels, and in the open. Unlike other projects, this one was not intended to uniformly dissolve existing practices with the introduction of modern horticulture. Rather, practice would change dramatically within designated spaces where new industrial practices were planned, while the usual subsistence agriculture would continue everywhere else. It seemed that there were now to be two distinct agricultural systems operating side by side.

If at first I saw a greenhouse, the project team leader advised me to see "a supply chain." As part of another private sector initiative, a middle-man and his extended family trucked produce to Dili where it was put into cold storage. With the help of the aid agency, this young Timorese entrepreneur sought to meet, and perhaps create, the demand for his supply. A second Timorese company was formed to supply inputs such as pesticides and nutrients for hydroponic systems, many of which came from Europe. Other contractors installed materials such as infiltration tanks, and Indonesian expertise was imported just as local community participants were exported to Indonesia for specialized training. Locals contributed their labor in an unpaid capacity until such a time as the outdoor gardens, and later the greenhouse itself, began to generate income.

A new hydroponic greenhouse and nursery heralds the beginnings of industrial agriculture in East Timor.

Inside the greenhouse new forms of sociality accompany the cultivation of capsicum.

When I learned that only eight of the some 90 families here were involved in the project, I enquired about what might have been the processes that constituted early negotiations between the agency and the community. Some of the "excluded" ones claimed that they wanted to participate in the project, but alas they had not been invited. They regretted that only the village chief, the *suco* (a larger political unit comprising a number of villages) chief, and their families were eligible. The project managers employed by the agency were understandably defensive. They pointed out

that at the time of consultation the whole community was asked to participate, but some declined "because they wanted to see if there would be any returns before doing so...they were only willing to work for cash." Yet while it was maintained that there were ways that these excluded ones could renegotiate their entry into the project, it was also emphasized that there simply was not sufficient land for everybody to be involved, and certainly not in the greenhouse. These contradictory explanations hinted at complex relationships within the community and between the community and the agency.

For their part, those eight families who had been contributing with their voluntary labor for more than a year saw no possibility for a wider inclusion. Rather, they anticipated problems when everything was up and running, as socioeconomic differences became more manifest. Several anxiously foresaw jealousy and feared reprisals such as damage to the installation. As a precautionary measure, the police had been placed on alert, and villagers had been warned that any intentional damage to communal property would be dealt with appropriately. One local participant believed that night watch may have to be instigated at a future point. Project leaders doubted this, and instead proposed that the benefits—in materials and knowledge— of the greenhouse would trickle out to the wider community and everybody would be happy; although the agency knew that other farmers could not make big steel greenhouses, they might make "little bamboo ones," and the agency maintained that it was always ready to offer technical assistance to the others.

Development was profoundly reshaping one section of this community. Differences in expertise, status, and ability were in the process of being created and consolidated. Project leaders from Dili had given specific technical training to two community members, who would later take on the roles of in-house technical managers. Tasks and duties were distributed—irrigation, checking pH levels and greenhouse humidity, and locking up at night. The families had their time structured so they could make their weekly contribution of labor (ca. 50 h per family) while also cultivating their own crops. The numerous levels of sociotechnical stratification were to dovetail into "gender-sensitive" intervention, ascribing particular roles to women and other roles to men. Boundaries between inside and outside, old and new, had to be constantly reasserted. New laws abounded: The greenhouse was no place for children to play, no place for goats to roam, no place for drying clothes, and no place for chewing betel nut. But the agency also had to negotiate amply with the locals, who also had their laws and priorities. And there were things that were simply not negotiable: A netting house that the agency planned to position next to a spring for hydrological purposes had to be moved to another spot. For when the village elders met in the sacred house to approve the project, they had ruled that because the spring and supply channel were sacred (*lulik*), they must be left alone.

Divisions in labor, expertise, and duty were also embedded in new forms of solidarity. Those involved had acquired a confluence of interests and now belonged together in a way they had never been previously. Meetings were organized for the group of eight, and the group of eight, soon to be ten, now shared time schedules. For their part, the "outsiders" now belonged to each other as they had not done previously. They were all marginal to the project that was appearing to become lucrative, and so they came to share common ground and, in many cases, common discontents. Their modes of agriculture and livelihood had not changed significantly,

and they faced similar struggles. Rice and oil, for example, had become increasingly unaffordable, and with justification, all complained that there was no money.

When the greenhouse began to produce and substantial incomes appeared imminent, new managerial concerns arose for the agency. The first concern lay precisely with managing the divide between the included and the excluded. To counter envy, the group of ten were urged not to flaunt their new incomes by purchasing, for example, flash motorbikes, but to spend it wisely on such things as clothes and education for the children. They were also asked to honor an agreement (which dated to the inception of the project), that 20% of greenhouse profits should go to the community. Most of those involved now felt aggrieved by this, as it was they, not the others, who had worked so hard for so long without pay.

The second concern centered on managing the balance of power between the wholesale horticulture business and the farmers. Ambiguity in the "ownership" and control of the greenhouse allowed the agency to explore two models. The first conferred ownership to the wholesaler who would lease the land from the farmers and pay the latter a salary. The produce would belong to the wholesaler, and the upkeep of infrastructure and the organization and payment of labor would be his sole responsibility. For the proponents of this model (who held allegiance to the wholesaler), farmers were assumed to be incapable of both avoiding internal squabbling and of managing a greenhouse on their own. They were thought to need the supervision of an employer who could appoint those who could work properly and dismiss the incompetent. The second model conferred ownership on the farmers as a "community project"; the farmers would run the greenhouse and *environs* as their own business. Proponents of this model believed that this was the only way to empower the farmers. Both groups claimed to best defend the interests of the farmers. This created some tension within the agency itself, but changes in agency roles permitted the adoption of the second model.

As the agency attempted to transfer a measure of power to the farmers, a third concern arose. The farmers were judged not to be accepting "ownership" of the project as the agency intended. From the perspective of the agency, the men, excited by the larger returns they anticipated from the greenhouse, were growing lax in their care for the outdoor gardens. The agency warned the farmers that the wholesaler would eventually not bother to turn up just for the two greenhouse fruit; he needed the full range of broccoli, cabbage, and so on to make his business viable. In addition, they were charged with failing to appreciate that the outdoor section, while apparently less profitable, entailed so little investment costs that the profits could be very substantial. All manner of attitudes and behaviors on the part of locals were considered insufficient for them to really assume effective control. Accordingly, the agency kept compensating. It also kept paying for supplies and assistance that would otherwise have been the responsibility of the farmer cooperative. Indeed, the farmers felt peeved that many expenses (e.g., for inputs and maintenance) were to be subtracted from the gross return, while only "profit" would be shared between them. It was supposed that the farmers did not comprehend the difference between "gross income" and "profit."

It was my impression that the farmers were most unified in their collective will not to appropriate the project. For that way, they could count on the ongoing material, moral, and organizational support of the agency; that way, they could avoid

infighting over money and effort, and they could keep deferring problems to the agency. They appropriated the project, one could say, by refusing to appropriate it. And if it looked as if the agency managed the farmers, one could also say that the farmers managed the greenhouse and the agency just to the right degree, so that the agency would continue to "be there" to rely on. Farmer passivity was, it is arguable, strategic.

5 A Seed Program

The Seeds of Life (SoL) agricultural program has become an ambitious agricultural undertaking in East Timor. Conceived as an Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) project, SoL began its first phase in 2001 to trial new crop varieties made available through the worldwide network of international agricultural research centers. With SoL's incorporation into East Timor's Ministry of Agriculture in 2002, and subsequent backing from AusAID, national research stations were established or rehabilitated.[7] When in mid 2008 an Australian government delegation dropped in to inspect the program, SoL was promoted by one as "bringing [the benefits of] the green revolution to East Timor."

On all possible fronts—ecological, economic, social, and cultural—the pros and cons of the green revolution (GR) have been hotly debated. There has not been one GR, however, but many. They have done different things in (and to) different places; the geopolitical and economic interests behind them have varied; and the technological package itself (seed, inputs, and irrigation) has not been fixed. Some GRs have capitalized and intensified agriculture at the expense of the small-holder (Shiva 1991). Others have been part of broader initiatives in democratic land reform with the intention of bringing science to small-scale production through Integrated Rural Development (Escobar 1995). Some GRs have stressed import substitution, and others have been oriented toward increasing export. Over time, geopolitical concerns have shifted to economic ones, and if the GR used to be about market production, monoculture, and GDPs, this is no longer necessarily the case. To relate SoL to the GR advances the positives that many continue to associate with the words. But it reveals little about the particularities of SoL except to imply agricultural networks, scientific authority, and well-established modes of trialing crop varieties off farm (whose origins are to found in late nineteenth century agricultural science).

If one harbors any standardized image of the GR, SoL exceptions are many. In phase 2 of the program, which began in 2005, extraordinary effort was invested in on-farm demonstration trials (of which in 2007 there were some 1,100 on 600 farms across five of East Timor's 13 districts) that were instituted once the credentials of a few high-yielding varieties had been attained within research stations. In the on-farm trials, only seeds were extended, and these were seeds that the farmers could reproduce themselves. The varieties, although imported, were not of new crops, but of existing crops. Fearing the logistics of input supply and distribution, the varieties went unaccompanied by any other elements of "the technological package." Except

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[7] See Piggin and Palmer (2003) for an early overview.

for the seed and expected produce itself, no incentives were offered. Significantly, the emphasis was placed not on turning subsistence farmers into market farmers but on food security "at home," of which there may or may not be a surplus for market or barter.

On-farm trials were intended to demonstrate to both farmers and to the research bodies the relative efficacy of between two and five new varieties of corn, sweet potato, cassava, peanut, and rice as against a "control," an existing "local" variety. While farmers cultivated in their usual manner, they did so within the parameters staked out for them (5 m×5 m) and delineated with string. Enclosed within these spaces of concentrated modernity (see Mrazek and Kim 2009), metal signs on stakes identified the local varieties and the new varieties. Farmers were requested to weed all plots symmetrically and maintain fences to keep marauding animals out. And because many years of Indonesian agricultural extension had accustomed farmers to receive free or heavily subsidized chemical inputs, SoL field-based research assistants not only clarified that inputs would not be gifted under SoL but they also took it upon themselves to recommend that times had changed—now, to be "modern" was to be organic. This did not reflect SoL ideology in particular, rather a general but irregularly applied belief held by many in government and in the NGO community.

A SoL research assistant takes data on plant growth at an on-farm demonstration plot while the farmer looks on.

Research assistants made regular visits to the sites to take data (plant growth rates and so on) and to encourage ongoing farmer participation. The end-of-season harvest was marked by a field day in which participating and neighboring farmers came together to see which variety fared better under "identical" conditions. Produce was

demonstratively placed into sacks and weighed. As in most cases, when the new varieties had done better, the collective weight and the body mass of cultivars were applauded. Snap-happy field staff enamored with digital cameras took endless photos, and science was vindicated with visual proof.[8] Later, further field days were held to test other variables, including how the varieties compared for taste. Surveys were undertaken and statistics were compiled to show that farmer adoption rates were in the order of 80%.

The farmers had opted to "participate" in scientific experimentation. Extension agents negotiated farmer participation by explaining and repeating the meaning of the trials until they "comprehended" to the point that the trial could be executed. Some farmers suspected they were being lied to by SoL staff; they feared that their participation would amount to planting the government's seed after whose harvest the government would come along and confiscate the produce. But in the main, SoL field staff had no trouble recruiting participants. Of those that agreed to conduct the trials, the right to benefit was first and foremost that of local leaders and their families, for SoL clearly acknowledged that "we have to go through the local authorities." The right kind of participation also had to be worked at. Farmers often did not weed plots, or fences were not erected or maintained such that animals entered and did "asymmetrical" damage to science. If so, farmers were gently berated for their inattention. But social relations remained convivial, and farmers were respected. After all, most of the SoL research assistants were of the same stock as the farmers, the same rurality, the same huts, the same diets, and although they were now educated and employed by government, they identified closely with the farmers and were sympathetic to their circumstances.

Notwithstanding inevitable constraints, because in SoL "intervention" was slight, the goal to distribute new varieties was only minimally different from existing modes of agro-sociotechnical practice—the SoL varieties were "fluid"; they were easily appropriated and passed on for their affordability, adaptability, productivity and democratizing effects (cf. de Laet and Mol 2000). Ultimately, it was the farmers who decided whether to keep cultivating varieties, and whether to pass them on. If they passed them on, they did so within their own networks, not those decided for them by outside agents (cf. Shepherd 2006). However, with the input of an Australian university, considerable effort was invested into finding out what these networks were, and applied anthropologists explored how a more effective distribution could be achieved through an inclusion of sacred houses and particular ritual authorities, as points of passage for seed and knowledge. "Culture," therefore, was not forgotten, nor pathologized, but examined selectively for its instrumentality.

The role of the state, however, would not be dislodged. Through the ongoing traffic of new seed from research stations to farms, seed quality would resist the likely deterioration that would come with successive plantings in the farmers' fields. But unlike other state and private development initiatives such as those that advanced hybrid varieties or plantation agriculture, SoL was not contested for exacerbating farmers' economic dependence, co-opting their interests, or restricting their options. Despite some opposition from some local NGOs to importing new non-native genetic material, SOL was effective in enrolling other NGO partners to carry on the same work. Significantly, however, SoL cannot be seen to typify the state approach to agricultural development; not only were its priorities driven

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[8] See Shepherd and Scarf (2006) on visual discourse.

externally by ACIAR and AusAID but the state itself was evidently flexible in its adoption of development ideologies. As East Timor was poised to accept almost any kind of foreign assistance in its state-building enterprise, it was also bound to accept any kind of influence. SoL was but one; phase 3 of SoL would see the program "indigenized" (operated under national control), and eventually, its underlying imported character would disappear into the flow of contemporary "local" agricultural research and extension practice.

6 *Tara bandu* and Permanent Farming

Lest one forgets that the "local" not always was, in Timor, one is often reminded that what is now Timorese came from elsewhere; the Dutch brought corn from America in the early colonial period, the Portuguese introduced coffee from Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, and as part of an earlier GR, the Indonesians imported IRR8 (a high-yielding rice) from the Philippines in the twentieth century. Some things, however, are as native as you can get. Unlike corn, coffee, and IRR8, *tara bandu* was never modern. But now, as development remakes it, it is becoming so.

Tara bandu was, and is, traditional law inaugurated through a *tara bandu* ritual, held as frequently as every few years. In agricultural communities, much of this law regulated farming practice. When your goat feasted on his cassava, then you must pay the penalty decided on by the community—some *escudos* (later rupiah or American dollars), or perhaps a chicken or pig. Failure to comply had unpleasant consequences in terms of community sanction. But there was worse to fear. Spiritual ancestors could be angered, and they had the power to curse you with a sickness or a natural disaster or have you chomped by a crocodile.

These ancestors may well have not been interested in the material world, except that their interests had been translated (Callon 1986) via the aforementioned ritual which entailed song, speech, and animal sacrifice. All of that became symbolically encoded in a wooden cross, planted in the ground, on which the horns and hooves of the sacrificed animal were hung (*tara*), a sort of mutable (subject to decay and forgetfulness) immobile that, if noticed, demanded a level of respect equal to the wrath that spirits could summon.

Tara bandu rituals are reported to have been neglected during Indonesian times. After independence, however, the state and numerous NGOs saw in *tara bandu* a potential mechanism to prohibit (*bandu*) the burning regime of swidden agriculture, extensive grazing, and deforestation. With backing from the World Bank, the state invited villages to perform the ritual and institute the new injunctions. Local administrators tempted villagers with the provision of a sacrificial animal, palm wine, and $500. In practice, villagers used *tara bandu* as an excuse to throw a big party. As in Indonesian days, rural dwellers were not likely to modify existing farming patterns because of a ban on swidden agriculture, burning, and extensive grazing, unless either coerced or persuaded with a viable alternative practice.

NGOs recognized that an alternative had to come first and the prohibitions second. USC-Canada Timor-Leste was one NGO able to develop an alternative system that seemed to work and gain considerable acceptance by some community members. In line with its ethos to support sustainable livelihoods by advancing

agrodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and food sovereignty, "permanent farming" was an agroforestry approach that involved the terracing of degraded hillsides on which a mix of indigenous trees, staple crops, and animal fodder were then planted. The fodder in particular was harvested and carried to the former free-grazing animals now held in pens. The technology was promoted in the usual way: The problem of existing practice and the benefits of the new system were reiterated in meetings, workshops, and in the fields; farmers were invited to learn from model systems elsewhere, and they were assisted in creating their own at home. The NGO helped locals, especially young farmers, to organize working groups (of five or so members), and elect leaders, who directed the group in rotation from one farm to the next. The authority of the NGO was delegated to the leaders, who exercised it with an assiduousness and skill that made these leaders very nearly indistinguishable from the NGO personnel itself.

A degraded hillside is terraced and cultivated with a diversity of plants, with a view to its regeneration.

Were it not for a band of "resistant" farmers who refused to change their ways, *tara bandu* may well have been ignored as a potential instrumental accessory to permanent farming (although it would have remained instrumental in other areas such as that of fortifying social relations). But a reconditioned *tara bandu* was to become a legal extension to the logic of permanent farming, enabling USC's promotion of the new practices to be fortified by a banning of the "old" ones which a good proportion of obstinate traditionalists perpetuated. The question was how to make this much eroded tradition of *tara bandu* more powerful such that it could assist in the transition of farming practice. The answers were found in a number of strategies. Here I mention a few.

When USC began to revive *tara bandu* in 2006, it adopted a new culturalist framing that was consistent with what the state and NGOs were now saying all over East Timor, not only in specific relation to *tara bandu* but also in relation to a larger cluster of things "Timorese." These things were most notably those which impinged on the realm of the sacred, such as sacred houses, sacred forest, indigenous rituals, and the beliefs and social roles associated with them. While some culture, such as some of the more exploitative expressions of gender inequality and child labor, was thought to be an anachronism and had to be dispensed with, other culture was held to be valuable.

When the *tara bandu* ritual was performed, an assortment of authoritative figures was enrolled in addition to the community political and spiritual leaders. These figures came from the Church, from the police force, from government, and of course, from the NGO. The essentially naturalist will of God, the point of ritual law, the importance of preserving the environment, the needs of progeny, and the links with culture and ancestry all converged in new narratives of state power, community responsibility, and nationhood. The sacrificed creature was cooked and consumed, and its parts were hung on the *tara bandu* cross as they always had been. But the NGO thought it necessary to complement the old mutable immobile of the cross with a new immutable mobile (see Latour 1987): This mobile came in the form of a booklet, in whose printed pages are all the new laws and the penalties which their infraction would attract, were laid out in text. It was not a blueprint. Its content was negotiated within the community itself and by the community itself, with support from the NGO, and many of the details that emerged within those negotiations differed from those that were negotiated in other communities.

In a conflation of animism and Catholicism, the priest stands before the *tara bandu* cross and gives his blessing.

This legal document was distributed among the signatories, and copies were sent to other NGOs so they could model their interventions as they saw fit. *Tara bandu* became exportable, and in a sense, it was stabilized (cf. Pols 2009). Most importantly, several copies resided in the community. In subsequent *tara bandu*

meetings and *tara bandu* evaluations, organized and presided over by the NGO, leaders could read from the booklet. They could also wave the blue-covered document around in the air with a new authority. With the booklet, the law could now be applied fairly, uniformly, and universally. When one opponent defended the practice of burning because "it is our life, we need to eat," the document overruled such defenses: Some forms of indiscriminate burning in certain protected forest areas were now illegal. Increasingly, those who burned did so on the sly in areas more remote from the community; the smoke could be seen, incriminations were made, but proof was scant. The community was now divided along the line of fire, but non-burners now had legitimacy on their side in addition to an alternative practice that was effective if all too labor intensive for many.

Notably, not one solitary spiritual ancestor was signatory to the *tara bandu* document. In reformed *tara bandu*, did these spirits do anything? In one village of Aileu district, locals held that the spiritual ancestors were weak, and most believed that *lulik* no longer pertained—it was old-fashioned. "Only God is *lulik*," said one; and another explained that things traditionally *lulik* were still called *lulik* but were no longer really so. Perhaps they were not taking their own culture as seriously as the NGO took it? But in another place, where one might have expected spirits to be weakest, they were strongest. The village, on the main coastal road from Dili to Manututo, was far from remote. But its inhabitants had settled there from deep in the mountains, and they had brought spirits with them. They also discovered some local spirits. There were many sightings, including that made by a group of men who one night entered a protected forest to cut some wood. The group was confronted by a large white creature—an oversized dog by some accounts and a tiger by others. All the villagers now knew that this spirit guardian of the forest, the *rai-nain*, would make trouble for anyone who transgressed the laws of forest conservation.

7 Discussion

Development begins with a "modernizing" technosocial agenda, which is conceived of and legitimized against the backdrop of what is framed as local culture, certain "traditions," or particular practices which are seen to be insufficient and must be attended to if development is to meet its objectives: Kids need real milk over the Indonesian condensed stuff; the yields of subsistence staples need to be increased; a burgeoning, foreign-led urban demand for vegetables needs to be met; and environmentally destructive traditions such as burning and free grazing need to be controlled through strengthening and modifying a legal tradition. With the implementation of projects, however, the "integrity" of the technical, rational schema is often fractured, and there may be significant operational difficulties. As we have seen in the dairy and the greenhouse, this is particularly so when there is substantial divergence between the regimes brought by development and existing local practices. In SoL, this was not the case. And in the case of permanent farming, the diminishing practice of burning and free grazing and a turn to more sustainable practices would represent a long-term challenge not only for the NGO but also for the community itself.

Development will respond strategically to elicit the "right" behaviors, "proper" appropriations, and "compliant" subjects. In all manner of ways, development actors will urge farmers to see the world the way development agents see it (Shepherd 2004). For the dairy, the greenhouse, and SoL, there was little flexibility in how these sociotechnical systems had to function, and the technical authority of experts was crucial. Participation was of the style of telling people exactly how, and in what, they were to participate, and convincing them of the gains were they to participate appropriately. In the main, negotiating spaces were narrow for the proper implementation of these projects—demonstration plots had to be 5 m^2 (not 6 m^2), pasteurization had to be at 75°C (not 72°C), and greenhouse humidity had to be within a range of 60% to 80%. The permanent farming also had its technical specificities, yet there was greater flexibility in the way permanent farming could be appropriated by farmer groups. In every case, technical matters corresponded more or less tightly to certain modes of social organization.

With interventions, different experts, authorities, rationalities, and concepts of equity or justice are called upon. Permanent farming entailed a legitimate appeal to a concept of equity that took into account the needs of future generations (see Okereke 2008). In the NGO's area of intervention, it was evident that this new conceptualization was readily accepted by local leaders. "Sustainability" entered the local lexicon as something associated with permanent farming and the future, anathema to a kind of burning now termed "indiscriminate" (*arbiro de'it*). Farmers were beginning to think about the needs of their children, and with the aid of maps brought to them by the NGO in collaboration with one large bilateral agency, new negotiations relating to land use, community needs, and imminent population pressures emerged. What remained uncertain, however, was the extent to which certain groups, particularly those with less land and less labor reserves, would be disadvantaged by a new regime which penalized burning and open grazing. What were the hidden inequities? As a humanitarian project, the dairy made a strong claim to a form of distributive justice (or equity) as meeting immediate needs (Okereke 2008). For its location at the agricultural college, however, the dairy and its beneficiaries were spatially circumscribed in a way that SoL was not. SoL pursued a utilitarian form of distributive equity—i.e., the program aimed to maximize happiness for the most number of people (Okereke 2008).

Discrepant ideals relating to equity were most evident in the greenhouse, where the project team was divided on who should "manage" the business and who should own the products at the farm gate—the wholesaler or the farmers. Divergent ideals of equity (Okereke 2008) were complicated by the fact that some families were included in the project while the majority was not. On the one hand, the agency intended that a percentage of profits be distributed to the whole community for undertakings that represented the common interest. On the other hand, the agency wanted to reward the participating farmers fully for their efforts, partly in compensation for their year of voluntary labor. This was an uneasy tension for the agency to negotiate. When the team leaders deliberated on whether to waive the community contribution for the first harvest, they were effectively trading between two understandings of distributive equity: a liberal egalitarian one that sought to combine entrepreneurial liberty with a measure of social and economic equity and another one which emphasized individual or collective entitlement when justly acquired (Okereke 2008) through the provision of labor, land, and other resources.

Where SoL and the dairy appeared to be more distributively stable, the greenhouse showed that ideals vis-à-vis equity could be negotiated and contested over the life of the project not only between community members and between the community and the agency but also between actors within the agency itself.

We tend to look at development initiatives from the outside in, placing agency on the side of the developers while framing locals in terms of their receptivity to a given intervention, what Stacy Leigh Pigg (1997) calls the dominance-resistance model. It is also important to look from the inside out to explore the ways in which development represents a site of opportunity for local recipients. Those locals who learn to speak the language of development, know its codes, and understand its processes are well-placed to facilitate connections with outside aid agencies. Sometimes they do so in close alliance with their contemporaries; sometimes they do so at their expense. Development can offer a way into a more privileged group, and a way out of a less privileged one (see Pigg 1997). When a village individual exhibits the potential or capacity to differentiate between humidity and temperature, between alkaline and acid, and between a pH meter and a mobile telephone, he or she is in a position to assume a particular role in a project. When s/he can speak publicly, manage people, and mimic development's narratives, development agents will delegate a role to him or her on those grounds. Development-relevant knowledge signals an opportunity for upward mobility on a whole number of economic, professional, and status-related fronts.

Economic matters aside, status and pride expressed themselves all too clearly in the case of the greenhouse. There was no mistaking the affected strut of greenhouse-insider Senhor Celestino as his big agency-supplied rubber boots carried him down village main street to visit some non-greenhouse relatives. Terracing and *tara bandu* also conferred a measure of status upon participants, and considerable moral authority over those who were yet to be persuaded to renounce burning and free grazing. At the agricultural college, the dairy presented direct employment and dairy training possibilities to farmhands, while further up the Catholic hierarchy, the Fathers, whose terms of service were differently conceived, resisted the rules of practice delivered by outside experts. The god-given status of the Fathers was visibly upset by the cognitive authority of science; the Fathers were fine with milk and probably added it to their imported cornflakes, but not okay with some of the imported rules and expectations that accompanied its on-farm production. Local participation in an intervention must therefore be understood according to local power relations and the myriad of ways these affect how an initiative is absorbed, appropriated, and modified to suit local contingencies and divergent interests.

Obviously, development programs and projects differ in their objectives, and as locals come to appreciate what these objectives are and the roles they are destined to play, they assess their situations and decide, often discretely, on their level and type of participation. If interested in the resources a project has on offer, the initial local strategy is usually to play along. Beneath the surface, organizational objectives encompassed within projects rarely match up with the expectations and hopes of local recipients. Those who trialed SoL varieties had no real interest in 5 m×5 m plots, nor in the *precise* facts and figures which would emanate from them. Nevertheless, they were more or less happy to try free varieties and some would have been even happier to receive a few free inputs too. Contrary to the objectives of

the horticulture project, I believe that greenhouse participants saw clear advantages in not appropriating the project and remaining agency dependent. And for those with fewer or no animals, less land situated close to home, and limited familial labor reserves, permanent farming was arguably a less appealing option than the old burning regime which, despite what many were now saying, was effective and easy. For them, new *tara bandu* was a power to contend with, an annoyance, and a ground for a new level of secrecy.

Different subjects, clearly, are afforded different possibilities in a development initiative. They consider the many variables, consequences, and personal investments and payoffs that development agents often fail to take account of (Scott 1998). Elsewhere in eastern Indonesia, there has been research to suggest that some farmers are not motivated by "economic rationality." Farmer collectives may intentionally pursue "economic irrationality"—agricultural practices that they know to be less productive than other forms.[9] In other cases, preferences for less productive dryland rice cultivation over irrigated forms are related to questions of ethnic identity and the wish of groups to remain mobile rather that sedentary (Fox 1992a, b; Helliwell 1992).[10] As beneficiaries weigh up their options, they are frequently led to actions that diverge from project goals. In different ways, SoL, the dairy, the greenhouse, and permanent farming aimed for certain kinds of precision in productive processes and maximization in output—of staples, of milk, of vegetables, and of sustainability. Development subjects had complex relationships to these aims. Participation, when it was constructed, may have signaled a convergence of interests, but never an undifferentiated unison of interests.

8 Conclusions

Although the case studies presented above are brief, they suggest some of the ways in which authority is exercised by development agents with power and resources, but also the ways in which it is exercised by local recipients. "The local" itself is clearly not a homogenous space but rather abounds in asymmetrical power relations, alliances, unequal distributions in resources and patterns of production, consumption, and knowledge-practice. Development agents move into these already complex spaces and try to establish particular assemblages of practice, knowledge, law, distribution, and sociotechnical organization within them. They attempt to generate a particular kind of participation suited to project objectives, while at the same time deploying constructs of participation, need, gender, and environmental sustainability and so forth not only to make sense of interventions and regulate practice but also to legitimize them by operating on development's moral imagination (Gow 2008).

How local actors appropriate development is equally complex and strategic. Some local actors are in a better position to appropriate a project's resources than are others; some are led to contest the distributions enacted; some show a capacity to

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[9] See (Helliwell 1992:7–8). In footnote 2, Helliwell refers to a number of authors who have documented this.

[10] As these authors note, for its labor-intensive style, irrigated rice production requires a greater commitment to staying put, although as a reviewer for this article pointed out, labor values are complex to assess over different productive forms.

manage an agency just as an agency appears to be managing them; some keep reinserting their "traditions" into new sociotechnical configurations where they are not "supposed" to be. And indeed, the moral imagination of recipients does not correspond to that of agents—to them it may be quite acceptable to take advantage of a resource-rich entity in ways decried by that entity itself. All of these things become spheres of negotiation encompassed in legitimizing, limiting, and extending distributions of power, authority, and equity.

Development, evidently, is a transaction of subjects and subjectivities. People may or may not recognize themselves as "underdeveloped" (Gupta 1998) specifically, but they will undergo transitions in habit, thought, disposition, expression, identity, and so on. So development subjects are not simply produced through representations of them. Instead, development provides opportunities for new forms of self-recognition, and a place from which to (re)negotiate subject interaction with development actors. Through an articulation of antagonisms, contradictions, and convergences (Bhabha 1994:25) all development actors—agents, beneficiaries, participants, and non-participants—are able "to find themselves and each other" in an ongoing dialogical politics.

We are accustomed to depicting Indonesia and East Timor (as other areas) as a conglomerate of cultures with their similarities and differences (Fox 1980a, b) bounded territorially and belonging to particular peoples (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Pre-1975 research on East Timor explicitly subscribed to this model as it showed that agriculture, agriculture-dependent conditions, and the products of agriculture were deeply infused with, and encoded in, social relations and cultural traditions, including ritual knowledge (Clamagirand 1980; Forman 1980; Traube 1986).[11] This tendency to reify the cultures or ethno-linguistic groups of East Timor abounds in the everyday "speak" of development agents and also informs public discourse. But because of the longevity of the ethnographic gap (1975–1999) and the view that the Indonesian occupation was the period of greatest "cultural loss" in the history of East Timor (Gunn 1999), there is uncertainty as to what these cultures are, how much is left of them, how relevant certain cultural forms are today, and how hybrid they have become with other sociocultural "impurities."

Evidence is nevertheless accumulating that a sort of cultural revival is taking place in East Timor after years of deliberate Indonesian suppression of East Timorese culture or as a result of other changes, some associated with development, including the delivery of secular governance and education, the extension of communications infrastructure, and the partial replacement of traditional politico-ritual authority with modern forms of representation (McWilliam 2001). In the near absence of "social safety nets" offered by the state, and driven by sheer survival needs (rather than simply a desire to revive a cultural aesthetic),[12] national independence, actually or potentially, opens up spaces "for more assertive cultural identity politics" vis-a-vis architecture (McWilliam 2005), clan-based custodianship claims and other tenures (McWilliam 2003a, b, 2007), ancestral values and cultural prohibitions surrounding "sacred groves" (McWilliam 2001, 2003a), forestry management (McWilliam 2005), and ceremonial exchange networks and ritual (McWilliam 2007).[13] Certainly, some of this revivalism is being

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[11] See also other contributions to Fox (1980a, b, 1988, 1992a, b).
[12] Personal communication with Andrew McWilliam.
[13] Some of these are presented as actual descriptions of the encounters between these historical layers, while others, in the style of applied anthropology, read as possibilities or recommendations.

pushed by development agencies themselves, some of which want to do more than valorize particular icons of East Timorese culture (e.g., sacred houses). As neoliberal dreams to create a market-driven agricultural economy have not been realized, agencies have looked for opportunities for more effective and appropriate intervention by drawing on existing, albeit eroded, traditions or "local knowledge" (e.g., *tara bandu*).

There is indeed a desire, which I share, to disentangle the hybrid circumstances that prevail today among East Timor's cultures to determine what aspects of culture have been eroded, what have been resilient, and what re-emerge concurrently with postcolonial forms of development and governance. Ethnographic studies of development offer a particular way of seeing the ways in which the old and the new are played out within the context of power relationships and negotiations between groups. But they also offer a way of looking at how the old—tradition and culture—and the new—development and modernity—are discursively and performatively created through planned interventions. In order to explore the latter, the idea of an "external" development industry operating on "internal" cultures may be considered a particular analytic effect, a purification (Latour 1993). Rather than splitting "development" and culture, we can also bring them into the same analytic framework, by which we understand both as a kind of "cultural whole" within which people apprehend each other (Abercrombie 1991). By adopting this other, apparently broader, concept of culture, we are then in a position to discover not just what culture is or what of it is left but how particular renditions of culture, tradition, and modernity are made and traded within those very development encounters. Who precisely is authorized, and who is not, to define tradition, culture, knowledge, modernity, and how are these ideas, their epistemological orderings, and the "participatory" practices impelled by them enrolled in the distribution of equity?

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