Chapter 3
Forest

This is a story
Of deforestation and soil erosion,
Brought on by yesterday's greed
And perpetuated by today's need.

Wood for Living
Tanzania: People and Natural Resources
Concern Video, Co-Funded by E.C., 1990[1]

This chapter looks at the social circumstances surrounding the Malangali Forestry Program (MFP), financed and administered by Concern. Like the other topics discussed in this dissertation, the MFP involved much more than simply planting and protecting trees. Malangali residents and the Concern forestry team all began their interactions with the MFP with particular histories, understandings of, and goals for forest resources. By examining where the actors started, how they and their environment changed during the program's decade, and where they stand at the program's resolution, we can learn much about how rural residents and international development organizations interact in contemporary Africa. My perspective, which joins recent calls to expand the anthropological contribution to environmental praxis (Hoben 1995, Fairhead and Leach 1996, Leach and Mearns 1996, Brosius 1999), is sympathetic to environmental discourses, yet subjects them to a critical examination. The chapter is only nominally about trees; while it can be read usefully for what it says specifically about forestry programs, the focus is on people and their ideas.

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[1] This text is excerpted from the introduction to a video segment that immediately follows the segment featuring Saimon Fihavango that uses the text of the brochure discussed in the previous chapter as its script. Though the narrator mentions that the location of this second video segment is Ismani, no information is given that would enable the viewer to discern that the Ismani area is different in any way from Malangali, which is shown in the segment, entitled "Three Bags Full" after the brochure, featured immediately beforehand. In the video, the segments follow one from another, as the Malangali Forestry Program followed closely the tree planting program designed for Ismani. The video is professionally edited to accompany the narration with images of felling trees, burning wood, and denuded fields.

We cannot ask what the MFP did without first looking at what its planners intended it to do. The chapter begins by examining their assumptions about Malangali's ecology and its people, a neo-Malthusian environmental policy narrative (Hoben 1995) that the area suffered from deforestation and that the deforestation was caused by the behaviors of area residents. I compare this to the attitudes area residents held toward trees and forests, who were less inclined to act as though the forests were under threat but were nonetheless happy to evaluate whether forestry messages were appropriate for them. I submit that Malangali has never had widespread deforestation, though the most populated areas of the division have experienced local depletion of forest resources. Because of these localized forest pressures, many area residents – almost all of whom were men – became committed to some aspects of the environmental agenda to which they were exposed. During the decade of 1985 to 1996, however, some of the assumptions underlying the MFP changed in ways unnoticed by the program management. European discourse shifted from its early focus on environmental protection toward something called economic sustainability. At the same time, gender analysis became central to the concerns of planners of ecological programs. These shifts away from the initial environmentalist agenda had dramatic repercussions for the forestry program, resulting in resources being used for activities in which few area residents were interested, thereby precipitating the collapse of the ten year tree-planting program. The chapter will chart this shift away from environmentalism by looking at Malangali actors and at large public stages in Europe and the United States. It concludes by examining what remains of the MFP following Concern's withdrawal of funds and personnel.[2]

Deforestation?

The MFP sought to change people's forest use practices through a combination of legal and behavioral changes. Concern expected the rewards of the program to be threefold:

1) Environmental benefits from reversing a perceived process of deforestation.
2) Social benefits from women having to spend less time gathering fuelwood.
3) Economic benefits from the eventual sale of forest products.

In 1997 I talked about the MFP with three men who were involved in its early days. From the perspective of these Europeans who were in charge of instituting the MFP in the mid 1980s, the organization made mistakes. With hindsight, the three men suggest, we can see how the fatal flaws in the forestry program were present from the beginning. One point of this chapter is to dissect these flaws more than has previously been done, to suggest which of the problematic aspects of the MFP are still extant within the organization and within forestry programs in rural Africa. The analysis of Howard Dalzell, Brian Nugent, and Jim Kinsella offers important contributions to our understanding of what went wrong with the MFP. This section places their analysis within the context of trends in European thought about African forestry, after which we will compare these analyses with the perspectives of the rural residents of Malangali.

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[2] This chapter contains few scenes of direct interaction between European development workers and African residents. Were the research conducted a year earlier I would have witnessed many more such encounters, but by the time I began fieldwork Concern had withdrawn all but one European staffer from Malangali. African-European exchanges that I witnessed were therefore often between the remaining African forestry staff and European visitors sent from Iringa to tour the Concern field areas. The discussion herein is thus based on many hundreds of conversations with Africans about forestry and the aid organization, and with Europeans about forestry and Africans, rather than a chronicle of their discussions together.

The Malangali Forestry Program began without conducting any needs assessment or baseline studies. Jim Kinsella, now a professor of rural development at University College Dublin, was present the day Concern arrived in Malangali. He does not hesitate to reflect critically on his time there or on the program.[3] "I had no development work experience," he says. "I had worked two years in emergency in Ethiopia. I was very much involved in the frenzy to figure out what to do in Malangali if we got involved… We were very much influenced by what was going on in Ismani, afforestation. [Ismani is a much drier area with many fewer trees.] So even before the Land Rover drove around Malangali it had been pretty much identified we would go in with forestry.[4] I had been in country two days, we went on a two day trip around Malangali…

"Malangali had been identified within Iringa as an area where Concern should be involved. It was a poorer area, accessible, with no other active programs. It was pointed out on a map by regional government. The next step was asking, well, what can we do?" The decision to undertake a forestry program was due in large part to the organization's experience with starting the Ismani tree nurseries: it was something they felt capable of doing. It was also something with which they were intellectually comfortable. The contemporary analysis that Africa was suffering a crisis of deforestation was one that agency planners accepted. As individuals, they had become involved in international aid because of a desire to help solve problems, and so they were committed to combating this perceived crisis. Dr. Kinsella's history surprised me, though, not because the people in the first Land Rover were predisposed to find deforestation in Malangali, but that they had decided it existed before they even arrived.[5] The die for a decade's work was cast not in the Land Rover, but in the European publication of several analyses of African forestry conditions. David Storey notes that Chambers, extrapolating from U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization figures that were formative in Tanzanian forestry policy (FAO 1984), shows the figures in circulation projected "that the last tree in Tanzania would disappear in 1990" (Chambers 1997: 22).[6]

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[3] These quotations are from notes from interviews in Dublin in 1997. Some sentences have been reordered for narrative clarity.

[4] Kinsella's prior experience suggests an evaluation of Malangali that was colored by a core narrative of environmental crisis in Ethiopia around which Hoben, prior to debunking it, demonstrates much international aid activity in the 1980s was based. "'Long ago when there were fewer people in Ethiopia, indigenous farming systems and technology enabled them to make a living without seriously depleting their natural resources. Over the present century human and animal populations have grown. Indigenous farming systems have been unable to keep up. Population has exceeded carrying capacity, causing ever-increasing and perhaps irreversible environmental damage. Only a massive investment in environmental reclamation can reverse this process. People are unable to make this investment without outside assistance because they do not know how and because they are too poor to forego present for future income or to provide for their children.'" Hoben continues, "The narrative is not new, and it is not peculiar to Ethiopia. It came to play a more central role in East African soil conservation in the 1930s (Anderson 1984). It has been reenunciated and reinforced and Africanized in the wake of the environmental movement in the West, as it fits well with its interest, understandings, sentiments and with the deeply rooted Western image of Africa as a spoiled Eden" (Hoben 1995: 1013; see also Adams and McShane 1992)

Ecology was not a new concern for planners in Tanzania in the mid 1980s, but ecological programs took on new urgency as they became imbued with new rationales.

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[5] An aside: Concern eventually replaced their Land Rovers with a fleet of Toyota Land Cruisers, a decision they made for a variety of practical reasons. Each Land Cruiser costs several tens of thousands of dollars, and each aid agency needs sufficient numbers of such vehicles to ferry, at a minimum, all high-level expatriate employees. I suggest that among the greatest beneficiaries of aid activity in Africa have been Toyota and its fellow manufacturers of four-wheel-drive utility vehicles.

[6] Storey was a key forestry and development worker for Concern in Malangali from late 1993 until early 1996. He was the last Concern expatriate in Malangali, living there through the first five months of my field research period. While we disagree about some interpretations of the topics in this dissertation, I hold his opinions and his intentions in the highest esteem. In addition to our many conversations and additional personal correspondence, he read a rough draft of this dissertation and offered extensive and incisive comments.

Steven Feierman outlines the theories behind the colonial-era ecological policies that evolved into more recent agricultural and forestry conservation efforts:

> [A] way to increase overall levels of production was through soil conservation methods. This would enable peasants to produce more (whether for market or subsistence) without using more land. Conservation measures would also preserve the soil for future generations. At this time [the 1940s and 1950s] planners around British-controlled Africa were imposing conservation schemes as a response to the many sources of pressure on the land: expanded African production, the rapid growth of the African population, and the growth of competition by European settlers for the land. Soil conservation was a way of fitting more Africans onto a small amount of land. (Feierman 1990: 164-5)

Among the concerns of planners, famine and drought ranked high while deforestation remained low on the list in East Africa until the 1980s. I make this assertion after examining the indexes of many of the books listed in the bibliography to this dissertation. Before the 1980s it is rare to find a book that discusses forestry problems in the region, while most books today give forestry at least some mention. *Facing Mt. Kenya*, written in the 1930s by Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, contains one paragraph that links declining rainfall with forest loss. "This deforestation followed the alienation of the Gikuyu lands," he writes (Kenyatta 1965: 241), making clear that policy planners had not yet begun to consider deforestation a more widespread phenomenon attributable to the practices of African populations. Nor was the environment an area of policy concern for the Tanzanian government in the years soon after independence. In a volume of major speeches and essays from 1962 through 1968 that devotes much space to discussing rural development matters, Julius Nyerere is silent on forestry issues and mentions soil conservation only in passing (Nyerere 1968: 66).

According to a small book published by the Tanzanian government's Forest

Division, 1968 was the year in which funds were first "set aside for establishing tree nurseries to supply free seedlings to villages, individuals and schools and other institutions" (Ministry of Lands 1984: 2). Mnzava (1983) concurs with this source that the objective behind these early planting programs was to increase the supply of fuelwood. These programs took on more urgency when the oil crises of the 1970s made it obvious that Tanzania could not count on meeting its energy needs by importing oil. In other words, forestry programs through the 1970s were motivated not by a sense of forest cataclysm but by the hope of better exploiting natural resources to meet the country's economic needs.

Importantly for Malangali, the early 1980s marked a significant transition in the ways planners – especially European donors – thought about African forestry. The shift from relative complacency about the future of African forests was sudden and complete. As late as July 1979, a "Conference on International Cooperation in Agroforestry" brought scholars to Nairobi from all over the world to talk about farm and forest issues in the Third World; the conference papers barely mention impending catastrophe. Four years later, a September 1983 international symposium on similar issues in Wageningen had as its premise that, "The overexploitation of forest and tree resources has resulted in a rapidly decreasing capacity of forests and trees to provide essential services and products to humanity" (Wiersum 1984:12). A concurrent document prepared for the U.S. government is prefaced with the sentence, "Deforestation has claimed half of the world's original tropical forest lands" (Shen and Hess 1983: iii). I suggest that the rapidity of this transition was inspired by analyses that suggested massive deforestation in Asia and the Americas. The notion of *African* forests as standing on the brink seems to have arisen in response to this international discourse of doom. In *The Primary Source* (1984), Myers made an influential case that tropical forests, which he described as under threat in many instances, were of crucial importance to people of the entire world. Myers flits from country to country, continent to continent in his writing, making it easy for European readers to lump all tropical countries together as a single zone of ecological desperation.

Writings that focused on environmental destruction specifically in Africa began to appear at about the same time. By 1985, Timberlake could write in *Africa in Crisis* (a book that has since been reprinted several times) that “there is an almost universal decline in woodland throughout dry tropical Africa” (Timberlake 1985: 95). From the early 1980s on, authors echoed the new wisdom that, “Deforestation is therefore one of the gravest threats to ecological stability and food production in Africa” (Harrison 1987: 172). “Erosion and loss of soil fertility arising from the destruction of trees over large areas of developing countries are among the most important problems of economic development today,” began a book about Africa written for the World Bank (Anderson 1987: vii). The response that appealed to development planners was tree planting. By 1984, for example, the Peace Corps was training its volunteers in uniform techniques to implement village tree planting programs throughout Africa (Mahaffey, Fillion, and Weeks 1984). Because tree planting programs were already underway in Tanzania, the new intellectual climate in Europe made logical their expansion in response to a suddenly perceived crisis of deforestation throughout the country. This theme of environmental crisis and deforestation has continued into the 1990s (National Environment Management Council 1994, Angelsen, Shitindi and Aarrestad 1999), despite the emergence of research that suggests a more complex counternarrative (Hoben 1995, Fairhead and Leach 1996, Leach and Mearns 1996).

The immediate answer to the assumed deforestation problem that Concern determined existed for Malangali, then, was to get people to plant trees. It was already too late, in September 1985, to establish a nursery in Malangali that could have seedlings ready for planting in January. Instead, ten lorry-loads of trees, about 50,000 seedlings, were trucked four hours from the Ismani nursery. A temporary nursery housed the seedlings until they could be distributed to about half the primary schools and half the village governments. Kinsella says, “when it came to the rains the interest wasn’t in tree planting, the interest was in farmers looking after their own *shambas* [fields]. In the middle of ’86, we did a survey, only about 10% of trees survived, and those were in the missions and schools.”

The experience of that first year did not dissuade the organization from pursuing a tree planting program in Malangali. While Jim was more enthusiastic about working with farmers on food security issues, the institution was already committed to establishing seedling distribution initiatives within the villages. Brian Nugent, who was Country Director at the time, told me in Dublin that the MP from the area to the south, Njombe district, was instrumental in bringing Concern to the area. “First he got Concern into Njombe, then suggested Malangali. He was very influential, he was the Minister for Agriculture at the time.” The program in Njombe that preceded Malangali was short-lived, in part because that district has more rainfall and is wealthier, so thus did not fit the agencies self-defined mandate to work with the poorest of the poor. “Once the Malangali area was selected, the recipe was there. And not a tried and proven one, either. Things hadn't gone far enough in Ismani to know what should be replicated… The wheel has been continuously reinvented."

Although Kinsella was lukewarm about all the effort put into forestry, saying "there was plenty of action in the first six months, but it was money wasted," the wheel was rolling. Says Nugent, "When you started putting the thing together, the bodies that became involved, different agendas started emanating from the discussion. Danida [Danish Aid] wanted to move into a neighboring area. The government started playing one off another to try to get more. By the time the negotiations were complete, the priorities of the other bodies, their agendas, bureaucracy, what kind of staff, all took priority over the poor. By process, it left these *people* way behind." Despite his reservations about the forestry focus, says Kinsella, "the next year the focus was on getting a local *bustani* [tree nursery]."

Howard Dalzell, now head of Concern's Overseas department, was recruited into the organization as an agricultural advisor in 1986. "I wasn't very happy with the programs," Dalzell says. "They seemed to me to be very recipe oriented, and without much understanding of local conditions, and without much emphasis on getting them involved." Dalzell joins with Kinsella in pointing out that no detailed baseline survey had been done. Says Dalzell, "No doubt had one been done, a program that dealt more with food security factors and sustainability factors would have been developed." He continues, explaining the top-down structure of the MFP, "The forestry programs were set up by foresters, not surprisingly. In Europe, forestry was set up by the state. The public is not invited in, except for special use such as a picnic. But the state plants the trees, minds the trees, harvests the trees. So you control everything and you don't even invite the public to get involved. So that's very different from sitting down with the people and analyzing what they needed and wanted. Unlike agriculture, which in Europe was private."

How could Nugent and Kinsella arrive at implementing a forestry program in Malangali before they ever arrived in the division? The answer had as much to do with European beliefs about Africa as with any scientific basis. The scientific perspective is the basis upon which Europeans claim the expertise that enables them to direct programs in Africa such as the MFP. Yet the people who instituted the MFP now say the program was marked by a *lack* of science – no baseline studies, no needs assessment, no planning. Despite a short-circuit in the accepted scientific practice, the organization and its representatives felt comfortable enough with the assumptions underlying the program that they would undertake a commitment that involved thousands of acres, tens of thousands of people, hundreds of thousands of dollars, and sustained effort for more than a decade. To do this, they had to rely on an analysis of forest resources in rural Africa that was bigger than what they encountered when they first drove through Malangali.

Bounty Malangali's miombo forest resources are well described by Tuite (1992). The division's rolling hills have long supported the low scruffy trees and wind-sculpted acacias common through a wide swath of this region of eastern Africa. Malangali is too moist to be colonized by the baobabs that can be found at the same altitude less than 150 miles away, yet too dry to support the denser forests that grow in the higher altitudes just to the south. We know from Brown and Hutt's early ethnography (1935) that people lived scattered throughout the woodlands. They cleared land by burning felled areas of forest, cultivated that land while it remained fertile, then let it lie fallow while they farmed a new plot of land. Though we have extensive archeological evidence of middle Paleolithic settlement at the nearby Isimila site from about 70,000 years ago, it is probably an oversimplification to suggest that such a symbiotic pattern continued unimpeded from long before recorded history. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that people and trees in the area have interacted without disastrous consequences since before recorded history.

Slash and burn agriculture was incompatible with many of the changes that occurred during the twentieth century. The most important of these has been siphoning of people from their homesteads toward labor in the cities and the plantations. (These processes are well described by Iliffe 1979 and Bryceson 1990.) Laborers off-farm have required food grown as surplus by the people remaining in rural areas like Malangali. Intensification of agriculture (increasing yields per acre), described in the previous chapter, was one way to farm more food in the rural areas. Other strategies of increasing crop production were to farm more land that had previously been forested, or to let land spend less time in fallow in a cycle between field and forest. All three methods are in evidence in Malangali; the latter two placed stress on the woodlands.

Additional pressures on the forest included governmental mandates that people farm crops such as tobacco, demand for forest products in the expanding towns, and in some places an increasing population. Some large areas of woodland were no longer allowed to regenerate after being cleared, and people continued not to take much action against fires spreading beyond their intended range. Although pressure on the forests has increased in recent decades, however, until recently they were not seen as scarce, and forest resources were not seen as a problem. Like Europeans driving around on fossil fuels, Malangali residents did little to protect their forest resources in areas where they dwindled.

Government policy generally promoted this view of the forests as a bounty for exploitation. In the north-central part of Tanzania, vast woodlands were cleared under the British colonial administration in a campaign to eradicate the tsetse fly. These lands were kept clear for cotton cultivation. The Ismani area was promoted for the commercial grain-farming potential available to farmers who would move in and burn down the unproductive forests. "Forestry" was largely confined to large plantations such as the huge Sao Hill area that borders Malangali and provides most of Tanzania's domestic paper pulp, or the wattle plantations in nearby Njombe. Government policy began to change only when it became apparent on both a national and a global scale that forest resources were limited and endangered.

Baba Eustacia Baba Eustacia brought up many of these issues of forest history in our conversation on the road to his daughter's wedding. Eustacia, a young woman from Isimikinyi, was marrying a young man from the village of Saja, 30 kilometers to the south. They met through their Lutheran choir activities. Twenty of us had each contributed 1500/= ($2.82) to charter Godi's pick-up for the day. Godi chose the circuitous route that brought us almost to Makambako before we turned off the main road and headed back north. We were piled into the back of the vehicle, bumping along on a dirt track, driving through a desolate landscape I'd never seen before. Eustacia's father, Baba

Eustacia, was with us, though he usually stays in Iringa town. He and his brother-in-law Maneno[7] and I perched on the metal cage above the pick-up's bed. Below us the women sang Swahili hymns and old Bena tunes, getting louder when we passed near houses.[8] Baba Eustacia remarked, "Hey, you know, I was on this road once. It was a long time ago, days of old."

Maneno answered, "It's a good way to reach Makambako."

Baba Eustacia continued. "I walked all the way from Isimikinyi. The whole day. That was the last time I did that, wasn't it!"

"I come with my bicycle sometimes," interjected Maneno. "It is not so long by bike."

Baba Eustacia pondered. "It looks so different, though. It took a long time to recognize the route." I asked what it used to look like. He replied, "It was all… it was forest! There were so many trees, you couldn't even really see the hills. It is really very hilly here, but the trees were over your head so you couldn't really see. But now, I say, all the trees have been taken, you can see so far."

"We can see far because we're on top of the truck," I joked, and we laughed.

"It's not that," Maneno said. "Really, he's right. There used to be so much good wood here. Now there's one tree here, one there, that's it."

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[7] This man's name never actually made it into my notes. We had a joking relationship dating from a group interview for Concern's Wider Impact Study in Kingege, when he dominated responses to every question. Exasperated, I finally cut him off with the moniker "Bwana Maneno," Man of Words. He retorted by calling me "Bwana Maswali," Man of Questions, and that is how we addressed each other in the friendly relationship that subsequently developed. In this scene, Maneno is an important uncle of the bride, having been the scribe at her brideprice ceremony.

[8] Clinging to the truck, chatting with the men, and listening to the songs rise with the landscape are all etched indelibly in my memory. The scene as presented here is reconstructed from notes written soon after the event.

Baba Eustacia added, “That was when, it must have been 1965. Before I was married.”

We arrived at the wedding to the cheers of a small crowd from Malangali who had set out by foot at 4:00 am. After the wedding and reception, we piled back into the pick-up. Godi decided to follow the dirt track straight north to save gas. The pick-up was now terribly overloaded, with 30 people squeezed into or above the bed. Dusk was settling as we entered the southern reaches of Malangali division. At each hill we all had to jump off the truck and walk to the top. The women were still singing, we men still swapping stories. As we were walking, halfway up a hill in Ikangamwani village, Baba Eustacia again pointed to the landscape. “Here, now this is changed too. This wasn’t all forest, but look at all the trees here!”

Remarked Maneno, “The trees are pretty young. Not even twenty years, this looked like Saja, like those hills we passed this morning.” We started jogging as the pick-up overtook us, grabbed the metal bars and swung on. Baba Eustacia agreed that the area had resembled Saja. I asked why the trees grew back.

“They started to grow after the tobacco,” answered Maneno.

“The tobacco?”

Baba Eustacia explained, “We used to have to grow tobacco. Everyone had to grow a certain amount. Then during Operation Songeza, we all had to farm together, each village had to farm tobacco.”

I asked, “The tobacco fields were so big, you had to cut the forest?”

Maneno puzzled, “Eh? No, we had to dry the tobacco with fire. Even a little tobacco, it takes a lot of wood."

"After *Ujamaa* you didn't have to grow tobacco anymore?" I asked.

Maneno replied, "We just stopped. It was still the law for a long time, but nobody did it. They couldn't make us, there was no market, they could not pay us enough."

"The tobacco really used so much wood?"

"Look at the forest," he said, "it wasn't like this with tobacco."

"What about Concern?"

"Concern, they helped too. Now we have laws, there are areas you cannot cut. Up ahead we will pass through a forest preservation area. Concern got us to make the laws, and now they are marking the forests."

"What about tree planting? Didn't they bring seedlings?"

"Yes, seedlings. But those are not for the forest, they are for private houses. This forest grew by itself."

I was surprised. "None of this forest is because of the seedlings they brought?"

"No," Maneno responded, "if it was daylight you could see it is all different kinds of trees. Concern brought 'European trees' [*miti ulaya*, actually an Australian eucalyptus], and other guest trees. Those trees, a few people planted small forests, those are all foreign trees they will sell. But this forest is all the small trees, the natives."

"I don't understand something," I said. "This morning you said that at Saja they cut down all their trees. Why don't they have good forests, didn't the government stop making them plant tobacco too?"

Baba Eustacia proposed, "Maybe they sell all their wood in Makambako? Those hills are not too far from the highway. Near Iringa there are no trees because they have all been cut for the city."

Maneno agreed with this theory. "Many people in Makambako buy firewood or charcoal, even put the charcoal on the train." Then we heard voices singing in the distance. It was the youth choir, who had left Saja much earlier than we. Our conversation was lost to the laughter of the singing competition between the people in the truck and those on foot, and the forest was lost to the blackness of the night.

The tobacco mandate that Baba Eustacia and Maneno described was responsible, many people agreed, for significant forest clearing in the division. Yet the need that led Concern and the Tanzanian government to concur *a priori* on a forestry program for the division could not be accounted for by tobacco alone. (A resurgent tobacco mandate is discussed in Chapter 8.) I suggest that most clearing in Malangali division was quite localized – that most of the division never had widespread deforestation. The most populated areas of the division did suffer from depletion of local forest resources, a problem that continues to this day. For inhabitants of the large area of the division, forest depletion was only a concern during the years they may have been concentrated in *Ujamaa* settlements. The need for a forestry program as enacted in Malangali arose, I suggest, from a view of rural Africa that was predisposed to see deforestation instead of trees.

Pictures Throughout 1996 I periodically flew in the small airplane assembled by Bill Norton at the Seventh Day Adventist mission 50 kilometers from Mwilavila. I could rarely do research in Malangali on a Sunday, so I often took the day off, biked to the mission and went up for a lesson. Sometimes we went on little errands to parts of Sadani division, in addition to covering most of Malangali. With Bill or his protege Jason, I'd fly over the Sao Hill forest to the nearby tea plantations, where there is a landing strip that sometimes receives a 16-seat twin-engine prop with tea executives from South Africa. The flights around the area gave me a chance to observe the changing seasons and the several ecological zones in a fairly small area. One feature of seasonality is that an area can appear thickly forested during the rainy season, but look wilted and barren during the dry season. The first Concern visitors to Malangali might have seen deforestation in part because of their September arrival, when lush green has given way to beige and brown. The other outstanding forest feature visible from above is clearing near the population centers. Two aerial pictures from January 1996 illustrate why casual observers might see deforestation in an area with abundant woodland.[9]

The first picture is Isimikinyi village. Isimikinyi's 400-odd households are clustered fairly densely, and the village center is directly adjacent to Mwilavila. There is pressure on the forests to provide wood for people in both villages, and people from both villages have cleared land that they attempt to keep in permanent annual cultivation. The aerial photo demonstrates that houses are usually surrounded by fields, and that the forest begins fairly far from the homesteads. Most of this nearby forest is in fact prohibited woodland for the new forest reserve.

The second picture is Idimilichuma subvillage of Tambalang'ombe. Idimilichuma is not hard to reach from Mwilavila in the dry season, with the closest houses being only a half hour walk from the division seat. The photo shows a settlement spread thinly along the dirt track that climbs the hill to the water tank. Most houses sit in the middle of their own little clearings, with forest separating their fields from their neighbors. Close examination of the photo reveals the footpaths through the woods that connect the homesteads, as well as the line where the trench was dug for the water pipe.

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[9] Unfortunately, the negatives for these photos were destroyed by the photo processor in Tanzania. A book publisher may be able to reproduce useful images from the prints, but because I am talking about elements that appear tiny in photos from 1500 feet, there is no effective way to include them in the dissertation other than describing their key features.

A comparison of the photos shows many more planted trees in Isimikinyi. When I showed the pictures to residents, they located their houses and remarked how well their trees could be seen from the air. (One man in Ihanga took the photo and walked along the trees he planted as a living fence as he traced the fence line with his finger on the picture.) The disparity in planted trees did not particularly surprise me; I had chosen the two subvillages as study areas because two Concern foresters evaluated Isimikinyi as a place where Concern had been particularly effective and Idimilichuma a place where people paid them little attention. I had begun to develop a gender thesis about the tree program, discussed below, when the subvillage chairman showed me a village census counting twice as many women as men. It was not until October 1996, a time when people were preparing for the planting season, that the following two scenes drove home an even more basic factor affecting whether people planted trees.

On the first occasion, I was waiting for Martha in her sitting room in Isimikinyi. She had told me to meet her at home to discuss village business. Her mother-in-law Bibi Chaula was preparing tea. She stood in the doorway trying to persuade me to have sugar in my tea. From the entryway to the compound, an arriving Martha called out in Kibena, "He won't take sugar, Mother. Even when I tell him it will make him fat."

I stood and walked to the door. "How are you today?" I asked automatically. Then I saw she was carrying a bundle of firewood on her head that she dumped on a pile in the corner of the yard. Her adult niece followed with an equally large headload, and her twelve-year-old daughter walked in bearing one almost as big. Abandoning the Kibena greetings, I said in Swahili, "Sorry for the heavy load."

Martha replied, "It is not too heavy. The trouble is, we have to carry it so far. And it is so hot! It's just not normal!"

"Do you have enough wood?" I asked. "I think this should last for a week, what you just brought."

Martha laughed. "You think we use this in a week? No, we are collecting for the rains. Every day we go get one or two loads so we have wood while we farm. There is no time to get wood when it rains, but even then we must cook! Maybe when the forest on the hill grows back, it won't be so far to get wood."

The next scene was a few days later in Idimilichuma. Mama Nikson and I had been talking for almost an hour, including a discussion of the trees she planted that she said "just dried up." She was starting to get anxious about the tasks I was keeping her from. Into our conversation she interjected, "I have to get firewood."

"I'm keeping you from your work," I apologized. "Is it far to get wood?"

She replied, "Far? Look, the woods are just across the path. But the good wood, it is ten minutes there, ten minutes to gather, ten minutes back."

I asked, "Do you collect it every day?"

“Only when I need it,” she answered. “I need it now. My husband is coming home, he will want his food to be ready.”

As she started to gather some cord to tie her bundle of wood together, I asked, “You don’t collect a big pile, enough for the farming season?”

Mama Nikson looked at me. “Here we don’t do that. Isn’t our farm right there in the forest?”

These two scenes give resolution to the fine grains of the aerial photos. From above we can see how people use the space they live in. From the ground we see that land is used according to specific rationales. Not all of these uses are optimal, either from the perspectives of the people using the resources or from the vantage of outside planners. The particular dimensions of optimal use, however, cannot be understood from the airplane, or the Land Rover. Forest policy planners in Malangali responded to the particularities that caused people to reject many Concern efforts as a challenge for more aggressive campaigns, not as a basis upon which to reevaluate the project they were attempting to implement.

The recipe that Concern brought to Malangali called for nine parts tree planting, one part education, says Augustin Shirima, the one forester who was with the program from start to finish. The idea was to have two central nurseries, one in Mwilavila and one in higher altitude Nyololo, that would provide seedlings for each farmer in the division. In addition, the primary schools were each to start or expand their own small nurseries, which would lead to woodlots for the schools and seedlings for students to bring home, plant, and nurture on their own. Extension workers were to encourage interested farmers to start “secondary” nurseries that would eventually earn profits from selling seedlings within their villages. In the meantime, seedlings were trucked to every village from the central nurseries, farmers were taught planting methods, and people were dissuaded from burning forests prior to planting. “Village Tree Committees” were established that passed by-laws mandating, in some villages, that each household plant 20 trees a year. The cookie-cutter approach assumed that each village, and each household within each village, had similar forest resource problems. As time passed, program managers became aware that women were much less willing tree planters than men. Cognizant of literature explaining the gendered relationship to trees in eastern Africa, planners set out to encourage women to plant trees through a variety of inducements. Only at the tail end of the program did planners move away from tree planting toward forest conservation – a decision that, perhaps serendipitously, better addressed local conditions. I now examine the MFP in light of its gender and sustainability foci.

Gender

Many African societies consider trees and the land they grow on as part of a gendered system of social relations. These gendered relations have been well explored by anthropologists, particularly Feierman (1990), Moore and Vaughan (1994), and Shipton (1994), and have been of some concern (if not well understood) to natural resource planners (Osborn 1990, Fortman and Bruce 1991, Williams 1992). Malangali residents share many perspectives similar to those documented elsewhere. I here present a brief synopsis of the ways women talk about trees in Malangali, which will serve as a reference point for analysis of the important gender component of the MFP.

When Malangali women talk to me about trees, they invariably bring up issues of land and lineage. The greatest significance of trees is that they mark ownership of land. While crops, and even houses, are impermanent and can exist on land without signifying ownership, trees spread into the ground the roots of the person who owns them. In what is apparently a centuries-old practice, trees are planted by the graves of the dead, and those trees are imbued with spiritual connections to the spirit of the deceased. Lineage groups or clans, *ukoo*, have historically been connected to areas of forest in which they have rights to timber and rotating agricultural land. Collecting firewood, fruits, and mushrooms, grazing, and hunting are and were unrestricted for all.

When I was given a parcel of land by the Chaula *ukoo*, the transaction was the subject of much discussion by Malangali residents. Was the plot really my land, or was I being granted rights to build a temporary house that would revert to the *ukoo* after my death? The question was based on a historical pattern of land accession among immigrants, whereby they sometimes took "temporary" occupancy of land given them by friends, but had no expectation that their children could inherit the property. I would produce the contract for the land transaction when people raised such questions. "Oh, you can plant trees!" was the common reaction to the contract. "The trees are your property, and your children can inherit them. I see, this makes you *mwenyeji*, the person of the land."[10]

By contrast, Kwomo, a Concern agricultural extension worker from far away Kilimanjaro, was given a plot of land by the government of the village in which he was working. A temporary resident, he built a house and started to improve the fields he had to farm. One extension message that he taught was agroforestry, planting certain nitrogen-fixing trees in the middle of agricultural plots. He did so on his own fields, but the village government later transferred him to a different plot. Again he planted leguminous trees, and again he was moved. Finally he gave up practicing agroforestry, and has not subsequently had to change his farm plot. People are quite direct about the connection between trees and land.

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[10] *Mwenyeji* is usually translated as citizen, resident, or native.

Women are equally direct in their equation of lineage and trees. When I initially failed to grasp the full import of the relationship, they patiently explained the connection. Although women sometimes inherit land from their fathers, and by implication the trees on that land unless otherwise stated, such inheritance is seen as the exception. Lineage follows the male line, so a father's land is usually divided in some manner among his sons. In one case a deceased man had designated that his only grandson, by his eldest daughter, should receive a small farm plot. All the rest of his land, which had been farmed by his second daughter, was inherited by his sons, with the lion's share going to the eldest. If a man has no sons, his land can revert to the male bloodline of his brothers, or even his father's brothers. The land belongs to the *ukoo*, and membership in the *ukoo* is traced through the male line. Oftena woman remains on her father's land after he dies , but at *her* death the land and its trees revert to the *ukoo* into which she was born. (I have seen single women and divorced women establish residence on their fathers' land, and one instance in which a married couple chose to remain on the wife's father's land because it included a water tap.) Women are attached to their *ukoo*, and are active and vocal participants in clan affairs. Yet they take pains to point out that children belong to the father's *ukoo*. A woman who continues to live on her father's land rarely has rights to pass that land, or the trees, on to her own children. A woman who lives on her husband's land can expect both land and trees to be inherited by her male children (if she has any), but often has little say in the affairs of her husband's clan or in decisions about the management of its land and trees. In short, a woman can manage land and trees, but can usually own neither. Investments that a woman makes in trees or land are therefore made on behalf of her brothers and her brother's children, or her uncles and uncles' children, or her husband and his family.

Depending on circumstances, women may find this male ownership of trees more or less problematic. One woman who manages the daily affairs of the *ukoo* into which she was born was unperturbed by the fact that her son will not inherit the land into which she puts so much effort. She attends to her son's interests by advocating for him with the relations of the boy's absent father. She is happy to think that the children of her brothers, who she cares for sometimes in place of their mothers, will share in the fruits of her labor. (She is less sanguine when she says her brother could return from his decades living far away and make her move out of their father's nice house with the metal roof and into the grass-roofed house he built nearby.) Another woman, a young woman who has not yet borne sons, considers herself an impermanent resident of the land her husband assigns her to farm. It seems that as women get older, have sons, and feel a sense of permanence within their husband's families, they become more ensconced in the new *ukoo* and more invested in safeguarding its assets for the next generation. A host of personality issues enter into the actual relation between a woman and the *ukoo* into which she marries. While these dynamics influence the particularities of how much women invest in land and tree resources, they all use the language of a woman's guest status in her husband's *ukoo*, and her children's evanescent relationship with the mother's natal clan.

The consequence of the equation between trees, land, and lineage is that women usually consider themselves neither owners of trees nor responsible for their care. When they have been made to plant trees, through village mandates instituted at the behest of the aid organization, most have done so with little enthusiasm. They can be explicit in stating their objections, be they the added burden of planting and tending the trees, or the likelihood that a husband or brother will claim the profit when the trees are ready to harvest in decades hence. Often women take more subtle means of avoiding the issue.

In Kingege village during the Wider Impact Study (WIS), forestry extension worker Mtindo, agricultural extension worker Silayo, and I talked with an older woman, Bibi Simba, at her home far from the village center. Mtindo asked if she had planted trees. She replied, "Trees? Yes, I planted. They all dried up."

I asked if they dried up from lack of water, or were eaten by termites. "Termites," she answered. Using her hand to demonstrate about eighteen inches from the floor, she explained, "The trees get this tall, then the termites eat them."

Silayo asked, "Did you plant trees for timber, or fruit trees?"

Bibi Simba responded, "Both, both. They made us plant 20 trees, every house 20 each year. Then the children planted fruit trees from the school."

Asked Silayo, “Did your husband help plant?”

“Him? No, he has his own concerns.”

Ever the forester, Mtindo wanted to know what species she planted. She said “I don’t know. I planted what they brought. Come, do you want me to show you?” We all went outside. In the yard grew a few healthy citrus trees, a scraggly papaya, and a banana tree waiting for the rains. The household farm plot ran up against miombo woodland. We walked a few steps into the woods, where Bibi Simba pointed to an area of withered scrub. “Here’s where I planted. Look, they all dried up.”

Mtindo looked quizzical. “You cleared forest to plant trees? For what profit?”

Bibi Simba nodded. “That’s what I said. They all dried up.”

I asked, “Did you ever water them? Did you ever treat them for termites? Those fruit trees in the yard are healthy.”

She answered rhetorically, “I should bring water all the way here? The children fetch water for their fruit trees, but these I just plant. They tell us to plant, I plant.”[11]

Bibi Simba exemplifies many elements of the interaction between women and trees that I observed throughout Malangali division.

1) She planted trees because she was told she had to, in this case because of a village law passed at Concern’s urging.

2) She professed resigned surprise that her trees died, but also knew exactly how to raise healthy trees.

3) She planted her trees in forest or wasteland, rather than using the scarce cleared farmland close to her house.

4) She had no expectation that the trees would be of use to her even if they grew to

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[11] Dialogue reconstructed from notes taken by Mtindo and Silayo.

harvestable size.

We can of course interpret Bibi Simba's actions as classic peasant resistance (Scott 1985), though what she is resisting is not oppression but an onerous imposition on her time. She finds it easier to take a few minutes to plant the trees – by planting them she avoids paying any fines for disobeying the law – and then allowing the inevitable acceptable "natural" consequence to occur. If anybody checks up on her they will see that she has done her part, and that the activity was futile. She has been around long enough to know that eventually this mandate will fade away, and new mandates will spring up in its stead.

Malangali women are not absolutely antithetical toward caring for trees. Even Bibi Simba was favorably inclined to the fruit trees her son and daughter were growing. Other women raise their own fruit trees. They use the fruit for household consumption, or sell it for cash that they control. Fruit from trees seems to equate conceptually to crops from land, a product to which the caretaker has all the rights. Girls who plant fruit trees on their father's land in theory continue to own the trees even after they move away to get married. (The school program of giving all students fruit seedlings to plant at home is too recent for any participating girls to have actually gotten married by 1996, as far as I know.)

Some women have even acquired rights to profits from trees they harvest. Mama Rehema Kiswaga is a widow living on her husband's land. I'm not sure whether the eucalyptus trees that she sold as center beams for a house were planted in 1986 by her husband or a son, but when she sold them in 1996 the cash went directly to her. It is possible that Mama Rehema is an advance wave of a transition in women's rights toward trees, that Malangali residents will come to see tree harvesting as a long-term crop option for women that does not harm the succession of land and lineage. It is also possible that she is an exception, granted authority over trees because of the peculiar combination of circumstances that put her in a position to profit from their sale. As with much else in contemporary Malangali, forestry issues, land tenure, and even lineage in an age of AIDS and migration are matters in continuous transition. At the time of the field research, women's right to profit from fruit trees and the rare sale of timber were almost always seen as exceptions to the widely accepted view that men own the trees on behalf of their branch of their lineage.

Dislocations Concern found the gendered relation to trees to be problematic in the implementation of the MFP, for reasons the theory of which will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5. They were aware of women's reluctance to plant, but did not know what to do about it. Their grant writers found it necessary to include a specific gender component of the forestry program in their proposal to extend funding for the MFP for the period 1991 to 1996. This need arose on two fronts. First, the Malangali staff believed that women, as a disadvantaged segment of society, ought to share in the benefits of the program. Second, they had mandates from Dublin to include gender components in each new program proposal that they prepared for the co-funding agencies. Helen O'Connell, in her analysis of the MFP in her report "Grappling with Gender," quotes the relevant section of the proposal (1995: 3.6.ii):

> Women are included among the project target groups in that it is acknowledged that many small farmers are women especially single heads of households, and that the problem of fuelwood largely affects women. The proposed strategies include:

> --making a definite effort to ensure that at least 50% of selected farmers are women
> --reserving 40% of seats on tree committees for women.
> It is anticipated that any improvement in the availability of fuelwood will lighten women's burden in the village and that women will be encouraged to exert real influence over the wood resources of the village.

In 1995, O'Connell writes, "It was estimated by the Project Manager [Shirima] that about 30% of the projects time was spent on women" (4.1.ii.).

The dissonance between the project's design goals regarding gender on the one hand, and the gendered relations toward trees that Malangali residents expect, resounds throughout the program's efforts with women. When the program began as an environmental action, it gained some acceptance in Malangali mostly because of its overlap with individuals' perceptions of problematic forestry issues. My impression is that all of these individuals were men, some of whom became planters and conservators of forest resources. When program planners decided to focus on women, they assumed that the concentration of forestry efforts on men represented a deficiency in program design that worked to women's disadvantage. In making their decision in 1991 to mandate women's participation as the solution to inclusiveness, they overlooked two questions. First, was male bias in the forestry program a problem for either area women or for the achievement of the program's environmental goals? Second, would a focus on getting women to plant trees effectively insure that any benefits from such a program would be shared by all? How we understand these questions will shape the way we see the relationship between program, process, and people.

Part of what occurred is, I posit, due to a shift in funder expectations. By 1990, funders such as the E.C. were eager to promote "Women in Development" programs.

Inclusion of a gender component had become, to judge by the proposals from organizations like Concern, a bonus attribute with which to get funding – and became a prerequisite without which they dared not solicit funds. Gender components appeared in every Concern project proposal for the 1991-96 period. One expatriate staffer comments, “We were instructed to [include gender] in the last proposal.” Gender received prominence primarily because individuals concerned with gender issues who were in positions to promote their views were involved in proposal design. Their premise, based on field experience, was that women were being ignored by the MFP. Their solution was to consciously target half their resources toward women. The Dublin administrators at the time were not committed toward re-orienting gender relations to the same extent as the young field personnel. They could, however, be sold on the language of fairness and of reaching the most disadvantaged; it was already well accepted that women were the most disadvantaged group. Dublin, eager to gear their programs toward reasonable concerns of the major funders and toward “the poorest of the poor,” acceded to and then demanded gender components in all their activities.

We see in this shift the roots of three dislocations from the original understandings that presaged acceptance of the MFP:

1) Movement away from the analysis shared by Concern and some Malangali residents of a forest system that could benefit from concerted environmental action.
2) A divergence in understanding between expatriate and Tanzanian forestry staff. Although Shirima gave 30% of his program’s time to women, he was not happy about it. He and his staff continued to see the gender issue as a drain on their resources, and

their work with men as their most effective means of achieving the quantitative results demanded.

3) The first step away from the original environmental goals. I demonstrate below that the program soon buried the ecological premise beneath other concerns, most notably the shift toward economic sustainability.

The consequence of these dislocations was confusion among Malangali residents, among Concern staff, and even within the project proposals. The confusion stemmed in large part from Concern's failure to articulate the shifts underlying program premises. In my write-up for the Wider Impact Study, I listed many different goals the MFP set for itself without ever acknowledging that they might not be of a piece. These goals included reforestation, helping the poorest of the poor, increasing general living standards, improving women's living standards, improving nutrition, promoting social acceptance of tree planting and conservation, and the elusive term "sustainability." With all these different goals, neither staff, residents, nor designers could maintain a general vision of what the program was attempting to do.

Efforts to involve women in the MFP included mandated planting as well as more studied efforts to approach the gendered relation to trees. Bibi Simba demonstrates the inefficacy of the former approach. Mandates were similarly poorly received by women in the majority of villages where that was the extent of the Malangali gender focus. The result was that tens of thousands of seedlings withered, either because they were never collected by women from village drop-off points, or because they were planted with all the care shown by Bibi Simba. In my report for the Wider Impact Study, I suggested that a negative consequence of such mandates was that people would “stop listening” to messages from extension workers. On further consideration, I think I was wrong; the rejection by women of the tree-planting program was part of a wider pattern, the consumption of development. To preview Chapter 8, women gave the MFP the same level of attention they give to hundreds of other extension messages they receive as objects of rural development. Most women gave a little thought to the tree-planting mandate, decided it would not benefit them, and barely considered the matter again.

In a few villages there were more concerted efforts to get women to plant trees. None of my primary research sites were in these villages, but I did briefly visit one site and heard stories about the others. I visited Bumilayinga with a Concern forester soon after the annual tree distribution. We went to the house of a woman where many trees had been delivered. The idea was for women to come get their trees from this relatively safe drop-off point because in the past the trees designated for women had all been collected from a more public place and planted by men. The women with whom we spoke said this time the seedlings actually had been collected by the women for whom they were intended. Whether these women then planted the trees themselves, and if so whether they subsequently retained control over them, is a question that awaits future research. In another village a woodlot was set aside by the government for women to raise trees collectively. I have heard conflicting stories – that the trees are thriving, that they were eaten by cattle, and that they burned to the ground. If, best case, they survived and will be harvested by women (and Storey thinks they did not survive), these few acres would be almost the only tangible result of the 30% of program effort over 5 years of the MFP that was devoted to getting women to plant trees.

I propose that the larger negative implication of the overall failure of the MFP gender component is less that it turned Tanzanian women against development programs, but instead that it contributes to a souring of donors toward the development endeavor in general. While a close analysis can uncover the social criteria that prefigured the failure of this aspect of the MFP, what returns to funders through the filter of Concern reports and many returning overseas personnel is an inverse interpretation, that Tanzanian women failed to take advantage of the opportunity to improve their lives through participatory forestry. The details of the failure, the fact that only a few acres of trees belonging to women may be growing after years of concerted effort, may well never be known among major funders or private donors. Yet, as explained in Chapter 6, such failures contribute to a cumulative disenchantment with the development endeavor – a disenchantment that places perceived African incompetence at the center of its analysis.

Perhaps even more regrettable is that people committed to working for social justice, such as Helen O'Connell, become disenchanted with a development process they perceive as ineffective because of baroque international aid institutions. By recognizing that the institution, as well as the people like Helen who seek to steer it from within, are moved by the thought currents in which they swim, we can appreciate the reasons their varying perspectives on female forestry did not mesh with those of the women of Malangali. Thus while disenchantment with development may be a necessary sequitur to the ineffectiveness of so many programs like the MFP over the past decades, the deeper lesson might be that failure is best understood by examining the preconceptions underlying the impetuses of such programs. The conflicts that arise from varying Western and African conceptions of gender issues warrant more thorough discussion, so are the subject of Chapter 5.

Economic sustainability

Almost simultaneous with the addition of the gender component was a shift in the premise of sustainability underlying the MFP. Even more than gender, economic sustainability arose without anybody acknowledging that the new objective entailed a shift of fundaments. Both phases of the project, the environmental and economic sustainability phases, emerged out of conversations Europeans were having among themselves about Africa and development. In the first phase there was an emerging conjuncture between the environmentalist and charitable desires of the Europeans in the 1984 to 1990 period on the one hand, and the needs and desires felt by some people of Malangali on the other. The shift to the second phase undermined much of the earlier work and set the program on a course toward failure to achieve its goals. Similar to the gender component, the economic phase was prefigured not to work because of a disparity between European and African approaches. This section examines how European approaches to forestry in Malangali changed away from environmental priorities even as ecological NGOs were celebrating their biggest triumph with the 1992 Rio UN convention on the environment.

The concept of sustainability (though not the term) first established its importance during the oil crises of the 1970s.[12] The world noticed that the economic prosperity that was the promise of the twentieth century rested on the draining of limited reserves of fossil fuels, that consumption outstripped the earth's ability to reproduce new resources, and that only a shift in human behavior could thwart global cataclysm. During the 1980s residents of the wealthy world became increasingly concerned with the residues of our consumption patterns, including toxic waste, overflowing landfills, air pollution, and global warming. The height of the new environmental consciousness was Earth Day 1990, when millions of people gathered for concerts at venues such as Central Park in New York. Following this event, I submit that sustainability and environmentalism in the wealthy world soon fell into disregard as people decided they had already addressed the issues.

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[12] Sources show "sustainability" trickling into discussions of Africa and development through writings about the environment in the late 70s/ early 80s, with the floodgates unleashed in about 1986. See footnote on page 231.

While the 1990 Earth Day Concert represents a peak of popular consciousness of environmental issues, it was just one of a series of mega-events in which millions of people in the United States and Europe were mobilized in a collective nod toward "saving the world." Bob Geldof's *Feed the World* in late 1984 and Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie's *We Are the World* two months later first brought rock and pop together for the cause of aiding Africa. Some of the world's biggest celebrities sang:

And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmastime
The greatest gift they'll get this year is life
Where nothing ever grows
No rain nor rivers flow
Do they know it's Christmastime at all?

(Here's to you) raise a glass for everyone
(Here's to them) underneath that burning sun
Do they know it's Christmastime at all?

There are people dying
And it's time to lend a hand

To life
The greatest gift of all
Send them your heart so they know that someone cares
And their lives will be stronger and free
There's a choice we're making
We're saving our own lives
It's true we'll make a better day
Just you and me

These two songs, sung in the winter of 1984-85 by collectives of British and American stars respectively called Band Aid and USA for Africa, started an outpouring of charity and popular consciousness about problems in Africa that culminated on July 13, 1985 in the massive Live Aid concert. Live Aid featured over 6 dozen acts at concert venues in London and Philadelphia and live video feeds from Australia, Japan, Moscow, and 4 other European locations. Phil Collins sang at Wembley, jumped on the Concorde, and sang that same afternoon at JFK Stadium. While the cause of Ethiopian famine relief may have been a little overshadowed by the glare of the celebration, the event along with the two songs that the celebrities joined in for the UK and US finales brought in an estimated $175 million.

With these appeals still playing on radios in the wealthy world, thereby shaping popular consciousness of Africa as a place "where nothing ever grows, no rain nor rivers flow," an organization called Comic Relief undertook charitable fund-raising for Africa. Some of their funds soon went directly to the MFP. To receive funds from Comic Relief and governmental co-funders, Concern had to write proposals that addressed the understandings of the people controlling the purse-strings – understandings that differed little from those with which Kinsella and Nugent arrived in Malangali in 1985. Desertification, deforestation, and the threat of population growth underlay their assumptions. Replacing wanton destruction with conservation and planned harvesting, what came to be called sustainable forest management, was an approach that resonated with both funders and planners in the years leading to Earth Day 1990.

Within development circles, however, the 1990s caught up with the continued existence of problems associated with poverty despite decades of development work. In a phenomenon that has since been labeled "donor fatigue," European funders wanted accountability for why programs so often did not yield benefits once their funding was withdrawn. Funders began to demand programs that would not always need to rely on external inputs. The term sustainability, originally one that applied toward the functioning of ecosystems, slid easily from the environmental into the wider lexicon. A potent concept, economic sustainability soon became a *sin qua non* of much project design.

Beyond the sudden need that programs account for their future, the economic sustainability movement intersected with another shift in European thought trends. The operative concepts of the 1990s have been trade and markets. As the GATT treaty, European monetary union, and NAFTA were being negotiated, the policy of the wealthy world toward Africa was dominated by imposing the terms of structural adjustment. Aid agency personnel sometimes argue that *their* work had little to do with structural adjustment; I counter that structural adjustment shaped most aid programs in the 1990s in both intellectual and practical ways. From a practical standpoint, all aid programs were faced with an operating environment shaped by currency devaluations, "free market" reforms, and cutbacks in government social service sectors. Despite silence in project proposals and annual reports, the lives of the people Concern was working among were subject to massive repercussions as health services dwindled, goods became more expensive, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, relative profits for growing maize plummeted. Given these practical changes, agencies such as Concern could have made an issue of the hardships that market reform was causing among rural African populations. They did not. Instead, they internalized much of the rhetoric of the free marketeers. In a long conversation we held at Dublin headquarters, Hugh Byrne, a senior Concern official, expressed his disillusionment with development programs that distributed free food or services. Byrne is not alone among aid administrators who came to believe that long term development projects represented a form of dependency (discussed in Chapter 9), the only cure for which was revamping aid as a system of market stimuli.

Projections The shift to economic sustainability in the MFP is emblematic of this general movement toward the marketization of development theory. When planners began to feel it important that the forestry program could not continue planting hundreds of thousands of trees in perpetuity without continued outside funding, they chose to focus on designing mechanisms that they hypothesized *could* enable on-going tree-planting. Again, the question of whether such an eternal campaign was necessary from a forestry perspective was never examined. This much could be expected – in the absence of baseline research, it was taken as a given that Malangali faced a crisis of forest depletion. Less understandable is how the program could assume that Malangali residents would adopt marketization of the forestry program, in the absence of any research that suggested any widespread tendency toward such changes. Other than a few stories of private individuals who established successful “secondary” nurseries – and whose seedlings were usually subsidized or bought by Concern for distribution in their remote villages – there was no proof of either a propensity to grow seedlings for profit or to buy them at cost.

Plans were devised whereby seedlings that had been free would be sold at a small price. Once people adjusted to the notion of paying for their seedlings, the price would rise to meet production costs. By 1996, when Concern would pull out of the MFP, people would be used to buying trees and their demand would sustain seedling production in the nurseries. These plans, written in an intellectual atmosphere that touted the logic of the market, seemed as logical to their European authors as they would seem bizarre to most Malangali residents.

While the early phase of the MFP found among receptive tree planters an agreement about the personal benefits of raising trees, this later phase abandoned the intersecting premises of this initial concord. The thrust of the program shifted from voluntary action – that Concern and the government hoped would have environmental benefits and that Malangali planters hoped could prove profitable – to significant impositions on individual behavior. An economistic analysis can demonstrate the changes Concern proposed. (Figures for quantities demanded in any year were never accurately estimated, and quantities actually supplied to Malangali residents varied greatly from the estimates of project proposals and reports. Storey points out that demand forms were compiled and filled in every year for the numbers and species wanted by area residents,[13] but my research found very low overlap in the program’s final year – granted, when Storey was no longer assigned to the forestry program – between the numbers on these forms and the actual tree distributions to the villages. Were the actual numbers available, they would make no difference in the analysis of the graphs.)

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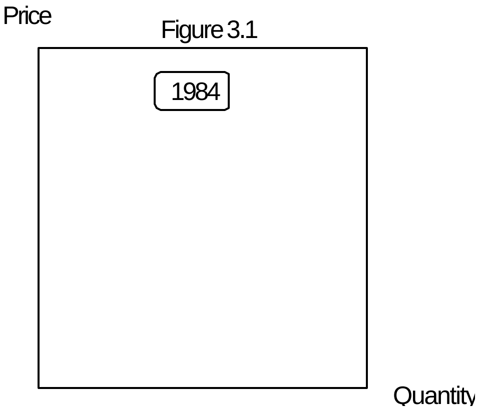
[13] Having no grounding in forestry, I did not delve into the decisions foresters and area residents made regarding particular tree species. Species preferred by forestry planners are detailed in Mbuya, Msanga, Ruffo, Birnie, and

1) Before Concern, the supply of seedlings was nil, the demand was nil, and the cost was nil (Figure 3.1). People neither bought nor planted seedlings.
2) As the MFP accelerated seedling production, they were able to stimulate a demand for some number of seedlings at no cost. The number of trees supplied was fixed each year. Quantity supplied exceeded quantity demanded in each year (Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4).
3) When the MFP began charging for seedlings, they hoped to create a normal supply/ demand pattern for tree consumption, where equilibrium would be reached at the target number of trees (Figure 3.5).

Tengnäs 1994.

Figure 3.1



Tree Demand 1984

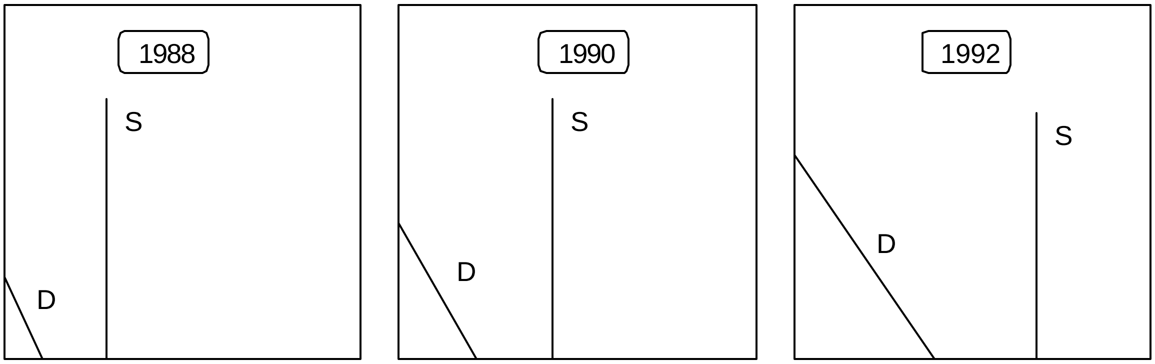


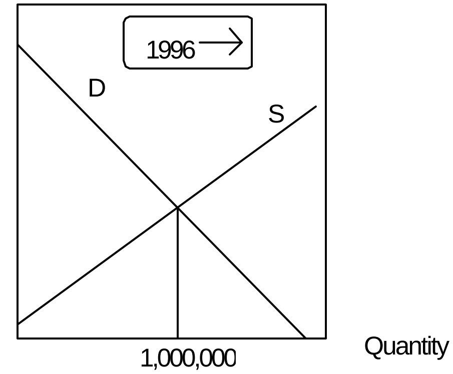
Figure 3.2

Figure 3.3

Figure 3.4

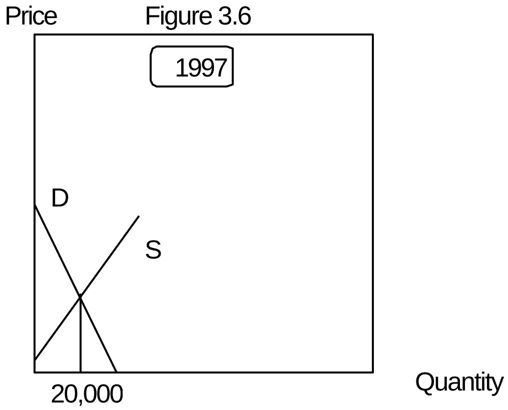
Tree Demand 1988, 1990, 1992 (Schematic)

Figure 3.5



Tree Projections after 1996

Figure 3.6



Tree Demand 1997

4) Given factors discussed below, the actual result was a much reduced supply and a more precipitous demand curve. The number of seedlings sold in 1997 was about 20,000 (Figure 3.6).

To explain the disparity between the goal of a million trees a year being bought and sold and the actuality of 20,000, we could compare the assumptions made by project planners with the factors shaping Malangali residents' decisions. The task is made difficult by the fact that planning assumptions were drawn out of thin air. Let us look, then, at some factors of actual relations between people and trees that Malangali residents cite, or that I observed, that continue to limit the quantity of seedlings demanded at any price.

1) While free seedlings that are delivered to your farm entail no risk and no opportunity cost, investing money in seedlings that can die is an uneconomic proposition for many people living on $100 a year. Survival rates were demonstrably low, in the range of 10% to 30%, so any per seedling price would need to be multiplied by a factor of about 5 to assess the cost to the farmer per tree.[14] (It could be argued that bought seedlings would have a higher survival rate than free seedlings, but as yet there is no supporting empirical evidence. The survival factor may be adjusted lower for purchased seedlings, but not eliminated.)
2) It takes 10 or 15 years to harvest a tree. The concept of tree planting as potential

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[14] Storey disputes the estimates for tree survival rates that I arrived at during research for Concern's 1996 Wider Impact Study, saying that over 60% of trees survived during 1994 and 1995, and at least 50% for previous years. My estimates are from limited household visits in six villages, with no checks for statistical representativeness, that looked at overall survival of trees planted from the program's inception; Storey's estimates are for survival through the first dry season. I do not think either of us can claim conclusive figures, but further research may well show that there is little actual discrepancy between our results.

income source was just beginning to prove itself at the time of the Concern pullout. Many people told me they wished they had realized earlier the profits to be made down the road, but that now it was too late because the seedlings were no longer available for the asking. The quantity they would now demand for free seedlings was increasing in the year of field research/ Concern phase-out, but for most a demand had not yet been stimulated for seedlings above nil cost.

3) Tree distribution occurs in January and February, during the middle of the rainy season, after the crops are in the ground. The timing is essential to give the seedlings enough moisture to take root before the long months without rain. This is also the absolute leanest time of the year, as demonstrated in nutritional studies of Tanzanian farm families (Tanner and Lukmanji 1987, Wandel and Holmboe-Ottesen 1992). Families are likely to be at or near the bottom of their food reserves, often relying on the first edible greens of the year to tide them through to the early maize. Any cash reserves will usually have been used to buy seed or fertilizer; as noted in the previous chapter, survey respondents in February and March had invested much of their savings in the crops growing in their fields. At this time of year, most people expressed that they would plant few if any trees if they had to pay cash up front. Concern attempted to address this problem by requiring payment for tree seedlings early in the dry season after harvest, when people might have cash on hand. Even into their last year, however, the system of advance orders and payments functioned sporadically and was embraced by few. Once external funding was withdrawn, no system remained to collect orders and payments prior to sale; 1997 tree sales were all on a cash basis at the

onset of the rains, so purchase was limited to a few wealthier individuals.

4) Almost nobody was prepared for the transition to purchasing seedlings at cost. The program shifted from massive distributions of free seedlings to a haphazard system of cash payments with almost no noise. Village Tree Committees were told of the new system – told, not polled – with the apparent assumption that they would pass the news on to residents of their villages. Some seedlings were still distributed free in 1996, including distributions to schools, Village Tree Committees, and a few women's groups. Some men invested in additional trees, putting forward some cash up front. Many of the other purchased seedlings were bought by people with cars from other districts who detoured to the nurseries from the main road. There was basically no time given to test the theory of a local market for seedlings, much less to gauge demand and match supply and appropriate price. The sudden transitions within the program served not to convert people to be cash consumers of tree seedlings but, as discussed below, to confirm their reactions as consumers of transient development initiatives.
5) The pricing of seedlings was artificially low based on an institutional accounting falsehood within the Concern system. Prices were determined by estimating the costs of materials – polythene tubes, seeds, and labor – that independent growers would face in the production of seedlings. The true costs of raising seedlings included a host of external inputs that were being withdrawn, and that Concern accounted for elsewhere in the forestry or general Tanzania budget. These included the trucks and petrol to gather fertile soil and distribute seedlings to remote villages, the training and

salaries given to nursery workers, the transport available to prepare land owners for the annual tree distributions, the education of the farmers and students about techniques to plant and nurture various tree species, and the fencing and water necessary to propagate thousands of seedlings and protect them from wandering ungulates. Although Concern staff knew the actual price of a seedling depended on this infrastructure, the accounting plans never reflected how these factors would be made up for without the organization's backing. The most successful private nursery, in remote Maduma village, produced 60,000 seedlings in 1995 on its own, but received truck transport to distribute its produce – a cost absorbed in Concern's transport accounts that year that would not be available to the nursery at any price in the future. Without these many inputs, it is unlikely any entrepreneur could produce anything approaching the hundreds of thousands of seedlings expected, much less at a price that could be afforded by most local farmers in the lean season.

6) Research about which tree seedlings people wanted was never conducted in Malangali in a comprehensive manner. While the individual private nursery owners, especially Mtindo and Sambena, had an intuitive sense of what seedlings people wanted, they were catering to their particular customer base of affluent Mwilavila men and buyers from other districts. Most village residents had come to expect a mismatch between seedlings they wanted and the seedlings that would be available. They had little inclination to pay for varieties they did not particularly want, but could reasonably assume would be forthcoming.

The above points demonstrate both economically and conceptually why, from a local perspective, the revamping of the MFP as an economic program was a non-starter. The shift highlights Malangali residents' interaction with the MFP as consumers of development programs, more than as consumers of tree seedlings per se. When we discussed the new policy of paying for seedlings, people generally scoffed. Some said they might consider buying a few seedlings, especially men who had successfully raised some trees to viability. Most pointed out that they rarely had the money to gamble on seedlings, with many people mentioning the poor survival rate of trees they had planted. What was often expressed was that people would plant trees if told to do so, or if seedlings were brought to them. Most did not find forestry important enough to them to invest their own resources in it. If the government thought trees were important, the government would continue the tree program; if the government had different priorities, people would devote their energies to following the new mandates. Conversations about the phase-out of the forestry program regularly transitioned to speculation about what new programs would replace Concern. Almost everybody assumed that some other agency would arrive. While people could not anticipate what the emphasis of any new program would be, they were ready to evaluate the resources that it would make available to their lives. In the case of the MFP, they evaluated that free seedlings were, for many, a resource worth availing themselves of. When Concern suddenly shifted to a cash-for trees program, people re-evaluated, mostly deciding to buy neither the seedlings nor the program.

Reserves The MFP did make one conceptual change in its late stages that seems to resonate with the desires of many Malangali residents. As the program was quietly planning the phase-out of subsidized seedling distribution, it stumbled into a set of actions that coincided with local desires to protect existing forest resources. While the idea of creating forest conservation areas is as old as organized forestry, in Malangali it was a new approach. Shirima asserts that the Village Forest Reserve (VFR) program arose from local demand. He is partially justified in this assertion; although forest reserves were in Concern's funding proposals from 1991 and received a large segment of the funding, Storey concurs that forest mapping did not begin until village leaders requested mapping themselves. The spread of the VFRs to many Malangali division villages was subsequently due to Concern effort, including raising the subject at village meetings and at regular gatherings of all village and division officials, and bringing officials from non-participating villages on tours of the new forest reserves. As we saw with the aerial photos, many villages have large swaths of forest that have apparently been healthy throughout recent history, and some welcomed the chance to map and protect these resources.

Some people do not feel the forest is under threat, and thus are not attracted to the VFR program. The people who cleared the land that launched Mtindo's tirade below, for example, live in an area of ample forest cover. I do not know if I ever talked to the men who actually did the clearing, but conversations conducted in the hypothetical tense with people living nearby revealed a "so what" attitude to forest clearing and conservation. On the other hand, many women in the more denuded Isimikinyi village were eager advocates of the forest reserve. As Martha pointed out, whether firewood was not available in an area because it was restricted or because it had vanished was immaterial. She and others were willing to set aside land near their homes to regenerate a source of firewood for years to come. She saw village legislation as a much more appropriate way of producing forest resources for women's uses than the direct planting of trees on her family land. Not incidentally, she pointed out that planting trees for fuelwood is not a useful strategy because the best fuelwood is found by scavenging healthy forest for dying branches. As with all such programs, the sponsoring organization would do well to examine the local particularities of forest needs and resources before expending the effort to map and proscribe Village Forest Reserves.

One aspect of the Isimikinyi VFR is fascinating on many levels, though unfortunately I will not be able to do it justice in this space. Briefly, the forest around the very top of Isimikinyi hill was an important area in which to propitiate the ancestors in anticipation of rain. The Lutheran church or some of its followers, in an apparent effort to stamp out animist tendencies among its adherents in decades past, encouraged church members to destroy the forest by gathering fuelwood there and burning swaths to plant millet. Subsequently the rains became much less reliable, usually beginning in December instead of November. When Concern raised the possibility of hiring surveyors to demarcate VFRs, Isimikinyi residents asked for the creation of two forest reserves. The larger one in the sparsely settled area across the creek is available for most forest activities except the felling of live wood. The area around the top of the hill, however, is completely off limits to wood gathering, even of dead wood already on the ground. The official explanation for this prohibition is that people who are allowed to gather dead wood will sneak in a few months early and chop off branches that they can later gather with apparent legitimacy. The spoken subtext is that it is important this forest grows back because it draws rain to the village. Is there a further religious subtext that people want to resolve the ancestors' displeasure at the felling of the forest? Conversations in 1998 brought forth many stories of inexplicable, magical events pertaining to this forest.[15] Many residents clearly associate the forest with the supernatural, and are quite happy that the area has been proscribed, finding that have intriguing parallels to research about sacred forests in northeastern Tanzania (Sheridan 1999). Aerial photos I took in 1998 showed that this reserve had extremely thick forest cover that was yet to be encroached, and by early 2000 the woody vegetation was thicker yet.

I conclude this discussion with stories of two men who benefitted from the MFP and are poised to continue profiting from it. I end with their stories because they highlight both the ideological and practical interests with which Malangali residents engage forestry issues. Forestry in Malangali is as much a system of beliefs as it is an ecological system; the eventual fate of Malangali's woodlands will be determined by the understandings and practices of area residents. The changes these men have made in their beliefs and practices show that the messages brought by Concern catalyzed actions that accorded with both the agency and some area residents. Instead of pessimism about the activities of the MFP, then, I wish to round out this discussion by pointing to aspects of the program that both funders and Malangali residents agree were positive.

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[15] One magical event was said to have taken place while village residents were surveying the forest with Tanzanian Concern staff for a mapping exercise. In brief, the group came across some paper money that had been left at a religious site in the forest. Group members pocketed the cash, then most went to a small shop to buy sodas. The man who did not spend his money found that it rapidly evaporated in his pocket, and the kiosk owner reported that the money spent on the sodas disintegrated within the hour. Most members of the group were devout Lutherans, with one Moslem among the Concern staff. On another occasion a Lutheran tells of having found a hoe in the forest. She brought it home, but the next day it had returned itself to its original location, and kept doing so until she gave up the chase.

Mtindo[16] Hector Mtindo is a true believer in the faith carried by the European designers of the MFP. He was born in 1968 near Nyololo Shuleni, a village in the east of Malangali division. He is a middle child of one of his father's junior wives. The elder Mtindo is a relatively successful man who has managed to build a large family and control many acres of fallow land. The family was not cash rich, however; Hector, though bright, only completed primary school, and his brother by another mother finished seminary because of scholarships from the Catholic Church.

Hector went through a brief period after finishing primary school typical of many young men. Job opportunities in the 1980s were even fewer than today, educational opportunities scarce,[17] and farming inadequate to support the challenge of building a house and saving for marriage. Some young men hang around the villages aimlessly, but most venture off to the plantations or the cities for a number of years. Mtindo got lucky. In the mid 1980s Concern hired several Malangali residents to work in their new tree distribution program. He got a job working in the central nursery in Mwilavila. His responsibilities included potting and nurturing the thousands of seedlings the nursery propagated every year. His salary in the nursery never exceeded a dollar a day (though shilling devaluation and massive inflation make it difficult to determine exact buying power over time), but by local standards he was quite well off. He is a good looking and charming young man who was soon fathering children with his first wife. He built her a house near his father in Nyololo, and took a second wife with whom he spends his working weeks in Mwilavila. He has a child by another local woman whom he does not plan to marry, though he maintains good relations with her father, a respected elder. ("It was only one time!" he laughs when I mention seeing this baby who looks exactly like him.) People marvel at the financial success represented by his relations with women and children, an extraordinary accomplishment for such a young man in today's economy.

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[16] Mtindo is a pseudonym. This character profile is based on dozens of hours spent together. Quotations are reconstructed from fieldnotes.

[17] According to Ministry of Education figures, *Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania*, 1981-1985 and 1985-1989, distilled by Buchert (1994:150), Tanzanian primary school enrollment in the 1980s ranged from 3,170,000 students to as high as 3,500,000. Enrollment in secondary schools (public and private) reached a high in 1989 of about 140,000, or about 4% of the primary student body. Slightly more than 13,000 graduates of secondary school (about 10% of secondary enrollment, or 0.4% of primary students) went on to teacher training colleges, and about 2,000 students got places in the nation's three technical colleges. A mere 3,327 students (2.4% of secondary enrollment, or 0.01% of primary students) found places in Tanzania's two universities, the University of Dar es Salaam and the Sokoine University of Agriculture. A further 1,287 students (about 0.004%) found opportunities for university study overseas. Government-sponsored post-primary educational opportunities have hardly moved in the past decade, although several thousand more students are now enrolled in private secondary and technical-training institutions.

Mtindo's success is due to his hard work and the MFP. He quickly advanced beyond the job of nursery attendant. He became one of 14 village forestry extension workers, the only one without post-secondary government training. Concern provided him the training they thought necessary for him to do his job. Because extension work depends more on people skills than scientific knowledge, and because the technical skills he acquired working in the nursery were sufficient for the job, he turned out to be well qualified. When Concern began to withdraw from Malangali, laying off all the nursery staff and most forestry extension workers, Mtindo was retained as one of three ward extension workers for the division. For the residents of his ward's villages, he is *bwanamiti*, or "Mr. Trees." His job as *bwanamiti* includes encouraging people to plant and protect trees, working with village committees to promote forestry policies, and apprehending violators of forest laws. He is called on for advice about what to plant and when to harvest, helps plan boundaries for village forest reserves, and is summoned for disputes involving woodlands. He is one of the only extension agents with local origins. This local connection enhances the respect and credibility people advance him as an expert.

Hector's personal investment in forestry issues goes beyond the interests of the job. He decided to begin his own seedling industry soon after his employment in the nursery started. His first order of business was to establish a private forest. He got his father to give him ten acres of Nyololo scrub land. With seedlings he raised from his Nyololo home, he planted the entire woodlot within a few years. He continues to expand this forest as the early trees reach maturity. He also manages a substantial private nursery in the grounds of the Concern gardens in Mwilavila. He had 15,000 seedlings ready for market in January 1997, a mixture of forestry and fruit trees that he hoped to sell for 50/= and 200/= respectively. If he came near his expectations, his income was over $1000.[18] This income is in addition to the $50 per month (30,000/=) he now earns as a ward extension officer. In an area where most people see $100 a year, Mtindo has done quite well by his involvement with forestry.

While other extension workers view their jobs as a means to a salary, Mtindo is a true believer in the cause of forestry. He is passionate about the need to plant and protect trees. He sees his personal success as an example that others could achieve if they adhered to good forestry practices. "Look at all the land available for private forests," he says. "Anyone could plant if they just showed a little effort. When I planted my forest, each seedling cost only 2/= for the plastic pot. When I sell the lumber, I'll get 2000/= for each tree. That is all profit. Now the plastic pots are 5/=, that is still nothing. All the work is in September to until December, what else am I doing anyway? Others are too lazy, they don't think about later on. They complain that propagating 100 seedlings would cost them 500/=, they want to eat that money today. If they planted that 500/= as trees, they would have 200,000/= later! And we would have good forest, the rains would return like the old days."

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[18] 15,000 seedlings at 50/= each would bring 750,000/=, or $1,250, so $1000 is a conservative estimate when considering that 3,000 of his seedlings were the more expensive fruit varieties. The exchange rate is roughly 600/= to the dollar.

Mtindo's beliefs extend to forest conservation. Walking through a remote stretch of woodland before the 1995-96 planting season began, he emerged into a fresh clearing where all the trees were drying felled by their stumps. A little farther on were several acres that had been blackened by fire. As he talked, he became more and more irate. "Why do people do this? They are such fools. Last week this was good forest. Now it is waste. They burn it, then they can plant for a couple of years. It will take years before this is forest again. If they were good farmers, they could use the fields near their homes and not waste all this land. They burn it at night because they know it is illegal. Then their wives come and plant crops later, they say they don't know who burned, they're just using available land. Sometimes the fires spread, they burn people's roofs, their private forests. And people don't care, they don't turn in the people who light the fires!" Mtindo sometimes disappears into the forest, surprising people violating conservation laws and bringing them to the police. He cares about trees, he believes in them, and therefore is an excellent forestry officer.

Elli Mwenda One day I was interrupted in my outdoor work by the arrival of Elli Mwenda. We had not seen each other for many months. We exchanged warm greetings, Elli clasping my wrist because my hand was too dirty to extend to him. He said, “My wife told me you passed by, that you asked I should find you?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I came to your house. I have no trouble with you, I just wanted to make sure to say goodbye. I return to America next week, I didn’t want to miss you.”

“Thank you, I am happy that you came.” He reached for my shovel. “Here, can I help you dig? What are you doing?”

I handed him the shovel. “Thank you, it will be nice to rest a little. I am planting banana trees. It is hot work!”

“We usually wait until January or February to plant trees,” he said. “The ground is soft from the rain, and the clouds make the work easier.”

“Unfortunately, my university demands I be home before then. But I am planting these fruit trees now, so when I come back I should have different kinds of bananas, mangos, lemons, oranges, avocado, nectarines, guava.”

“Did you get the trees from Concern?” he asked.

“No, they are not giving seedlings this year,” I replied. “I bought them from Sambena. 100/= (16 cents) each. Only a few people are even selling seedlings.”

“In other years there was no market. Concern was giving them away, so nobody could profit by growing them privately,” responded Elli.

I asked, “Did you ever try?”

He said, “I raised my own seedlings, but I did not even try to sell them here.”

I then asked, “What have you been doing these months? Every time I stop at your house, your daughter tells me you are in Makambako. Have you taken another wife?"

He laughed. "Not even – I'm a Lutheran! To tell you the truth, I've been raising seedlings. I have a nursery there so I can sell trees. The prices are very good there, they beat Malangali."

"Tell!" I said. "Aren't there other nurseries there?"

"No, they never had a forestry development program, so nobody learned how to grow seedlings. But they chopped down so much forest near the town, now many people want to plant their own trees again. So the business is excellent."

"What kind of trees do you sell?"

Elli said, "People like fruit trees, I can sell those for 300/= (50 cents). They also want cypress and the Eucalyptus, they want trees for carpentry and for building poles. Those trees I sell 100/= (16 cents) each. Here you cannot even make 20/= (3 cents)."

I told him, "This year they are trying to sell fifty-fifty (8 cents each)."

"Maybe they can," he said skeptically, "but here there is good forest. Who will buy seedlings?"

"Where did you learn this business?" I asked.

"I learned from Concern. They taught some of us. But I saw the business was bad here, so I left. Now for these fruit trees, you know you should dig your hole three feet deep and three feet wide. Then you fill it only with topsoil. Bring one of your seedlings, we can plant it now."[19]

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[19] Before Elli left, he asked if I was going to write about him in my book. "Yes," I replied, "I already wrote some things from our conversations." "You'll say it was me? You'll write my name in America?" "Without doubt," I answered, already thinking about the new perspective this information from Elli gave to what I had been thinking of as a failed effort by Concern to teach people how to manage private nurseries. By June 1998 – the

Conclusions

This is not an ecological study, and I do not have the data to make authoritative statements about the condition of Malangali forests over time. My analysis is based only on the few written sources about forests in the area, discussions with area residents, and personal observations from ground level to a mile up. The deforestation analysis that led Concern to undertake the MFP may hold some validity, or it may be a significant misreading of this African landscape. I suspect the truth lies somewhere between rampant deforestation and the case in Guinée that Fairhead and Leach document so well(1996), that humans are agents of forest growth. Were it not for the many individuals who related some version of forest depletion to me, I would be more inclined to base my analysis even more closely on that of Fairhead and Leach. Let us look at a few factors:

1) As in West Africa, writings about East Africa have for decades warned of impending catastrophes of deforestation, erosion, or desertification.

2) Tuite's doctoral research about the state of Malangali forests in the 1990s warns of potential problems, but finds what can only be characterized as normally healthy miombo woodlands in her research villages.

3) In travels to the sparsely populated northeastern portion of the division, a pattern was clearly visible of abundant forests with frequent clearing and regrowth.

4) Overflights and aerial photos reveal contained areas of erosion as a feature of the natural landscape far from human settlement, even in the midst of thick woodlands.

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month the banana trees we planted with the additional help of Ernesti Kidenya yielded their first fruit – Elli had given up his nursery business because he found it was no longer profitable. Other people in Makambako had entered the business, driving down prices, so he was trying other small business ventures.

Erosion in Malangali Division is, I submit, a process limited to specific geological conditions (some of which can be triggered by human agricultural activity), not a problem associable with trends toward overall forest loss.[20]

Given these points, I would be disinclined to agree with a hypothesis of forest cataclysm. However, several counterpoints argue a mitigating position:

1) Areas like the one I rode through with Baba Eustacia and Maneno both appear degraded and are spoken of that way by area residents.

2) Many Malangali residents, especially in population centers, were eager participants in forest conservation activities, even if that meant fewer forest resources would be immediately available to them.

3) Practices that people say are damaging to the forests continue both in areas with no obvious degradation and in more marginal zones. Unlike Fairhead and Leach, my questions revealed no obvious practices to prevent wildfires from damaging important resources. Nor did I discover regulated symbolic uses of fire akin to those described by Kaspin (1996) for Malawi. Instead, in two October to December periods before the rains, I witnessed uncountable conflagrations that spread far beyond the areas they were intended to clear for rotating agriculture. These wildfires often generated bitter complaints from people whose land was burned, though I know of no legal action against individuals. (One primary school received a fine from the government after burning its fields, though I do not know the details, and I know of one case against a man who started

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[20] Stocking (1996) convincingly demonstrates that "erosion" in Africa is often a crisis more of the intellectual than the geological landscape. Storey, trained in soil science, disagrees strongly with this interpretation. I expect him to take me to task for this assertion in his forthcoming MA thesis.

a controlled fire next to the Isimikinyi forest reserve.) I also saw several fires set to roust small game, one of which nearly burned several houses as well as a large swath of land residents did not want burned. My “in-law” who is a renowned hunter (my dog Cruiser sired pups with his dog, and sometimes went hunting with him) expressed little remorse for hunting with fire, even though he lives in the most heavily populated part of the division.

Given these observations, I hypothesize that Malangali is an area with much healthy forest and some forest that is at risk or in actual depletion. People do not have a history of caring for their forests, despite the cultural ecologists’ positions Leach and Fairhead so rightly make problematic that theorize an indigenous environmental equilibrium. Such factors as concentrated village settlements (a legacy of *Ujamaa* in a few areas) and agriculture intensified beyond domestic subsistence needs (discussed in the previous chapter) mean that Malangali residents can no longer take for granted the bounty of their forests. Many people agree with this analysis at some level, which is why I argue residents welcomed the MFP to the extent that they did. However, the blinding pervasiveness of the deforestation juggernaut, a case regularly made anew throughout the decades, should give us pause about accepting wholesale what are obviously only partial readings of the Malangali social and ecological landscape.

My data is also insufficient to support a necessary overview of the many different ecological zones subject to forestry programs and deforestation hypotheses in Malangali, Iringa region, and the wider East African landscape. Are there areas that are seriously deforested – or are many areas viewed as suffering deforestation simply zones that historically have not supported thick woodlands? Several expatriates, for example, told me stories of the deforestation in Ismani division in the past fifty years, but I harbor doubts that barren Ismani has supported many trees for many centuries. Are the differences I observed between the southwest and the northeast of Malangali division a function of population concentrations and proximity to transport infrastructure, or does some of the answer also rest in zonal distinctions? At this writing I have no answer, other than the key observation that people who perceive their forest resources *under threat* are much more inclined to undertake conservation activities, regardless of the state of their forest cover relative to other areas.

When Concern first drove through Malangali in 1985, an encounter began that engaged European and Tanzanian concepts of forest issues in complex ways. At the beginning of the encounter, the Europeans were prone to see Malangali as an ecological danger zone undergoing rapid deforestation. Most Malangali residents at the time considered the forest a bountiful resource that, though currently problematic, would rebound of its own accord. Through the steady campaigns of Concern and government forestry workers, many Malangali residents came to appreciate the potential benefits of reconfiguring their laissez-faire approach to trees and forests. Many men especially became involved in planting trees for later personal use and potential benefit.

Probably the most important thing that the MFP did was raise the issue of forest depletion and resurrection. By putting forestry issues into the local discourse in new ways, the MFP caused people to consider the personal consequences of felling and planting trees. Where the MFP fell short was in not recognizing that the program was essentially one of ideological conversion, and that conversion takes time. By 1996 the forestry program could claim dozens of true believers, such as Mtindo, Elli Mwenda, and Mama Rehema. Unlike the historically successful evangelists, including the Muslims, Lutherans, and Catholics who are well established in the area, the MFP withdrew its missionaries after only ten years. To Concern, this withdrawal was logical – ten years seemed like a perfectly adequate length of time for people to catch on to what are to planners the eminently logical practices promoted by the MFP. When seen as a question of converting people's beliefs more than transforming their practices, however, we can see that within those ten years the MFP only just learned how to communicate its message.

Had the ideological rather than the practical aspects of conversion to conservation been stressed, it is likely the program would have taken a different form. Emphasis could have been placed on strategies to best communicate the forestry message to Malangali residents. The mandates to engage in sometimes irrational tree planting could have been reconceived as efforts to engage people in practical alternatives to forest depletion. Such conversion would still have arisen out of definite European conceptions of African forest practices and global deforestation (Hoben 1995). The point of this chapter is not to argue that such conceptions are wrong – at least, they are not *entirely* wrong. Instead, I contend that we need to fully understand the bases of such conceptions of the environment before attempting to institute programs like the MFP that derive from their ideological construction.

Many Malangali residents were quite happy with the existence of the MFP, and were sorry to see it go. They accepted its demise with equanimity. If a new environmental program comes along, they will be ready to evaluate it and, if it seems reasonable, support it with their participation. I suggest that Europeans should not accept the reconstitution of MFP tree planting as an economic and gender-focused program, and its subsequent rapid termination, with such dispassion. If we believe that the environment is under threat globally, we cannot be complacent about the evisceration of the environmental programs we advocate. We should first look to our own desecration of the planet, but we should also support the efforts of people in places like Malangali to protect their resources for future generations. Now that environmental protection is on the minds of many residents of Malangali, aid resources planned in conjunction with area residents would allow those new converts the opportunity to institutionalize local resource conservation. Forestry planners steered their Land Cruisers away from Malangali neither because their efforts could not succeed at achieving their environmental goals, nor because their efforts had been successful. Rather, the program was phased out because it no longer represented the fashions that motivated funders and planners in Europe. With currency in neither funds nor advocates nor discourse, the program withered, and Concern, its public and private donors, and the people of Malangali all moved on to the next trend in international aid.