

DisAssembling Partnerships: Establishing Criteria for Evaluation

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At a time when our assumptions regarding partnering between NGOs and local communities are coming under questioning (Bray and Anderson 2005; Chapin 2004), one case, the Kayapó Surveillance Project, stands out as exceptional. This paper attempts to unpack the term “partnering” in order to identify the factors that contribute to the outcomes of collaborations when NGOs and local communities work together.

After nearly two decades of experimentation in “partnering” between NGOs and local communities we are ready to evaluate these collaborations. It is important to disassemble partnerships to identify outcomes and link them to process. A vague notion of partnering is insufficient. We must now parse the notion of “partnering” to review its constituent elements. What do we mean by “partnering”? What do different actors bring to the partnership? Must the goals of partners be identical or coincidental? Under what circumstances are partnerships effective? My goal here is to parse the processes involved in a single, demonstrative case in which a relatively small indigenous community entered into a collaborative arrangement with one of the world’s largest environmental NGOs in an effort to preserve its territorial integrity. The case provides a number of lessons because the innovative processes involved have led, to date, to satisfaction on the part of all parties. I hope to use this highly visible case to arrive at criteria with which to evaluate projects and predict outcomes.

This paper discusses a project, initiated in 2001 between the Washington-based environmental NGO, Conservation International (hereafter CI), and the Kayapó of the Área Indígena Kayapó (hereafter called AIK), in which CI would assist the Kayapó in an ongoing

effort of territorial surveillance. The reserve, nearly eleven million ha of tropical forest and savannas, has suffered border erosion by ranchers, farmers, and other predators. Although the Kayapó have continuously monitored the borders of their reserve for over two decades, surveillance of the 1,600 km perimeter would benefit from resources provided by CI, including transportation and communications equipment. I limit my assessments to the processes involved in the creation of the project, in particular the phases I was able to observe, including three meetings between Kayapó and CI leaders (Chernela 2005).

Literature Review

Recent studies by Bray and Anderson (2005), Brosius (2005), and Chapin (2004) reflect a growing skepticism where large, internationally-financed NGOs attempt to partner with local communities. A multi-case survey of NGO involvement in community projects for Latin America conducted by David Bray and Anthony Anderson in 2004 concluded that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, global environmental NGOs appear to overlook or subordinate local peoples in their programming (Bray and Anderson 2005). At the same time, Bray and Anderson report that "very little is known publicly about project success and failure for the global conservation NGOs, [and] their relations to local communities" (Bray and Anderson 2005:71)

As the debate continues, the environmental journal *World Watch* devoted two issues exclusively to international NGO involvement in local communities. In the first of these (Dec. 2004), the anthropologist Mac Chapin leveled harsh criticism at conservation NGOs, including Conservation International, on the grounds that they exclude local communities from their agendas (*WorldWatch* Nov/Dec. 2004). In spite of policy statements that proclaim respect for local peoples, Chapin argues, these large NGOs display, in practice "a studied lack of interest toward partnerships with indigenous peoples or local communities of any stripe" (Chapin 2004:6).

Chapin points out, rightly, that the inherent imbalance between large NGOs, with their financial resources, and local indigenous communities, who lack this type of resource, challenge our notions of fair and equal "partnering." While I agree that the gap between the financial capabilities of large NGOs and local communities indeed weighs heavily against

effective partnering, I recognize that the relationship between local entities, specifically indigenous peoples, and NGOs, can be mutually benefiting.

Although Chapin blames large NGOs for failing in their stated mission to benefit local populations, he does not examine the shortcomings of specific collaborations and the factors that drive their failure. As pointed out by Bray and Anderson (2005), the debate lacks sufficient data with which to carry out a responsible evaluation. Certainly, more effort is needed to improve the relationship before it is abandoned. It is too necessary to all parties.

In this paper I want to examine the phenomenon of partnering in a case that appears to be successful. In dis-assembling the factors that contribute to what I would call the co-management of the case at hand, I hope to demonstrate that inherent disparities in power may be adjusted or compensated for when the notions of resource, power, and capital, are expanded. Although I concur that a level playing field is necessary for partnering, I call attention to tangible and intangible assets that have not conventionally been calculated in measures of balance. I argue here that indigenous groups bring important assets other than financial ones, to the collaborative encounter. I take the Kayapo/CI surveillance project as my case-in-point.

Indigenous Peoples and Landscapes

A large portion of the remaining, relatively intact landscapes are occupied by indigenous people. In Brazil, for example, according to ISA figures, a fifth of the standing Amazon rainforest lies within Indigenous reserves, whose total area is almost double the size of all other protected areas. As Marcio Santilli (2005) points out, many indigenous reserves “encompass ecological transition zones that are known for their high biodiversity and dozens of locations within Indian reserves have been identified as priorities for biodiversity conservation. Indigenous territories located at the agricultural frontier along the ‘Arc of Deforestation’ ... act...as barriers to deforestation” (Santilli: 2005).

From this perspective, alliances between conservation NGOs with indigenous peoples would appear to be strategically advisable. Yet, although such collaborations are increasing in number, surprisingly little investigation has explored the conditions and factors that contribute to the success or failure of any partnership. I define as successful a project

which meets the satisfactions of both parties --local, indigenous peoples as well as environmental NGOs.

Here I will suggest a number of criteria that I believe are necessary for the success of any collaboration between indigenous peoples and NGOs. These are: 1) Re-valuing natural assets; 2) Re-valuing social assets; 3) Maximizing participation; 4) Excludability; and 5) Recognizing mutual interdependence. This paper is a preliminary step in defining the factors necessary to build a set of criteria with which to predict project outcomes.

Value

A number of sociologists and economists – among them, Bourdieu (1991); Coleman (1999); Dasgupta and Serageldin (1999) -- have extended the notion of capital beyond produced assets to include natural as well as social and cultural forms of capital. These innovative evaluations recognize and assign value to biological, cultural, and social diversity. In locations of greatest import to conservationists, these types of capital typically exceed produced assets (Serageldin and Grootaert 1999: p. 42). These are just some of the vast amount of social and cultural capital that the indigenous entity brings to the collaboration.

1. Re-valuing Nature. If we limit ourselves to conventional measures of assets in partnerships between northern NGOs and indigenous peoples, the NGO will have financial and technological resources that far exceed those of the local partner. However, when the value of natural resources and land rights are considered, it should be clear that the indigenous entity brings to the bargaining table the asset of greatest value. If natural capital were assigned its proper worth, indigenous people would not be regarded as the disadvantaged partners in a collaboration. If we are concerned with balance in a contractual relationship in which each entity brings its own assets to the negotiation, assigning value to critical, natural, assets narrows the gap between the partnering entities and levels the playing field. No less importantly, it is a more accurate assessment of the capital in discussion.

2. Re-valuing social capital. Natural capital – the focus of interest by the environmental NGO, belongs to the local entity who controls and organizes its use. 'Symbolic' or cultural capital, includes many kinds of culturally-acquired knowledge and skills, including cosmology, ritual life, conceptions of the body and the life-cycle, the

universe, the forest, and the meanings attributed to them. Social capital is yet another form of capital that the local community brings to the arrangement. All communities have complex institutions with rules or norms for access, reciprocity, sharing, social sanctions, and appropriate harvesting behavior and ethics (Berkes 1995). Processes of participation and decision-making are some of the social capital an indigenous community brings to any collaboration. These differing forms of capital combine with other resources to produce a number of different outcomes.

Coleman defines social capital as "organizational resources" (p. 19), adding, "All social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits. Certain kinds of social structure, however, are especially important in facilitating some forms of social capital" (Coleman in Dasgupta and Stiglitz, 1999:23). The latter include social networks, social boundaries, sanctions, norms, values, networks of cooperation, normative expectations; obligations; family and extended kin.

Societies have the abilities to construct and enforce regulations when they are in accordance with their values and their goals. The persistence of forested landscapes within indigenous territories cannot be explained by historic accident. It is the result of the knowledge of local resources and the organization of their use and distribution. The capacity for concerted social action provides a group of users with the ability to organize and manage local resources according to both tradition as well as new, experimental techniques.

Decision-making must be situated within the local community for any collaboration with to succeed; indeed the collaboration cannot proceed without the owners of the property. Moreover, placing decision-making in the hands of the indigenous partners further contributes to a leveling of the playing field as it also creates a necessary groundwork of trust in order for the collaboration to proceed.

Despite the importance for outsider-partnering entities to recognize the social capital brought to the endeavor by the indigenous partners, this form of capital may be invisible to them. Increased investment on the part of NGOs is necessary in order for them to gain the skills required in recognizing social and cultural assets. Communications will fail if the

outside entities underestimate or are incapable of recognizing the intangible phenomena of social life.

3. Participation. Evidence demonstrates that local users with territorial or livelihood-related interests may better manage their own collectively-held resources than outsiders, who may undervalue the participation of resident stakeholders (McKay and Acheson 1987). Moreover, if participation is exclusive, rather than maximally inclusive, dissent is a likely consequence, leading to project failure. A project that does not take into account and incorporate local forms of participation and decision-making risks failure.

4. Excludability. One of the most important of the criteria I include is “excludability,” or “rights of exclusion” (Berkes 1995; Feeny et al. 1990). Excludability carries special import, since it meets the objectives of both environmentalists and indigenous peoples, allowing NGOs and indigenous organizations to work cooperatively and productively to meet their differing goals.

The case of indigenous peoples in Brazil and elsewhere offers unique characteristics of excludability. The rights of indigenous peoples to their lands are recognized in international instruments, including the UN’s ILO 169, the OAS Commission on Human Rights, and the UN Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples. In Brazil, these rights are explicitly stated in Article 231 of the Federal Constitution of 1988. There, the use of the term “original” in defining these rights provides them with precedence over other claims. Unlike private property rights, vested in individuals, the collective property rights of indigenous territories, are not transferable but are rather held in common by a limited and designated community of users. These users may lawfully exclude outsiders.

Although exclusion is a right guaranteed indigenous peoples by law, controlling access by potential users (“subtractability” in Berkes’ terms) is difficult, requiring monitoring and the capability for removal. The means of exclusion are therefore costly and not always available.

Although constitutional provisions provide the basis for a well-defined set of legally-enforceable property rights, and despite the recognition of the inviolability of indigenous lands by federal law and the governmental entity charged with enforcing land rights (FUNAI), the resources required to protect indigenous lands from intrusion are often

lacking. Despite Constitutional guarantees, reservations and their resources are routinely violated by invaders. Without adequate protections indigenous territories can be regarded as unregulated, open-access lands. Self-enforcement is often the most realistic option for the protection of indigenous territories. The Kayapó have been practitioners of this method for decades.

The advantages for conservationists who would preserve forested and other landscapes where they are the territorial province of the indigenous peoples who occupy and hold rights to them should be apparent. The rationality of combining indigenous interests in protecting their lands from outsiders and conservationists' interests in defending these lands against open access holds promise for collaboration. In the absence of adequate protections most indigenous reserves, including some with extremely high indices of biodiversity, such as the lands of the Yanomami, are being eroded along their borders by ranchers, loggers, miners, and other intruders. From this viewpoint, both landscapes and indigenous peoples are subject to the same threats to their existence. For this reason, among others, an attempt at alliance is both appropriate and strategically advisable.

The case at hand demonstrates that a collaboration between NGOs and indigenous societies can result in a productive arrangement to accomplish both indigenous rights as well as minimizing environmental destruction.

5. Interdependence. The final feature, necessary for successful collaboration, is the recognition by both partners that the collaboration will fail unless a mutual interdependence is understood. This entails explicit communication but it does not require agreement about values or goals.

In 1995 Conklin and Graham argued that international alliances may pose risks for indigenous peoples, since the grounds on which they are forged are accomplished “on the basis of assumptions about the Other ...[that]...always involve cross-cultural misperceptions and strategic misrepresentations” (Conklin and Graham 1995:696). William Fisher argues that while environmental NGOs may regard indigenous areas as islands of forest cover surrounded by deforestation, the concerns of indigenous peoples are lands rights and self-determination (Fisher 1994:229). I use the CI/Kayapo alliance to demonstrate that isomorphic goals are *not* necessary for a successful collaboration. The more important

understanding is the recognition that each party contributes to the goals of the other, and that the arrangement is satisfactory to both partners.

The Kayapó Lands: Conservation Concerns and Interests

Kayapó reserves in Brazil encompass a total of 10,905,175 ha in the southern portion of the Amazon basin along the upper Xingú River in the states of Pará and Mato Grosso. One of these, the Área Indígena Kayapó (AIK) in southern Pará, with about 4,000 people encompasses a variety of habitat types, including two of the largest biomes in Brazil, the closed-canopy rainforest and the savannic *cerrado*. Both of these habitats are found in remarkably pristine condition, yet they are threatened on all sides by unsustainable activities. The Área (also here called “AIK” or “the Kayapó Reserve”) contains one of the largest continuous blocks of pristine *terra firme* rainforest in the world. Although the closed canopy tropical rainforest is recognized as site of high biodiversity, the loss of forest cover today is proceeding exponentially. The Reserve is also site of the northern limit of an immense *cerrado* that extends southward into the Central Brazilian Planalto. Although these two biomes are recognized for their importance and vulnerability, they are underrepresented in Brazilian conservation units (including National Forests, Parks, and Research Stations). Although the *cerrado* is the second largest biome in Brazil, it remains one of the least understood. At the time of this writing only 1.5 % of the *cerrado* had official protection, in spite of the presence there of important species complexes underrepresented in natural reserves. In the Kayapó Reserve, these two biomes, with remarkably intact vegetation cover and animal populations, are found in interdigitation.

Processes of development or persistent hunting have driven fauna in many other Amazon regions to local extinction. Researchers working in the Kayapó Reserve, in contrast, report no evidence of overhunting (Peres 1996; Zimmerman et al. 2001). Indeed, these studies, conducted at the Pinkaiti Research Station, find unusually high densities of species of conservation import, including Uta’s bearded saki monkeys (*Chiropotes satanas utahicki*), white-whiskered spider monkey (*Ateles marginatus*), giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), and other species whose populations elsewhere in Amazonia are severely depressed.

Native Americans who inhabit this region play a critical role in the preservation of its rich biodiversity. The population is sparsely distributed, with village sizes ranging from under 100 to 1000. The Kayapó practice low-intensity land use methods, combining itinerant cultivation and silviculture with foraging for fish, game, fruit, insects, and honey. The relatively small garden sizes and short cultivation cycles have minimal impact on the natural dynamics of forest succession. Moreover, the Kayapó protect these landscapes, monitoring the borders of their Reserve against intruders.

As a result of scant population, low-impact utilization, and militant surveillance, the size of uninterrupted tracts of forest and *cerrado* is sufficient to maintain reproductive populations of numerous species of plant and animals that have been driven to local extinction elsewhere in Amazonia. These include viable populations of disturbance-sensitive species of large vertebrates, including top predators. The rich biodiversity of the area, the intactness of the ecosystem, and the increasing rarity of species found there, make this region a high priority for conservation funding. It is within the interests of conservationists, in general, and the Kayapó, for whom they are a source of livelihood, that these habitats be conserved.

Native Amazonian societies have been universally subject to incursions into their territories, accompanied by disease, population decimation, social disorganization and land loss. The Kayapó have been unusual, however, in drawing upon traditional as well as innovative organizational resources and political strategies to effectively halt uncontrolled exploitation. After a century of physical conflict beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the Kayapó entered into several forms of negotiation with the national society. By the 1990s the Kayapó had earned a reputation as effective political spokesmen (Chernela 1988, Turner 1995a, 1994b, 1999). In addition to traditional subsistence practices the Kayapó have entered into a number of commercial ventures. For several years the Kayapó supplied the international cosmetics corporation, The Body Shop, with Brazil nut oil. The Kayapó maintain what Terence Turner has referred to as a "mixed portfolio," combining several different ventures at once.

The Kayapó: Recent Economic History and Threats

The extent of intact forest cover is all the more remarkable given the relentless pressure from mining, logging, and ranching interests in the Kayapó region. Gold miners flooded into southern Pará beginning in 1981. The growth spurt that accompanied the gold rush of the 1980s and early 1990s resulted in rapid rates of deforestation. Between 1991 and 1994 13,900 ha of primary forest were cleared for ranching.

Today deforestation reaches the borders of the Área Indígena Kayapó. The absence of large-scale agricultural activity inside the reserve is due in large part to close monitoring of the borders by the Kayapó who have used two principal protective strategies: 1) vigilance posts and 2) overflights. (On occasion, as in the case of loggers in A'Ukre in the late 1980s, trespassers have been killed.) This militant defense has deterred appropriation and large scale destruction of forest resources in a manner unprecedented elsewhere in Amazonia. In the absence of conservation safeguards at the local, state and federal levels, and the presence of entrenched development interests in the region, the role of the Kayapó in protecting their own territories is vital to the preservation of these lands.

At the same time as the Kayapó are concerned about managing their lands, their need for revenue for medical, educational, and personal supplies continues. While the Kayapó gained worldwide reputation as knowledgeable guardians and managers of forest resources (Posey, Balee, Rabben), a number of Kayapó are also savvy exploiters of them. Over the past two decades, individual Kayapó entered into negotiations with both miners and loggers (Turner 1995a).

Income through sustainable harvest of resources of the standing rainforest became an available alternative to the Kayapó in 1989 when the Body Shop-UK contracted with two villages to supply Brazil nut oil. While that project generated income for a period, it is also now in decline, due to competition from less expensive sources of Brazil nut oil in the Peruvian Amazon. The Body Shop cancelled its contract in one of these villages, Pukanu, causing political tension and eventual spatial divisions. In another (A'Ukre) it reduced its purchase of processed oil.

Several simultaneous events merge to make this a critical time for environmental action in the Area Indígena Kayapó. First, former revenue sources, destructive to the environment have subsided. Mahogany, formerly a source of income for Kayapó, is no

longer economically sustainable. Therefore, sale of individual trees to logging concerns is no longer an attractive income source for Kayapó. Moreover, logging initiatives have shifted from the lucrative and less destructive logging activities of extraction of hardwoods to the large-scale destruction of forest cover for plywood. Farmlands between the Kayapó border and the city of Redenção, location of sawmills, have been targetted in recent years for wood sources. Logging companies purchase total landcover from local farmers who would otherwise take up the costs of clearing their lands. In this new system, profits to loggers per unit of land are lower; the activity is only economically feasible if carried out on large scale. When the vegetation cover of the farms is complete, the intact forests of the Kayapó reserve will be the target of logging interests. The only impediment at present to clearcutting Indian lands is the strong opposition and vigilance by the Kayapó.

It is in this context that CI approached the Kaiapo to recommend a partnership in which it would finance the Kaiapo existing practice of monitoring the reserve through satellite villages on its perimeter. To this goal CI sponsored annual meetings for all representatives of villages in the AIK, beginning in 2001.

CI/Kayapo Project Description and History

In 2001 CI and the Kayapó *Protected Forest Association* (PFA), began a project involving territorial surveillance along the 1,600 km reserve border. CI support includes boats, motors, radios, vehicles, gasoline, equipment maintenance, camping supplies, GPS, overflights, satellite data, training and meeting expenses.

The operating budget supports twenty-two border guard posts. The annual operating budget for these posts is extremely low. Of a total annual expenditure of \$328,046 by CI for all its Kayapó, Reserve projects, including an ecological research station at Pinkaiti, only \$124,000 is dedicated to the PFA Territorial Protection Service. Of this amount, 28% goes to supply to the 22 outposts, with each post receiving \$2,000 in supplies per year. An approximate 30% is dedicated to equipment replacement and maintenance and 15% to delivery of the supplies to the communities by small aircraft. About 14%/Another 15% is dedicated to thirty over-flights for border surveillance and eleven satellite image purchases. The remaining outlay goes to miscellaneous costs. An additional \$21,000 is dedicated to capacity building. This fund pays for training courses in patrol surveillance, motor

maintenance, and annual strategy meetings by Kayapó, leaders. Thus, the total of \$145,000 dedicated to border patrol is slightly less than CI's expenditures in maintaining the Research Station at Pinkaiti.

CI support enabled leaders of far-reaching communities of the AIK to meet to discuss the possibilities of a partnership in border surveillance. CI provided air transport and food. Leaders of 14 out of 15 communities inside the Kayapó, reserve in June 2000, 2001, and 2002. Elders led and organized the 2-3 day meetings. Spokespersons were accorded open-ended speaking time, according to Kayapó conventions of social organization, public speaking, and decision-making. The conclusion from these meetings was that a local Kayapó, NGO, the Protected Forest Association, would be the vehicle for distributing assistance for territorial surveillance and protection. All communities could benefit from the project by participating in area surveillance.

Three assemblies of Kayapó chiefs were called by CI between the years 2000 and 2004, in conjunction with a partnership between the Kayapó and CI involving border monitoring. (I was able to attend two of these meetings.)

The long-term goals of the project are to protect the full 11,000,000 ha of Kayapó lands by supporting Kayapó protections of their own territories. Two funding sources would be made available, one for border protections, the other for absolute reserves. The latter are small reserves -- with a minimum size of 10,000 ha within the territory of the AIK -- that are set aside for absolute protection. Decisions regarding the reserves would be made at the level of the village; that unit would set aside some of its forests for protection and monitor the protected area. No extractive activities, including hunting or logging, would be permitted in these reserves."

The "Partners"

Working in over thirty countries on four continents, Conservation International (CI) is one of the largest environmental NGOs in the world. With headquarters in the United States, CI is a tax-exempt corporation founded in 1987. In 2002 its staff was over 1,000. CI's investment in conservation over 15 years is over \$315 million.

According to CI's position statement, *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation International: Principles for Partnerships*, its mission is to "conserve the Earth's living

heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature" (www.conservationinternational.org). The same website describes CI's strategy as applying "innovations in **science**, economics, policy, and **community participation** to protect the Earth's richest regions of plant and animal diversity in the hotspots, major tropical wilderness areas, and key marine ecosystems." CI's purpose is to preserve biodiversity by means of focusing resources in areas where biodiversity is richest and most threatened. Hotspots, a concept developed by Norman Myers, identifies the richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on Earth.

"Tropical Wilderness Areas," the largest remaining tracts of pristine tropical forest on earth, are those estimated to be over 70% intact. CI reports that the Amazonian Tropical Wilderness Area "harbors more rainforest than all of the countries of Central America combined." From the perspective of Conservation International, the Kayapó, reserve constitutes one of the largest remaining "tropical wilderness area."

CI aims to leverage several billion dollars to fully realize these ambitious goals set at the "Defying Nature's End" conference. They estimate \$30 billion in private and public investment over the next few decades is needed to protect critical biodiversity.

Project History

The history of the Kayapó/CI collaboration has its origins in the 1980s. While traveling abroad to publicize his appeal to halt projected dams in 1989 (Chemela 1988), the Kayapó spokesperson, Paiakã, visited Canada where he met the ecologist Barbara Zimmerman. When Zimmerman later visited the reserve at Paiakã's invitation, he proposed the idea of a reserve (pers. com., Zimmerman June 2004) in an area located two hours by motorized canoe from other villages. Zimmerman subsequently raised funds for the reserve and an ecological research station, which she established in 1992 with support from CI and the Suzuki Foundation of Vancouver. The field station, known as Pinkaiti, serves as a base camp for biological researchers who conduct projects of their own design, supported by external funding. Field data collected and compiled by researchers at Pinkaiti has expanded the knowledge of the region's biodiversity and ecological interactions, as well as contributing pertinent material to debates regarding parks and peoples. Taken as a whole, the Kayapó/CI partnership involves three components: a reserve, a research station; and the surveillance

project. Together with the village of A'Ukre CI established a zone of absolute preservation, adjacent to the research site and maintained by villagers. The reserve and the research station, both associated with the village of A'ukre, have worked well in combination, since the research conducted at the station serves, in part, to document the ongoing changes in fauna and flora within the reserve. A later component of the Kayapó/CI collaboration, initiated ten years later, extends beyond A'Ukre to include all of the villages of the AIK. This project, described here, builds on an existing attempt by the Kayapó to monitor intrusions into their territories by means of surveillance guard outposts. CI's contribution to this Kayapó initiative is to finance the guard posts. This newest phase has a number of repercussions, including a two-fold increase in the number of outlying posts, and the opportunity of CI to set conditions to this assistance. Several additional projects, not yet implemented, remain possibilities. Resources from the project flow to the nearby community of A'Ukre in the form of salaries for assistants and visitor fees.

The CI/Kayapo Surveillance Project: Why does it work?

I have listed 5 prerequisites to success in any indigenous/NGO alliance. The CI/Kayapó Surveillance Project provides one example of the way these criteria may be met.

1. **Natural Assets.** Kayapó reservations in Brazil encompass a total of 10,905,175 ha in the southern portion of the Amazon basin in the upper Xingú River in the states of Pará and Mato Grosso. Among them, the Área Indígena Kayapó (AIK) in southern Pará, contains 3,284,005 ha that encompasses one of the largest continuous blocks of pristine, closed-canopy terra firme rainforest in the world. It is also site of the northern limit of Brazil's immense savannic *cerrado* that extends southward into the Central Brazilian Planalto. Although these two biomes are recognized for their importance and vulnerability, they are underrepresented in Brazilian conservation units (including National Forests, Parks, and Research Stations). Although the *cerrado* habitat is the second largest biome in Brazil, it remains one of the least well understood. This vulnerable vegetation cover contains important species complexes underrepresented in natural reserves. (At the time of this writing only 1.5 % of the *cerrado* had official protection.) These two biomes, along with transition zones, are found in interdigitation in the region.

2. Social Assets. It should now be clear why the social assets brought to bear by an indigenous community in dealings with an environmentally-oriented-organization are so critical. These assets – which include values, knowledge, and procedures for decision-making, will determine how the indigenous organization interacts with the NGO and what meanings and expectations it brings to the collaboration. Social assets are the single most important determinant in whether activities deemed sustainable (to NGOs) have been and will be followed. Social assets can serve the negotiations of a partnership or bring about its failure. Kayapó leadership continues to maintain its decision-making role, a basic tenet of any true "partnership."

In the case at hand the goals and strategies of the project were developed by the Kayapó. Prior to the start of the project, the Kayapó had in place a system of satellite villages for purposes of border surveillance. Today, with CI provisions, the number of surveillance posts has increased from sixteen, before CI support, to twenty-two. Rather than the superimposition of a prefabricated plan, the surveillance project builds upon an existing Kayapó practice that coincided with conservationist goals. This may be regarded as the transformation of social and symbolic assets into natural ones.

3. Participation. A number of actions by CI strengthened, rather than weakened, the existing social assets brought by the Kayapó to the negotiation by facilitating interaction. CI provided the logistics for annual meetings of Kayapó leaders to discuss strategies and other issues of concern. Three assemblies of Kayapó chiefs were held inside the Kayapó reserve between the years 2000 and 2003. In these meetings, which lasted 2-3 days, the Kayapó and CI set out the terms of their partnership and made these known to one another. At every step each party is able to demand accountability of the other. The Kayapó call CI to task if they feel they are not meeting their part of the bargain as made explicit in the verbal and written contracts.

It was in these meetings that leaders decided that the Kayapó NGO, the Protected Forest Association, was the appropriate vehicle for distributing assistance for territorial surveillance and protection against invasion. This points to a different, but equally important factor in the success of this partnership to date. The project benefits all Kayapó villages and individuals without exclusion. Any village that wishes to participate in the

project may do so. Many projects fail because they benefit a portion of a community, creating factions and disrupting social life.

Given its extreme importance, it is surprising that social assets have been seriously neglected by many environmental NGOs. The case in question is exceptional. As a consequence of an individual, not an institutional, initiative, one researcher has served as a go-between among the Kayapó for over ten years. Zimmerman, the mediator between CI and the Kayapó, speaks Kayapó and maintains "fictive" familial relationships with a Kayapó extended family through whom she is related to others and by whom she is addressed as "daughter," "sister," or "aunt." In A'ukre many newborns are given the names of CI researchers. Zimmerman (and by extension, CI), have fallen, however inadvertently, into a "participatory" mode of interaction. This is a methodology not regularly or consciously employed by environmental NGOs who may regard as sufficient five or fewer days for an "on-site" analysis. Yet inclusion and partnering are complex processes, carrying potential for mutual misunderstanding. Much lip-service is given by environmental NGOs to "listening" to the voices of indigenous peoples. Yet such "listening" requires a degree of trained attentiveness and engagement in which most NGOs invest few resources. The Kayapó/CI project has benefited from Zimmerman's long-term investment among the Kayapó. It is one of the fundamental reasons of its success.

4. The power in excludability. The criterion of excludability is all the more important because of the natural value of the indigenous lands and their legitimized, inalienable rights by virtue of "original" habitation.

In the case described here, the Kayapó hold a natural resource whose conservation, preservation, and sustainable use are of extreme value to its partner, CI. In this relationship the Kayapó have the greater leverage, since they do not require CI in order to carry out their activities -- indeed these activities were underway before the collaboration began. CI's assistance is welcome so long as it furthers the long-range goals of Kayapó to maintain the intactness of their territory.

That Kayapó lands are guaranteed them by Brazilian and international law enables exclusive access and closure of use. Few features are of as great importance to the integrity

and self-determination of indigenous peoples as well as the values placed by environmentalists on biodiversity preservation.

5. Interdependence: Building a Common Ground through "Listening"

Conklin and Graham's 1995 seminal work points to the dilemma when entities build their interactions on mistaken assumptions about one another. The only available alternative is to make every attempt to substitute assumptions about the Other with knowledge based in interaction. This is accomplished through an interactive methodology that, as I have said, emphasizes listening.

The Conklin/Graham paper, however, misrepresents the notion of a "common ground" as isomorphic with shared goals and values. This is not the case; people may build a common ground while holding to different values and objectives.

Moreover, the notion "finding a common ground," is based on a faulty assumption that such ground exists prior to the interaction. Certainly a prior common ground ought *not* be assumed in interactions between First World NGOs and Third World CBOs. Instead, a common ground may, and indeed, must, be *constructed*. This is especially the case when interlocutors do not share the same expectations, beliefs about proper social behavior, values, goals, and different languages.

Typically speakers build a common ground in the course of conversation. In this process, they make their positions explicit through checking and correcting to ensure that misunderstandings do not build up. Such communicative efforts take time and methodologies, that are often overlooked in partnering projects. The CI/Kayapo case is an exception. Here, ten years of on-the-ground experience by one researcher was fundamental in building a common ground.

In the case described here, the goals of the partners are not the same. Whereas the goal of CI is biodiversity preservation, the goal of the Kayapó is to protect their own territories from invasions. The case illustrates that the goals and the assumptions of the partnering entities may differ. In partnerships between international NGOs and indigenous peoples, the goals may not be the same; but they may be complementary. The expectation that the other party will have identical goals is neither realistic, nor necessary to the

collaboration. It should be recognized that each side of the partnership is likely to behave in an opportunistic manner..

That which is essential is that the goals of each entity, though different, be known to the other, and be satisfied. Communication -- I have called it listening -- is key in this effort. I suggest more investment by NGOs in that exercise. If the goals of the entities are understood as mutually benefiting, the partners have a degree of interdependence with regard to the success of the project in question.

Conclusions: Why does it work? Why has this project succeeded?

Why does CI's project among the Kayapó, appear to be working when so many partnerships between NGOs and indigenous peoples, have failed? In this paper I argue that the Kayapó/CI case appears to be successful to date because of several phenomena. These phenomena, when considered syntactically, or together, illustrate that power is not only determined by financial factors.

First, the project is based in Kayapo values and practices. The Kayapó initiated the project of border surveillance, planned it, and carried it out for over a decade. CI representatives recognized 1) the conservation value in protecting the boundaries of the reserve; 2) the prior investment of the Kayapo; and 3) the importance of Kayapo social assets, including a strong decision-making apparatus. CI built upon ten years of experience by one of its researchers in the area, and promoted Kayapo chiefly interactions by sponsoring meetings.

The Kayapó participate in the governing Board that oversees the project. In addition, the project satisfies the criterion of maximum participation. It benefits all Kayapó villages that wish to participate.

Both partnering entities have demanded accountability at every step. The Kayapó have called CI to task when they feel that CI is not meeting their part of the bargain as made explicit in the contract and vice versa. Financial assistance from CI has been recognized by the Kayapó, as useful in meeting their own goals. Both parties set out the terms of their participation and made these known.

Leveling the Playing Field

Finally, the “partnership” maintains a certain balance brought to it by both entities. The Kayapo do not need CI in order to meet their goals, yet assistance from CI is advantageous. On the other hand, CI does need the Kayapó, who hold rights to this expanse of tropical wilderness, in order to meet their project goals; both the Kayapo and CI are aware of the leverage this affords the Kayapo.

To establish or “construct” balance or equality in a partnership, I have argued here that indigenous peoples can bring to a bargaining situation many types of resources, including natural ones, social ones, and political ones. Both the Kayapó and CI are aware of the power of dominion and political advantage yielded by the Kayapó whose lands are guaranteed them by Brazilian and international law. It is the very purpose of these legitimized “rights” to provide indigenous peoples with an inalienable resource that is theirs by virtue of origin.

Why does it work?

From the point of view of NGOs, it is important to prioritize and target specific conservation investments where the impact will be greatest. From the point of view of indigenous communities, protecting their lands and preserving their autonomy is a principal priority. Since: 1) the least disturbed lands lie within indigenous reserves; 2) that indigenous peoples have rights of exclusion by law; 3) these lands are threatened by the same predatory forces and interests that concern conservationists, it could be apparent that the NGO/indigenous alliance is strategically advisable. However, such an alliance, or partnership, can only succeed if certain criteria, outlined here, are met.

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