

The role of culture in the conservation work and communication strategy of WWF Madagascar

Tsihy be lambanana ny ambanilantra
All who live under the sky are woven together like one big mat



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Internship report

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WWF in Madagascar, Ambalavao

October- December 2006

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Preface

Dear Reader, here before you lays the story of my internship in Madagascar, cast with love into a paper format. This experience has been more to me than a curriculum activity and I will not do it wrong by treating it in that way. In this report you will find memories, life lessons, moments of joy and reflection intertwined in a report of my research and evaluation of my internship.

With a strong urge to protect the earth's environment I landed in the lecture rooms at Wageningen University to study forest and nature conservation and later on a Master in applied communication science. I am fascinated by the human relationship with nature and I deepened my knowledge on nature conservation policy. For my Bachelor thesis I dived into the theory on the role of environmental Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) in a globalizing world. To put my theoretical knowledge into practice I joined Greenpeace as a volunteer and in 2005 I was invited to join them to the UN conference on climate change in Montreal.

In my quest for an internship I got the possibility to do an internship as a communication assistant with IUCN in Brussels. Even though by work there would very much resemble the job I admire for the future. I have deliberately chosen to do this very different and practical internship with WWF in a southern country; Madagascar. My experience with conservation issues has been very theoretical, based in a Northern country and focused on a global policy level. In the future I want to become a campaigner for nature conservation issues for an international NGO. I believe that if I want to become a good communication expert on nature conservation I should gain direct experience of the unique challenges developing nations face in protecting nature, so I can get a global view of conservation and effectively communicate my experiences to people living in industrialized countries.

Some things I like to look at others like to eat, and some species I consider important others see as a pest. Therefore to me the most important reason to do an internship in Madagascar was to challenge my own mind, stuffed with western values and scientific knowledge, with the norms and values of people living in a developing country. So that I will be able to create a realistic perception of conservation issues and be able to build bridges between nature and culture on the one hand and between northern and southern perceptions on nature conservation on the other.

WWF's goal to create a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by integrating development with conservation is a vision I share and it has led me to apply for their internship program. My fascination for the relation between humans and nature has motivated me to research the role of culture in nature conservation programs. WWF has given me the opportunity to work and live in communities in Madagascar that are part of a community based natural resource management program for three months. I was able to directly experience the link between nature and the culture of the Malagasy people. This paper is a report of that internship and the research I have done therein.

I wish you lot's of mind expanding pleasure while reading my internship report!

I am very grateful to WWF for giving me this mind expanding and heart thrilling experience. My heart is full of thankfulness and hope that we will meet again: my Malagasy renny (mum): Ms Sahondra Razafintsalama, the people that are making the world a better place at WWF Amablavao, my lovely co-adventurer Mari Roald Bern, the heart warming communities with open arms of Ambalamanenjana, Ankarimbelo and Faliarivo. Misaotra besaka!



After 4 years of reading about it I was finally going to see a real primary forest for the first time in my life!

Chapter 1

Introduction

Ny hazo matin'ny hitsiny, ny zozoro matin'ny hodiny, ny vary matin 'ny voany, ary ny olombelona kosa...

L'arbre est victime de sa qualité, le papyrus est victime de son écorce, le riz est victime de ses graines, mais l'homme est victime de lui-même...

Ray- mendreny Namoley



From mid October till the end of December 2006 I have done an internship with WWF in Madagascar. This report will give you a reflection of this experience and offers you an insight into the role of culture in the conservation and communication efforts of WWF in Ambalavao, Madagascar.

Over the last century nature conservation efforts have focussed mainly on the creation of protected areas, islands of biodiversity that are protected from human intervention. More recently, however, there is increasing recognition of the value that local, indigenous communities can bring to the process of conserving biodiversity. Currently a vast majority of research is dedicated to this subject, referred to as Community Based Natural Resource Management or Community Based Nature Conservation. In most of these studies and projects attention focuses mainly on the utilitarian values of the natural resources (1). However, increasingly it appears that CBNRM activities often include cultural values. Little attention has been given to this link between the community's culture and their natural environment. With this study I would like to obtain a better insight in the various cultural features of Community Based Natural Resource Management and their effect on the management of CBNRM projects, with particular interest in the effect on the communication strategy of the managing organisation. In order to identify how organisations should adapt to cultural values of CMNRM in practice. This study is especially useful for scientists, field agents and policy makers that intend to enhance the effectiveness of Community Based Natural Resource Management in the future.

The aim of this study is to identify and describe the role of culture in the community based nature conservation work and communication strategy of WWF by answering the following questions:

- What is the relation between the culture of the Tanala and Bestileo and their natural environment?
- How does this relation influence nature conservation the area?
- How does WWF deal with the cultural values of nature conservation in their communication strategy?

The methodology that I used in this research is twofold. First of all I have practiced participant observation. My daily internship activities allowed me to work with many different people within each community that were very willing to show me their daily activities. Secondly I selected different people within the community to do informal interviews, with different age, gender and livelihood strategies. I interviewed in each village the local traditional and legislative authorities in a more formal and structured from. My hypotheses and observations I discussed repeatedly with the WWF agents at different levels of the organization.

In chapter 2 I will discuss WWF as an organization, give background info on the area that I worked in and the project that WWF is running in this area. Chapter 3 will discuss the relation between the culture of the Tanala and Bestileo and their natural environment and how this influences nature conservation. I will especially focus on how differences in culture influence the impact of nature conservation efforts. Chapter 4 deals with the role that cultural values of natural resources have in the communication strategy of WWF. In Chapter 5 I will discuss the role of culture and livelihood in the conservation work and communication strategy of WW. The rest of the report is my internship reflection. I will describe the activities that I have undertaken and evaluate my learning goals. In the annexes you will find several outputs of my internship in the form of a magazine article, a game and a report.



2.1 The Organization

The World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) is a large environmental international non profit organisation that works on:

- *conserving the world's biological diversity*
- *ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable*
- *promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption (2)*

WWF has over 50 country or regional offices that together work in more than 100 countries. The head office is based in Switzerland, Gland. They have around 5 million supporters world wide and employ more than 4000 people.

WWF was created in 1961 to "conservation of world fauna, flora, forests, landscape, water, soils and other natural resources by the acquisition and management of land, research and investigation, education at all levels, information and publicity, coordination of efforts, cooperation with other interested parties and all other appropriate means." Their objective has slightly changed over the years and at present WWF has adapted the following mission:

"to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature"(2)

They try to achieve this mission by practical field projects, scientific research, advising local and national governments on environmental policy, promoting environmental education, and raising awareness of environmental issues. WWF characteristics can best be described by their guiding principles.

WWF aims to:

- *be global, independent, multicultural and non party political*
- *use the best available scientific information to address issues and critically evaluate all its endeavours*
- *seek dialogue and avoid unnecessary confrontation*
- *build concrete conservation solutions through a combination of field based projects, policy initiatives, capacity building and education work*
- *involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs*
- *strive to build partnerships with other organizations, governments, business and local communities to enhance WWF's effectiveness*
- *run its operations in a cost effective manner and apply donors' funds according to the highest standards of accountability (2)*

My internship was organized by WWF international in the form of a Youth volunteer program that was hosted by WWF Madagascar. The Head office of WWF Madagascar is based in the capital Antananarivo. They focus on policy development and support and coordinate projects all over the country. WWF Madagascar consists of 4 layers:

1. The national office
2. The regional offices
3. The local offices
4. The field offices

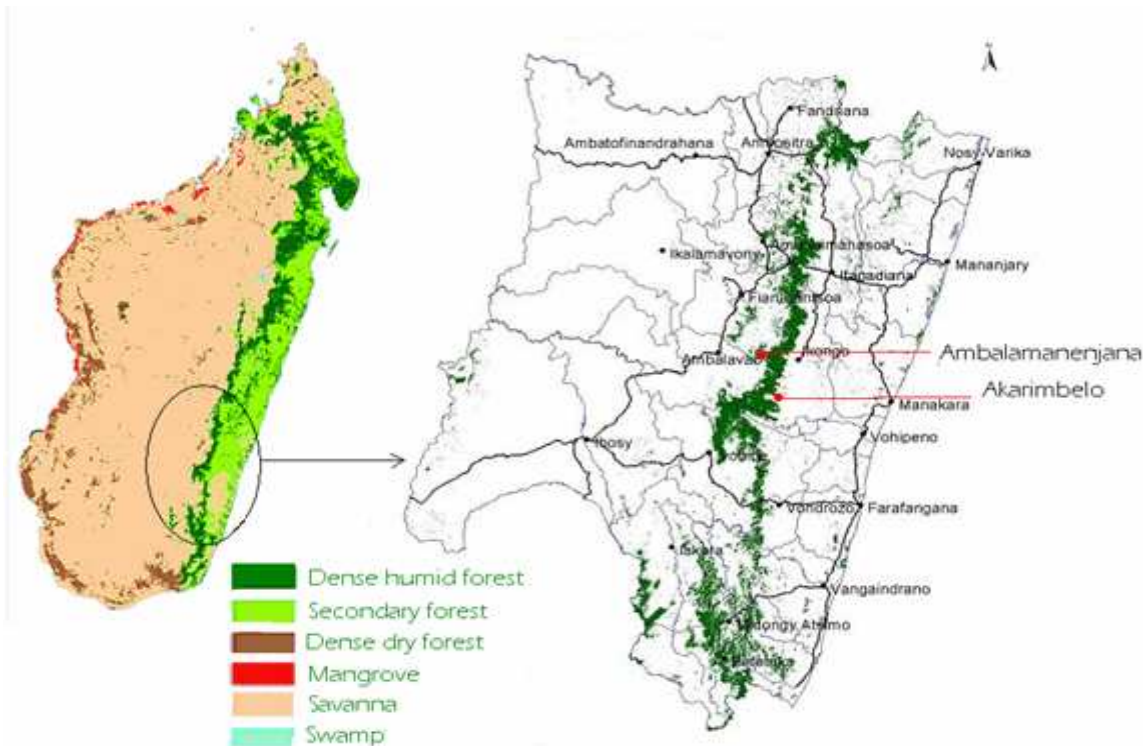
During my internship I was guided by an agent of the national office. I was based in the province of Fianarantsoa. My placement was under direct guidance of the Amabalavao local office that guided several field projects. The staff of the Amabalavao office is located on the different field projects. I was located in two places, Ankarimbelo, where WWF has established a field office and Amabalamanjena where the work of WWF is being adopted by ANGAP (l'Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées). Before further explaining the work of WWF I will describe the conservation challenges in Madagascar and more specifically for the region where I was.

2.2 The conservation challenge

Madagascar

Madagascar is considered by many ecologists as the single highest biodiversity conservation priority on earth and is therefore a region where WWF's work is intensive. This is in the first place, because it is home to five percent of the world's plant and animal species (more than 80 percent of which are indigenous to Madagascar) (3). Madagascar is the world's leader in endemic families and genera. It has 24 endemic families of plants and vertebrates and 478 genera (4). These species, that are found nowhere else on earth, are the result of Madagascar's long isolation from other continents. Most remarkable are the half apes, which are also called lemurs, the carnivorous fossa, three endemic bird families and six endemic baobab species (3). On the other hand Madagascar is prone to one of the most severe forms of environmental destruction. Ninety percent of Madagascar's original forest cover has already been converted by man to open up land for pasture and agriculture. Between 1950 and 2000 44% of all remaining forest was lost (4). The remaining forest cover is humid tropical rainforest that spreads from north to south on the mountainous eastern side of the island.

Fig.1 Forest cover of Madagascar



Source: http://www-tem.jrc.it/images/pages/fm/prod_data/fmdadagascar2.gif

This large scale deforestation is in large part due to “tavy”. This is the Malagasy word for slash and burn activities. When “tavy” is conducted forest is cut, burned, and then planted with rice, cassava or maize. This field will offer two years of good yield after which the owner is forced to move to another area. The field has to be left alone for four to six years before the process is repeated. When practiced repeatedly, or without intervening fallow periods, the nutrient poor soils are exhausted or eroded to an unproductive state. Following the field will be colonized by scrub vegetation or alien grasses. The resulting increased surface runoff from burned lands has caused severe erosion. The Malagasy only arrived on the island about 2000 years ago (4). The first people coming from south east Asia and Africa. Later on also people from Arabia settled on the island. The first settlers brought with them a mix of different traditions, such as rice growing and cattle breeding, practices that are not well adapted to Madagascar’s delicate ecosystems.

“From the air Madagascar seems to be bleeding, the red rich soil pouring from it’s veins.”



Source: http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/NewImages/Images/ISS008-E-19233_lrg.jpg

Another cause for deforestation is bush fire. Every year as much as a third of Madagascar burns (6). The fires are set to create pasture land for the cows, but often transcend into adjacent lands, causing forest to disappear.

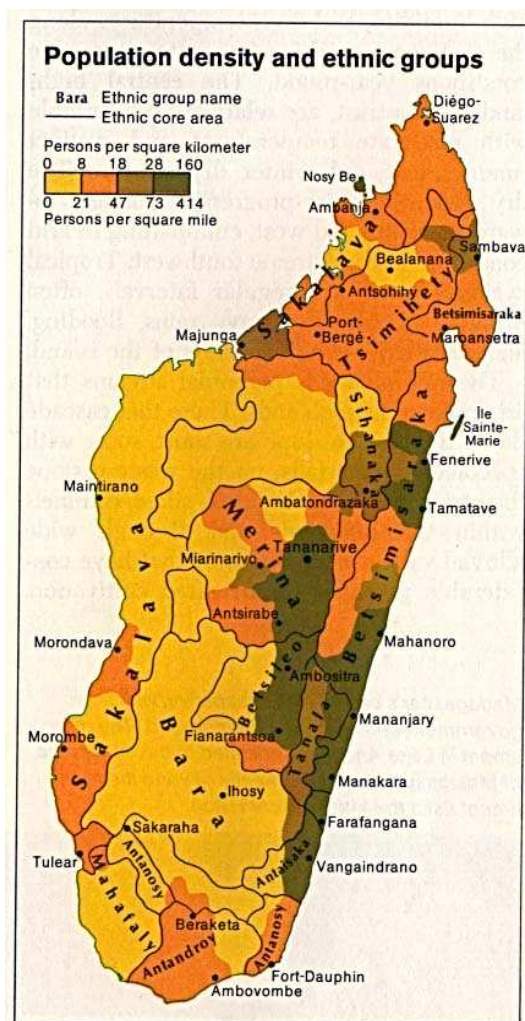
Madagascar is among the world's poorest countries. As such, people's day-to-day survival is dependent upon natural resource use. They live off the land that surrounds them, making use of whatever resources they can find. Madagascar now has a population of 17 million that has doubled in the last 25 years. The population grows annually by 3,1%. In Madagascar there is only 30.000 km² of arable land and 80% of population is dependent upon small scale agriculture, which indicates the severe land use pressures (4).

The Forest Corridor

During my internship I was based in two villages in the forest between Ranomafana and Andringitra national park. This area is by WWF referred to as the forest corridor. This is one of the largest uninterrupted pieces of forest in the country and therefore a place with conservation priority. WWF has over 31 projects running in the area around and in the forest corridor.

The forest corridor connecting the national parks (NP) of Ranomafana and Andringitra (170,000 ha) is located in the eastern part of the central High Plateau, and at the high part of the eastern slopes of Madagascar. The vegetation is primarily made up of low, average and high altitude humid forests. This area is home to around 70 % of all endemic species of Madagascar and it contains some of the country's richest forests and wetlands (5). The forest corridor used to be a large intact block of forests. It has now become a narrow band of forests from 15 to 20 km wide in certain places. The dominant ethnic group in this zone is the Betsileo (sedentary agriculturists, large land managers) on the Western side, the Tanala (migratory agriculturists) on the eastern side and the Bara Haronga (migratory agriculturists and pastors) to the south. This ethnic diversity causes a multitude of human-induced pressures that varies in size and intensity from one region to another. The forest has suffered from "tavy", uncontrolled fires and cattle grazing. The impact of these activities is the most severe in the southern part of the corridor.

Fig.2: Population density and ethnic groups



The local population is economically poor according to national indicators. The period of "welding" (agricultural period during which food availability is limited) is a severe problem. The average income of the inhabitants is less than 1 USD per day (5). This makes it very hard for them to invest activities that will result in future development. The poverty of the corridor population translates itself into increased dependence on natural resources. In return, the continued deterioration of the environment can contribute to an aggravation of poverty.

The corridor is a "forgotten" area. It is an economically, socially and politically neglected.

"Ici, c'est le vrai jungle, un anarchie. Il n'a pas des regles. Là habites une voleur, est son voisin est un meurtrier!", Solofo Andraimahavo, Project chief WWF Amabalavao

The access to basic social services (education, health and sanitation) is low due to the distance between the villages and the administrative and commercial centres and the lack of clean water access. The communities do not have the capacity effectively use water resources for a productive and durable agriculture and for clean and safe drinking water. In these rural areas the access to and management of water resources are the crucial conditions for any type of agriculture and socio-economic activity, in particular rice growing, which is the main and most preferred food in Madagascar (5).

Currently it is difficult for the state, given its present capacities, to lead large-scale conservation actions with its own resources. The political situation is currently unstable and corrupt. National policy concerning environmental protection and forest resource management is focussing on decentralisation. They recommend the communities to take responsibility of their own environment and development in the form of a transfer of natural resource management. Due to the isolation of the zone the present local capacity for the setting up of community development and environmental protection policies is very insufficient (5).

2.3 The Project

In the Forest corridor between Andringitra and Ranomafana national park WWF is working on multiple projects with the aim to protect the ecological functions and exceptional biodiversity in the forest, promote sustainable use of resources (soils, forest and water) and the creation of management infrastructures that contribute to socio-economic development of the surrounding communities and community conservation (5).

The project offers:

- Technical and organisational support to local management structures and/or agricultural system development. WWF offers the local agricultural commission's access to expert agricultural knowledge and helps the community to set up a management system and plan for the area. They offer possibilities for local capacity building and stimulate the contact between community, forest service and local authorities.
- Promotion of technical alternatives to environmentally deprecating practices. They educate interested farmers in the practice of Systeme Riziculture Intensive (SRI), which produces higher yields and shortens the weeding period in comparison to the traditional systems.
- Environmental education by launching environmental clubs on high schools under the name Club Vintsy. Their aim is to engage students in environmental issues and to motivate them to protect local nature through biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources. WWF also supports the building of schools and they offer books on the Malagasy environment for schools.
- Implementation of hydro-agricultural micro-infrastructures. WWF has built dams that help to allocate water efficiently for agricultural purposes.
- Development of access systems to potable water, which include the location of wells and the construction of water pumps and filters.
- Reforestation activities. WWF builds in corporation with the community tree nurseries and buys juvenile trees to be replanted.

In the project description of WWF is mentioned that The "Andringitra-Ranomafana" forest corridor project is based on the development of communal natural resource management and claims to: "*put an accent on the value of local knowledge and existing traditional structures (5)*". In Chapter 4 we will see how WWF puts this theory into practice.

“La forêt est la source pour nos vies”
Francois, Ambalamanenjana



The name culture derives from the Latin *cultura* stemming from *colere*, meaning "to cultivate" (11). Nowadays culture is often understood as the patterns of human activity, the symbolic structures that give such activity significance and that set them apart as a distinct group or society (7). It incorporates behavior that is carried out by groups of people while being passed on from generation to generation. This specific behavior is carried out by a large amount of people over a longer period of time and is therefore prone to have a significant and long lasting effect on their environment. As the Latin source of the word culture already suggested, culture is strongly linked to natural resources. M. Cocks (8) describes the relationship between humans and their environment as mediated by culture. In this chapter I will discuss the relation between the culture of the Tanala and Betsileo and their natural environment and how this influences nature conservation. The focus is on how differences in culture influence the impact of nature conservation efforts. I will start with an explanation of the concept of culture that I use in my analysis.

3.1 The concept of culture

Culture is described by Mainteny as; *“The name we give screens or lenses, beliefs, knowledge, values and meanings that are shared by any given group of people and through which they see and interpreted the world”* (10). These shared meanings are constructed by communicative interaction (12). Mainteny believes that culture is expressed through symbols¹, because in these meanings are captured, expressed and transmitted. Culture is learned and passed on from generation to generation, but this does not mean that it is static. Culture has the ability to adapt and adopt under change (8). Culture is produced by the past behavior of a group and its members and shapes future behavior (11).

The anthropologist Leslie White (27) suggested that for analytical purposes, a culture could be viewed as a three-part structure composed of three interrelated subsystems that he termed ideological, technological, and sociological. For a researcher it is impossible to directly view the beliefs, knowledge, values and meanings of a culture, but you can try to analyze symbols. My 2,5 month stay with the Malagasy communities allowed me to understand some of the symbols that link them to their environment. I have used the classification of White to describe these symbols. Even though I was welcomed with open arms by the community I still remain a “vazaha” (white person, stranger). As an outsider my interpretations of their symbols, even after extensive discussions, remain mingled with my own way of interpreting the world, as I am too a human with my own culture and set of lenses through which I interpreted the world.

With the ideological subsystem I refer to the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge and values that are expressed in speech and other forms of communication, such as myths, theologies, legends, philosophy etc.(9).

The sociological subsystem refers to the sum of the expected and accepted patterns of interpersonal relations that find their outlet in economic, political, military, religious, kinship: and other associations. These norms define the social organization of a culture and they are based upon the culture’s values. They regulate how the individual functions relative to the group, whether it be family, church, or state (9).

The technological subsystem refers to material objects, together with the techniques of their use, by means of which people are able to live. Such objects are the tools and other instruments that enable us to feed, clothe, house, defend, transport, and amuse ourselves (9). This is more the physical part of culture. These tools and techniques interact with the culture’s norms and values.

Based on this classification I have done my analysis of the Malagasy culture. Following I will describe the sociological, technical and ideological aspects of culture that greatly affect the environment of these tribes. I will first give an introduction into the tribes of the Tanala and Betsileo and the villages that I visited.

¹ something used for or regarded as representing something else

3.2 Tanala

The Tanala, or “people of the forest” are a mysterious tribe. Not much is known about their origin and only few remain. They are traditionally forest dwellers. They are skilled woodsmen, food gatherers, and hunters. They trade beeswax, honey, and other forest products and engage in slash-and-burn agriculture in Malagasy known as “tavy”. Their main staple is rice and a meal without it is considered incomplete. They are divided into two subgroups: the Tanala Menabe in the mountainous north and the Tanala Ikongo dwelling in the more accessible southern part of the Tanala homeland where I stayed.

Madagascar has been colonised by the French from 1894 till 1960. The WWF chief of the Amabalavao office, Solofo Andriamaharavo told me that the Tanala are refugees. They consist of people from different tribes that fled into the dense and difficultly accessible forests to flee from civil wars and the French colonisers. This immigration into the forest is still occurring. People from neighbouring tribes migrate to the forests of the Tanala out of land scarcity. The Tanala traditionally live in small family encampments with up to ten houses that migrate through the forest. The houses are made of wooden polls with bamboo walls and banana leave roofs that are easily constructed. Nowadays the Tanala mostly live in villages consisting of more than a hundred villagers of which many have recently migrated into the area due to the scarcity in cultivable land.



Above: Tanala women

Ankarimbelo

The village of Ankarimbelo was founded about 110 years ago in the beginning of the colonization. It has a population of 1860 people, of which the majority lives in small encampments in the surroundings of the village. The population is continuously increasing. The majority of the village is Tanala, but around 600 people, or 32% is immigrant (16). They are originally Antemoro (South-East Coast, around Manakara), Zafisoro (near Fianaratsua) or Betsileo. There are also a number of Merina and Asians who mostly own the shops in the village. The curious thing is that nearly all people living in the villages are referred to as and call themselves Tanala. People from other tribes that married into a Tanala family and families that have lived there for more than one generation are seen as Tanala. This made it very difficult for me to describe and understand Tanala culture. People will tell you that they are Tanala, while their families originally come from other parts of the island. The Tanala are really just the people that live in the forest, and the term is used very literally. The immigration into the forest has been going on over decades and therefore the people have developed a distinct lifestyle and culture. The origin of the Tanala lie in other tribes and regions, therefore it is very hard to describe the Tanala as a distinct tribe with a culture that clearly be described. There are not many reliable scientific papers written about them, they are either very old or of questionable sources. Those that do exist contradict each other or also express doubt on the origin and identity of the Tanala (19). The Tanala area borders that of the Bestileo. There is much interaction between the tribes, for example many Bestileo have migrated into the Tanala forests. This will be further described in this paragraph. This interaction blurs the boundaries between the two cultures. Of course both cultures also have elements that are shared all over the country. In my analysis I will often refer to the Malagasy, these are thus national cultural elements that include the Bestileo and Tanala.

The majority of the villagers (of all backgrounds) grow rice and cassava, sugar cane, bananas and coffee. The cultivable land is obtained by tavy or tevy. Tevy is the slash and burn activity on land with secondary vegetation. The villagers sell forest and river products such as fruits, honey and fish. They also produce “toaka gasy” Malagasy rum with sugar cane. Some people also work for salaries or payment in kind. Before 1974 Ankarimbelo owned 40.523 ha of primary forest, nowadays there is 16.232 ha of primary forest left (1).

The majority of the Ankarimbelo community earned a living in producing coffee. The coffee plantations were created during the French colonization. After the French had left the community continued producing coffee. The scarcity in the coffee market supported the supply of bad quality coffee from Madagascar till the 1990ies. When Vietnam, Brasil and other African countries entered the market with better products, the times got rough for the Malagasy. The world coffee price fell and the Malagasy could not compete with the coffee coming from other parts of the world. The coffee producers never taught their children how to work the land, because they were wealthy enough to provide for them and to pay others to work on their rice fields. The villagers did not have knowledge on how to plant new coffee species and slowly the old coffee plantations were producing less and less. The only thing reminding of the time that the people of Ankarimbelo were benefiting of the coffee production are the rusted iron roofs on their houses.



Presently a large part of the population lives under poor conditions. They lack the essentials for a minimum quality of well-being, such as food, health care, social status and education. They do not have rice fields or cows and work for others to earn a living. These are mainly the immigrants and youth. There is a low degree of education. When kids can write their names they often quit school. Only few are able to read and write. The village is very isolated, making it hard to trade and to get information from the outside world. Children are undernourished and the population is plagued by tropical and sexually transmitted diseases. Hygiene is low.

The immigration accelerated after the liberation in 1960 and caused a social disruption in the area. There was much robbery of land and zebu and social and traditional events were spoiled by fights (16). The immigrants moved to Ankarimbelo, because of the traditional zebu offerings. This is a tradition shared among all Malagasy. At important family events, such as birth, marriage or burial zebus are offered. In order to be able to pay for a zebu people often have to sell their rice fields or put a loan on them. Families that have no more rice fields left flee to the forested areas to practice tavy to be able to make a living.

The immigrants are the poorest of the community. They often work for others for a salary. But due to the high level of poverty in the village not a lot of people can afford others to work on their land anymore. So the poorest immigrants go from family to family to help them in the hope that at the end of the day they will receive a plate of food, leaving their children alone at home, with no food. The few immigrants that own land are nearly the only ones practicing rice culture in terraces, a technique that they have brought from home.

The majority of the immigrants leave their traditions and techniques behind to adapt to the Tanala way of living. The Malagasy have a saying: “*Trandraka an-tany mena ka maka ny volon-tany*” meaning: The tenrec lives in red soil so takes the color of the soil. This refers to the Malagasy that migrate to another area adapt to local culture and customs; they take the color of the land. The Tanala live off the forest and practice tavy. They are not used to cultivating the land and there was never the need to. The soil being so rich that merely planting something and waiting was enough. Working the land is seen by the Tanala as something for the poor, it is degrading. This discourages the villagers (including the immigrants) to practice rice culture on terraces.

3.3 Betsileo

The Betsileo live in the highlands around Fianarantsoa and Ambositra. They proudly named themselves Betsileo or “the many invincibles”, referring back to a past of conquests where they successfully resisted attacks of other tribes (18). They are efficient and productive cultivators of rice on irrigated and terraced hillsides with the use of zebus (14). They also grow cassava, corn, yams, bananas, and sugarcane. They are good wood craftsmen and live in houses made of brick and mud. In Madagascar live around 1 million Betsileo. They traditionally wear colorful lamba's (cloth) over there shoulders.

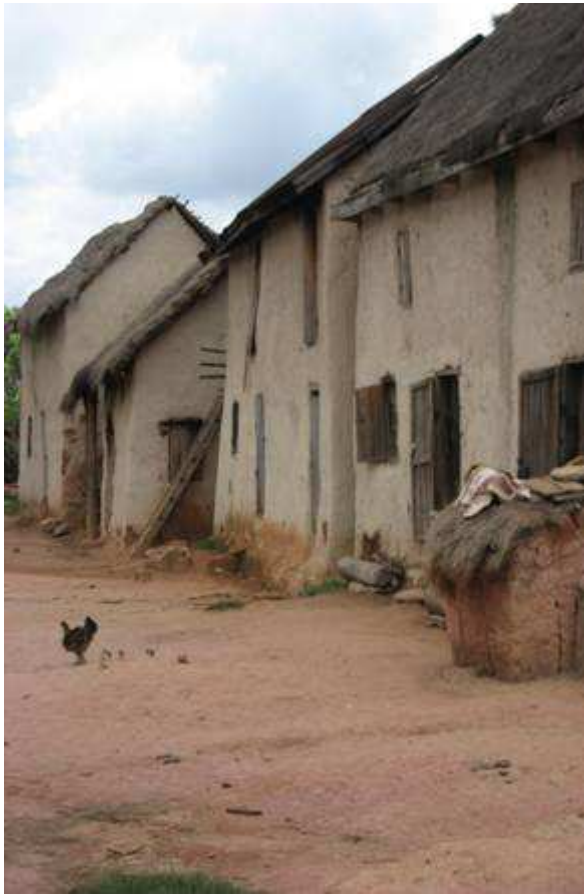
Under: Bestileo women



Ambalamanenjana

Ambalamanenjana was created around 100 years ago, founded by a family that was moving closer to the forest in search of cultivable land. The majority of the people in the village are Betsileo that earn their living by planting rice in terraces. There are not many immigrants. Part of the rice yield is sold at local markets. They also grow maize, manioc and beans. Many families own zebus. At the outskirts of the village there are large fences to protect their cows from theft at night.

The village is situated at the end of a valley and a 2 hour walk to the forest corridor. The city of Ambalavao lies at a distance of 45 km and can be reached by a dirt road. Closer in the valley there are some larger villages that have a weakly market. Ambalamanenjana is less isolated than Ankarimbelo. Many people walk several hours to go to the market every week, even if it is just for a chat. Due to the dirt road there is better access to economical centers and information reaches the area easier. There is also a population increase, but a lot less than in Ankarimbelo. Forest has been rapidly disappearing around the village over the last decades.



Before the colonization the community elders governed the natural resources through the traditional management system of the *Dina*. The *Dina* is a system of rules and regulations that cover social relations, conflict resolution, land management, resource use, and harvesting of diverse local forest and aquatic resources such as honey, eels and crayfish. The *Dina* is passed on orally from generation to generation. During the French colonization in 1895 the *Dina* and traditional authorities were deemed illegal. The French set up a governmental system. Elders lost their authority to the Department of Water and Forests who exploited the natural resources and allowed outsiders to degrade their resources. With a lack of control of the government, local residents felt pressure to deforest and to exploit their own forest resources, before others would do so. Social conflict increased as communications fell apart within villages and between villagers and government officials (23).

Currently there is a scarcity of agricultural land. Especially those that do not own land are poor. Traditional values and rules and rituals are not as strongly rooted in the community as for the Tanala in Ankarimbelo.

There are 2 primary schools in the village and a large high school in the neighboring village. People here walk a longer distance to school and there are less analphabets compared to Ankarimbelo, although the number remains high. The rice terraces give higher yields, the people seem better nourished and healthier than in Ankarimbelo.

3.4 Ideology

In this first part of the description of the culture of the two tribes I will discuss the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge and values that influence their relation to the environment. I will begin by describing spiritual beliefs and how these influence the behavioral norms related to natural resources. Secondly I will discuss the knowledge that both tribes have on their natural environment and the way they perceive nature.

Spirituality

The Malagasy are characterized by their rich spiritual life full of complicated and fascinating beliefs and customs. All clans in Madagascar share the belief in the power of the dead ancestors (*razana*) (14). The dead ancestors are believed to be a strong force in the daily life of the living. The *Razana* are the link between god (*Zanahary*) and mankind and considered the most important members of the family. They can influence the fortune of the living by doing favors, but on the other hand they can deliver punishments when their wishes are not respected. These wishes consider the behavior of their family and are passed on in the family or community in the form of “*fady*” also known as a regimen. *Fady*’s are beliefs related to actions, social events and objects. *Fady*’s are aimed to improve the quality of life for the Malagasy. The *fady* can be seen as symbols, because although they often consist of simple rules and norms they represent the interaction with the spiritual world. The *fady* and belief in the power of ancestors forms a strong force in the resistance to change of the Malagasy. The ways of the ancestors are adhered to and changing might offend them.

Fady are different from village to village but sometimes also from family to family. A *fady* always starts as a family regimen and as the family spreads so does the regimen. If people marry traditionally the *fady*’s of both families are mentioned and promised to be adhered to. Many *fady*’s guide the interaction with natural elements. In Ankarimbelo for example it was prohibited to cross the river with a red item.

The family of my field coordinator, Sylvain Razafimandimby, is not supposed to eat the slender build fluff tail. His grandmother hid in a cave to escape from bandits and this bird was flying in front of the cave. The bandits thought that there would be nobody in the cave, since the bird was flying there so peacefully. So the bandits moved on. His grandmother made it fady to eat this colorful bird. Some birds are forbidden to eat for everyone. Such as the Blue Coau and Crested Drongo which is considered royal for its crown. The Madagascar Cuckoo-roller is considered a bringer of bad luck as well as the aye- aye. They are often killed, also because farmers consider them a pest to their crops.



Slender build Fluff-tail



From left to right: Aye aye, Madagascar cuckoo-roller, blue coua and crested drongo

On the other hand in the Ankarimbelo region the Aye-Aye is respected, although it is a bringer of bad luck, it is still a sign of the Razana and should therefore be respected. When a dead aye- aye is found it is sometimes even buried as a human being. All over the island there are many different fady, prohibiting the hunting and eating of certain animals and plants.

Fady's also prohibit people to disturb certain areas. The Tanala bury their dead in the forest in hollowed out trees. The forest is for the Tanala the realm of the Razana. The forest around a tomb should remain undisturbed; it is prohibited to cut down trees there. In the surroundings of Ankarimbelo there is a forest called "Ingidy" placed upon the highest hill in the area. This forest has remained because there is a royal tomb there. Due to the isolation of the area traditions still have a strong foot in the community. The traditional values, beliefs and rules are important to the Tanala. Only recently this has started to change. According to Sylvain Razafimandimby the fady are nowadays less and less respected, even local leaders do not always obey to them. A large part of the population in Ankarimbelo is immigrant. These people often leave behind most of their traditions when they decide to move, because in the new area there is no social control on the fady specific to their home region. Hunger is the main motivation to no longer respect these traditions. The first priority is to gather food and secondly come these rules and regulations.

The Betsileo in Ambalamanenjana do not have many fady and only few of them are related to their natural resources. The Betsileo bury their dead in concrete buildings, that are far more costly than their own residency. These are often placed at prominent places, near a road on a hill top etc. They thus do not have many forests that are sacred or that should remain undisturbed, because not many tombs are placed in the forest. The fady have a less prominent place in society in comparison to the Tanala in Ankarimbelo. The trend that these traditional beliefs are becoming less important is related to the position of traditional leaders. During the colonial period traditional leaders were replaced by governmental officials and the communities laws were considered unlawful. The retreat of traditional authorities contributes to the erosion of traditional beliefs. This will further be explained in the paragraph on decision making.



Above: Betsileo tomb

The fady related to natural resources are generally beneficial for nature conservation. The belief in the symbolism of certain animals can both be beneficial and counter productive for conservation. Adjacent to the belief in ancestral spirits and symbolic animals, many Malagasy also believe in spirits of natural elements, such as forest, river and mountain spirits. These guide over these resources and should be consulted before use or entrance. Some are believed to do harm to people, others are worshipped and asked for help. The belief in spirits influences the way in which the people deal with the resources. Sometimes certain places are avoided, others sought after. In any case they are treaded with respect. When entering the forest in Ambalamanenjana an amount of alcohol is offered to the forest spirits. The president introduces us and clarifies our purpose and asks for the blessing of the forest spirit. When we leave the forest the same ritual is repeated, thanking the forest spirit for our prosperous stay.

The Tanala are said to also have a strong belief in these forest spirits, in Ankarimbelo they told me that there is a spirit in the form of a young girl in the water that tries to drown people. Places can also be holy because important histories took place there. This belief in spirits and holy places benefits nature as these places are mostly preserved and treated with care by those that believe in them.

The waterfall in Andringitra² is holy and many come there to pray for children. Once upon a time the king of Madagascar and his wife could not get children. The king consulted an old wizard and he told him to go to these waterfalls and offer a zebu. The king and his wife went on their way and gave the offer. They received 5 children in return. The waterfalls are now called the king and the queen.

- Story told by Florin, our guide in the park -



Knowledge

Next to religious beliefs the ideology of a culture also consists of a shared basis of knowledge. In this section I will describe the knowledge the people in both tribes have on nature.

The Tanala are called people of the forest, and therefore I expected them to have a lot of knowledge on their environment, especially the forest. This was however a preconceived opinion. Most of the villagers never go into the forest, even though within 2 hours walking you are in the middle of the jungle. One day we went into the jungle to find young plants for in the schools arboretum. We went together with our field agent, Ludovic, and a local guide called Mahmud. They told me that he knew a lot about the forest. He was able to name most of the tree species, which he told me he had learned from his father. Later on I was told that this was the second time he had ever really been into this jungle. When we returned in the village the old women by the road asked us where we had been. We said: "Ala": forest. They gave us a disgusted face and then started laughing, apparently for them the forest is not a place to roam around in for recreation. Most villagers avoided the forest they told me because of the mosquitoes and leeches. They only cross it to go to the city. When we returned with the trees very few of the students were able to identify the species. There are very few people in the village that regularly go into the forest and have knowledge on the species that live there. Most of them have never even seen a lemur, a primate species for which their forest is known for world wide.

Sylvain Razafimandimby told me that most people that live in the village are immigrants. They do however name themselves "Tanala". They have only lived here very shortly and do not go into the forest very often, because it is now far away from the village. They do not have any traditional knowledge of the forest, because they used to live in other areas. The immigrants go into the forest to do tavy, which only

² Nature park close to Amabalamenjana

destroys the forest. Sylvain Razafimandimby said that the real Tanala are the ones living in the encampments at the border of the forest. They practice tavy, but also gather food and wood from the forest. They collect wood for the construction of houses, fire wood, medicinal plants, fish and shellfish, honey and fruits. They also hunt for meat. They have a lot more knowledge on what lives in the forest because they depend on it for their livelihood. The Tanala that are left are very few and the remaining have serious health issues due to incest. Sylvain Razafimandimby knows only one “real” Tanala, a man of 92 years old that knows everything about the forests and practices a lot of tavy. Most of the forest encampments have recently been evacuated due to new forest laws. These prohibit living in primary forest areas, thereby determining the destiny of this tribe.

The Tanala originally are refugees. When these immigrant tribes arrived in the forest the only way they knew to survive was to cut it down and grow rice, a technique brought from the ancestors of Indonesia. By slowly destroying the forest they have created their own destruction. In the areas where the Tanala nowadays live the forest is far away, sometimes more than a 4 hour walk. The people that used to be dependent upon the forest now have to change their livelihood, and with it their culture. The decrease in forests has caused a decrease in Tanala that live in the forest and with that a loss of knowledge on Madagascar’s humid forests.

The few Tanala that still live near the forest are indeed dependent upon the forest. It is the place they live in, that provides a living for them. On the one hand they feed themselves on the forest on the other they destroy it to create fertile land. The Tanala that still live in encampments in the forest have a lot of knowledge on the forest. More and more Tanala live far away from the forest, because it is rapidly disappearing and new forest laws have prohibited residency in the forest. This has resulted in a loss of knowledge on use of the plant and animal species found in the forest and is slowly changing the identity of this tribe.



From left to right: fish, drinking water, fruits, honey, medicinal plants, mats from raffia palm, construction bamboo

The Betsileo traditionally do not have an intense relationship with the forest. They mostly create irrigated rice cultures in the lower valleys. In higher areas they cultivate other species, such as beans, cassava and maize. The vegetation only needs to be removed once for the creation of the rice paddies. It is not necessary to shift to a new plot after a few years, so the forest is spared. Nowadays the high lands do not have many forests left. Therefore I expected the Betsileo in Amalamanenjana to have less knowledge on the forest.

Soon I discovered that the people in Ambalamanenjana used a lot of forest products in their daily lives. They use wood of the “kingala” tree for house construction, palm leaves, honey, fish and shellfish, medicinal plants and fruits. Just like the traditional Tanala. The primary forest in Ambalamanenjana is easier to access than in Ankarimbelo. It lies closer by and on lower altitudes. In Ambalamanenjana there is not a lot of forest left that falls under the communal area. In Ankarimbelo and surrounding communities there is more forest available to the villagers. In Ambalamanenjana the majority of the villagers have knowledge on the use and location of forest products, but they are also able to locate animal species, such as the lemurs. They were very proud to show their forest and tell stories about it. Even though the Betsileo in Ambalamanenjana are not “people of the forest” they did develop an intense relationship with their forests. The knowledge is also passed on from generation to generation. The young people in Ambalamanenjana have also created a commission to check the forest on illegal activities, such as tavy or fires. These trips have increased their knowledge on the forests surrounding their village.

I believe that this large knowledge base in comparison to the Tanala in Ankarimbelo can be explained by the interactions the people have with the forest. In Ambalamanenjana people visit the forest often. It is not only closer by, but also there are no leeches and many mosquitoes. They enter the forest to herd their cows. The Betsileo are famous cattle breeders and many Betsileo own zebu. To feed these they are taken into the forest during the day to feed on the young trees. The forest is a good place for nourishment and protection from cattle thieves. Zebu’s in Madagascar are seen as the largest wealth and they are therefore carefully monitored by their owners.

Nature perspective

The use of forest and the knowledge on its functions influences the way the villagers perceive nature and its conservation. The king in Faliarivo (neighboring village to Ankarimbelo) believed the forest is most important for the provision of wood and fresh drinking water and should therefore be protected. This includes all the creatures living in the forest. He explained to me how the birds and lemurs secure the regeneration of the forest. He also mentioned that in certain forests important historical events occurred and that there are many holy burial sites that should remain in peace.

In Ambalamanenjana the elderly have seen the forest retreat and their environment becoming dry and lifeless. The perception of protection is a relatively recent development that gradually emerged while the forest was rapidly disappearing. Francois one of the village elderly in Amalamanenjana told me:

“The forest is our source of life. We believe it is important to protect it so that we, but also our children can sustain a living.”

Both communities traditionally share a strong link with their surrounding forests. In the interviews I have done with people it became clear that they acknowledge its importance, especially related to their existence. Solofo Andriamaharavo describes their perception of nature as follows: *“They see the forest as the mother that feeds them and understand that they need to protect it”*. Both realize that some of their practices, such as fires and tavy are unsustainable and greatly affect their environment. It is difficult to start conservation projects in areas where still a lot of forest is available, because in these areas people do not feel the need to protect it. This partly explains why in Ambalamanenjana the need to protect the forest is stronger than in Ankarimbelo. In Ankarimbelo they still have plenty of forest to their disposition. This perspective is rather anthropocentric, focusing on the functional use of the forest, which is not so much a sustainable one.

3.5 Sociology

In this second aspect of culture I will look into the sociological aspects that influence the relation to their natural environment. These may not be as direct as the ideological aspects described above, but do form a very important aspect of conservation work. First I will describe the importance of community life for the Malagasy and secondly the way of decision making in both tribes.

Fihavanana

The Malagasy have a strong feeling of community that influences much of their daily lives. It is based upon two strong values; hospitality and generosity. One important aspect of the Malagasy society is “fihavanana”. This is a traditional value recognised throughout the country that encompasses tolerance, solidarity, mutual respect and social harmony (13). Fihavanana lets the Malagasy see all others as their relatives that should be helped in times of need. The word Fihavanana literally stands for kinship, but it serves to underline the connection between the Malagasy. It is characterized by a will to help, respect and care for one another in the first place within the family but also between two families, the village, two villages, even two ethnic groups and the country. This social norm is apparent in farm work. This is done by immediate family, but sometimes also different families. When working together they sing and laugh. It is the source of social cohesion. Also rituals such as burials, weddings and births are celebrated intensely by the entire community. Sharing is very important and individuals seeking to fulfil their own interest are punished. A great fear is to be humiliated in public. Communities are traditionally characterised by a much social control. The traditional authorities will punish those that seek only benefit for themselves.

In the area of Ankarimbelo there is a lot of attention for these traditional values. The communities in this area are very isolated and therefore the focus of social life is on the community level. In Faliarivo for example we woke up very early in the morning to find the whole community cleaning the village together. Also when working on the building of tree nurseries people were always willing to help. People also asked us often if we could come and help them harvest or plant their rice. In Faliarivo we also got offered a house on hospitality of the community. The importance given to Fihavanana in Ankarimbelo has been changing over the past decades. There is a decrease of social cohesion and social control, fuelled by the poverty and the social disruption caused by the many immigrants.

In Ambalamanenjana the value of fihavanana is currently regaining importance, due to the work that WWF is doing as I will explain in the next chapter. Families help each other in the rice fields, take care of each others children etc. Francois indicated that Amabalamaenjana has known different times in which the fihavanana and local authorities did not get much respect. The explanation for this will follow when we look into the authority systems in both cultures.

The strong link of the individual to the community is not directly related to a natural resource. It does however form an important aspect of conservation efforts. Community Based Nature Conservation is difficult when there is no sense of community among the villagers. They have to be willing to cooperate to be able to manage their natural resources sustainably. This cultural trait that traditionally unites communities is a strong incentive in community based nature conservation. In the forest corridor there is near to no law enforcement. Although there is a forest law prohibiting tavy and fires in certain zones, culprits are rarely caught. In order to restrain people from depleting their natural resources the communities are left to rely on themselves. Therefore a united community and social control are the only control mechanism in this remote area.

Decision making

During the colonisation the French declared the traditional leaders and their rules illegitimate. They set up a new legislative system and replaced the traditional authorities by civil servants that they appointed (21). Nowadays there is still a gap between the legislative and traditional authorities. This divide of power has caused a lot of social disruption and led to erosion of traditional rules and values (21). The lack of a clear authority to resolve conflicts resulted into the fragmentation of the communities (21).

Nowadays in Ankarimbelo and surroundings authority over the community is divided between the administrative and traditional leaders. In Ankarimbelo there is a small brick office, the only one in the surroundings, that accommodates a mayor and civil servants. The traditional authority is called *Ampanjaka* (the king). He decides in conflict situations, war and allotment of land. He is also the symbol of the community's ancestral rituals and traditional laws. All decisions taken by the administrative legislation are

always passed by the king first. The king is a highly respected person in the community and he has strong influence in the community.

*“When walking on the street for the first time an old man approaches me. He gives me a warm smile and stretches his hand out to me. I reach out for his hand and *smack*.... He gives me a fat kiss. The whole street is roaring with laughter and the story quickly spreads through the village. That has its consequences. We work together with the king, of this side of the river, and he immediately decides to make a new law. Whoever tries to kiss the *vazaha* (stranger, white person) will have to pay a cow. When the sun sets he walks onto the small square and notifies, loudly calling, the whole village of the new law.”*

-Fragment of my travel diary-

Decisions in the community are taken by the king in discussion with the noblemen and presidents of the agricultural organization (communauté de Base). The rest of the community is only notified of the decisions taken. The king is the last judge on all conflicts in the community. The king however does not have knowledge on how to use their resources in a sustainable way, so not much had been done on conservation before WWF arrived.



Men in Faliarivo, the second men from the left is the Ampanjaka

The decision making process is important in a community based nature conservation project. Solofo Andriamaharavo, WWF project Manager, says that the project is primarily dependent upon the willingness of the local authorities. Once they are willing to cooperate in a community based conservation project it is easy to organize activities with the whole community, because the king has the power to give them orders. This allows activities in the project to be executed fast.

In Ambalamanenjana there is also a legislative and traditional leadership. The traditional leaders are the village elderly (*Ray aman-dReny*) and the clan chiefs. In Ambalamanenjana there are 4 different clans. A clan is a group of family descendants. The *Ray aman-dReny*, is one of the oldest men in the village and is appointed by age and charisma. The *Ray aman-dReny* is mainly involved in rituals and ceremonies. He represents the traditional values in the community, but does not have a lot of power in comparison to the *Ampanjaka*. The clans discuss issues of rice, zebu's and land property. The Betsileo love talking and decisions are taken after discussions in which the entire community is involved. This also counts for issues on tavy, fires and conservation of the forest.

In Ambalamanenjana there is much more initiative under the villagers to protect the forest than in Ankarimbelo. I argue that the decision making process influences this. Tavy and bush fires form a social dilemma; the immediate personal benefits of cultivable land versus the more long term effects on the communal wood and water resource. A measurement, like the rule that these fires and tavy are illegal and will be punished are only successful when there is a level of acceptance. By including the villagers in the decision making process they feel more involved. By discussing the villagers gather arguments on the pro's and con's of certain behavior. The arguments are weighted and the villagers are able to elaborate on the content of the messages. This will lead to an internally based attitude change and may also lead to an integration of the different perspectives. The community can create a joint perspective on tavy. This shared belief system allows for social pressure and control. With the lack of law enforcement in the area, social control is important. Discussion does thus not only allow people to adapt their attitude towards tavy, but also influence the subjective norm. In Ambalamanenjana the community meets every Friday. In these meetings the authorities and men, women and youth of the community are represented.

In Ankarimbelo the community is not invited to discuss with the authorities. A change of behavior is ordered by the king. People are externally motivated to follow these orders, because they will be punished if they do not comply. Important here is that the people understand the rule, that the prohibited behavior can be checked and that the authorities are able to punish culprits. When practicing tavy in Ankarimbelo it is hard to control this behavior because people have to be caught and there are very few law enforcers. The local community does not have the means and authority to enforce the law. The incentive for people to follow the order of the king is therefore low. The external motivation is less durable than an internally based motivation (22).

The decision making process influences the successfulness of certain rules and norms related to behavior that has destructive effects on nature. Especially where conservation efforts involve behavioral change of the community such as in these two communities the way decisions are made in these cultures is important.

3.6 Technology

The technology in a culture focuses on the artefacts and the techniques that the people use to make a living. I will discuss here the techniques that are so deeply embedded in the cultures and greatly effect the environment of the Betsileo and Tanala; tavy, cattle and fire.

Tavy

People often say that nature gives you calm and peace. Then they have never been to a Malagasy humid tropical rainforest! In the forest there are a thousand creatures announcing their presence and at night the insects make eardrum snapping noises. Unfortunately the village is not much quieter, except for the screaming children and roosters I hear a constant cracking and smashing; tavy...

-Fragment of my travel diary-

In the first chapter I shortly explained the practice of tavy and its effects. Tavy, although shortly described as slash and burn activity, is a much more complex behaviour. In this chapter I would like to take a closer look at the position of tavy in both communities and its consequences for conservation. I will focus especially on the motives that drive this behaviour. Furthermore I will look into the cultural values and symbolic meanings related to tavy.

In Ankarimbelo tavy is still the traditional practice to make a living. Tavy for the Tanala is not only a way to produce food, but also a way of social organisation (19). The decision to practice tavy and its location are decisions that lie within the village or clan. The practice of tavy is connected to ceremonies in which the consent of the ancestors is sought after. Therefore practice of tavy is not only a way to make a living but also a way to maintaining a link with the ancestors (19). The strong belief in the powers of the ancestors makes it very hard to change the lifestyle of the Tanala. They highly value the practices of their ancestors and are therefore resistant to change.

Most Malagasy are aware of the destructive effects of tavy, but still continue its practice, mostly because for most Tanala it is the only option to make a living. They are dependent upon it. The question on the mind of most Malagasy is; *"How will I feed my family today?"* Where there is hunger today there is little concern of the consequences for tomorrow. The malnourishment also influences the capacity to work. Due to the hunger many Tanala are not able to work intensely. They do not have the energy to work in the field everyday.

Except for this physical restraint they also do not have the knowledge on how to produce food in other ways. For irrigated rice fields know how and dams are needed. A lot of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) are now providing this to the Tanala. In spite of these initiatives not many change their way of production. This is partly for the rituals related to tavy, but also the history of the village is important.

The villagers of Ankarimbelo were coffee breeders and were wealthy enough to pay others to work on their land. The elderly never taught their kids to work the land; they were wealthy enough to provide for them. After the fall of the coffee price in the nineties many had to provide for their own living and did not know any other alternative than to practice tavy. In order to produce rice in irrigated rice fields you need to work in the field nearly every day. It is hard work that not many find appealing. The soil in Ankarimbelo is so

rich that the only thing you need to do in order to produce food is to get rid of the lush vegetation and sow seeds. The earth is so rich that it does not need a lot of work, in contrast to many other areas in Madagascar.

A true Tanala only needs his goro and fire to survive, says Solofo Andriamaharavo, the WWF project chief. The goro is the tool that is used to cut down the vegetation. It is not only the main instrument for tavy, but is used for nearly all technical work, such as building houses. The goro is a man's most precious possession; it is a symbol for the Tanala. The angady or spade is rarely used. The Tanala are not used to work the land every day. Hard labor is considered to be for the poor. Working the land everyday is not only tiring, but also considered degrading. This is in stark contrast with the meaning ascribed to tavy. Tavy literally means fatness and is associated with wealth and prosperity.

Another strong incentive to practice tavy is land ownership. When practicing tavy you secure ownership over the land. Each community has their traditional land delimitation which is divided into the clans, but personal property rights are not well defined. It is important to have a lot of land for all Malagasy. It is a sign of wealth. Often more land is deforested than necessary for their own providence. This land is sold. Sometimes even communal land is sold, which is a serious source of conflict. Due to immigration and population increase there is land scarcity. Many people in both tribes do not own land because they sell it to be able to buy zebu. There is not enough land to be inherited to provide for all. Therefore they practice tavy to gain land. As long as there is forest left many will choose to use the land before someone else does. Tavy is also preferred by the poor because it is a practice that does not demand investment. Irrigated rice fields cost a lot of money and labour to create. They are a big investment and in a country that is troubled by cyclones tavy is a safe option.

The deforestation by Betsileo is only a recent development, resulting from the land pressures and increasing population (18). For the Betsileo slash and burn activities are opportunistic, it is not part of their traditions. It is driven by economical incentives, not socio-cultural ones as with the Tanala. The Betsileo do have a cultural link to producing rice in irrigated rice fields, not so much with tavy. You will not see many Betsileo men walking around with a goro. The Betsileo use the angady (spade) to work their lands.

In Ankarimbelo tavy is more often practiced than in Ambalamanenjana. This because in Ankarimbelo there is much more forest that is free and open to use and tavy is part of the social and cultural life. Also people without land come from other areas to the forest to practice tavy. The fact that tavy is rooted in the culture of the Tanala makes it more difficult to change.

Jamie Spencer (14) states: "Tavy as the traditional means for the Tanala to survive can be seen as central to societies make up and culture." Land ownership hierarchies are determined by its practice and politicians are centered on it. While the national government labels tavy illegal and tries to eliminate it, local politicians give their support for tavy hoping to get the vote of the poor man, which unfortunately are many in Madagascar. Tavy is the subject of many ceremonies for the ancestors. It is the symbol for wealth and prosperity. While in practice tavy has destroyed the forest that provides food, water and wood, leaving barren step land that has driven many into poverty.



From left to right: Tanala men with goro, Tanala women planting rice seeds on tavy land, angady, Betsileo kids with their angady

Fire

Sitting at night outside my cabin I look over at the silhouettes of the mountains that are interrupted by high orange flames and curtains of smoke. Day and night you hear the cracking of the fires. These are lit by humans either after cutting down forest to create a fertile ground for agriculture or to set fire to other vegetation so young fresh plants will grow, that the many zebu will consume with pleasure.

-Fragment of my travel diary-

In the first place fire is used for creating cultivable land or pastures. Furthermore fire has a more cultural meaning. In Madagascar fire is used as a way of protest, against the government or even against neighbouring villages. It is used as a tool to provoke.

In the beginning of December the presidential elections were held and everywhere you could see a strong increase in fires. Sata, a WWF field agent told me that these fires were lit to show the people's opposition to government policies, but on the other hand this was also a very convenient time to create these illegal fires for pastures and arable land. The government was so busy with the preparations of the elections. The majority of the governmental work force and treasury were put into the presidential propaganda. The school teachers in Ambalamanenjana had not been paid their salaries for over a month. This meant that at that moment there was no governmental control over the illegal fires and minimum chances of getting caught.

Last year a large area was reforested by the villagers of Ambalamanenjana and the WWF, unfortunately last autumn this area was set afire. The villagers and WWF officers suspect neighbouring villages, because these do not support the rules set out by the community and the work of WWF. WWF is working in the area with communities to create regulatory framework that will make land use more sustainable. The culprits might not like change or might be people that are benefiting of the current situation. They do not like rules and to be told what to do. The fires clearly show the power struggles and resistance to change that still remain in the area. Planting the area for a second time shows the determination of the villagers and send a clear message to those that lit the fires.

Fires are not only lit as a protest but also out of superstitions. Many people believe that lighting a fire will cause rainfall in the area of Ambalamanenjana. Two thousand and six was an extremely dry year and many fires were lit. They also believe that fire will make the soil more fertile, while in reality the nutrients from the ashes and the top soils are mostly washed away by the heavy rainfall.

In Ankarimbelo fires are not a big problem, because the vegetation is too moist and therefore the fires damage is often limited. Fire is only used with tavy and not for creating pastures because there are few people there that can afford zebu's. In Ambalamanenjana on the other hand fires are a tremendous problem. The vegetation here is dry and there is not much rain, therefore the area is very sensitive to fires. Here fire is used as a protest and out of superstition. There is a lot of erosion in the area and the fires often destroy a much larger area than was intended, destroying crops, ancient forests and even houses.



Cows

The zebu lies near to the heart of all Malagasy. When I was invited to the house of the son of the president of the agricultural organisation in Ambalamanenjana, he proudly showed me a picture of him and a very sturdy looking zebu. It was a wild zebu, once escaped and now living in the forest. He had followed it for days and finally managed to capture it. The tale was told with much grandeur and received by the audience with awe .-Fragment of my travel diary-

The Malagasy zebu is much more than just an animal of burden. Of course they are used to carry things and work the land, but their value is much more of a cultural sort.

First of all zebras have a high spiritual value. The zebu represents strength, prosperity and wealth (21). All over the island they are used as sacrifices to the ancestors. By the ceremonial sacrifice the ancestors are taking part in the festivities. The Malagasy rum and zebu are part of every meal on festivities. These range from more nationally celebrated days, such as Christmas, to burials and marriages. Sometimes the skeletons of the face of the zebu are placed upon the tomb.

The zebu is also used as amusement in day to day life. In Ankarimbelo the young boys let their bulls fight for the amusement of many. The young Betsileo men practice a sport called "tolon'omby", a kind of bull fighting to prove their strength.

The fortune of a family is measured by the amount of zebu's being offered (21). The zebu's are a measurement of wealth and social status. The zebu is also used as a fine or punishment for crimes. The need for zebu's in social life has led to the impoverishment of many. They sell their land or take a mortgage. The landlessness in Ankarimbelo and Ambalamanenjana has led many people to migrate into the forest to start practicing more tavy. The Malagasy aim to have as many cattle as possible, which causes overgrazing of pastures and the burning of forests. The forest is also used as a shelter against cattle thieves. It causes the owners of the zebu's to go into the forest often, thereby gathering knowledge on their environments.

The Bestileo and Tanala both use the zebu for the offerings at social events. The main difference between the Betsileo and Tanala concerning the zebu is that the Betsileo mostly use the zebu for work. For the Tanala on the other hand the zebu is much more of a financial security. For them it is a way of saving capital or a investment especially for the ceremonial offers. They attach more social value to the zebu than the Bestileo (20). For the Tanala zebras are the determining factor in defining the social status (20). The Betsileo in Ambalamanenjana own more zebu than the Tanala in Ankarimbelo and therefore the damage to the forest in Ambalamanenjana is more severe. On the other hand the zebu is also the reason for the higher level of knowledge on the forest in Ambalamanenjana in comparison to Ankarimbelo.



Top to bottom: working the land, wood craftsmanship, zebu offering, zebu bull, a young Bestileo man zebu fighting

3.7 Synthesis

In this chapter you have seen that the relation between the culture of the Betsileo and Tanala and their environment is complex. Especially the culture of the Tanala is in a turbulent change process. Often traditional communities in forests are portrayed as living in harmony with nature and more modern communities as culprits. This stereotype of the ability of traditional people to live sustainable is often referred to as the noble savage. In Madagascar I have learned that culture greatly influences the way in which we interact with our environment, but it can not be labeled bad or good. Our interactions with our environment are multiple and culture is ever changing. Parts of culture may benefit nature conservation while others restrain it. You have seen that fady as well as fire and zebus have beneficial and restraining effects. These cultural aspects of conservation are important to pay respect to when designing a conservation strategy.

The ideological aspects related to nature form a strong connection between nature and the people. The fady can be a strong incentive for the Malagasy to protect certain areas. The knowledge on the environment and their perspective on nature are on the one hand a sign that the people have a strong interaction with the forest, but also is a sign of their dependence upon it. The awareness of their dependence upon the forest is a strong incentive to conserve it.

The sociological aspects are not directly linked to the environment, but are very important for conservation. A community that is united is better able to work together on conservation. The decision-making process influences the motivation for people to contribute to conservation. Discussions results in a more thorough value change that is more likely to influence behavior. The formation of a shared belief system among the community allows for social pressure and control.

The technological aspects are related to the direct interaction with the environment. Fire, tavy and cattle breeding form in a certain extent a threat to the forest. The most important is to note that these practical behaviors have symbolic meaning and are accompanied with rituals that represent the link to the spiritual.

In this chapter it has become clear how strongly culture influences the interactions with the environment. The different aspects; ideology, sociology and technology are heavily intertwined. For example; Tavy is driven by the purchase of zebus, which are needed to participate in social life. The link between culture and nature as described in this chapter is elemental to a community based nature conservation program. In the next chapter I will look at how WWF deals with the link between culture and nature in their communication strategy and how this influences the successfulness of the program.

Chapter 4 The role of culture in the communication strategy of WWF



In the former chapter I have taken you along in the culture of the Tanala and Bestileo. Their relation with their environment is intense, complex, symbolic and ever changing. Conservation efforts are highly influenced by the ideological, sociological and technical aspects of the community's cultures. In this chapter I would therefore like to look at how WWF deals with this intense relationship between culture and nature. In their guiding principles WWF states: "We aim to *involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs (2)*"

In the project description of the Ranomafana and Andringitra forest corridor project WWF states more specifically: "*The project puts an accent on the value of local knowledge and existing traditional structures (8)*".

I will evaluate if they indeed live up to the aims mentioned above. I will do this by again evaluating the three aspects of culture: ideological, sociological and technical and to see how WWF deals with these. In this evaluation I will focus on the communication strategy of WWF, because this is the determining factor in the relationship with the local communities.

In Madagascar the problem is not the deforestation by large companies but by the slash and burn activities of local people. The corridor is officially not a protected area and therefore WWF is dependent upon the benevolence of the local people. The work of WWF in the corridor is interesting from a communication point of view because they do not only protect areas but also try to influence behavior and raise awareness of those living in and around the forest.

4.1 The communication strategy of WWF

Before analyzing the role of culture I will give a introduction into the communication strategy of WWF. First of all what place does communication have in the work of WWF?

At the core of the problem is human behavior, the unsustainable use of natural resources. Culture is important for conservation, because in this case human behavior is the culprit and the solution therefore involves intense interaction with these people.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations have several policy instruments at their disposal to try to change behavior. These instruments include: regulation, facilities, social pressure, money, communication (22). In this mix of policy instruments communication can be used subordinately or supplementary. In the case of WWF communication is used supplementary. WWF is not able to make effective use of all of the above policy instruments. They do not have the authority to make rules and regulations nor give fines or subsidies; these have to be made in collaboration with governmental or traditional authorities.

WWF is able to provide the population with facilities or technical devices that will encourage them to change their behavior. In the forest corridor this is for example the provision of schools, books, dams, wells and tools to work in rice paddies. The stimulation of social pressure is also an instrument that WWF has at their disposal. This means that they will persuade people to behave differently because certain highly influential people do so. Finally WWF can use communication to encourage people to change their behavior. The difference between this and the other policy instruments is that communication will result in an internally based motivation for behavioral change, which is more durable than external motivation that is driven by laws, subsidies and social pressure (5). When the subsidies, control mechanisms and influential people disappear, the motivation for the behavior will also cease to exist.

The aim of the WWF project is to protect the ecological functions and exceptional biodiversity in the forest, promote sustainable use of resources (soils, forest and water) and the creation of management infrastructures that contribute to socio-economic development of the surrounding communities and community conservation (22). Communication plays a role in achieving these objectives. The aim of their communication is to change the behavior of the people living in the corridor to more sustainable use of

natural resources. WWF uses communication to improve the villagers ability to learn about agricultural practices. They offer information on the environment for education purposes in schools and in the environmental club Vintsy. Communication plays a role in bringing together the community, WWF and the government officials in order to work together on nature conservation. Communication is also used to raise environmental awareness among the villagers and farmers. WWF communicates in large part by personal communication and group discussions, but they also make use of books, movies and songs. The main objectives of their communication activities are to enhance the use of technical devices, to create organizational arrangements and to share their beliefs on nature and it's conservation.

Now that we have taken a short look at the communication of WWF it is time to see how culture plays a role in the communication of WWF.

4.2 Ideology

In chapter 3 I have described the role of nature perspectives, knowledge and taboo's (fady) in the interaction with natural resources. Their strong influence of these ideas, beliefs, knowledge and values of the Tanala and Bestileo on their environment suggest that these are fundamental to the success of nature conservation efforts. So how does WWF deal with these in their work and communication?

Nature perspective

The first and most important adaptation WWF has made to local culture is the adaptation of their identity and their perspective on nature and its conservation. I learned about WWF when I was very young. As exited I was about animals I soon learned about the organizations that tried to protect them. I have always se en WWF a s an organization that tries to save endangered animal species, such as the panda.



When I got older and started my study in forest and nature conservation I learned more about the broader scope of WWF its activities. Nowadays the Dutch office portrays herself as an organisation aimed to protect the biodiversity world wide by:

1. Protecting and where possible restore the most important living areas: forests, wetlands sees and oceans.
2. Take on the most important threats: deforestation, desertification, unsustainable fishing, climate change and trade in species.
3. Raising awareness of the Dutch public and how they can contribute to the protection of species richness. (24)

In the Dutch aims there is no mention of local communities and indigenous people and their cultural and economic needs as is the case in the global aims cited in chapter 2.

WWF's mission statement is the same all around the world: *a future in humans lives in harmony with nature* (2). In the mission statement of WWF there is no mention of culture conservation or development. There is a statement in their guiding principles: *"involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs (8)"*. This indicates that cultural and economic needs are not a goal in itself, but will be respected in the process of nature conservation activities. In a more elaborate report on people and the environment WWF describes the importance of traditional ecological knowledge:

"As a conservation organization, WWF is concerned about the loss of biodiversity and the degrading quality of the world's environment. But it is also increasingly concerned about the loss of cultures and knowledge. Traditional peoples have accumulated vast amounts of ecological knowledge in their long history of managing the environment - knowledge that could be beneficial for nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources world-wide. WWF supports indigenous and traditional peoples to sustainably manage their resources, and to maintain, use, and strengthen their traditional ecological knowledge. In doing so, WWF fully respects indigenous and traditional peoples' human and development rights, and recognizes the importance of the conservation of their cultures. (25)"

Above you can see that WWF wants to pay particular attention to culture of indigenous communities. They frame this from a conservation perspective. Indigenous cultures possess important ecological knowledge that might benefit conservation. Human and development rights are respected, but do not form a goal in itself. The WWF international office addresses issues of unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities from a conservation perspective. They recognize that development issues are connected to nature conservation. Poverty and high population increase influence the use of natural resources as you have seen in the former chapter. The WWF international office approaches these issues from a conservation perspective. They develop communities with the aim to reduce unsustainable use of natural resources.

The same holds for the Madagascar office. In their Annual report (2006) they discuss the conservation impacts and achievements on different ecosystems. The communities are discussed within the creation of new protected areas that are managed by local communities. Development issues are by them also framed in a conservation perspective. Even on the regional level, where we received a presentation of the regional officer the talk was focused on ecosystems, ecological corridors and biodiversity.

In the Dutch office there is no reference to development issues, in the international office and Madagascar office these issues are addressed in the organizations mission and goals, but approached from a conservation perspective. This means that they justify development activities in the field by linking them to conservation goals. These frames are however different from the perception of WWF by the local communities in the corridor. They see WWF in the first place as a development organization, and the majority of the local staff does also.

In the field WWF has helped the construction of a school in Ambalamanenjana and schoolbooks in Ankarimbelo. They give support to agricultural organizations by hiring expert to give information on issues that the community decides on. They have build water treatment systems and pumps providing potable water to both communities. They educate women in order to put a stop to prostitution. When we were there we even treated about 200 children one day in Faliarivo for a disease on their feet.

In interviews with the local staff it became apparent that they see WWF as a development organization. Olivier, one of the field agents told me:

"For WWF here the first priority is to develop people. Only if they develop they will become less dependent upon the forest. Only if people are no longer hungry they are open to nature conservation. Therefore not all activities of WWF will directly benefit conservation."



Above: Olivier WWF field agent

Olivier quit his job as a headmaster in school to work in development aid when he noticed that his students were too hungry to learn. About half of the staff members that work for WWF in Ambalavao have a development background, not an ecological background.

The communities themselves see WWF in the first place as a development organization. Their perception of the organization is solely based on the people that represent it. There are no media to influence their perception. For them WWF are the people that work and live in their community. They come from a development background and many activities in the communities are aimed to develop the community. In the communication with the community there is rarely speaking of the intrinsic value of nature and the importance of protecting biodiversity. Conservation issues are framed in the perception of the community: The forest has to be protected, because your livelihood depends on it.

In the communication with the community WWF has adapted their frame. This is a gradual process and is not always consciously done by those working in the field. The differences in frame and identity of course have to do with those they are communicating to. In the Netherlands many people see humans as destructors of nature. Communicating the development activities that WWF has in the field will very likely not be beneficial to fundraising. WWF has to adapt their message to local circumstances, because otherwise the local communities will reject their message, and cooperation and funding are needed to overcome the unsustainable use of resources. In the Netherlands WWF emphasizes their focus on nature protection and animal species, while in the corridor they emphasize on development. The effect of communication on attitude change is described by the theory of social judgment (22). This theory describes that a message should be in line with the current attitude of the receiver. If the message is too much in contrast with the current attitude there is a high chance that the message will be rejected or will even strengthen prior held beliefs. Therefore it is important for WWF to frame their message in line with the perspective and interest of the community. The focus on ecology, biodiversity and the intrinsic value of nature are too different from the local perceptions of nature. First of all the communities have too many problems to be able to deal with these conservation issues and secondly they see nature as a resource. Therefore in their communication with the community WWF focuses on sustainable development and the functional value of the forest for the community.

The differences of focus in the identity of WWF can be explained by the people within the organization. On the local level work people with a lot of knowledge of development techniques. They understand the local population, speak their language and live with them. They are sometimes from the same region or from areas with similar issues, so they share at least part of the local culture. Higher on in the organization there is more focus on ecology and nature conservation. On every level in the organization there are bridge builders that are able to translate from level to level. The shift in identity focus is a gradual process. *Solofo Andriamaharavo*, the office coordinator in Ambalavao, for example knows how to translate the practical activities to fit them in a more general framework of sustainable development. The regional coordinator is able to translate this into a frame that is even more ecological oriented. This process goes all the way up to the global level. The key to be able to fit a global identity into local circumstances is the use of broad concepts, such as sustainable development, and people that know the discourse of both levels and are able to translate and build bridges between them.

This reframing is not only a local issue but has influenced other levels of the organization as well. In the 1990 WWF in Madagascar was working with the government to create national parks. When they discovered that this cooperation was fruitless, because of the continuous deforestation by communities, they were forced to focus on participation with local communities. Based upon this and many similar experiences in other countries WWF changed from a conservation to an organization more focused on sustainable development in 1995. This change was put down in their new mission: *“to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature”* (2). This shows that WWF's adaptation to local circumstances, as is the case in the corridor project, does not stick to a local change in communication, but can influence the identity of the organization globally.

I believe that the adaptation to local nature perspectives and community interests is one of the most fundamental adaptations to local culture. The shift from an orientation on conservation to development and the functional use of natural resources is not only a boundary set by culture on the frames that WWF can use, it has also changed the identity of the organization on the local level in the corridor. Local culture influences the fundament of the organization, its identity.

knowledge

WWF internationally mentions the importance of local cultural knowledge on nature for nature conservation. So what cultural knowledge is used for conservation? What role does the communities knowledge play in the work of WWF? WWF especially states that: *“The project puts an accent on the value of local knowledge and existing traditional structures (8)”*. In the last chapter I have identified the types of knowledge the Bestileo and Tanala have on their environment. There is a large difference in the amount of knowledge between the two villages, but the knowledge revolves around the same objects. First of all the knowledge is centred on the use of their environments. The forests provision of food, wood and medicines. Secondly the knowledge is more of a historical nature, their environment is full of stories, legends and myths.

During my internship I have gotten a first hand look in the interaction between the WWF agents and the community. First of all part of the agents are locals. In the projects where I have been WWF always has a local resident working (paid) for the project. These persons are a tremendous source of information on the area for the WWF project. In our daily activities I have experienced that the WWF agents from outside often seek information with the locals. All our activities in the forest were always accompanied by a WWF agent and a local “guide”. Sylvain told me that he always prefers to work with a guide, although even he is an ecologists and has a large knowledge base on the environment. Secondly the knowledge of the villagers also plays a large role in the monitoring of the ecological status of the corridor. Sylvain discusses often with the locals about where they have spotted certain species. The opinion of the villagers are always consulted even though the agents have a sound knowledge base.

This seems to indicate that in the daily activities the project does indeed pay a lot of respect to local knowledge. In the long run this however does not hold. Last year WWF together with the national government and local authorities have prohibited people to live in or very close to the forest in Ankarimbelo. People are forced to return to the lower valleys and villages. This will strongly influence the interaction of these people with the forest. They are not very likely to visit it regularly since the distance has increased. In the village people are more driven to practice agriculture and not be very dependent upon forest products anymore. This of course benefits the effort to conserve the forest, but by limiting the interaction with the environment the knowledge base will rapidly diminish. This is already apparent with the children of the Club Vintsy in Ankarimbelo. Also the kids in Ambalamanenjana said that they no longer regularly went into the forest since WWF had learned them in school about the effects of particular behaviour. WWF has to take into account that these kids will grow up largely without the forest and will have a smaller knowledge base. The knowledge on the use of local species will diminish and therefore the



notion that they need to forest to survive. Taking away the connection to the forest may in the long turn influence people's value of the forest. Less interaction and dependence is likely to diminish the will to protect it. This is a serious threat to the local support for conservation in the future. WWF should make sure that even tough they try to diminish the destructive behaviour of the forest they do not reduce the relation with the forest. The kids in Club Vintsy should regularly visit the forest. In Ambalamanenjana there is a youth group that helps monitoring the forest, this is a very good way to secure the local cultural knowledge on the environment for the future.

Above: Exploring the forest with the youth group in Ambalamanenjana

Spirituality

For final stage of our trip we have to cross a river in a hollowed out tree. We drag our bags to the river side and quickly hide all our red items. It is fady, or taboo, to cross the river with something red. The problem is that my friend's entire bag is bright red. We put a big bag over it, but the struggle is not over. A few months ago a WWF agent (a perfectly good swimmer) drowned in the river. Life jackets are necessary, unfortunately also these have a color that makes your eyes hurt. A lifejacket is taken to the Ampanjaka's approval before we use it to cross the river. He officially labels it orange, so there is no problem. We get into the swaying canoe and hold on tight.

.-Fragment of my travel diary-

In my first interaction with the community in Ankrimbelo fady were of major importance. During my entire stay everywhere we went we were informed about the local fady and pressingly asked to respect them, even though I read in my travel guide that foreigners are often excused when violating a fady. We were for example always given a bottle of rum before entering the forest so that we would be able to make an offer to the forest spirits. In our first days we were also explained about the fady within the home, through which way to enter, where to sit and not to step over the mat on which the meal is served.

Under: buying "toka gasy" (local rum) before entering the forest.



In the daily activities of the WWF project the agents pay a lot of respect to local fady, although many of the villagers in both communities do not necessarily do so. There are community fady and also fady that restrict to the family. Some of the agents did not follow all the family fady, but did respect the communities fady. Their behavior is not consequent towards the fady. Sylvain, a WWF field agent explained me that he tries to respect the communities and his families fady although he does not necessarily believes in them or agrees with them. He does this out of respect to his family.

I believe that the fady play a very important role in the successfulness of the WWF project. The project is based on community involvement, development and the change of behavior. Trust and acceptance between WWF and the community is therefore of major importance. Paying respect to the fady is a symbolic way of saying that they respect the communities norms and values and their own identity. Respecting the fady is a way to get acceptance by the community and to show that you are trustworthy. Because of the symbolic value of fady, the relationship to the ancestors, by respecting the fady WWF pays their respect to the ancestors of the community. I believe that WWF attitude towards fady is an important aspect in gaining access to the community and their culture.

WWF also uses fady in certain cases. Leaving areas with tombs undisturbed is encouraged. Holy forests are often the basis for the creation of protected areas. While on the other hand the effects of other fady are stressed, such as the killing of the aye-aye. Thanks to WWF the animal is no longer everywhere an ill omen, but seen as a symbol of Madagascar's dedication to conservation (26). The perception of fady is therefore not consequent but individualistic and opportunistic. The differences of fady within communities and the value added to them allows for this.

4.3 Sociology

In chapter 3 I have described the decision making process in both communities and the value of fihavanana and its importance for community based conservation work. An open decision making process with participation of the entire community is beneficial for the creation of a joint perspective on nature conservation. And the value of fihavanana is a basis on which to strengthen and unite the community. These two sociological aspects influence the union of the community and therefore its capacity to work together on conservation issues. In this paragraph I will further explain WWF's interaction with these sociological aspects.

Decision making

In the 1990s WWF aimed to create national parks in Madagascar in cooperation with the national government. They created the national park of Andringitra. Nearing the end of the decade experience learned that only creating a protected area was not sufficient to secure natural resources. In 1993 WWF started an Integrated Conservation and Development Program in the area. Due to the lack of control in the valley of Ambalamanenjana the villagers were rapidly depleting their natural resources, before someone else would. The village elderly got worried and approached WWF to ask their assistance in the management of their natural resources. The WWF personnel formed a close partnership with the elders and a number of the residents to discuss the problems in the valley. The goal of the partnership was to preserve 5,100 ha of mid-altitude forest and 400 ha of swamps (23). On recommendation of WWF the village elderly formed FITEMA (Flkambanan'ny Terak'I Manambolo – Association of Natives of Manambolo) an organization aimed to manage the cultural and resource challenges in the area. WWF played a central role in facilitating the administration, communication and transportation that were central to the process of developing the conservation plan (23). WWF in collaboration with the FITEMA aimed to improve the communication between the community, the villagers and the government department of Water and Forests.

Under: The Ray aman-dReny of Ambalamanenjana on the right together with the president of the FITEMA in the middle.



In order to manage their natural resources the community needed to regain authority over them. The traditional system of Dina, which ruled village life more than 150 years ago, was revived. The Dina is a traditional rule system that governs rules and regulations, social relations, conflict resolution, land management, resource use, and harvesting of diverse local forest and aquatic resources such as honey, eels and crayfish (23). It has been passed on orally from generation to generation. WWF together with the FITEMA updated the Dina to include the prohibition of tavy and setting of fires. They also incorporated the rule that all land owned by villagers should be in use. WWF helped the villagers to re-establish and legalize the

Dina and create a forest management plan. The Dina has been adapted to the current situation and the distribution of tasks has become more democratic through its involvement of all residents in making decisions regarding resource use. The women formed an association called EVA that ensures their joint collective voice is heard and integrated in the decision-making process. After 5 years of work the community received official control over their natural resources from the government. This process has enabled the community to create a joint perspective on the management of their natural resources. The WWF personnel increased the general awareness of the local residents to ecological issues and the importance of the forest (23).

In Ambalamanenjana WWF has indeed put an accent on traditional structures by first of all working together with the traditional leaders and secondly by even reviving a cultural rule system, the Dina. They work on the communities initiative and have created space for a participatory learning process between FITEMA, WWF, the villagers and the representatives of the department of Water and Forests. This has

resulted in a successful sustainable resource management scheme. Working with traditional authorities and invoking the Dina has resulted in a change of perspective within the community and has been a means to achieve a internally based motivation for sustainable use of resources by the majority of the villagers. The basis of this cooperation is the way WWF approaches a community.

"Here in Ambalamanenjana we have taken nearly 10 years to achieve these results. To work better with local communities, first of all you have to know how to listen. It's not for an organization coming from the outside to dictate what should be done."

Solofo Andriamaharavo - Project Chief

When WWF starts up a project in a area they will start by organizing a debate with community leaders and the community. In these debates they will not identify problems and their solutions, but they will listen to the wishes and ideas of the community. In my daily activities I could see this day by day, the work of WWF is done on initiative of the community and its leaders and they are involved in every step of the way. Whether it be cutting bamboo for making a tree nursery to making agreements with the government. Very important is also the timing of work. The WWF picks carefully the period in which they work. In February and March is it cyclone season and most people are busy with mending the damage. In summer there is a rest period, there are a lot of parties and people are not open to the message of the WWF. WWF also adapts to the local life rhythm. In the national office people work from nine to five, but in the field they start early and rest in the middle of the day. Adapting to the pace of life does not only include work hours, but also the need to produce results. WWF has a lot of patience in their daily activities, they give the community the time to get used to changes. Results are maybe not produced fast, but they are of quality, embedded strongly within the community. Adapting to local lifestyle also has a downside, the local consumption of alcohol is an example of this. Alcohol is used in many traditions, but also in daily life much alcohol is consumed especially by the men. Integrating in community life has led the local agents to adopt to this habit as well. The high abuse of alcohol is sometimes harmful to the work of WWF.

As you have seen the use of the traditional management system and strong collaboration have resulted in many positive results. I believe this is to great extend because the project was so well adapted to local decision making processes. The collaboration with traditional authorities the use of the Dina and the discussion oriented culture have been a strong fundament for the projects success.

The aim of WWF is to duplicate this successful project in other communities. Other surrounding villages have shown interest in the project. One of the places where WWF is trying to achieve this is Ankarimbelo. In the previews chapter you have seen that the Tanala have a different decision making process, which demands another strategy from WWF.

WWF has started working in Ankarimbelo in 2001. Here WWF works closely with the local king and government officials. Many things are very similar to the project in Ambalamanenjana. WWF together with the community have revived the Dina. They have adapted and legalized it. In 2007 the resource management rights will be transferred to the community. The difference between the projects with respect to the decision making process is that in Ankarimbelo the contact with the community is focused on the local agricultural commission and the traditional authorities. The project is in a different phase. There is still a lot of sensibilisation needed that focuses on the local kings. The WWF field agents believe that this is the most effective way to achieve change; because once the authorities are supportive they will order their communities to act accordingly. So also here the strategy of WWF has adapted to local culture. My concern is that the lack of discussion within the community is affecting the strength and durability of the behavioral change. The change of behavior is not supported by an internally based value change and the social control effects is smaller. Adapting to the decision making process in the case of Ankarimbelo thus has it's benefits and weaknesses. Focusing on persons with a high position within the community results in a higher chance of diffusion among the community. The opinion of the king is highly valued and it will strongly influence the social norm. He is a strong role model in the community. This will however still be an externally based motivation. The lower motivation for nature conservation and behavioral change in Ankarimbelo may in part be explained by the lack of a shared vision or internally based value change of the villagers. The high motivation for conservation in Ambalamanenjana on the other hand might be explained by the village discussions that allowed for the development of a common vision and internally based motivation for behavioral change.

Fihavanana

Fihavanana is a traditional value that ensures and strengthens the unity of a community. The existence of this value within both the Tanala and Bestileo culture is a useful tool to strengthen the community. In Ankarimbelo traditional values play a more important role in daily life than in Ambalamanenjana, but still the value is recognized. By working with the traditional authorities WWF creates an opportunity to revive traditional values, because the authorities are the representatives of the traditional values, norms and traditions.

In Ambalamanenjana before WWF started working there the community was falling apart and traditions were eroding. In an interview with Francois, one of the village elderly I asked him why the village was so eager to work with WWF. He responded to me: *"Because they bring us together"*. The importance of a communities union, apparent in the value of fihavanana, forms a reason why communities and local authorities want to work with WWF. I have very clearly noticed that WWF aims to bring together the community. One of the fundamentals in achieving this is collaboration and strengthening of the local authorities, secondly WWF gives the community a common goal and activities. In the collaboration process the community interacts closely and develops a common vision (21). WWF recognizes that a community should develop and unite in order to be able to manage their natural resources in a sustainable way while at the same time fulfilling the wish of a community to unite. The value of Fihavana makes it easier for the villagers to participate in WWF's activities. WWF agents help villagers in their fields and also ask for help in their activities, which was the case in the reforestation day or the creation of tree nurseries.



Above: Francois one of the village elderly in Ambalamanenjana

Over all the value of fihavana influences the success of the conservation program of WWF by:

- It is a motivation for villagers and local authorities to want to work with them.
- The tradition of helping each other makes participation in WWF activities easier.
- A value that underlines the unity of the community is a basis on which to build communal activities.

The importance of a strong feeling of union within the community is important for the communities capacity to successfully manage their resources. It will also increase the social control on villagers behavior. In a strong community the social norm is important and in a place with no governmental law enforcement this control is the most important in determining unsustainable behavior.

4.4 Technology

The symbolic value of land tenure practices are easy to overlook when you aim to improve them. Many of the activities that WWF undertakes are of a more technical nature. The aim of WWF in the villages is to stop the destruction of forest for agricultural practices and a sustainable use of the forest resources. In order to achieve this they provide technical devices, education and information on agricultural production systems. The aspects described under technology in Chapter 3 contribute to the deforestation in Madagascar; tavy, fires and cow herding. All three of these activities are connected to cultural symbolism.

Because these behaviors are at the core of the problem that tries to solve it is hard to adapt to the cultural values related to these behaviors entirely. In this paragraph I will describe how WWF deals with technical symbols that relate to nature.

Tavy

Tavy is one of the main causes to deforestation in Madagascar. In the previous chapter I have described its symbolism. It is a symbol for prosperity and forms an activity that connects daily life to the ancestors. It is a practice surrounded by rituals. It is a habit that has influenced work values, working on the land every day is not desired. WWF aims to stop tavy and replace this practice by terraced rice culture systems. They do this on the one hand by making tavy illegal and on the other hand by offering people different alternatives to income. This includes not only more intense forms of rice culture, but also the introduction of new crops and beekeeping. These are introduced in the community by WWF agents and agricultural production specialists hired by WWF. WWF supports local agricultural organizations by providing them with expert knowledge on subjects by their demand. The new rice technologies are introduced by the WWF agents in village meetings and shown and support interested families. They also have educational movies that are shown in village gatherings.

In the previous chapter we have seen that there are many aspects to tavy that cause resistant to change. First of all tavy is connected to the ancestors. An important aspect overlooked in the transfer to new rice planting technologies. The rituals are not connected to these new techniques so the transfer to other techniques will cause a loss of traditional rituals. By working with the traditional authorities the gap between the new technologies and ancestors may be minimized. The traditional authorities represent the will of the ancestors within the community. They are in the position to try to internalize the new practices into the ancestral belief system.

Secondly tavy is associated with wealth and prosperity. Other forms of making living that incorporate working the ground daily are looked down upon. WWF tries to undermine these associations by showing the benefits of the new techniques. For these values there is no question of adapting. The work of WWF is centered on changing the behavior related to these values. In their communication they do not focus much on arguments that undermine these values. WWF work is more aimed at giving people the opportunity to change their behavior and giving education to learn the use of new techniques. They do not so much aim to directly undermine these associations with arguments. First people need the possibility to change before discussing with them on why they should change their behavior, especially because the consequences of tavy, such as the low revenue and soil erosion, are known by the villagers. They stress that they need an alternative in order to change their behavior.

So for tavy WWF mainly offers the technical aspects needed to practice alternative forms of agriculture and they educate the people so that they are able to practice these new techniques. The communities are aware of the effects of tavy on nature as well as their future. Even though there is problem awareness the change of behavior is slow. I believe that the symbols that are related to tavy form a cause of resistance to change.

Fires

In Ambalamantenjana fires are a severe cause of deforestation. The fires are set to create fertile grounds for agriculture and pastures. Fire is believed to cause rain and create fertile land. WWF together with the community leaders declared fires illegal. There is not a lot of attention in their communication on contradicting these beliefs. The communication focuses on education and alternatives, not so much on the problems and the values that underline these. More focus on the effects of fires might help to diminish them, but only if the farmers have other alternatives to create fodder for their animals. Direct discussions on the truthfulness of values held by the villagers can however form a source of conflict between WWF and the community.

Cows

Cow herding enhances the amount of knowledge on the forest. On the other hand pastures are created by deforestation and in order to afford a zebu people are stimulated to practice tavy. WWF does not have a specific campaign on zebus. Only the fires to create pastures are prohibited.

The acquirement of social status by acquiring zebu has led many into poverty. The drives for deforestation, such as population increase and zebu ownership are not addressed directly by WWF. The zebu is a corner stone of the Malagasy culture. As a symbol of wealth and a way to acquire social status it is very difficult to reduce zebu numbers. WWF works in close collaboration with the villagers and finds

solutions in collaboration with them. I believe that the zebu's place within Malagasy culture restricts the work and communication strategy of WWF. The love for the zebu is so strong that changing practices or the volume of zebu ownership would be very difficult. Zebu's are not seen by the people themselves as a problem, nor is the changing of zebu practices seen as an acceptable solution.

The technological aspects of culture as especially those that form a threat to nature. It is especially those practices that WWF aims to change. They do this by focusing on education and alternatives. This differs very much from the communication strategy in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands and I expect most western countries the communication of an NGO aims to catch the attention of the people in a world overloaded with information. WWF the Netherlands focuses in their communication on emotions and arguments. In Madagascar they offer people the basics of living and show them alternative techniques and behaviors in order to make a living. They do not give the people arguments on why it is important to conserve nature, definitely not in the way we are used to here in the Netherlands. Arguments are not valid on the local level in Madagascar as there are not considered relevant, people do not have a choice, even if they wanted to and could understand the arguments they could not afford to change their behavior. So the activities are firstly aimed at providing alternatives and educating people. This we have seen with the fire and the zebu. WWF does not directly present arguments, but rather focuses on alternative behavior and basic education. Education of the young generation might lead to a better ability to understand the reasons for conservation.

4.5 Synthesis

By looking closely at the interaction between WWF and the local residents I have been able to describe the role of culture in WWF work and communication strategy. Now I can evaluate the statements of WWF mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

"We aim to involve local communities and indigenous peoples in the planning and execution of its field programmes, respecting their cultural as well as economic needs (2)"

Both the projects that I visited were community based natural resource management projects. Their aim was to reduce the destruction of forests and sustainable use of natural resources. WWF in Ambalamanenjana and Ankarimbelo aimed to do this by giving back managerial rights back to the community. In this chapter you have also seen that many of WWF activities are of a development nature. By giving people new alternatives not only the forest is spared people also earn more. This clearly shows WWF focus on economic needs of the population. The use of the Dina and collaboration with traditional communities underlines WWF dedication towards the communities cultural needs. The intense collaboration with the community is something I experienced every day. WWF hires local people and the agents themselves live in the community for longer periods at a time. For me often the border between WWF and community seemed to fade. In all their activities WWF seeks the opinion and collaboration of the community.

"The project puts an accent on the value of local knowledge and existing traditional structures (8)".

The use of traditional structures is apparent in the development of the Dina and the intense collaboration with traditional authorities. The accent on the value of local knowledge is a more questionable issue. On the one hand in the daily activities WWF seeks the opinion and knowledge of the residents, for example they help with monitoring of the forest. In the daily interaction and project planning WWF makes intense use of the knowledge available. In my opinion putting an accent on the value of local knowledge goes beyond a daily use of this knowledge. It is also about the protection of local knowledge and ensuring its survival. Currently young kids are discouraged to go into the forest. The replacement of tavy with irrigated rice fields and the abandoning of forest residents will lead to a diminishing interaction between the forest and the people. This directly reduces the pressure upon the forest and thereby contributes to its preservation, but in the long run people will lose knowledge on their environments. I am afraid this will strongly influence the communities willingness to preserve nature in the future.

Chapter 5 Discussion



This report has taken you on a quest that has rapidly sharpened its focus. I have started with a quick acquaintance with WWF, Madagascar and the project. Building on this knowledge I have described the complex relation between culture and nature of the Berstileo and Tanala. Their relation with their environment is intense, complex, symbolic and ever changing. Conservation efforts are highly influenced by the ideological, sociological and technical aspects of the community's cultures. An important lesson is that some aspects of a culture are beneficial to nature conservation or sustainable, while others cause serious damage to the environment and to the communities themselves in the long run. Environmental NGOs often portray the culture and lifestyle of a traditional community as sustainable. In my opinion a culture can not be portrayed as sustainable or unsustainable, because the different aspects of culture influence the environment differently and a culture is always inherent to change.

In the final chapter I have analysed how WWF deals with the aspects of culture that influence nature and its conservation. In this chapter it is clear how nature and culture are intertwined and that in order to be successful at conserving nature human issues need to be addressed. Hunger is an obstacle to a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. "Les Malgasch doit vivre au lieu de survivre": said Solofo Andriamaharavo, the chief of the WWF Ambalavao office. The forest is their source of life. Therefore a thorough understanding of the culture of these communities is required prior to the development of a conservation plan.

On the basis of the information presented in the former analysis I am now able to answer the main question:

What is the role of culture in the work and communication strategy of WWF Madagascar?

Culture is at the fundament of developing a community based conservation plan, because for one the adaptation to local culture will enhance the level of acceptance of change by the community. For example paying respect to the local regimens, such as the fady and the collaboration with traditional leaders will enhance the building of trust between the organization and community.

Secondly integration in the local culture will learn the organization what problems and solutions are considered relevant. It will determine what issues are discussed.

Thirdly insight into the community's culture determines how issues are discussed. It determines how issues can be framed. In the case of WWF, knowledge of the nature perspective of the local people has caused a shift in frame of their aims. They approach nature conservation from the perspective of the community. Forest is their source of life. So when WWF speaks about the need for conservation they stress the dependence of the community upon the forest. It not only determines how issues are discussed but also what issues are discussed.

The determination of relevant issues is the fourth important role of culture in a community based nature conservation program. A good understanding of the culture and interaction with the community will learn an organization what is considered a problem and which are the acceptable solutions. Culture also determines the relevance of an organizations plans. In the corridor the communities are heard by WWF. They identified their problems and appropriate solutions in discussion with WWF. In Amblamanenjana and Ankarimbelo this has resulted in trying to increase food production and enhance agricultural techniques. This is a combination of the wish of WWF to protect the forest and the community to increase the providence of food. For example issues such as cow herding and family planning have not been addressed even though these both greatly influence deforestation.

In my opinion these are hard to address for WWF because addressing both these issues is not in compliance with the culture of the local community. Children and zebu's are two things most loved by Malagasy. It is for them out of the question to try to reduce them, as both are also an important symbol for social status. The cultural aspects of children and zebu's thus play a significant role in the planning of sustainable management systems of natural resources.

Not only is the culture of the community an influencing factor, but also the organizations culture. WWF is seeking to increase the well being of the people in the region. But, this is to achieve nature conservation. Within the organizational culture there is room for maneuver between development and conservation. Introducing family planning however would cross the border of WWFs organizational identity at a higher level. This is in part, because projects of WWF need to find funding with the offices of the countries that collect funding (western countries). Therefore a project should comply with the wishes and perspectives of those funding the project. Therefore the perspectives on nature and its conservation of developed countries also greatly influence the practice of conservation in developing countries.

Finally culture's most important role in the conservation work of WWF is that the culture is a source of knowledge. This cultural knowledge may be used to benefit nature conservation. Not only the knowledge on species and their use will benefit conservation, but also the ways in which the community has managed its resources may provide important information for conservation. In Ambalamananjana and Ankarimbelo the traditional Dina proved to be a good tool to come to a sustainable use of resources by the community. Emerging into the community's culture will enrich and open your own views, make them more applicable and relevant. It is also a source of innovation to our western perspectives and practices of conservation. By emerging and adapting and being open the culture of those living in and around the forest in developing countries WWF will become more democratic. They will be able to represent the perspectives from around the world in global environmental governance, which is currently dominated by western values. Opening up to culture of those living in the forests in developing countries (that we in developed countries pay so much money for to save) can enhance the integration of western and southern perspectives on conservation. It will prevent the projection of dominant western values³ (that focus on biodiversity conservation) on southern local communities (which look at conservation from a functional perspective) and the domination of western perspectives at the global level of environmental governance. This was portrayed by the shift of WWFs identity on a higher level that changed from a conservation orientation to an organization that is now more open to sustainable development.

The role of culture within the work and communication of WWF can be described by 4 functions:

1. Culture determines the willingness of the community to accept the messages and changes initiated by WWF.
2. Culture influences the relevance of problems and solutions. Culture determines what issues can be discussed.
3. Culture influences the framing of the messages of WWF. It plays an important role in the determination on how issues are discussed.
4. Culture is a source of knowledge and innovation for WWF.

From a communication point of view the most important thing about conservation and behavioral change in a development country is that no matter how much you think your ideas will help them, and they indeed may, they have to fit within the frame of reference of the people. Opening up to them will allow you to learn about their world perception and identify relevant problems and solutions. You may or may not learn and change your perception, but at least you will be able to communicate your innovation in such a way that it will be accepted and understood.

³ Here I refer to the differences in values that are also apparent in WWF. In the Netherlands there is a focus on biodiversity conservation, while in WWF Ambalavao there is more focus on development and use of natural resources. See page 31.

I believe that cultural change is a slow process that is most effective when internally motivated. An innovation from an outsider will be most likely rejected. They might not trust the source, do not understand it, do not agree with it or do not find it interesting. First of all by gathering knowledge on the culture and its relation to nature you will learn to get a more realistic view of the problem the community is dealing with. You will get important knowledge on this problem, and if you still believe that your perception of the problem is relevant and you are able to help in solving it, you can learn which subjects are relevant and how they should be discussed.

Adapting to certain aspects of the culture will increase the trust in the organization and you will slowly become an insider. In the case of WWF examples of these adaptations are the respect for the fady, the collaboration with traditional authorities and use of traditional management structures.

WWF starts up a process by listening to their problems and discussing relevant solutions with them. This process and intense interaction have led WWF to a position where they are seen as part of the community. In Ambalamanenjana WWF agents have a high social status and their opinions are highly valued. After a long history of collaboration WWF will be in the position to change the more fundamental ideologies and related social and technical aspects of the Bestileo culture, such as the use of fires.

If you do not adapt to local culture you have the chance that you are wrong about the problem and its solutions and on the other hand people will not listen to you as an outsider. So from a practical point of view emerging into the culture is necessary. It will allow you to become an insider and frame your message in the right way, but more importantly it will enrich and open your own views, make them more applicable and relevant. A successful conservation program is based on a process in which both community and organization learn.

Chapter 6 Internship reflection



6.1 Description

My internship is part of the WWF Explorer program. This program provides young people with the opportunity to gain a powerful, direct experience of the unique challenges developing nations face in protecting their environment, to understand of the reality of conservation in the field. The second aim is to gather enough information and evidences and communicate the conservation realities through multimedia documentations and storytelling to others.



I was selected with 4 others to participate in this program. After a period of introduction to WWF, and the culture and language of the Malagasy we were sent of to our projects deep in the jungle. I have stayed in two villages together with Mari Roald Bern. We were working together with the WWF field agents and communities. Our work was very practical and we were involved in all activities of the field agents and the daily life of the villagers. In the first village Ankarimbelo we were involved in the following activities:

Discover the reforestation activities undertaken by WWF and participate in these local reforestation activities.



In two villages we worked together with the villagers on building a tree nursery. In Faliarivo we worked together with the king (Ampanjaka) and other important men in the village and in Tanambao together with the environmental youth group.

Cooperate in the development of a demonstration ground.

On the land of the King in Faliarivo we were asked to develop a demonstration ground. This would be used to show the villagers new techniques and use of other crops. We started by creating rice terraces. In the future the rest of the land would be planted with other species, such as vanilla and giroffle (tree species that provides essence oil). These are species that can prevent erosion into the rice fields when planted on the higher slopes. We also assisted in the planting and weeding of rice and were involved in village meetings on the introduction of new rice planting techniques.



Participate in "Club Vintsy Tsindrano" activities in place.

We soon discovered that it was not on the kids own initiative to join the Club. They did not know each others names and the main activities seemed to be focused on maintaining the schools surroundings. In our opinion being in a club should be fun. We developed several games and activities to enhance the group feeling and to let the kids get to know each other. The techniques I learned in facilitating interactive processes proved to be very useful.



We also restored the club house together with the children. The youth were engaged, but lack of equipment retarded simple tasks and left many members obliged to watch others work.

In the weekend we have given French lessons to nine members. We prepared a class in which they would learn to introduce themselves in French. The differences between the Dutch and Malagasy school system became very clear. The kids were only used to copy the teacher, not to create their own presentation.

We collected trees in the jungle together with a local guide. These trees were planted together with the kids of the club and the kids from Tanembau (a neighbouring village). The aim was to label the trees to enhance the children's knowledge on what lives in the forest. Very little of them could identify the species.

We were asked to develop a spectacle with Club Vintsy Tsindrano. The aim was to perform this for the village to gather funds for the club's activities. We soon discovered that the kids in the club had very little experience with thinking creatively and working independently. I choose to develop a game that would enhance the group feeling and environmental awareness. The plan was to perform this game at the spectacle with the kids from other villages. A description of the game and a report on our work with Club Vintsy Tsindrano can be found in the appendixes.



On the 4th of December the elections were going to take place. In the end of November the political situation started escalating. An officer was threatening to do a coup d'état. The newspapers were full of frightening prospects. WWF wanted us to be in a less isolated place among people that they fully trusted. Therefore we were relocated to Ambalamanenjana, where they had been working for over 10 years. This included a very exhausting and exhilarating trek through the jungle. Due to this relocation our spectacle with Club Vintsy was cancelled. As well as an excursion to a isolated piece of primary forest of which we were asked to develop a reforestation plan.



Above: activities with club Vintsy

In Ambalamanenjana we participated in the following field activities.

Participate in the preparation of reforestation activities.

In the last week of our stay we organized a reforestation day. On which around 2000 trees were planted. These included species that were used by the villagers for construction or fuel wood. They were planted on the barren hills close to the village. We visited all the schools in the area to explain the children about the reforestation day and asked for their help. In this activity all school children participated together with many men of the village. We also worked with the local youth group in the preparation of young trees to be replanted in tree nursery. On the reforestation day I also played the game that we developed in Ankarimbelo with the kids of the youth group and the children of the high school.

Discover the forestation activities undertaken by the local youth and participate in these local reforestation activities.

We went for a week with the local youth group into the forest to collect and plant "Kingala" seedlings. This is a tree species used for house construction and it rapidly disappearing in the area. We also collect tree seedlings to be replanted on the reforestation day.

Other activities undertaken in Ambalamanenjana were assisting in the introduction of the SRI technique. We helped interested villagers with weeding and planting of rice seeds according to the SRI technique.



Right: planting rice seedlings with the SRI technique

In both villages I spent significant time on interviewing villagers and village leaders. I believe that these discussions have not only been important for me and my research, but by asking questions that they would normally not ask I presented them with a different view on nature and its conservation. These interactions have also greatly influenced my perception of nature and conservation.

Under: meeting with Ampanjaka in Faliarivo



These lessons I have captured in different forms. The message of these different communications is aimed at giving people in the western world a more realistic perception of nature conservation in a developing country. I believe that we can only secure our ecological resources in the future when we find ways for humans and nature to live together. Creating national parks will only make boundaries, not only will nature be fragmented, but also people will lose their interaction with nature. This loss of interaction is bound to decrease people's willingness to conserve nature. I therefore believe that conserving nature means finding ways so that humans and nature exist in harmony. Here in the Netherlands people

are not directly dependent upon nature. They perceive nature as a place where there is no human trace. I believe that this perception of nature, which I myself have had for a long time, endangers a sustainable future.

This perception of nature is logic. We do not have a strong connection to nature, only on the emotional ground. It is however enhanced by the messages that we receive from nature in other parts of the globe. The messages that reach us show us the beauty of nature, pictures of pristine forests, colorful animal species, and traditional people living in harmony with nature. On the other hand we see humans destroying nature. To my frustration our hope for the future, a modern man living in a sustainable way is never shown. The focus is very much on poverty, destruction and problems. I believe that this focus makes people feel helpless. The people living in the western world have an important role in the future of those living in other parts of the world, as donors and consumers. The message that they receive is that where people meet nature disaster takes place, in compliance with our own history and perception of nature.

Therefore the goal of my communication efforts is to show to the people in my home country that where people meet nature also initiatives arise. The people that I met in Madagascar do not live isolated from the rest of the world, they are aiming to develop themselves, overcome hunger and at the same time the destruction of their environment. In these places development goes hand in hand with conservation. I want to broaden the perspective on nature by showing the positive initiatives and ways in which people and nature can develop together, by introducing them to the villagers and forests of Amabalmananjana and Anakrimbelo.

This message I have captured in the following ways. During my internship we (all 5 volunteers) developed a movie about the conservation challenges in Madagascar. Upon my return I have written articles for different magazines, such as Panda (WWF magazine), the Resource (university paper), the Hinkelnymf (paper for forestry students), Life style Dordrecht (Glossy magazine of my home town) and a report on the WWF website:

http://www.pnda.org/how_you_can_help/volunteer/volunteer/volunteer_stories/madagascar/bette_harms/index.cfm.

I have also given three presentations on conservation in Madagascar. Two on the university of Wageningen for prospective Master and Bachelor students of communication Science and furthermore a primary school in Dordrecht. I have joined the volunteer team of WWF in the Netherlands and am planning to continue to give these presentations.

6.2 Evaluation

Prior to my departure I have identified my own personal learning goals for this internship. After giving a short description of my internship I will evaluate my learning goals to identify the lessons I have learned and the skills that I developed.

To learn about the perceptions of WWF on nature and its conservation

I have chosen to deepen my knowledge on the nature perception of WWF in the form of the research described in this report. In the Netherlands WWF puts stress on the intrinsic value of nature. I associated them with the creation of protected areas and effort to conserve threatened animal species. During my internship I have learned that WWF is an organisation with a strong global mission, but different identities around the world. All around the world WWF employees are trying to create a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, but the perception of the relation between humans and nature has a different focus. In the Dutch office and communication strategy there is more focussed on nature, while in Madagascar humans and their development play a more important role. In Madagascar WWF agents believe that humans need to be developed in order to be able to conserve their nature. The perceptions of nature and its conservation is thus different in the different layers of the organisation. On the local level the perception is strongly influenced by culture. I am very interested to find out why the identity of WWF is so different between the Netherlands and Madagascar. My hypothesis is that the identity and strategic communication of the Dutch office is as much influenced by the perceptions of their donators as is WWF Madagascar by the perceptions of the local people that they work with. I do believe that this is a questionable practice. By portraying themselves as a nature organisation in one country and a development organisation in the other people get a false view. I believe that environmental NGO's have an obligation to give people in the western world a realistic view of nature and it's conservation. How will we come to a future in which humans live in harmony with nature when humans perceive themselves independent of nature? Instead of projecting our view on nature on the rest of the world we should look carefully to the rest of the world to learn all the complicated ways in which humans and nature are intertwined. Only then is it possible to come to a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

To learn about perceptions of local people concerning nature and its conservation

Many people that I met were dependent upon the forest for their livelihood. They see nature as their source of life. It was for me important to realise how many people on this earth are dependent upon nature for their livelihood. In my forestry study I was often shown a forest map of the world. When I look at it now I realise that those green spots are not vast undisturbed pieces of forest, they are peoples homes. Development has become part of nature conservation for me.

In my future career I would like to contribute to enhancing the representation of local community's perspectives on nature and its conservation in international environmental governance.

To get an insight on how an international intercultural organisation deals with local perceptions on nature and its conservation

I was interested in working with WWF, because they have much experience with community based conservation. When I was there I truly learned the importance of local communities and their culture in the success of nature conservation efforts. WWF integrates many essential parts of the local cultures into their work. This does not only influence the way they work but their identity as well. Locally WWF is more of a development organisation. The recognition of the importance of local communities in conservation led to an international change of identity for WWF. They changed from an organisation focussed on conservation of nature to a organisation aiming for sustainable development.

To learn how to live in a developing country

I have definitely experienced the famous culture shock; all the interested people, the food, the illnesses and poverty. I did have a hard time when I realised that it is hard to dream when you are kid living in Ankarimbelo. They have very few changes to realize their dreams.



I have really learned lessons that will benefit me the rest of my life. I have realised that you can not take health for granted. A healthy body is a gift that you should cherish. Furthermore for me the break from my normal daily life felt liberating. I learned to live life “moura moura” which means step by step. I have always been an enthusiastic planner, as making schedules is engraved in my Dutch genes. In Madagascar I learned to live day by day, not worry about the future. In my daily work in Madagascar I was helping people. When I started my study I thought that people were the cause of the destruction of nature so I would never help them so they could destroy more. In my internship I have felt great fulfilment in helping others and I have learned to understand the value of a communities needs in nature conservation. In the future I would like to work on an integration of conservation and development issues and give people in the western world a more realistic perception of conservation in development countries.

To bring my theoretical knowledge into practice

Although my daily activities were very practical my internship has been very good opportunity to relate theory to practice. In my future career I would like to work for NGO, a job that involves a desk, a computer, lots of meetings and policy making. Communication planning and policy making are subjects I have studied for several years, but in this internship I got very little opportunity to put all that I had learned into practice. This is something I deliberately choose. I got offered a job in Brussel, a job that I would like to do in the future, in which I could have used al my communication planning and policy making skills. I choose differently. I believe that if you want to design successful campaigns and make good policies on nature conservation you need to know them situation in the field. I need to understand the reality of nature conservation in developing countries before I write policy plans about them, or design a campaign on the conservation of tropical rainforests.

This is exactly what this experience has given me. I now know what this reality is, and even if I tried my hardest I could have never imagined something like it. This experience has been an opportunity for me to understand where all the theories and discussions come from, to be able to tell which scientific discussions are relevant for me. My internship in Madagascar has provided me with a hanger on which I can place many theories that I have learned in my study. The practical job, living with the people getting an insight in their daily lives allowed me to understand the challenges for conservation in a developing country. Being in the place where the problems are that many scientists in my field write and theorize about has helped me to put theories into reality, into practice. I know understand how the practice leads to theory. I have recognised many theories when living in Madagascar. Many of them I have described in this report, such as the theory of planned behaviour, the theory of social judgement, the very basics of communication theory. It is like a picture of an apple, you can tell its shape and colour, but you do not quite understand what it is until you have tasted it.

To improve my use of the French language

My competence in the French language has improved during my internship. I have learned to understand it much better and I am no longer afraid to speak French. My level of French however did form an obstacle. I had to concentrate very hard in order to follow everything and I was therefore easily tired, this influenced my ability to socialize. Especially jokes are still hard for me to understand. For my research I was always dependent upon my group mates to translate difficult parts. To my surprise I nearly only spoke French with my group mates and WWF agents. The local people mostly spoke Malagasy. Mari, my group mate in the villages, spoke much better French so I tried to be of use by learning Malagasy. I have managed to learn basic sentences, like greetings and introductions in Malagasy. Furthermore I learned many words and was able to understand the topic of a conversation. I believe that languages are very important for my career, but also in my personal life. When studying communication a good knowledge and understanding of languages is crucial, definitely in an intercultural organisation such as WWF. To further improve my French, especially writing I will follow a course at Centra Wageningen.

To deal with a different culture and communicate in an intercultural way

The key for me was the use of my body. We were together with young people very often that did not speak any French and we could not rely on our WWF agents to translate all the time. We spent much of our time thinking of games and songs. From Mari I learned that the key to interacting with people of a different culture is to take initiative and not be afraid to embarrass yourself. When we arrived in a new village people were very curious, most of the children had never seen a white person. Mari would always start singing and dancing. Music is a language shared among all cultures and this soon broke the ice. On my next adventure to a country with a culture very different from mine I will make sure to bring a guide with many games and songs with me.

I only had one experience in which I had difficulty with the Malagasy culture. I was working with field agents to build a water pump. One of the field agents had asked me to come and help him paint a fence. He gave me a brush and I started painting. He stood next to me and was watching me paint the fence. It made me feel as a subordinate and it made me angry. I thought that I came to help him and that we were supposed to be together, as a team. I came to help him, not to do his job for him. For the Dutch equality is important and getting things done. Working hard is admirable. I thought that his action made him a lazy person and that he must like feel superior. In this area of Madagascar working is not considered very admirable. In the rural area that I was in you have a higher status when you manage to work as less as possible. I also noticed that all the local people in the village were always watching when others were working; it seemed that this is not considered inappropriate.

My attitude in the beginning was very shy; I felt that I had so much to learn. I was so overwhelmed. I wanted to learn everything about their way of life. Once I was more acquainted I soon became my normal self again. I am content with my overall behavior. I have tried to respect and adapt to local culture as much as possible, while at the same time stick to my core principles. When I encountered a problem I would talk about it and then always a solution was found. I am very thankful that the people I met from Madagascar were so open and eager to welcome me into their way of life and willing to discuss our differences.

To learn how to organize and develop participation in nature conservation of local communities.

The skills that I developed in Madagascar on community involvement will not be very useful in my home context, nor do they resemble the situation of a Malagasy working on participation of a community. Me and Mari did not have to think of a way to involve people, because we were the communication tool ourselves. The villages that we visited were very isolated. Bringing in two tall white girls with cars and all this strange stuff caused a never diminishing interest in the work that we were doing, so automatically the work of WWF.



Everybody wanted to know what we were doing and so WWF got a lot of attention for their activities. Therefore it is much easier getting people to participate there than in my home country.

I did learn however that in order to start a successful management of natural resources by the community the adaptation to culture plays a fundamental role. Getting people to participate not only means getting their attention, but also making your message understandable and relevant. You first have to integrate, earn trust and get to know a community before working on conservation with them. In this process you have to make sure that a community unites. A feeling of trust and union between villagers and the organisation is of major importance. These are the first things that need to develop when starting up a community based natural resource program. When a certain level of trust is created there is a fundament for collaboration. The process of setting up a plan for natural resource management with the community will lead to a more intense relationship and trust. But at all times during this process the organisation needs to pay attention to enhancing the relationship with the community. They need to be willing and able to invest in activities that do not directly benefit conservation, but do enhance the relationship between the different actors.

My purpose lies not in getting participation of communities in Ambalamanenjana or Ankarimbelo, but in involving people in my home country. Being in Madagascar clearly showed me that even after 4 years of study I was there to learn, learn about these beautiful people and magnificent nature and all the complicated ways they are related. My purpose is to give people in the Netherlands a more realistic perception of nature and it's conservation in Madagascar. I was there to be able to tell you:

"Tsihy be lambanana ny ambanilantra"
All who live under the sky are woven together like one big mat



Living in nature; Faliarivo

Epilogue

I have learned that every creature inhabiting this planet is dependent upon each other, humans are dependent upon nature.

It is their source of life.

The forest is a source of construction wood, it provides food, medicines and most importantly it ensures fresh water for us to drink. Although in my daily life I do not go into the forest to provide for my own living, it does not make me less dependent upon it.

This internship confronted me with the beauty and destruction of nature. Madagascar is a continent of contrast. As one of the biodiversity hotspots in the world it is characterized by its richness, on the other hand it is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Often the messages that we receive of Madagascar consists of depressing stories of destruction, erosion and deforestation. But here in Madagascar I have seen that in the places where nature meets people beautiful initiatives arise.

It is encouraging to see that our dependency upon nature does not necessarily result in destruction. Just changing a small thing can greatly enhance the quality of life for human beings and all other creatures here on Madagascar.

Something as simple as changing the way of sowing rice seeds can make people less dependent upon their more destructive ways of gathering foods.

I have explored this country and found a great motivation to work for a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, a truly living planet.

When I left Ambalamanenjana I had lost some kilos, gained some scars, spend my savings and gave away my clothes. I might have left there with an empty bag, I returned with a full heart.

Madagascar has given me innumerable beautiful memories. The warm Malagasy people, their joy in life, the melodies of their songs, the sound of the rivers, the beauty of the primary forests, the taste of the fruits, and their initiatives to overcome the destruction of nature. These will inspire me for the rest of my life.



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Pictures shown at every beginning of a chapter belong to WWF Madagascar. Other pictures belong to Bette Harms.

Appendixes

WWF, Organisation mondiale de protection de la nature
Explore Programme

Rapport sur le Club Vintsy Tsindrano

Introduction

Ce rapport a été créé par Bette Harms et Mari Roald Bern suite à notre séjour à Ankarimbelo du 28 octobre au 24 novembre 2006. A cause d'instabilité politique, nous ne pouvions pas terminer le travail et les activités initialement prévus. Ce rapport envisage de commenter la situation actuelle du Club Vintsy et de fournir quelques suggestions pour le travail ultérieur.

Activités

Le programme a été développé en coopération avec un agent WWF, Georges, ainsi qu'avec le professeur du CEG (nom ?).

Activité	Commentaires	Activités pour la suite
Jeux d'introduction (un après-midi)	Les membres ont été timides, mais coopératifs lors de l'introduction des jeux. Surprenant qu'ils ne savaient pas les noms des autres membres.	- Passer plus de temps en faisant des jeux. La création d'une dynamique de groupe est essentielle.
Rénovation du chalet (deux après-midis)	Les jeunes étaient motivés, mais le manque de matériaux a ralenti le progrès des travaux.	- Installation de bancs - Finition du panneau portant le nom et le logo du Club Vintsy
Cours de français (3 heures un samedi)	9 membres sont venus.	- Pratiquer la conversation en français - Le Magazine Club Vintsy devrait être plus facilement accessible pour les jeunes.
Travail à l'arboretum (les volontaires ont passé une journée à chercher de jeunes plantes ; plantation avec les membres samedi)	En coopération avec l'association de jeunes de Tannenbau. Bonne ambiance.	- Identifier les arbres plantés - Créer de petits panneaux portant le nom des plantes et en malgache et scientifique
Spectacle à Tannenbau	Annulé à cause du départ des volontaires	

Points faibles

Le Club Vintsy est très important pour le travail du WWF à Ankarimbelo. La sensibilisation des jeunes à l'importance de la forêt ainsi qu'à la menace que les hommes représentent pour la nature pourrait assurer la réalisation des objectifs long-termes du WWF. Pendant notre séjour, nous avons eu l'opportunité d'identifier certains points faibles. Il s'agit de l'insuffisance de compréhension et de relation personnelle avec la forêt, du manque d'encadrement et d'une vision commune ainsi que d'une identité de groupe.

1. La relation avec la forêt

La majorité des membres du Club Vintsy n'a jamais été dans la forêt primaire autour d'Ankarimbelo. En vue d'une éducation environnementale, il faut savoir pourquoi les habitudes des gens ont un impact (négatif) sur l'environnement. En même temps, il faudrait éviter de mettre l'accent toujours sur les problèmes ; perte d'intérêt ou même distanciation pourraient être les conséquences.

Notre recommandation est d'organiser des sorties en forêt avec les jeunes lors desquelles ils peuvent découvrir la richesse de la forêt et avoir une expérience personnelle de sa biodiversité.

2. L'animateur

Quant à l'animation d'un groupe de jeunes, l'identification est primordiale. L'encadrement est plus importante que l'instruction. Georges est une personne très qualifiée et dévouée au développement rural et agricole. Cependant, son âge et l'abus d'alcool lui rendent inapproprié pour la tâche d'animation du Club Vintsy. L'enseignant représente un relais important entre le WWF et le CEG, mais il doit occuper deux rôles contradictoires, celui d'enseignant (autorité) et celui d'animateur (encadrement et identification).

Notre recommandation est d'engager Sata ou Ludowig comme responsable pour le Club Vintsy.

3. L'absence d'une vision commune et long-terme

La plupart des activités auxquelles nous avons participé en tant que volontaires ont été réalisées en coopération avec une seule personne d'autorité de la commune. Ceci semble caractéristique pour Ankarimbelo ; la commune d'Ambalamananjana mise plus sur le consensus. Les membres du Club Vintsy montrent très peu d'initiative par rapport aux activités. Ils suivent les ordres et les idées avancés par l'enseignant. Cet approche assure un certain progrès, mais la qualité du travail et l'apprentissage restent médiocres. Il faudrait qu'ils soient basés sur des convictions personnelles.

Notre recommandation est d'encourager les membres de participer à la discussion des objectifs du club ainsi que d'être en charge des activités initiées par eux-mêmes.

Tandis que le Club Vintsy existe depuis 2002, pour la plupart des membres et leurs parents, la raison d'être du club reste vague. Les jeunes joignent le club pour améliorer leur connaissance de la langue française ou anglaise. La compréhension et la motivation d'être membre d'un club environnemental restent superficielles.

Notre recommandation est d'inclure le Club Vintsy aux activités de reforestation et à la gestion des communes autour de Ngidy.

4. L'absence d'une identité de groupe

Le spectacle du 9 décembre aurait dû rapporter de l'argent au Club Vintsy. Nous voudrions exprimer de sérieux doutes par rapport à cet objectif. Ni le succès ni l'impact du club dépendent de cet argent. En l'absence d'une dynamique de groupe et d'une motivation de faire quelque chose pour l'environnement local, l'argent peut poser plus de problèmes que d'avantages.

Notre recommandation est d'éviter des activités destinées à rapporter des revenus avant que des objectifs communs et une identité de groupe ne soient établis.

Pour le reste de notre séjour au Madagascar, nous avons passé du temps à la commune d'Ambalamananjana où nous avons travaillé avec l'association de jeunes. Cette association s'occupe de la gestion de la forêt, et elle participe à l'application des Dinahs locales. Deux fois par mois, les jeunes vont dans la forêt. Ici, ils la monitorent, et ils font de la reforestation. La fonction sociale est très importante. Les membres sont amis, ils dansent et chantent ensemble. Le fait de s'amuser ensemble renforce les relations sociales et crée une dynamique de groupe. D'ailleurs, les jeunes sont attachés à la forêt et à leur commune.

Notre recommandation est d'organiser des événements et activités sociaux pour les membres du Club Vintsy et le groupe de jeunes de Tannenbau.

Indices de succès

Les membres du Club Vintsy sont très coopératifs, ils sont curieux et ils ont la volonté d'apprendre et d'essayer de nouvelles choses. Ils habitent proche de la forêt. Les agents WWF basés à Ankarimbelo sont expérimentés et dévoués, et ils entretiennent des rapports solides avec la direction du CEG ainsi qu'avec le roi à Faliarivo. De plus, récemment, ils sont entrés en contact avec l'association de jeunes à Tannenbau.

Suggestions de continuation

Basé sur les contraintes et les indices de succès identifiées, nous voudrions recommander les interventions suivantes:

- Sortir à la forêt un ou deux fois par mois avec les jeunes. Activités dans la forêt:
 - o Découvrir la nature
 - o Pêcher, observer les oiseaux, se baigner
 - o Installer un campement
 - o Apprendre les noms des plantes
- Assurer l'accès au Magazine Club Vintsy.
- Lier les activités de Vintsy Tsindrano avec le groupe de jeunes de Tannenbau. Par exemple:
 - o Des soirées sociales, des jeux et de la musique
 - o Journée de reforestation
 - o Entretien de la pépinière à Ankarimbelo et à Tannenbau
 - o Expédition dans la forêt primaire
 - o Le jeu de la vie malgache (voir description à part)
- Identifier un endroit entre Ngidy et le couloir de forêt qui peut être sous la gestion du Club Vintsy. Ici, ils peuvent faire de la reforestation.
- Permettre le président du Club Vintsy à la réunion des patrons du village

Nous avons passé des moments très beaux à Ankarimbelo, et nous vous souhaitons le meilleur au travail, pour aller encore plus loin avec beaucoup de succès!

Ambalavao, le 10 décembre 2006

Bette Harms

Mari Roald Bern

Le jeu de la vie malgache

Bette Harms et Mari Roald Bern
Volontaires
Ambalavao, Madagascar 2006

Idee générale

En novembre 2006, au sein du programme EXPLORE, nous avons eu l'opportunité de travailler avec le Club Vintsy Tsindrano à Ankarimbelo. Le Club Vintsy se constitue de clubs environnementaux qui, à l'initiative du WWF et partout au Madagascar, s'organisent dans les CEG. Leur but est de provoquer un engagement de la part des jeunes avec les questions environnementales et de les motiver à protéger la nature locale par la conservation de la biodiversité et l'usage durable des ressources.

Notre première observation était que les membres ne se connaissaient pas par noms. Leurs activités principales consistaient en l'embellissement de l'école et la maintenance d'une pépinière. A notre avis, ces activités ne promeuvent pas le travail de la conservation de la nature. Il est essentiel pour un club environnemental de provoquer l'engagement de la part des jeunes. De plus, les membres devraient considérer la protection de la nature comme quelque chose d'intéressant et amusant. Le club devrait donner l'opportunité d'entrer en contact avec d'autres jeunes en faisant l'expérience de la nature et de l'environnement local. Au delà des relations sociales peu profonds, les membres n'étaient pas au courant des objectifs du Club Vintsy. La plupart d'eux comptait améliorer son niveau de français ou d'anglais. L'aspect environnemental n'était mentionné par personne.

Nous avons développé un jeu qui a pour but de s'amuser ensemble, mais qui favorise en même temps la mise en évidence du principal problème par rapport à la conservation de la nature au Madagascar : la pratique de tavy.

Le jeu ne transmet non seulement une première connaissance de l'écologie et des effets de tavy, mais il peut aussi servir comme outil de communication des soucis environnementaux à travers la commune (par exemple en le jouant avec d'autres enfants au collège).

Fact box:

Tavy est la pratique du défrichement pour l'agriculture. Le terrain est brûlé pour ensuite y produire du riz ou du manioc. Comme la qualité du sol diminue au fur et à mesure, au bout de trois à quatre ans, la cultivation du terrain est devenue impossible. Une nouvelle partie de la forêt est défrichée, et ainsi, la forêt disparaît très rapidement. La pratique de tavy laisse du sol infertile, couvert par des espèces invasives (de mauvaises herbes ou du bambou). Pendant la saison de pluie, le sol souffre d'érosion. La réduction de la forêt met aussi l'accès des communes à l'eau en danger.

But du jeu

Faire comprendre les liens entre la forêt, l'eau, les gens et la production de nourriture.

Groupe ciblé

Selon leur niveau d'éducation et de connaissance des sujets environnementaux, le jeu est conçu pour des jeunes entre sept et vingt ans. Le jeu a sa plus grande valeur pour les jeunes qui connaissent la pratique de tavy, mais qui ne se rendent pas compte de ses effets.

Description générale

Les joueurs sont divisés en équipes. Ils représentent soit des arbres dans une forêt soit des villageois. Les villageois produisent leur nourriture ou par la pratique de tavy ou par la cultivation du riz en terrasses. Les villageois qui pratiquent le tavy représentent une menace pour les arbres puisqu'ils les coupent. Les villageois qui cultivent le riz en terrasses peuvent réduire le nombre des villageois pratiquant le tavy parce qu'ils récupèrent le terrain qui a subi la pratique de tavy.

Le jeu se fait en deux parties. Entre les deux parties, des questions sont posées pour assurer l'apprentissage et la compréhension des sujets environnementaux.

Besoins

- un groupe de joueurs (entre 15 et 30 personnes)
- un terrain délimité (de la dimension d'un terrain de foot)
- des bouts de corde (ou d'autres objets pour différencier les équipes)

Déroulement du jeu

Ceci est un jeu d'attrapage, organisé en deux parties. Pour la première partie, le groupe est divisé en deux. Un tiers des joueurs forme l'équipe des arbres. Les deux autres tiers du groupe sont les villageois qui pratiquent le tavy. S'il est nécessaire, l'animateur explique la pratique de tavy avant que le jeu commence.

1. Le but des villageois pratiquant le tavy est de couper un maximum d'arbres. Ils coupent les arbres en les attrapant. Les villageois se tiennent par la main par paires, et il est interdit de lâcher son partenaire. Un arbre est coupé quand un couple de villageois encercle un arbre.
2. Les arbres doivent éviter d'être attrapés par les villageois en se sauvant à travers tout le terrain de jeu. Quand un arbre a été coupé, il doit s'asseoir à l'extérieur du terrain de jeu.
3. Quand il n'y a plus d'arbres, la première partie du jeu est terminée.
4. Cette partie est suivie par des questions posées par l'animateur. Elles peuvent être posées de manière ouverte ou en indiquant la réponse. Il est important que l'animateur identifie la bonne réponse et, avant de commencer la deuxième partie, assure que les joueurs comprennent que la pratique de tavy représente une menace pour la forêt. En vue d'encourager la discussion parmi les participants, ils peuvent être divisés en petits groupes qui répondent aux questions en les notant sur papier. Au bout de dix minutes environ, chaque groupe est sollicité d'avancer ses réponses.

Questions première partie:

Quelles sont les choses les plus importantes que nous procure la forêt?

- a) bûches, charbon, feuilles
- b) bois de construction, eau douce, bois de feu
- c) bananes, lémuriens, pierres

Qu'est-ce qui est un danger pour la forêt?

- a) la pratique de tavy
- b) l'érosion
- c) l'armée

Pour la deuxième partie, les joueurs sont divisés en trois groupes égaux. Un groupe représente toujours les arbres, le deuxième groupe est formé par des villageois pratiquant le tavy (« villageois tavy »), et le troisième est un groupe de villageois qui pratiquent la cultivation de riz en terraces (« villageois terrasse »). Les problèmes posés par la pratique de tavy (surtout la déforestation) ont fait le sujet des questions, des discussions et des réponses. Maintenant, en guise du nouveau groupe, une manière alternative de production de nourriture est introduite, et par conséquent, le problème initial perd de l'ampleur. Les « villageois terrasse » devraient être bien distinguables des autres.

1. Les « villageois tavy » poursuivent la même manière d'attraper les arbres que dans la première partie du jeu.
2. Puisque les « villageois terrasse » peuvent produire de la nourriture sur le terrain des « villageois tavy », leur but est d'attraper les « villageois tavy ». A cette fin, ils s'incrument entre un couple de « villageois tavy » (qui se tient toujours par la main) en passant par-dessous les bras. Quand un couple de « villageois tavy » est attrapé, il doit quitter le terrain de jeu.
3. Le jeu est terminé quand tous les « villageois tavy » ont été attrapés.
4. A la fin de cette partie, il y a aussi des questions.

Questions deuxième partie:

Qu'est-ce qui est indispensable à la survie des gens et de la forêt?

- a) une maison et du riz
- b) de l'eau et le sol
- c) des zébus et du feu

Pourquoi y-a-t-il toujours de la forêt à la fin de cette partie?

- a) Parce que les arbres repoussent
- b) Parce que la forêt est sacrée
- c) Parce que les villageois ne doivent pas couper les arbres pour produire leur nourriture

Comment les gens et la forêt pourraient-ils vivre ensemble?

- a) En pratiquant le tavy
- b) En cultivant le riz en terrasses
- c) En interdisant les gens d'entrer dans la forêt

Pourquoi les gens ne peuvent-ils pas vivre sans la forêt?

- a) Parce qu'elle leur donne des terrains pour l'agriculture
- b) Parce qu'elle est leur source de vie: elle fournit du bois et de l'eau
- c) Parce que la forêt est belle

Tuyaux pour l'animateur

- I. Sois préparé: Connais bien les règles du jeu avant de l'expliquer. Note les questions sur une grande feuille. Fais des dessins d'explication si nécessaire.
- II. Sois patient: Explique lentement et à la voix assez haute.
- III. Sois engagé: C'est un jeu amusant!
- IV. Sois attentif: Assure que tout le monde a compris, et que tout le monde participe.
- V. Sois conscient: Ce n'est pas seulement rigolo, les joueurs devraient apprendre quelque chose.
- VI. Les réponses correctes: Première partie: 1b) et 2a). Deuxième partie: 1b), 2c), 3b), 4b).

Ce jeu a été conçu pour favoriser la compréhension de l'interdépendance des gens et de la nature. Les uns ont besoin de l'autre pour prospérer, et vice versa. Ce jeu peut être associé à des sujets divers de l'école :

- le fonctionnement des écosystèmes
- la circulation de l'eau
- la forêt et la déforestation

Ce jeu pourrait motiver les élèves à apprendre plus sur les sujets de l'environnement. C'est notre espoir. Nous avons passé deux mois au Madagascar, et nous avons rencontré des gens pleins d'énergie et d'espoir pour l'avenir. Si l'avenir devait voir la prospérité et la durabilité, il est d'une importance décisive que les habitants du Madagascar prennent conscience des forêts des ressources abondantes de leur pays et veillent à leur protection et bien-être.

Dat zijn de eerste woorden die ik schrijf in mijn dagboek als ik in het vliegtuig zit, onwetend wat me te wachten staat. Met zo'n titel heb ik er gewoon om gevraagd. In de drie maanden die volgen, ontmoet ik koningen, krijg ik malaria, leef ik in de jungle en dans ik nachtenlang met het volk van de hooglanden, de Bestileo.

Als stagiaire voor het Wereld Natuur Fonds zet ik voet op Madagaskar, het wonderbaarlijke rode eiland aan de oostkust van Afrika. Het heeft de grootte van Frankrijk en België samen en een bevolking die in de afgelopen 25 jaar verdubbeld is tot 17 miljoen. Madagaskar is een van de armste landen op aarde, 49 procent van de bevolking leeft onder de armoedegrens van 1 dollar per dag. In een ander opzicht is Madagaskar een van de rijkste landen op aarde, de dieren en planten zijn hier even divers als uniek. Madagaskar bezit meer dan 200.000 soorten, waarvan een groot deel nergens anders op aarde te vinden is.

Geen rood

Rijdend van de hoofdstad naar het zuiden kijk ik uit het raam; het land is kaal en dor. Kleine plukjes bos geven een onregelmatigheid in de glooiende horizon. Sommige Malagasy zijn ervan overtuigd dat ze ook verticaal land kunnen verbouwen. Op de hoogste toppen en steilste hellingen poogt men nog steeds om rijst en cassave te laten groeien. Ik ben op weg naar het dorp Faliarivo waar ik de komende maanden zal verblijven. Om er te komen zit ik twee dagen in een busje, een dag in de enige trein op het eiland en vervolgens een dag opeengeklemd al hotsend, klotsend en wiebelend in de bak van een jeep. Vlak voor een korte boottocht wacht ons een uitdaging. Alle tassen moeten naar de uitgeholde boomstam worden gesjouwd en we moeten onze rode spullen wegstoppen. Dit vormt enigszins een probleem aangezien mijn collega haar hele tas brandweer rood is. Het is *fady*, oftewel taboe, om iets roods te dragen als je de rivier oversteeckt. De Malagasy hebben ingewikkelde leefregels met vele taboes en bijgeloven, allemaal gebaseerd op het geloof in de krachten van hun dode voorouders. Na de korte boottocht gaan we te voet door de jungle en na vier dagen kom ik aan in Faliarivo, het midden van nergens.

Techno?

De mensen wonen hier in kleine hutjes op palen, gemaakt van bamboe en palmladeren. Ongelooflijk! Eerder had ik deze huisjes al gezien in het museum in de hoofdstad. Ik was door mijn gebrekkige Frans in de veronderstelling dat onze gids praatte over historie, maar de mensen leven hier nog steeds zo. Iedere ochtend word ik wakker om vier uur. Naast mijn huis staat de pomp van het dorp, wat 's ochtends de 'place to be' is voor wat lokale roddel. Dat is me te vroeg en ik draai me om en probeer weer te slapen. Een zware harde techno beat maakt me weer wakker. Ik dacht dat ze hier geen elektriciteit hadden?! Het is het geluid van de vrouwen die rijst stampen, tijd voor ontbijt! De Malagasy eten drie keer per dag een berg rijst en ik prop met moeite mijn mond vol met de zoute witte plakkerige korrels.

Niet zoenen!

Wanneer ik de eerste dag over straat loop, komt er een oude man op me af die me vriendelijk toelacht en zijn hand uitsteekt. Ik reik hem mijn hand en smak... hij geeft me dikke zoen. De hele straat schaterd van het lachen en het verhaal doet al gauw de ronde. Dat heeft zijn gevolgen. We werken hier samen met de koning van deze kant van de rivier en als gevolg van de zoen besluit hij die avond een nieuwe wet te maken. Een ieder die mij of mijn vriendin nog probeert aan te raken moet een koe betalen. Bij zonsondergang loopt hij het plein op en stelt luid roepend het dorp op de hoogte van de nieuwe wet. Overdag help ik de dorpelingen met het planten van rijst. De Tanala, het volk van het bos, verzamelen voedsel uit het bos en branden stukken ervan kaal voor het verbouwen van rijst. Na drie of vier jaar is de grond uitgeput en kappen ze een nieuw stuk bos. In de afgelopen eeuwen is 90 procent van de bossen gekapt om plaats te maken voor landbouwgrond. Het WNF leert hen hoe je rijst op terrassen verbouwt, zodat de opbrengst drie maal zo hoog is als met de traditionele techniek. Ze hoeven niet langer na vier jaar hun landbouwgrond te verplaatsen en zo wordt het bos gespaard. Om de natuur hier te beschermen helpen we de mensen, zodat ze niet langer hoeven te overleven, maar gewoon kunnen leven. Ik had nooit gedacht dat ik als natuurbeschermmer zou werken aan ontwikkelingshulp, maar hier gaat dat hand in hand met natuurconservatie.

Staatsgreep

Dit is het verst weg van de beschaving dat ik ooit in mijn leven ben geweest, er is maar een radio in het dorp die hele dag door schalt. Naast mijn huis is een kantoorje met een bordje 'agence postale'. Wanneer ik op een dag mijn brieven af kom leveren, kijkt de ambtenaar me met verbazing aan. Ik had het kunnen weten, je kan hier geen brieven versturen, nergens heen. Het enige nieuws wat dit dorp bereikt komt te voet door de jungle. Zo komt er na een maand in de jungle te hebben gezeten een bericht voor ons. Er dreigt een

staatsgreep en we moeten ons zo snel mogelijk melden in de stad. Voor zonsopgang gaan we op pad, nadat de dorpelingen een uur naar onze gigantische tassen hebben staan gapen. Uiteindelijk gaan er twee mannen mee om mijn tas te dragen en ik leg ze met veel geduld uit hoe je de rugzak goed afstelt. Er wordt heftig ja geknikt en vervolgens plaatst hij mijn 20 kilo wegende tas op zijn hoofd ...

Om snel terug te komen in de stad moeten we de onbewoonde jungle doorkruisen, een tocht van acht uur. Ik wandel met de mannen van het dorp gespannen over een eeuwenoude handelsroute. Voor me lopen handelaars van illegaal gestookte rum met jerrycans op hun schouders en achter me een jongen met een grote zak lychees op zijn nek, als ik stop om uit te rusten vult hij mijn handen met deze heerlijke vruchten. We doorkruisen een prachtig woud met ontelbare soorten groen en duizenden dieren die met hun roep hun aanwezigheid bekend maken. Onderweg zie ik glibberige slangen, nieuwsgierige wollige half apen en kleurrijke kameleons. Ook zijn er wat minder troetelbare wezens die mijn aanwezigheid erg op prijs stellen, bloedzuigers!

Speelgoed

Gelukkig wordt de rebelerende generaal snel op gepakt en kunnen wij weer aan het werk. We vertrekken naar een nieuw dorp in de hooglanden. Hier wonen de Bestileo, een stam die bekend staat om hun rijstterrassen en de grote aantallen koeien (zebu's) die ze houden. We worden met open armen ontvangen en het hele dorp komt met dekens, potten, pannen en matten aanslepen om ons verblijf aangenaam te maken. Nadat ik 's ochtends mijn was heb gedaan in de rivier, hoor ik achter mijn huis kinderen lachen. Ze hebben ons afval gevonden en mijn waterfles is omgetoverd tot een vrachtwagen, mijn plastic tas tot vlieger en mijn blikje tomatenpuree is nu een autootje. De buurvrouw komt op visite met haar vriendinnen, ondanks mijn gebrekkige Malgasch komen ze iedere dag langs voor een praatje. Met mijn twee woorden Malgasch; "akory abi" (hallo) en "Ino vao vao?" (Wat is er nieuw?) kletsen we, vooral zij, al snel een half uur. De Betstileo hebben een wonderbaarlijke kledingstijl, ze draperen vrolijk gekleurde kleden (lamba's) om zich heen, bedrukt met bloemen of teddyberen. De jongens dragen een accessoire die ik ook in Nederland af en toe tegen kom, een kam in het haar. Hiermee laten ze zien dat ze op zoek zijn naar een huwelijkspartner.

Feest

Ter ere van ons bezoek wordt er een groot feest gegeven in het dorp waar we aan iedereen voorgesteld worden. De rum gaat rond en overal in donkere hoekjes zitten kinderen verscholen in hun dekens, ze zijn uit hun bed gekropen door de lokkende klanken van de kabosy en het gestamp van de vrouwen. In een hoekje is een groep bezig een roestige taperecorder aan het werk te krijgen onder het licht van een olielampje. Abrupt stopt de muziek en de dorpsoudste jaagt persoonlijk alle kinderen weg, bedtijd! Vergeefse moeite, zodra alle ouders voldoende onder invloed zijn en de meeste moeders al op bed liggen, zie ik overal weer kleine kindjes opduiken. Ze zijn dol op dansen en de hele avond heb ik steevast twee kleine meisjes van een jaar of vijf voor me dansen, ze kopiëren iedere beweging die ik maak en vormen enigszins een obstakel wanneer de 75 jarige François me ten dans vraagt. Hij is een van de oudsten van het dorp en danst de benen onder zijn lijf vandaan, heftig zwierend en zwaaiend word ik over de dansvloer geleid. In de hoeken staan de jongens als spoken met hun lamba's over hun hoofd getrokken. Het is net of ik me op een Halloween feestje bevind.

Malaria

Met de bewoners van het dorp organiseren we een herbebossing dag waar we met zijn allen zo'n 2000 bomen planten. Een jaar eerder is een bebost stuk in vlammen op gegaan, maar de dorpelingen zijn vastberaden en met volle moed wordt het opnieuw beplant. De mensen hier zien in dat het bos van levensbelang is. Ze gebruiken hout voor constructie, vinden er traditionele medicijnen en het bos verzekert hen van voldoende toevoer van drinkbaar water. De gemeenschap heeft zelf een commissie opgericht die de bossen controleert op illegale houtkap en bosbranden. Ze werken hard aan een duurzame toekomst voor mens en natuur. Wanneer ik een aantal dagen met koorts op bed lig van de malaria, komen de dorpelingen me kruiden brengen om mijn hoofdpijn te verzachten.

Malagasy style

De laatste dag komen alle mannen van het dorp om ons gedag te zeggen, voor de gelegenheid hebben ze een fles lokale rum meegenomen. Na drie lange uren wachten op onze jeep is alle rum op en worden we bij de dorpsoudste uitgenodigd voor nog wat meer lokale delicatessen. Onze taxi komt niet opdagen en uiteindelijk kruipen we lichtelijk aangeschoten in de achterbak van een lokale handelaar samen met stukken graniet, kippen, gastanken, een opa met zijn kleinzoon, reservewiel, een vrouw met een baby en een flinke lading rijst. In ieder geval verlaat ik het land Malagasy style!