Negotiating Development: Valuation of a Guesthouse Project in Southern Guinea-Bissau

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Abstract

This paper provides a case study illustrating the crossroads between the agendas of international/national economic development with that of the development objectives of local communities. It shows how a community development project connects villagers to the larger world – both practically and imaginatively. This study takes a single case, the process of developing a guesthouse building project among the Nalú of southern Guinea-Bissau, to illustrate how a local attempt to connect to the outside world is intersected by community relations, NGOs, and development discourse. Through a community study using ethnographic methodology including participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, the village under investigation is shown to be engaged in a process of negotiated valuation in economic, cultural, and globalized terms. The context of the guesthouse project is outlined, followed by the revelation that although the project failed to accomplish what the developers had hoped, it did succeed in enabling various members of the community to demonstrate what they valued, thus asserting agency on their own terms.

Economic development discourse remains tied up in a debate between practice and critical theory. Jeffrey H. Cohen and Norbert Dannhaeuser summarily submit, "We [in anthropology] are left with a divided setting where anthropologists take stands either for (those who practice) or against (those who critique) development, with little ground on which a compromise can be reached or a more finessed position constructed. In such a setting, there is little room for a general discussion of development, for an analysis of economic development as a process" (2002, p. xi). This paper presents a case study of development negotiations in a small village in the southernmost Tombali region of Guinea-Bissau, ethnically divided between the Nalú autochthones and Balanta immigrants. The minority Nalú villagers (n=137), supported and funded by a local NGO known as Nimba, constructed several guesthouses between 2007 and 2010 with the aim of operating a profitable business that would generate revenue for the Nalú inhabitants, the premise being, "If you build it, they will come." This paper traces how this particular site-specific struggle to build guesthouses was influenced by customary values and localized perceptions of capitalist modernity and how this tension affected established patterns of community relations, thus providing a treatise between theory and practice.

The first step in bridging the gap between practice and theory includes an examination of identity. I suggest that the politics of identity can be exposed through the documentation of economic practice as a public spectacle that affirms, colludes, challenges, and makes meaning out of diverse cultural articulations of economic investments and development (Crewe & Axelby, 2012; Crewe & Harrison, 1999; Escobar, 2011; Ferguson, 1997; Grillo & Stirrat, 1997; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Pottier & Sillitoe, 2003). In other words, examining the reality of ongoing engagement and negotiation can expose competing perceptions and agendas between various actors as they relate to a specific project. These negotiations take place between actors with vested interests, power differentials, and shifting values, which can lead to the pursuit of development projects with stereotypical agendas such as aiming to bring locals into some sort of modern present. What is needed, and what anthropologists can provide, is further clarity about how development workers perceive locals, how locals perceive economic development, and, ultimately, how these perceptions are articulated in practice. According to Jonathan Friedman (1992), the attribution of meaning, in this case, various stakeholders assigning value(s) to a particular type of development project, is a motivated practice that comes from different sources (i.e., customary, economic, modernizing, etc.).

In the circumstance of the guesthouse project, there needed to be buy-in from many stakeholders: the neighborhood to supply the labor and in-kind materials (through negotiations between elders, youth, males, and females); the families responsible for the site where the project was to be situated; the spiritual inhabitants of the land, represented by the secret societies; the other ethnic groups occupying the larger community (e.g., the majority Balanta, n=545); the organizational liaisons and interlocutors (i.e., NGO Nimba); and the project funders (i.e., IFAD). Building on Friedman's argument, Robert C. Ulin (2004) argues that there are many stakeholders engaged in a particular event such as the construction of guesthouses and that these constituencies operate within unbalanced "fields of power that position human agents differentially" (p. 153). These power differentials can affect the decision-making processes associated with the event in both anticipated and unanticipated ways, as is shown below through the discussion of the implementation of the development project.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork begun in 2007, this paper considers the conceptions of valuation of development and moves the discourse away from the objective patterning of reality toward the subjective realm of ongoing negotiations. This paper, then, uses a single case study

approach related to a finite event, the construction of guesthouses, as an example of community and economic development, to speak to value formation. Valuation is discussed as a process of engagement between conceptions of custom (e.g., autochthony, inheritance laws, traditional religion) and perceptions of modernity (e.g., economic development, tourism). What emerges then is a hybrid definition of global capitalism, the modification of which is attempted in order to suit more localized needs. This negotiated hybrid understanding of economic development strikes a tense balance between the local and global as it intersects with notions of power and ownership. Because the amalgam understanding of economic development often privileges the global perspective, the project did not adequately fit the local context and, by strict definition, "failed."

At the same time, although the project ultimately did not meet the initial intent of the developers and community participants to bring in scores of tourists ready to pay top dollar for the privilege to stay in the village, the project did encourage the articulation of a development discourse within the community, allowing them to express valuation and, ultimately, agency (*a la* Graeber 2001, 2005). From both methodological and theoretical perspectives, current, ongoing, and complex engagements with stimuli and stakeholders over specific events, such as the construction of a guesthouse, allows *value trends* to emerge that should be observable and interpretable in the ethnographic record. In this case, a value trend is something expressed by one or more of the stakeholders as something worth seeking (Graeber 2001, 2005) for its importance in meeting needs (see Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs").

This paper is divided in five sections. First, I present some background information on the community under investigation. Second, I discuss my research methodology, addressing my research question: How do negotiated practical and imaginative valuations of development result in community development projects that may not fit local contexts? Third, I present the development project as well as the various stakeholder interests while simultaneously discussing value trends related to the development project. This serves as a window into a larger understanding of social configurations and connectedness. I conclude by showing how this case demonstrates that failures and successes of development depend on who the referent is and how they value the initiative, process, and outcome (Crewe & Axelby, 2012; Crewe & Harrison, 1999).

Bissau, the Tombali Region, and the Research Village

The peoples of Guinea-Bissau have been linked in to the demands and vulnerabilities of the global market for centuries through the colonial enterprise and most recently from international fishing contracts and a reliance on the world market to sell locally grown cashews (Lundy, 2012b, 2014). Throughout the Guinea-Bissau countryside, the agricultural sector is economically beholden to the apparent whims of the world commodity markets, affecting local communities' livelihoods and development prospects. Fluctuations in the global price of cashews directly impacts the country's entire populace, with 85 percent of the population involved in agriculture, 85-90 percent of the annual export revenues tied to raw cashew nuts, and more than 250,000 families participating in cashew farming (Lundy, 2012b, p. 36). Communities, therefore, seek to mitigate the realities of the global market by seeking alternative "safety nets," often to no avail (Forrest, 1998; Lundy, 2009).

I purposefully use the idea of "community" as the previous sentence's subject (as opposed to "villagers," "residents," or "local citizens") because many of the villages in rural Guinea-Bissau remain deeply intertwined. For example, Guinea-Bissau's rural land rights and

land use patterns are primarily unwritten, customary, and ethnically delineated. In the rural Tombali region, for example, the land tenure system could be described as one part autochthonous commons (i.e., based on primogeniture and ethnic/familial first settler rights), one part colonial legacy and advancing privatization, and one part land use rights (i.e., partible to an able bodied workforce). Decisions regarding land use then must be negotiated in both time and space (i.e., based on customary norms and global perceptions).
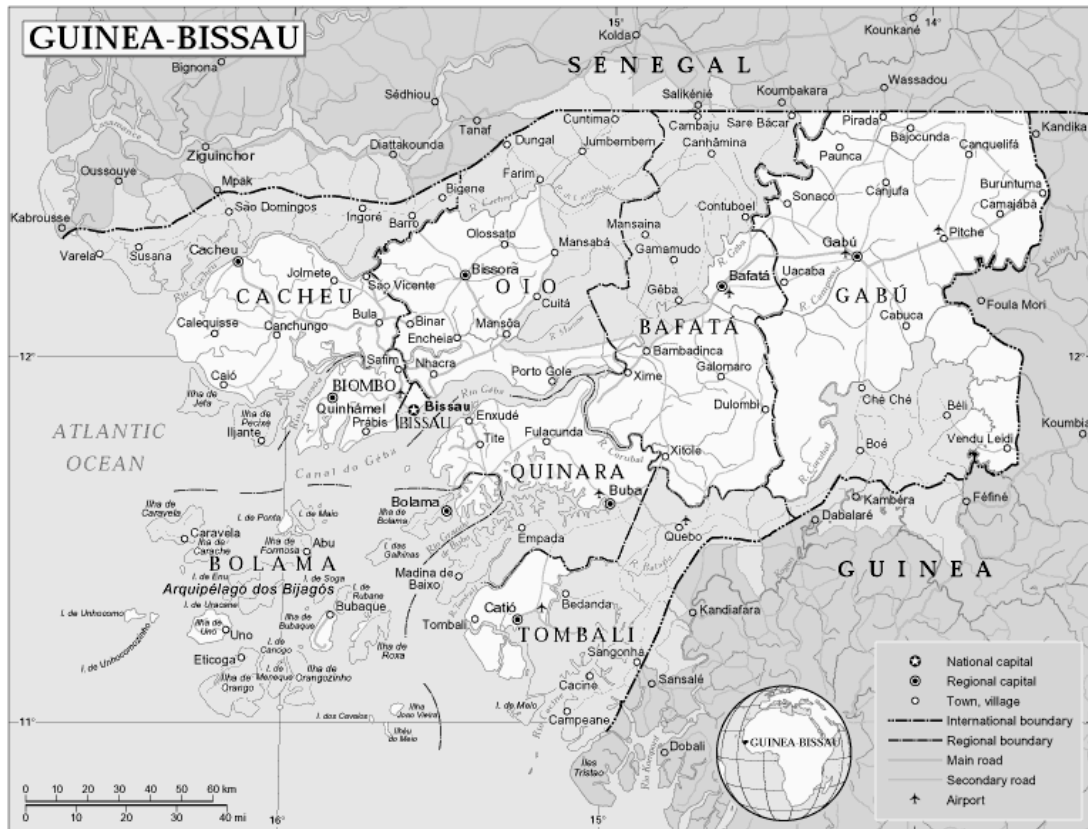

Figure 1. Map of Guinea-Bissau. Source: Guinea Bissau, Map, UNITED NATIONS, June 2012.

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau borders the Casamance region of Senegal to the north and Guinea Conakry to the south and east (Figure 1). Guinea-Bissau has a history of political instability since gaining independence from the Portuguese in 1974; in fact, it is regularly noted in the media that no president has successfully served a full five-year term in office. Similar in size to Taiwan or Moldova, or slightly larger than Maryland, Guinea-Bissau has an estimated population of 1.6 million people, an amalgam of more than 30 distinct ethnic groups, with the two largest being the Balanta and Fula, each at about 30 percent. Nalú, the ethnic group under investigation here, makes up less than 1 percent of the population, with no more than 25,000 Nalú worldwide, divided between Guinea-Bissau and Guinea Conakry (Castro, 2004; Passavant, 2000, p. 385). The official language of Guinea-Bissau is Portuguese, with a Kriol serving as a majority of the country's lingua franca.

The country is divided into eight regions plus the capital of Bissau (Figure 1). These regions are then further subdivided into 37 distinct sectors. The southern region of Tombali, administered from the town of Catió, is made up of the Bedanda, Cacine, Catió, and Quebo sectors, many of which are considered the patrimonial territory of the Nalú ethnic group. The

guesthouse project under discussion occurred in a village of less than 700 inhabitants in the southernmost sector of Cacine. This village is a majority (approximately 500) Balanta transplants, who began moving into the village in 1939 and now inhabit four of the six neighborhoods. Although the Balanta are the largest ethnic group in the country and are found throughout Guinea-Bissau, Marina Padrão Temudo has described them as practicing an "isolationist rationale" (2009, p. 49), valuing agricultural production over education. Balanta elders maintain strict control in society, making the Balanta ethnic group fairly conservative and insular in relation to many of the other ethnic groups of the country (Hawthorne, 2003; Temudo, 2009).

In contrast, the Nalú currently number less than 200 in the research community due to processes of culture and language loss resulting from Susu-ization (i.e., Susu intermarriage and assimilation), the Susu being the immediate and much larger ethnic neighbors of the Nalú, and the out-migration and urbanization of Nalú youth seeking educational and work-related opportunities not available in the semi-isolated rural community. Nalú conversion to Islam was slow, historically, only catching on in the twentieth century, although today most Nalú self-identify as Muslim. The Nalú are still thought to have the second most powerful traditional religion in Guinea-Bissau, just behind the Bijagos of the Bissagos Archipelago off the coast. Since the village under investigation is home to the primary Nalú sacred grove still frequented by domestics and foreigners alike, the Nalú throughout the region refer to this village as the *biku* or bellybutton of their people. The privileged position of the Nalú based on their spiritual heritage has led to a unique form of tourism as well as a cultural conundrum in the village. The dilemma stems from actively encouraging visitation to the sacred grove, the lack of practicing operators for the traditional religion (due to conversion to Islam), and the burden of being "obligatorily hospitable" according to their cultural customs, "giving over food, time, and even their beds to guests" (Lundy, 2012c, p. 124).

When asked what they liked about the research village in southern Guinea-Bissau during a focus group with ethnic Nalú male youths, they responded:

> The ocean makes [the village] a better place to live than elsewhere. We have fresh air blowing off the ocean, keeping the temperature lower than inland. Fish are plentiful and easy to catch when necessary. Since our village is small and isolated, whites might not like it here, … but our environment provides valuable resources. The second best beach in all of Guinea-Bissau is located here. If this beach were in Europe, we would have hotels and other businesses here. (Lundy, 2012c, p. 136)

This quote gathered in 2007 prognosticated the community's desire to develop guesthouses along the shore. Therefore, I was not entirely surprised when I returned to the village in 2010 to see that four small guesthouses had been built (Figure 4). The perception of the community as an environmental treasure and its centrality as a spiritual tourism destination put a heavy burden on the Nalú community, one that some were looking to alleviate and potentially profit from. As will be discussed, this valuation led to the proposal of the guesthouse development project under consideration here.

Methodology

The information in this paper is based on approximately 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork throughout Guinea-Bissau over a five-year period (2007-2011). Data was collected through hundreds of hours of conversations with youth, elders, heads of households, merchants,

religious leaders, and development officials. Forty-one household surveys (100%) were administered to collect demographic profile information and economic data on house construction, land usage, gathering and agricultural practices, the raising of livestock, and household cost of living. Participant observation and continuous monitoring of community activities was used to develop rapport and note daily livelihood activities among men, women, and children from throughout the community to enhance my contextual understanding of the environment. More than 30 semi-structured interviews, group interviews, and focus groups were used to follow up after observation sessions and surveys as a form of triangulation to cross-reference and crosscheck collected data. In addition, a plethora of digital photographs and videos were taken throughout the region to bolster observational data. Both the sponsoring home institution as well as the National Research Institute in Guinea-Bissau (INEP) provided research credentials. Being fluent in the lingua franca, I collected data in the local Kriol language with the added assistance of a local research assistant. The research assistant was partially involved in the guesthouse project, which was managed by Nimba, a local nongovernmental organization (NGO, ONG in Portuguese) and funded through the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, FIDA in Portuguese). Therefore, my research assistant offered unique insights alongside Nimba's director and the Nalú community, which sanctioned the project through several community-wide meetings run by Nimba's director. Eventually, these meetings led to the consent of the heads of household to offer in-kind support of the project through labor and local resources (including adobe, wood, sand, and the land on which to build the guesthouses). In order to carry out the project, funding was needed since Nimba operated on soft money garnered from international aid and development organizations.

Constructing the Guesthouse

IFAD's slogan is "Enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty" (http://www.ifad.org/). This international financial institution is a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to eliminating poverty throughout the developing world, particularly concentrating on rural areas. Through low-interest grants and loans, IFAD is responsible for developing and financing poverty reduction and food security projects to empower vulnerable populations to overcome insecurities on their own terms (viz. Sen, 1999). At the 91st session of IFAD in Rome, they approved a $4.7 million grant to go forward with a $5.6 million "Rural Rehabilitation and Community Development Project" for the southern Quinara and Tombali regions of Guinea-Bissau (President's report, 2007). In 2010, $1.05 million supplementary funding was added, bringing the total cost of the four-year project to $6.7 million (President's memorandum, 2010). This was the third attempt to work effectively in Guinea-Bissau, the first two projects being approved in 1983 and 1993, respectively. These initial projects were deemed to have performed poorly, with many "lessons learned" to share with future projects (COSOP, 2003). Types of projects funded in 2007 through the newest initiative included rehabilitating infrastructure such as 65 kilometers of essential rural roads, improving basic social services, and strengthening grassroots organizations by funding local NGOs such as Nimba directly (IFAD, 2014).

The 2007-2010 IFAD Rural Rehabilitation Community Development Project, headquartered in Buba, targeted approximately 70 percent of the population in the southern regions, which amounted to 13,000 rural poor households (i.e., <5 hectares of land according to the Land Laws of Guinea-Bissau) or 100,000 persons total (President's report, 2007, p. 2). According to the 2007 President's report:

> The overall objective [of the IFAD project] is to reduce rural poverty by improving the incomes and living conditions of the target group, particularly through the *valorization* of natural resources and their sustainable management. The specific aim is to enable target group members to become major players in building the social fabric of their communities and to strengthen their capacity to establish their priority goals and then develop economic and social initiatives to realize them. (p. 2, emphasis added)

This statement is paramount to the current argument because it recognizes that stakeholders must see the value in the development project if it is to "succeed" because success is defined by that very same process of *valorization*. This statement also implies that the local community must come to value "natural resources and their sustainable management" in a fashion similar to the international community (i.e., they must develop *value consensus*). Based on observed in-migration, focus group data, and interviews, the Nalú already highly valued their land, natural resources, and the sustainable management of those resources as both symbolic (i.e., tied to ethnic identity and religion based on first-settler rights through spiritual contracts) and as practical (i.e., rich with fish, rice fields, palm fruit, and cashew orchards). What was really at stake concerning the "successful" implementation of projects such as those funded by IFAD, even when selected by the communities themselves, was that there was an expected accompanying *affective* shift in valorization toward, for example, the privatization of land, as an exchangeable and individually held commodity that could then be "developed" economically.

The IFAD project dispersed funds through calls for proposals on a competitive basis announced in the national press for two-year, renewable contracts. Participants were recruited from select NGOs, public sector partners, and target group members. The project steering committee was made up of "senior representatives of the … Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, representatives of the regional Government administration, representatives of the target population (half of these [being] women), and representatives of the NGOs/service providers contracted to carry out the field work" (President's report, 2007, p. 4). The local community stakeholders, the neighbors, the families, the elders, and the ethnic groups (i.e., locals that were to be "developed") then met with the steering committee through its service provider representatives, in this case, the NGO Nimba, to develop and advance specific initiatives tailored to the identified needs of the people.

According to IFAD, "The project is the first-ever major investment project in Quinara and Tombali and, despite its small size, is proving to be an important motor of development in these two regions, … allowing more investments to be made in agricultural production, food security, and other rural development activities directly benefiting IFAD's target group in the regions" (President's memorandum, 2010, p. 1). The project activities were designed to "be built around innovations proposed by participants themselves" (IFAD/54/07, 2007). NGO Nimba's proposal to construct the guesthouses in the research village was ultimately one of these IFAD-funded ventures. But why was it proposed by the community as a "need" in the first place?

Just before the 1998-1999 civil unrest and eventual coup in the capital city of Bissau, Italian investors were making a bid to build a small beachfront villa at the research site. After extensive negotiations with the Nalú community elders, they were granted a tract of land and began to import materials. However, once the fighting in the capital began, the project was halted and never resumed. It is this initial interest, before my entrance into the research site in 2007, that I believe sparked the community's eventual proposal to build these guesthouses. Although

speculative, the fact that the Italian project was still discussed as a "what if" and as a "missed opportunity" almost ten years after the project ceased is a good indication that it was still being thought about by many in the village. Upon my arrival in March of 2007, the initial conversations about moving forward with the guesthouse project had been completed between Nimba's director and Nalú community representatives (i.e., the heads of household from all three lineages), and the next steps of securing a site and building materials was already underway. As far as I could tell, the Balanta were excluded from these conversations from the beginning and never participated in the project throughout the process. This Balanta exclusion will be discussed further below.

To explore the rationale behind this and other Nimba directed projects, I decided to interview Nimba's director. The following information about Nimba and its operations came from an interview on July 21, 2010, in his darkened living room in Bissau. I had already known the director of Nimba for three years at this point, accompanying him when he would travel south to manage his various projects, including the construction of the guesthouses. By 2010, the guesthouses were complete, and he had begun other initiatives in other communities throughout the Tombali region.

He began his story from his return to Bissau in 2000, after having fled to the countryside during the 1998-1999 civil war that destroyed much of the capital city's viable infrastructure. He started working to develop the youth culture in Bissau until 2002, when he went north to Cacheu to begin managing microcredit and fishing projects. He continued in this capacity until 2006, when he submitted a proposal to IFAD aimed at developing food security in the rural south. That same year, he created the NGO Nimba, aptly named for a female fertility statue/masquerade found among several ethnic groups along the Upper Guinea-Coast. He dedicated his work to expanding food security throughout the southern part of the country, which was his ethnic homeland (being from Catio just across the Cacine river from the research village) and was once considered the breadbasket of Guinea-Bissau (Smith-Morris & George, 2007, p. 584). Funds were limited, so he was only able to hire a small staff including a driver and secretary. He was also able to acquire a vehicle and office space in Catio once the funding was approved. Other functionaries of Nimba were hired as consultants to advise on technical projects or run workshops such as one on keeping fowl or another on rehabilitating paddy rice fields. He also began to offer microcredit loans, distribute seed stock, and advocate for adult literacy campaigns. He explained that since he could not predict the price of cashews in a given year, he instead advocated for development through agricultural diversification as a protective strategy to slow the dangerous trend of monocropping that had been gripping the nation during the preceding three decades.

Nimba had ongoing projects throughout Tombali, including in the Cacine/Quitafine sector, where he eventually built the guesthouses. His worry by the 2010 interview was that while he had a number of ongoing and successful projects, the IFAD funding was set to expire by 2011. According to IFAD, "The short life of the project (four years) permits a return to operations in Guinea-Bissau and the testing of new approaches, with the possibility of an exit opportunity should the political situation become unsustainable" (President's report, 2007, p. 5). This was the director's number one stressor since he could not guarantee sustainability to his employees, constituents, or their initiatives. He stated, "Once the money stops, the projects stop" (interview, July 21, 2010). His overall objective, aligned with IFAD's mission, was to promote independence and get people back to work. He asserted, "If we just give them rice, they won't go into the fields to grow it for themselves" (interview, July 21, 2010). He also got quite frustrated

when he would learn that someone to whom he had loaned money had used it to purchase a mattress or pay for their wedding instead of investing the distributed funds into something that could provide a return and allow for further borrowing in the future. Especially because he was acutely aware of the lack of funder stability, he worked hard to make all of his projects "sustainable," without the continued infusion of cash from outside international donor agencies.

He seemed to be deeply entrenched in the discourse of development through his conceptions of ideas like sustainability. His view seemed to be that the community members participating in his projects didn't quite understand the way global capital worked, leading them to "misuse" their funding in unsustainable ways. Sustainability, as conceptualized by international development and aid organizations, carries with it a damning value judgment with respect to the community members who did not view sustainability in terms of profit margins and reinvestment, possibly opting for the "sustainability" of a lineage or household livelihood instead. He implied that these community members had not adopted the "right" values if they did not use their funds in a "sustainable" way (i.e., by creating a return on the money loaned). The guesthouse project was allowed to move forward specifically because the investors and interlocutors valued the project as potentially profitable for the community as a business-venture, not as a way to mitigate hospitality concerns addressed below as important to members of the village.

The IFAD-funded guesthouse project was underway in a community split ethnically between Nalú first-settlers with accompanying land rights and Balanta immigrants, who outnumber the Nalú villagers almost three to one. The Nalú elders and lineage heads agreed to place the guesthouses in the main Nalú neighborhood; Nimba was working closely with the Nalú since the Nimba director shared Nalú ethnic heritage and because the Balanta in the area seemed "uninterested" in working with outside agencies, although upon further investigation, I discovered that they were never invited to participate in the project in the first place. In the research community, the Balanta had been excluded from development decisions and marginalized in decision after decision regarding a number of projects over the last two decades.

All of the community economic and infrastructural development projects were centralized in or near the primary Nalú thoroughfare. To illustrate the mounting frustration by the Balanta, on August 30, 2007, ADEC (*Associação Desenvolvimento Ensino Communitário*) agreed to supply rice and oil rations to anyone in the research village who was willing to rehabilitate two log bridges that kept access to the village open to vehicles year round. These bridges needed to be replaced every few years. Sixty-one men showed up to cut and place logs, with ADEC giving each person three kilograms of rice and one-half liter of palm oil for their efforts. However, only one Balanta from a neighboring village, and none from the research site, showed up to work. The problem was that the Balanta section chief, who had been asked to announce the project in his ethnic community and ask for volunteers, spoke out against participating in this project. The section chief and the Balanta community were expressing their frustration with the Nalú, who were making all of the decisions on behalf of the entire village despite representing the minority of the community. Regarding the bridge project, the Balanta section chief and his constituents had only been consulted after the Nalú villagers had decided to support the project and were looking for additional labor. During a community meeting, it was clear that the Nalú wanted the majority of the resources being supplied by ADEC and other development agencies to remain staunchly in the hands of the Nalú ethnic community. One of the heads of household in the Nalú village worked for ADEC at the organization's regional office, while the Balanta did not have a similar mouthpiece. In this small, semi-isolated

community, most projects, whether government-funded or externally-funded, tended to run through the same narrow channels, owing largely to a lack of institutional capacity.

The same neglect of the Balanta villagers was observed in relation to the guesthouse project. The Balanta saw little direct benefit of the project for their ethnic community; therefore, they opted out of participating. As an aside, the relations between these two ethnic communities in the research village were in fact mostly positive, although there were instances, such as the engagement with external development under consideration here, that did add some strain to the ethnic-positive cooperative relationships (see Lundy, 2012a).

As I have described elsewhere, when I arrived in the research village for the first time, I documented how the village was ethnically divided into discreet neighborhoods and yet the groups seemed to maintain complex socio-economic interconnections to promote survival, cohesion, reciprocity, security, and stress reduction (Cliggett, 2001; Lundy, 2012a, p. 237; Wilk & Cliggett, 2007, pp. 153–176). At the same time, when preference is given to one group over another, there is always the potential for such preference to enflame cultural difference; in this case, the Balanta simply opted out of participating in the guesthouse project altogether. Further, the Nalú heads of household also had some disagreements over the actual implementation and eventual management of the project.

Space and perceptions of space become quite important in making decisions about how to use and value "development," especially when such development involves "communally" held resources. The Nalú in the village were organized in a centralized neighborhood that contained much of the village's infrastructure. The Balanta, on the other hand, lived in extended family compounds surrounding the main Nalú village (Lundy, 2012a, p. 243-244). Since this project was intended for the Nalú neighborhood, both for centralization and ethnic affinity, it was first decided that the guesthouses would be located within the main Nalú neighborhood proper. Already contained within the centralized Nalú neighborhood were a font, primary school, mosque, community/dance hall, bread oven, two Fula boutiques, and a defunct health center. The national government, ADEC, and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), among others funded these projects. As mentioned above, land ownership throughout Tombali is both collective and lineage based. Distribution of land is determined according to both patrimonial inheritance and production. The Nalú are considered the first settlers of the community and therefore hold rights over the territory through spiritual contracts. At the same time, the Portuguese administered this territory from Cacine during the colonial era and granted land rights to their local allies as a form of cooptation. By 1939, Balanta transplants began to request agricultural lands from the Nalú elders, who acquiesced due to low population density and an abundance of arable land. In fact, as long as the land is under cultivation, it belongs to the individual or family working the plot, no matter the ethnicity. At the same time, the Nalú are protective of their territory and limit and control their holdings as much as possible. "More practical considerations are also at play with the Nalú, [who control] approximately 5% of Guinea-Bissau's land while making up less than 1% of the country's population" (Lundy, 2012a, p. 245).

With these considerations in mind, the four guesthouses were placed in a location at the periphery of the Nalú neighborhood. The original site negotiated for by Nimba was selected near the beach and sacred grove since these were viewed as primary draws for visitors, but the family who had been granted this territory during the Portuguese colonial era rejected this locale and claimed it as theirs to administer (and therefore, profit from), to the dismay of Nimba and the rest of the Nalú heads of households. The eventual construction site was then moved further inland to

a less desirable parcel, where it rested near a second family including two opportunistic brothers, who would eventually become responsible for maintaining the property and granting access to the guesthouses. While the decision to locate the project in this new locale was collectively determined in a community meeting, it was not entirely without political implications. While the guesthouses would be owned communally, this family would become the caretakers of the guesthouses on behalf of the community and would receive any payment first to maintain the site before profits would be shared among the Nalú villagers. In fact, this arrangement was one of the primary reasons for the project's eventual demise. Nimba had planned to allow an outsider, my research assistant, to manage the project once complete. However, the brothers disagreed with this plan. The result was that Nimba refused to fund the continuation of the project once the initial phase was complete. The larger plans for additional guesthouses and a management building with restaurant have been put on hold indefinitely.

The brothers felt that they had the necessary expertise to operate and manage the guesthouses (since they had previous experience running a successful boutique) in spite of the strict hospitality expectations among family, friends, and co-ethnics that might potentially result in practices that undermined the profitability of the guesthouses. In fact, the success of the brothers' boutique was due in part to their having brought in an outsider to operate it, a Fula youth from Guinea Conakry, who could be easily coopted. This arrangement allowed them to sell household products to friends and family (as opposed to providing such goods free of charge) without feeling the social stigma associated with doing business with close relatives. In other words, the community had selected this site in some respects because of the social challenges of operating a guesthouse. However, Nimba and the community had different ideas about how to solve this management issue. By allowing the guesthouses to be built in this particular spot, they acknowledged the need for eventual outside management if it was to be successful, although Nimba and the community disagreed over who would ultimately control the manager and, hence, the guesthouses themselves. In this case, the community was able to wrest control of the project, while Nimba decided that further investment was no longer "sustainable," or more accurately, in the organization's best interests to continue to fund, especially as IFAD aid was about to expire.

The closest points of interest to the selected site included a Balanta family compound (with no observable role with the project), the water tap, the defunct health center, the community/dance hall, a Fula boutique, the primary footpath access point to the village, and the family who granted access to the land. Also relatively close by was the village proper, sacred grove, and beach, although these could not be directly viewed from the project location. At the same time, the project had been selected through consensus with the bricks being provided from clay located at the other end of the village. The entire Nalú neighborhood was responsible for supplying the needed labor; men worked by making bricks, cutting roof beams, and constructing the buildings, while the women, on a rotating basis, cooked the meals, with the food being supplied by Nimba. The roof beams were cut from the nearby forest, while the corrugated metal sheets for the roof, wooden windows and doors, beds, toilets, plastic basins, and other construction tools came from Nimba after being purchased in the capital of Bissau.

Returning to the interview with Nimba's director in 2010 for a moment, it is relevant to mention that he described the Nalú as one of the smallest ethnic groups in the country with one of the "biggest secrets." This was not the first time I had heard these sentiments. Because of the spiritual reputation of the Nalú throughout the country and region, the director believed that visitors would travel to the southern part of the country seeking spiritual guidance, a

phenomenon I had been witnessing on a small-scale (a few hundred visitors per year) since my arrival in the village in 2007 (Lundy, 2012c). The Nalú's traditional religion however, was fading through the acculturation pressures of Islamic conversion and larger neighboring ethnic groups, particularly the Fula, Beafada, and Susu, which was having a dramatic effect on their language (with Susu having become the most common lingua franca in the village and the Nalú language only spoken among the eldest generation) and culture through intermarriage and assimilation.

Despite these changing cultural patterns, the director of Nimba and others continued to romanticize the south, leading to untenable development expectations, perceptions, and ultimately, projects. For example, Nimba's director foresaw Buba, with its soon to be rehabilitated port, becoming a modern, commercial hub that would then transport goods through Catio and southern Guinea-Bissau across the border into Guinea Conakry. According to him, this would ensure rapid development along this international transit route. He also continued to hold dreams of the south becoming the country's breadbasket once again. This was, after all, one of the primary reasons he was working in the southern part of the country; he encouraged the population to return to their now defunct and decaying paddy rice fields through seed distribution projects. The local population too supported these perceptions of themselves as rice farmers, although they produced only enough to sustain their families for a few months before having to buy, barter, or borrow this staple for the remainder of the year (Lundy, 2012b). Their idealized selves and community identities no longer matched the objective realities, as evidenced by many long conversations excoriating Nalú youth at planting time because many chose to remain at school or visit urban centers during the rice season instead of returning to the village to help their families prepare the fields. According to my household survey, while most Nalú in the village described themselves as paddy rice farmers, the majority of family income was from petty trade, palm oil production, cashew nuts and wine, and fishing (Lundy, 2009).

Finally, as mentioned above, many Nalú saw this village in particular as a potentially unique tourist destination for both its beaches and spiritual reputation. There was already a Labor Day festival in early May that drew thousands of revelers annually from throughout the country to this tiny village. In addition, folks came from as far as away as Europe to consult with the *boloberu* or traditional religious specialists and visit the Nalú sacred grove to petition to become pregnant, heal unknown diseases, be united with loved ones, or gain political or economic success (Lundy, 2012c). It is for these reasons that the collaborative talks between Nimba and the community led to the guesthouse project. According to IFAD's funding guidelines, an eligible project needed to be selected by the participants themselves. Due to perceptions about their community's environmental, geographic, spiritual, and touristic desirability alongside outside valuation encouraging such perceptions, including the Italian investors' interests in the 1990s and the annual Labor Day festival attracting large crowds, the Nalú community was ready to invest land, labor, and resources into the success of this project.

The guesthouse project broke ground in February 2007, and the buildings were completed by 2011. The following excerpts related to the project were taken from my fieldnotes in 2007. For example, on March 7, I wrote, "It is currently 7:40 am. The local schoolteacher and his primary school class are carrying adobe bricks from behind our house, where they were made out of the local clay to the guesthouse site down closer to the Cacine River port. Many people have been working on these four round buildings over the last five days. They are building half the wall and then allowing it to cure for a few days before finishing them off [Figure 2]. They have one and a half of the building walls finished." On March 27, I documented a fight between

two teenage girls over a boy outside of the community dance hall. The argument became physical, and several of the new adobe bricks for the guesthouses were destroyed. The girls' fathers were quite upset the following day and made the girls compensate the community for the destroyed bricks, not because they had any value in the economic sense but because they represented the collective interests of the Nalú community.

Figure 2. Construction on the first guesthouse gets underway. 2007. Photograph by author.

Figure 3. Construction is just about complete. 2010. Photograph by author.

By June 2, the guesthouse project was still progressing. The village did not field a team at a local soccer tournament because the youth group had forgone the games to work on the guesthouse. What these fieldnotes demonstrate is that Nimba was actively involved in the research community from the moment of my arrival in February 2007 until my departure in October of the same year and upon my return in 2010 and 2011. The activity around the guesthouse project, however, was intermittent since Nimba personnel only visited the site a few days per month. In fact, by the start of the rainy season, the corrugated tin roofs had not been completed, and one of the guesthouse walls had collapsed. By my return visit in 2010, all four buildings were standing (Figure 3). However, much of the talk about expanding the project did not come to fruition, and the only people who had been granted access to these guesthouses were Nimba associates, who had not paid for the privilege to sleep there. The project was a success in the sense that the community did what they set out to do, namely, construct the guesthouses, fully equipped with indoor shower areas and latrines (Figure 4). The expectation that "if you build it, they will come," however, never materialized.

Figure 4. Inside shot of the guesthouse. 2010. Photograph by author.

Conclusion

This paper began by asking how negotiated practical and imaginative valuations of economic development result in a community development project that may not fit the local context. I challenged the notion that development projects must be evaluated as successes or failures and instead suggest that various stakeholders in the guesthouse project both gained and lost something in the process of negotiating development based on their perspective (Crewe & Axelby, 2012; Crewe & Harrison, 1999). This project elucidates the idea that hybridized traditional institutions regulating economic development can operate concurrently with the ideological and practical infusion of global capitalism onto the cultural landscape.

What a description of a development project and its myriad valuations such as the one provided above allows us to do is to conduct what Chris Fowler (2004) calls "the archaeology of personhood." He explains that "the study of personal transactions, relationships, interactions and

transformations" (i.e., personhood) "gives a shape to how identities that shift continually throughout life are mediated through the small interactions between a few people [whom I have called the stakeholders, above] and in large community events" (2004, p. 155). These events then showcase how development is negotiated, shared, and valued.

People throughout southern Guinea-Bissau are small-scale farmers, herders, and fisherpersons. Along with the majority of the rural population, the village residents are vulnerable to erratic rainfall and weather and price fluctuations. Entrenched food habits, poor infrastructure limiting access to markets, inadequate health care, a defunct educational system, international exploitation of aquatic resources, political instability, and a myriad of other problems compound their economic insecurities. Amartya Sen (1999) would argue that a lack of "agency" is responsible for the populace's inability to turn their "capabilities" (i.e., labor and resources) into a better quality of life. Recognizing the precarious position of these people, some international development agencies are now funding national and local NGOs in Guinea-Bissau to create collaborative projects that are participatorily developed alongside the target population. This form of decentralized needs assessment is intended to empower the local population by working on initiatives aimed at increasing local agency by nurturing capabilities. What the case provided above demonstrates is that decentralized needs assessment is theoretically and morally a step in the right direction when it comes to international aid and development, while at the same time, selecting appropriate projects may also benefit from community engagement with professional expertise beyond the community, such as with those who understand issues of multivocal valuation and power differentials. Like the work of Crewe and Harrison (1999) and Crewe and Axelby (2012), this paper challenges the notion of "community" projects by insisting that one must first understand who the community is. The Nalú are a very small minority group in the community, and yet the guesthouse project was focused on them largely because the head of Nimba, the NGO administering the project, was an ethnic insider. At the same time, additional conflicts arose because the director of Nimba had his own vested interests and was entrenched in traditional development discourse. Ultimately, this paper looks at how global discourses on development shape and are shaped by local contexts. In this case, one of those local factors influencing the valuation of the guesthouse project that was initially overlooked was hospitality.

Hospitality most certainly factored in to the valuation of the guesthouses. It was a collective drain on the community, as the cost of providing food, shelter, and water to both domestic and foreign visitors seemed to outweigh the economic benefits from their visits to the sacred grove. Therefore, the guesthouses had the potential to funnel foreign visitors toward the outskirts of town, where the community obligations to these visitors were lessened. At the same time, as mentioned above, hospitality could also serve as a deterrent of business since it was socially unacceptable to charge friends and family for services. The eventual affect this value will have on the guesthouse project is still unknown; if a community outsider manages the project, then friends and family could be charged freely without community reproach. However, if someone from the community is responsible for managing the property, which was the case in 2010 and 2011, then it is much more likely that visitors will be staying in the guesthouses without providing compensation.

This story is largely about the negotiation of value and potential value, from the economic value of the guesthouse project to the values of hospitality, family, ethnicity, heritage, custom, and personal connection. In the end, what the guesthouse project in Guinea-Bissau accomplished was to allow members of the community to recognize multiple perspectives on

valuation and to better appreciate the community's various positions of distance and scale related to value formation.

Notes

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