



Laguna de Chicabal, in the Western highlands of Guatemala, processes of constructing territorial narratives

By Gijs Cremers

This research analyzes how actors near Laguna de Chicabal, in the Western highlands of Guatemala, engage in processes of constructing territorial narratives 'from below' at the junction of the territorialization of indigenous territory and local practices and meanings of places that have been labelled as 'sacred' by the local indigenous population. Territorial narratives are accounts with a clear territorial aspect for those who compose the narrative. Along these lines, different actors ascribe sociocultural and physical characteristics that support the argument of the projected narrative with the intention of gaining 'control' over the territory. In Guatemala, such narratives are constructed by both global and local actors, such as indigenous communities, conservation activists, and (eco)tourists and all of these develop different claims to the territory. This raises questions about the relation between globalization and local issues such as land distribution and local power relations; about which sociocultural and political dynamics arise when 'global meets local', and how these processes inform and assemble globalization.

The study revolves around two main concepts, 'territorial narratives' and 'friction'. Friction can be described as elements that influence processes of globalization in a certain community as defined by its network of global relations, the interconnected relations and networks of a variety of 'particulars' (local actors) and 'universals' (global connectors). Friction thus occurs when different actors give different meanings to a certain area and generate a variety of narratives in order to 'claim' that particular territory. The relevance of studying such processes at natural sacred sites in relation to what I call ecospiritual livelihoods lies in the fact that indigenous peoples often advocate a strong connection with (self)declared sacred territory (e.g. volcanoes, lakes, mountaintops) in their claim-making. Practical implementation of spiritual rights as a political act and the influence of ecotourism and resource extraction challenge assumptions about the role of globalizing and political processes and opens up new avenues to the research of sacred territories and ecotourism. Focussing on indigenous ecological narratives, created 'from below', will provide a deeper understanding about the relation between globalization and everyday life.

Planning

From January onwards I will start reading relevant literature and focussing my research proposal on the first fieldwork. I will start my fieldwork in Guatemala (Quetzaltenango area – Laguna Chicabal) in July 2014 after teaching several courses at Wageningen UR. Once in the field I will 'move inside': documenting the complex local situation and gathering data. Furthermore I will search for people who can teach me basic skills in Mam, the local language, which I will improve once I arrive in Santa Maria Sacatepéquez. I intend to contact local NGO's and other relevant organisations before and during my fieldwork. The fieldwork will continue until November 2014 and shortly after wrapping up I will start writing on an article and try to get it published.



A sweet or bitter alliance?

Different identities, expectations and narratives enclosed in regional movements against Genetically Modified Soy. The representation of smallholder Mayan beekeepers in Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico.

By Karen Hudlet Vázquez

The representation of smallholder Mayan beekeepers in Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico This research project analyses how social movements represent the different interests of rural stakeholders regarding Genetic Modified Soy cultivation in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. The study connects European policies and norms regarding Genetically Modified Crops (GMC) with its

socio-economic impacts on the livelihoods of indigenous communities, beekeepers, honey producers and smallholder farmers in the South. In order to do so, it focuses on the value chains of organic honey, the changes on the livelihoods strategies and development expectations of Mayan communities and the collective forms of engaging, coping and/or resisting the cultivation of GMC. As more permits are being granted to transnational enterprises for the cultivation of GMC, local struggles are increasingly taking place. Thus, there is a need to understand better how social movements represent different voices, the frames and narratives that are being used, and the means for scaling up demands. The project also seeks to bring together social movements and economic development theories by contrasting the position of different actors in the value chains of the cultivation and commercialization of honey, including the production for exporting to the European market, with their role in the different scales of social mobilization.