



# **“They told us we have to plant many trees so that we can harvest air”**

Hegemony, mistrust and communication failure in a tree planting project in Tanzania

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## Abstract

PES has become an important tool in climate mitigation policies, and has potential to increase the economic flow to low-income countries and enhance rural development. However, most studies show cases where policy design is in conflict with the local context. In many cases, only partial information is provided to local people, which not only makes it difficult for them to understand the project goals, but the power imbalances between project implementers and participants could increase. This thesis focuses on a tree planting project in Tanzania where farmers receive incentives from tree planting activities. The project has three main implementers who work on different levels. The aim of the study is to understand how the different actors view the project, their own and the other actors' roles within the project, and how those views affect the information given to the participating farmers. My data shows that hegemonic structures highly affect what information that is and is not being shared, which in turn affects how the farmers understand the project aims. The project has helped the farmers to increase their supply of firewood as well as improve the local environment. Due to a lack of sufficient information, however, the project implementers are failing in one of their main objectives: to empower the farmers.

*Keywords:* Carbon, tree planting, communication, information, hegemony, invisibility cloak, post-colonial structures.

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## Abbreviations

CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
TZS	Tanzanian Shilling (1,000 TZS equals USD 0.43)
VCM	Voluntary Carbon Market

# 1. Introduction

Healthy ecosystems are crucial for human well-being (Alcamo 2003; Nzau 2018). Ecosystem services (ES) are the benefits that nature provides to society, such as healthy soils for food production, clean water and climate regulation (Alcamo 2003; Cole et al 2014). Functioning ES are important all over the world, and especially for small scale farmers whose livelihoods are dependent on agriculture (Nzau 2018). Semi-arid regions of the tropics are highly affected by ecosystem degradation. These regions often have high rates of poverty and population growth (Ibid). This is also the case in Tanzania. Here, the majority of the population lives in rural areas and make their livelihoods within the agricultural sector (FN Förbundet a&b n.d.). Tanzania has been welcoming various projects aiming at implementing sustainable agriculture and forestry practices, reducing poverty and increasing biodiversity in recent years (Ece 2021; Sida 2022; Bartholdson et al 2019; Engström 2018; Khatun et al 2015). One such project is the Tree Planting Project, here referred to as TPP for anonymisation purposes, investigated in this thesis. TPP aims at reducing poverty, empowering farmers and enhancing rural development through tree planting in small groups (SGs). TPP, as well as a number of development projects focusing on reforestation or avoiding deforestation, falls under the label of PES, Payment for Ecosystem Services. PES has become an important tool in climate mitigation policies, where carbon sequestration projects have emerged as a way for countries, companies and individuals to compensate for their emissions elsewhere while contributing to local economies (Carton et al 2020; Leach & Scoones 2015; Brown et al 2011).

Even though PES has the potential to enhance local climate adaptation and reduce poverty (Carton 2020; Jindal et al 2012; Brown 2011), it has also been argued that the commodification and financialization of carbon aligns with neoliberal economic policies that legitimise business as usual and serve the interests of countries not interested in the drastic cutting of emissions required to truly mitigate climate change (Carton et al 2020; Fairhead et al 2012). Not only is this argued to risk undermining ambitious climate action (Carton et al 2020; Andersson & Carton 2017), it has also been shown to exclude and pose harm to local communities (Fairhead et al 2012; Leach & Scoones 2015; Jindal et al 2008). Jindal et al (2008)



argue that more research within carbon forestry is needed in order to understand whether or not this is a general phenomenon.

This thesis will try to enrich the literature on this subject, with a focus on how chains of communication and information sharing is affected by power structures, and how that in turn affects the project participants understanding of the project goals. Information sharing is seen as an essential part in enhancing local engagement as well as ensuring transparency (Pham et al 2013). Research has shown that local communities that are well informed about the project goals and the different roles within a project increase their sense of project ownership and community empowerment (Dyer et al 2014). Galié & Farnworth (2019) refers to women's empowerment as the capacity of self-determination where women can control their own circumstances by having the agency to define and achieve goals and to live lives they find valuable. In this thesis, I use this definition when discussing empowerment among the project participants, regardless of their gender. Active engagement from local organisations, farmers and indigenous peoples could increase the possibilities of shaping a PES program towards the social objectives of the communities (McElwee et al 2014). Organisations working as intermediaries between e.g. authorities or companies, and the local people, could play an important role in helping the local people to voice their needs and input to policy implementation (ibid). Engagement often comes with knowledge and awareness. When the levels of awareness are low, true participation and engagement are hindered (McElwee et al 2014). Many forestry projects claim to prioritise engagement and procedural justice, while research shows that many of these projects do not meet the basic requirements set for participation (ibid).

There seems to be a recurring phenomenon that local people are only provided with partial information about the objectives of carbon forestry projects, the carbon component being one of them (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; Twyman et al 2015; McElwee et al 2014). This could put local communities in vulnerable positions that could increase the power imbalances both between the participants and the project implementers, as well as between different groups within the communities (Lover-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). Only providing partial information about the carbon component could also have big impacts on how the sequestration is functioning on the ground (Twyman et al 2015; Jindal et al 2008). Hence, more attention needs to be paid to understanding how local people in different contexts understand and value carbon sequestration and carbon trade, as well as their contractual obligations (Twyman et al 2015). Scholars argue that in order for higher levels of engagement, participants have to be more involved in the different elements of a project (McElwee et al 2014; Dyer et al 2014; Lovera-

Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; Pham 2013). In sum, there is a need to understand how projects could be more inclusive (Jindal et al 2008).

## 1.1 Thesis aims, objectives and research problem

This thesis was carried out as part of a research project at the Division of Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU. Field work took place in January – March 2022. The focus of my thesis is on a tree planting project (TPP) located in the Dodoma region, central Tanzania, where most of the project participants are small scale farmers whose livelihoods are highly dependent on sufficient harvests. TPP was implemented in the villages investigated in 1999, but has been dormant for some time and is not running at full capacity at this point. When planning the fieldwork, members of the research team contacted the TPP organization, an American company, who recommended we visit their active and more successful programme in Uganda. When in Tanzania, we decided to investigate another project focusing on tree regeneration. Many of the farmers interviewed, however, kept on mentioning that TPP had been active in their villages. Farmers expressed that no one had informed them that TPP would stop, nor why. This made me interested in understanding more about how the farmers perceived TPP and what happened when TPP left. The farmers also mentioned incentives being given to them based on their number of trees, whilst none of them mentioned carbon sequestration as being the source of those payments. This drew my attention towards how the farmers' perceptions and understandings about TPP were being shaped. TPP is now making a return to the villages and many farmers are willing to join them again.

The fact that different development projects are initiated and then delays, or, as in this case, run for a while and then stop, is not unique to the case investigated in this thesis. Scholars argue that simplistic narratives of development and project implementations tend to overlook the complexities of different localities, which in many cases is the reason of project failure (Engström 2018). As my results will show, the actors' different reasons for withdrawal and how the situation was handled stands in contrast to the stories told by the farmers. When a project stops or is delayed, political and bureaucratic processes could tend to be prioritised, while the project participants could be heavily affected (Engström 2018). I wanted to investigate to what extent this is the case in the villages where TPP had been implemented. Moreover, community forestry projects worldwide tend to face difficulties in reaching their set goals (Baynes et al 2015). Not only could this be due to a lack of contextual understanding (Ibid), but also if the participants are not provided with all the necessary information (Dyer et al 2014; Lover-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; Bartholdson et al 2019).

Initially, I believed that communication deficits would be the main reason to why the farmers spoken to had less knowledge in the carbon component and the withdrawal of the project. The more I looked into this, however, the more I realised that it was more about the power dimensions between the different actors that caused these information gaps. This thesis will investigate the role of communication within TPP, i.e. *how* information is being provided and what kind of information that is and is not being shared between the actors and why. Literature suggests that perceptions and understandings about projects could vary between the actors involved (Bartholdson et al 2019). My study seeks to find out more about this in the case of TPP. I argue that these different understandings have had an impact on the information flow, which in turn has affected how the project participants, in this case small scale farmers, understand the project aims. More specifically, I investigate how the different actors perceive the project and the other actors, as this could help us understand why the flow of information is functioning the way it does. I will draw on the analytical concept of *cultural hegemony* and the analogy of *the invisibility cloak*, further discussed in section 3. This could help us understand how underlying hierarchical structures and power dimensions are being reproduced within TPP and how this affects the different actors. The research questions that I will try to answer, are hence:

- What are the different actors' views of the project and what are their views of their own and the other actors' roles within it?
- How have those views affected the information provided to the farmers?
- How has the information provided affected the farmers' understanding of the project aims?

The purpose of this study is not to expose an individual project or the actors involved. Hence, the project and actors interviewed will be left anonymous. References about the project will be left out of the reference list for anonymisation purposes.

### 1.1.1 Thesis outline

The following chapter provides findings from previous research on carbon forestry, tree planting projects and the role of communication, information sharing and participation in such projects. Brief background information about Tanzania and the project being investigated is also presented. Chapter 3 will describe my analytical concepts and how these will be applied in my thesis. In chapter 4, I describe my methodology, methods used and a more detailed description of the villages investigated. Chapter 5 will provide an overview of findings from the field, starting with the implementers views followed by the farmers' views. The findings

are discussed further in relation to previous research in chapter 6. Chapter 7 offers a short conclusion.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Carbon sequestration and tree planting projects

Climate mitigation policies generally operate within the mechanisms of REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), CDM (Clean Development Mechanism) and the more informal voluntary mechanism VCM (Voluntary Carbon Market). The latter two are especially promoting tree planting projects in the Global South. Even though research has shown that, in many cases, there seems to be a genuine will among project initiators and funders to improve the lives of local people (Fischer & Hajdu 2018), most research on carbon forestry projects is highly sceptical (Mesham & Lumbasi 2013; Carton et al 2020). REDD projects, for example, often come with restrictions on forest use or even enclosures which have shown to affect forest-dependent people negatively (Svarstad & Benjaminsen 2017). Several studies reveal how large-scale PES projects under the CDM mechanism tend to pose harm upon local communities (Fischer & Hajdu 2018; Leach & Scoones 2015). Some large-scale projects focus on tree plantations, where land-grabs and dispossession of people have been revealed (Fairhead et al 2012) as well as negative effects on local biodiversity due to the monocultures in these tree plantations (Andersson & Carton 2017; Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). Even though there is potential for poor communities to benefit from PES schemes, given that these are well-designed (Carton et al 2020), Twyman et al (2015) argue that one has to remember that the value being placed on carbon and carbon sinks is part of a broader geopolitical discourse and that proposition and implementation is being made by powerful neoliberal actors partly to serve their own purposes. In many cases, this is manifested through different narratives and discourses about sustainability and development (Fairhead et al 2012; Engström 2018). These narratives legitimise the differentiation between things that cannot change, e.g. a growing energy demand, and things that must change, e.g. the land-use practices of the rural poor (Carton et al 2020). This means that even though policies might very well raise the importance of improving the lives of the rural poor, these narratives often stand in the way of considering the local context and the perspectives of the local people (Fischer & Hajdu 2018).

This has also proven to be the case in Tanzania, where win-win success stories are provided by powerful actors in conservation, while local people highly dependent on natural resources tends to be affected negatively (Khatun et al 2015). Many authors, however, also highlight the fact that PES projects have real potential to increase the economic inflow to countries in the Global South and to improve local livelihood opportunities (Brown 2011; Carton et al 2020; Jindal et al 2012) as well as increase local participation and engagement in environmental management (McElwee et al 2014). In fact, one of the goals of CDM is to facilitate a sustainable, equitable, rural development by providing an income to local landowners via the global carbon market (Brown et al 2011). Criticism has been raised, as market-based instruments could be seen as contradictory in relation to local rural development, and the design of CDM rarely matches the needs of local communities in terms of implementing sustainable land use practices (Brown et al 2011). In order for a project to be successful, it is not only important to understand the local context, but also to understand how different factors intersect and affect that context and the people living in it (Baynes et al 2015).

There are, however, different ways to define and measure what success means with regard to rural development (Mesham Lumbasi 2013; Dyer et al 2014; Baynes 2015). As mentioned, much depends on the initiators and their drivers behind a project, which could differ greatly between a company, an NGO or an aid organisation. Context-based solutions that focus on serving the interests of local people are in general more expensive compared to one-size-fits-all solutions (Jindal et al 2008). If the main objective, on the other hand, is to sell carbon credits for profit, a guess would be that more cost-effective solutions would be preferable. This means that the objectives set by the initiators and their motivations behind a carbon forestry project, could have a big impact on how that project plays out locally.

When the focus is on improving the lives of local people, as is the case investigated in this thesis, scholars have argued that, among other aspects, a sense of ownership and empowerment within the local community should be seen as desirable project outcomes (Mesham & Lumbasi 2013; Dyer et al 2014). There are many components affecting project outcomes, several of which are contextual. However, effective governance, social equity and secure property rights have been shown to be important components for a sustainable and successful forestry governance overall (Baynes et al 2015). In addition, Brown et al (2011) recognises three design elements that are necessary in order for carbon sequestration projects to be successful with regard to local people: 1) the project should help smallholders to sell carbon individually or in groups, 2) trees with multiple benefits (i.e. fruit, nuts, fodder etc.) should be used, and 3) the project should encourage practices that do not pose threats to local livelihood systems. Short-term cash incomes in

combination with long-term material benefits are also seen as necessary components for sustainable forestry management (Baynes et al 2015).

A popular approach that aims at increasing local engagement and empowerment is Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) (Dyer et al 2014). This approach involves practices such as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs), Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Community-Based Payments for Ecosystem Services (CB-PES), which includes agroforestry and conservation agriculture (ibid). Active participation in decision-making processes and incorporation of local knowledge should work as general principles within CBNRM to enhance local resource management (Mesham & Lumbasi 2013). Within CBNRM projects, the carbon component should, therefore, have a secondary focus, while the improvements of local livelihoods through active participation should be primary (Shames et al 2016). Tanzania adopted Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in CBNRM in the early 1990s as a way to promote sustainable forestry through co-management between the state and communities (Svarstad & Benjaminsen 2017). Tanzania is also one of the first countries to have drafted a national REDD strategy, where PFM is noted as a model upon which REDD projects should be built (Ibid). Research shows that this model can improve a households' supply of forest products (Vyamana 2009). However, most studies made on CBNRM in the Global South have focused on project failure, simply because failure is more prevalent than success stories (Mesham & Lumbasi 2013). Studies generally show an improvement in forest conditions, while the results on local livelihoods differ (Vyamana 2009; Khatun et al 2015). In Tanzania, this is especially visible in terms of failure in poverty reduction due to income inequalities within communities, mostly due to elite capture and weak representative decision making processes (Vyamana 2009).

There are project components and examples that are more successful than others. Studies on projects in Ethiopia, Kenya and Mozambique, for example, have shown that carbon payments were generally low and did not function as the main driver for people to get engaged, but the driver was rather the implementation of sustainable agricultural methods such as agroforestry (Shames et al 2016; Jindal et al 2012; Brown et al 2011). During the monitoring period of 2010-2012, the carbon revenues paid to the Kenyan smallholders were about USD 2.50 per hectare per year (Shames et al 2016) and the carbon credits paid to the project participants in the case from Mozambique were shown to be insignificant for households' welfare and had small impacts on household livelihoods overall (Jindal et al 2012). However, in the cases of Mozambique and Ethiopia, carbon payments were also given for similar activities in community forest- and farmland. These payments were put in a community fund to finance infrastructure such as schools and health

centres. This was especially successful in the Mozambique case where the local communities also committed to REDD activities in an old growth forest (Jindal et al 2012). Between 2001 and 2008, the smallholders sold carbon credits through agroforestry and avoided deforestation at a value of over USD 900, 000 (Ibid). The Mozambique case shows that even though individual households got relatively low payments, the community as a whole could improve their situation through the payments from the common pool resources.

These three studies highlight the importance of long-term planning with regard to soil improvement and climate adaptation that comes with the project activities (Shames et al 2016; Jindal et al 2012; Brown et al 2011). Agroforestry systems need some time to mature before harvests can start to increase (Jindal et al 2012). In the case from Ethiopia, however, participants observed how 5 indigenous tree species started providing fruits after just 3 years (Brown et al 2011). Community members also observed an increase in ground vegetation, which helped to decrease flooding, erosion and siltation on their farmlands (Ibid). At the time of the study, the participants in the Ethiopian project had only received one, rather low, carbon payment. Even so, the participants were generally satisfied with the project (Brown et al 2011). These case studies all conclude that carbon payments should not be seen as the main objectives when recruiting new members (Shames et al 2016), nor are they on their own likely to move local people out of poverty (Jindal et al 2012). The transaction costs of verification, monitoring and supervision of individual contracts leave less money for the participants (Ibid). This calls for fair negotiations with local communities, which in turn requires communication strategies that makes sure that the complexity of carbon sales and the understanding of what carbon offsets are, is well understood by the participants.

## 2.2 Participation and communication

As mentioned, participatory practices are promoted when the purpose is to enhance local engagement and empowerment. So, what can be classified as `participation`? The World Bank's definition of participation is: "a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affects them" (World Bank 1996:xi). Information sharing and consultation are seen as participatory practices that could strengthen local communities and provide minority groups with a voice (World Bank 1996). Aruma (2008) recognises communication in development as a means for actors to share information that could bring about changes for improved living conditions through other actors' actions. Within the spectra of communication, there are different levels where the lowest level is top-down and one-way communication and the highest level involves two-way communication and dialogue (Rowe &



Frewer 2000). When turning to the literature on public participation strategies, however, being provided with information is seen as the lowest level in participatory processes which usually do not include any mandate in decision making (Rowe & Frewer 2000; Organizing Engagement 2022) and, according to some, hardly counts as participation at all (Cornwall 2008). It is also suggested that providing information rather should be seen as more of a symbolic gesture than an act of allowing people to be involved in decision making processes (Ibid), since involvement does not automatically mean that people are given a voice.

Authors differentiate between exclusion and self-exclusion. Some exclusion could be necessary in participatory practices (Cornwall 2008; Rowe & Frewer 2000). However, the type of exclusion discussed in this thesis is not seen as necessary, but rather as the failure of making space for groups with a smaller voice (Cornwall 2008). This type of exclusion could, for example, manifest in linguistic barriers where indigenous people and people in rural communities often speak a different mother tongue than that used when actors are providing information about a project, which hinders them from active participation (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). Moreover, groups that are included could feel that they cannot speak freely without “fear of reprisals or the expectation of not being listened to or taken seriously” (Cornwall 2008:10). For example, project initiators have been shown to have a tendency to ignore or dismiss dissent raised by project participants (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). Having experiences of being silenced by those in more power could lead to less confidence, which in turn could lead to the idea that one cannot contribute and that one’s ideas might not be taken seriously (Cornwall 2008; Baynes et al 2015). This could lead to self-exclusion (Cornwall 2008) where local people choose not to participate at all or participants showing low levels of engagement. Studies on different REDD projects in Vietnam, for example, show that limited information lowered the levels of participation and engagement among local people (McElwee et al 2014; Pham et al 2013). The majority of the participants in one study recognized information as being a favour given to them by the authorities, rather than them having the right to receive project related information in order to understand the project goals and to ensure transparency (Pham et al 2013).

The highest level of participation includes citizen power, delegation and partnership, which could lead to empowerment among the participants (Cornwall 2008; Organizing Engagement 2022). Research has shown that two-way communication and involvement based on mutual respect at all stages of a development project process, is key in enhancing community engagement and sustainability (Dyer et al 2014; Aruma 2018). This includes the dissemination of sufficient and relevant information that is well understood by the receiver (Aruma

2018). Transparency has also been shown to be important for effective natural resource governance, as well as “downward accountability through democratic local institutions supported by transparency” (Khatun et al 2015:2109). A general phenomenon raised by Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri (2021), however, is that project managers often provide only partial information in bio sequestration projects. This could have negative effects on project goals and outcomes (Jindal et al 2008; Twyman et al 2015), as well as increase the power imbalances between project implementers and local people (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). One of the case studies mentioned from Vietnam makes a good example of this. Few participants in the two performance based REDD projects studied knew where their payments came from and that those were conditioned (McElwee et al 2014). 25% of the surveyed households that received PES payments, stated that they did not conduct any REDD activities. McElwee et al (2014) argue that this could be a result of both deficient information, as well as low payments compared to work input that led to lower levels of engagement (ibid).

Low levels of awareness of the project goals could indeed have consequences on how environmental conservation and carbon sequestration play out in the project sites. Due to this, Twyman et al (2015) argue about the importance of understanding how carbon is perceived and valued locally. In addition, implementers and participants might have different understandings about the intentions and objectives of a development project overall. The implementers could be driven by their interpretations of those objectives, norms and values and their perceptions about development, while the participants must try and understand the project from their own social, cultural and economic contexts (Bartholdson et al 2019). Not bridging these different understandings could have negative effects on project outcomes and the well-being of the participants. A case study on a CBNRM project from Mozambique, for example, showed that even though the participants understood that carbon was sequestered in the project area and sold elsewhere, most participants did not understand the global fluctuations and verification processes that come with the carbon market (Dyer et al 2014). The study showed that, when carbon credits were selling slowly and not enough were being sold, payments to the participants were delayed. A lack of information about postponed payments and the reasons why led to frustration within the communities, where some grew distrust towards some of the project staff (ibid). This suggests that, even though this project had a participatory approach with two-way communication as a means to achieve community engagement, the information given to the participants was not enough to manage this situation. Moreover, it shows yet another way in which global processes could impact local communities and, hence, the importance of adapting communication structures accordingly (Ibid).

As mentioned, providing information is one thing, but assurance that the information is understood by those receiving is another. Scholars argue that experts must learn how to communicate complex ideas effectively to audiences that might be less educated within a specific field (Rowe & Frewer 2000). Explaining exactly what a project is about, its purposes, who are involved and who are not, could lead to what Cornwall refers to as “clarity through specificity”, which could lead to a more inclusive process (Cornwall 2008:13). Rowe & Frewer (2002) argue that when the general public are provided with more accessible information about science, the easier it is for them to enter debates about specific subjects. Studies of CBNRM projects in Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of The Congo and Zambia, for example, conclude that the better project participants understand the project aims, roles and responsibilities, as well as involvement throughout the entire project process, the more likely they are to develop a sense of ownership of those aims and to increase their sense of community empowerment (Dyer et al 2014). The inclusion of local knowledge and traditions in projects is also important and could enhance the involvement of local people (Dyer et al 2014) and especially of more vulnerable groups (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021).

## 2.3 Tanzania, the project site and the project investigated

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world, with almost half the population living in extreme poverty (World Bank 2022). 26% of its population has access to safely managed sanitation services, and 39.9% has access to electricity (Ibid), where the majority lives in the cities (Sida 2022). The population constitutes over 130 tribes (FN Förbundet a n.d.) and over 120 different indigenous languages are spoken in addition to the official language Kiswahili (Unicef 2017; Simpson 2008).

Out of Tanzania’s total land area of 885, 800 km<sup>2</sup>, 51.6% counted as forest area in 2020 (World Bank 2020). Tanzania is famous for its wildlife and has the largest amount of land reserved as protected areas in Africa, both for conservation of wildlife but also for environmental purposes in general (Ece 2021). Even so, 3,500 km<sup>2</sup> of forested land is cleared each year for agricultural purposes (FN Förbundet n.d.). Other drivers for deforestation are the need for firewood and charcoal, but also due to the commercial, often illegal, logging of tropical tree species (NE n.d.). This increases the long-term risks of desertification and soil erosion (FN Förbundet a&b n.d.). In 2002, Tanzania declared the Forest Act which aims at protecting and restoring forest areas all over the country, where some main objectives are to ensure a sustainable supply of forest products and to enhance local participation in the

conservation and management of forest resources for the benefit of present and future generations (TFS 2002; Ece 2021). To enable implementation on a local level, the Forest Act includes Village Community Forests and Village Land Forest Reserves (TFS 2002). The latter have been implemented in mountainous areas in both of the villages studied in this thesis (Personal communication 2022). In the cases where Village Land Forest Reserves are implemented, the District designs a management plan which decides to what extent a village has control and ownership of the forest area (Ece 2021).

The tree planting project relevant to this thesis, here referred to as TPP, was established in two districts in the Dodoma Region, Tanzania, in 1998 and implemented in the two study villages in 1999. TPP was implemented as a cooperation between the Founder of local NGO, who is also a high level person at the local Anglican Church, and an American company. The Founder is now retired and is no longer active in TPP, which today is governed by the American Company, while the local Anglican Church functions as the local level operator and has the nearest contact with the project participants. A Tanzanian company has handled the business component of TPP in Tanzania since 2004 and functions as a bridge between the local Anglican Church and the American Company (Personal communication 2022). The fourth actor within TPP are the project participants who are small scale farmers living in the villages investigated.

The focal region is one of the poorest in Tanzania (TPP website n.d) and the purpose of the project is to empower small-scale farmers through sustainable agriculture and forestry (TPP PDD 2012). The farmers are working together in small groups of 6-12 members each and are provided with seeds for a variety of tree species and with training in tree planting and nursery building (TPP website n.d.). The farmers are the owners of the trees, which brings a number of benefits such as shade, firewood, windbreaks, and soil erosion control (ibid.) The trees are counted and measured by Cluster Servants and Quantifiers (Personal communication 2022) and farmers are given an incentive based on the number of their trees. This is seen as a strategy to reduce poverty, drought and deforestation while increasing biodiversity and sequestering carbon, which is to be sold on the global carbon market (ibid; PDD 2012; TPP website n.d.). Today TPP is also active in Kenya, Uganda and India (TPP PDD 2012).

Some years after the implementation in Tanzania, TPP stopped and has since been dormant until recently. As my results and analysis will show, the actors present different reasons as to why TPP stopped and how that was handled. TPP is now making a return to the Dodoma region, which has registered 198 active small groups (TPP website n.d.).

### 3. Conceptual frameworks

This thesis will be filtered through the perspective of social constructivism. According to this perspective, individuals build an understanding of the world by developing subjective meanings of their experiences. These subjective meanings are formed through interactions with others and are often negotiated through social, cultural and historical norms (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). Research from this perspective, hence, focuses on understanding the complexity of different views and how these play out when individuals interact (ibid). Moreover, by focusing on specific contexts, one can get a deeper understanding about the historical and cultural settings in which the individuals are living and, hence, how this affects their world view and their interactions (ibid). I intend to hold a critical approach, which also recognises that different people face constraints based on their class, gender and race (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). This perspective has been helpful when trying to understand the different views held by the different actors. This study is not aimed at finding one “true” perspective, but rather to understand the actors' views of themselves and the other actors and how that affects their interaction with one another.

This thesis is also based on a post-colonial understanding of the TPP and the various actors involved. This is important for two reasons. The first of these is due to Tanzania's long history of colonialism, which has affected how the hierarchical structures have been shaped within the country as well as how they are being shaped within TPP. Tanzania, formerly Tanganyika, was colonised by two European countries. It was firstly colonised by Germany until 1919 (Mbogoni 2013). When Germany lost World War I, the British took over the administrative ruling (Ibid). Besides the need to secure raw material and the opening of new markets to ensure that British industry and trade flourished, there was also a preconception that the British had a racial, cultural and moral superiority whilst the people living in the African colonies were perceived as savages with barbarian behaviours needing “to be civilized” (Ibid). After decades of struggles, Tanganyika got its independence in 1961 and in 1964, Tanganyika and the Zanzibar archipelago became the United Republic of Tanzania (Mbogoni 2013). According to post-colonial theory, the colonial assumptions, values and representations still linger in the western images of the “other”, where the “developed” knows what the “undeveloped” needs

(Engström 2018). Arguably, the colonial legacy also lingers in the former colonies' images of westerners. This highly affects how the local organisations as well as the local people in the villages investigated perceive westerners, as in this case a project implementer from America. This means that none of the actors operates within a vacuum, but that everyone's respective perception about themselves and "the other", is coloured by the colonial legacy.

Another important aspect is the fact that carbon forestry, as well as projects aiming at rural development in the Global South imposed by funders from the Global North, have been accused of reproducing colonial structures (Leach & Scoones 2015; Fairhead et al 2012; Pain & Hansen 2019). Scholars argue that practices commonly used during colonial times are being legitimised through a dominating development discourse (Pain & Hansen 2019; Engström 2018). This discourse frames the Global South as being underdeveloped and in need of assistance from the Global North in order to develop - a development curve that is thought of as linear (Engström 2018). In the case of TPP, no land is bought by foreigners, nor are any people being displaced from their lands, as has been the case in some large scale tree plantations (Leach & Scoones 2012) and agricultural investments (Engström 2018; Fairhead et al 2012). However, the funders and implementers of TPP have, as my results will show, the same development narrative, which is not unusual for NGOs (Pain & Hansen 2019) or development agencies (Engström 2018). This, I argue, is one of the main reasons why hegemony proves to be a strong driver behind the ways the actors perceive one another.

The main focus of this thesis is on information (and lack thereof) and the role of communication in upholding hegemony within TPP. In order to do so, I have analysed the data through two conceptual frameworks that are somewhat interconnected. First, I use Gramsci's concept of *cultural hegemony*. Hegemony in a broad sense refers to political leadership which is based on public consent that is secured through the diffusion of the world view of a ruling class (Bates 1975; Huang 2015; Wollard 1985). Gramsci recognised two "floors" of dominating groups in what Marx referred to as "a superstructure", e.g. the intellectual elite setting the agenda of society (Bates 1975). The two floors are "Political society" and "Civil society", where the latter is composed of schools, churches, clubs etc. that are setting an agenda in society without having the absolute power as does the political floor (Ibid). In doing so, these institutions are able to uphold a discourse based on their perspective that serves their needs, and this discourse is accepted by the masses through consent (Wollard 1985; Bates 1975).

I use this concept by recognising that there is a cultural authority that is not in absolute power, but still manages to dominate others through discourses that are being perceived as the truth by those who are being dominated. This has been

helpful in understanding the different levels of hierarchy within TPP as well as in the Tanzanian context.

Besides the concept of cultural hegemony, I also use Johansson's (2021) analogy of the *invisibility cloak*. This is used to explain the practices deployed by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in relation to local partner organisations, as well as towards civil society. In terms of civil society, Johansson (2021) argues that the invisibility cloak is used by INGOs as a way to make themselves invisible when errors occur and, through that, fail to take responsibility for those failures. This tends to put more focus on the local actor who is then seen as responsible for the failure, since the INGO cannot be seen. These practices, Johansson argues, *"are still 'sticky' with a colonial hierarchy where all the focus is on improving the local actor."* (Johansson 2021:8). This gives the INGOs the privilege of continuing without being contested as they are shielded from attention beneath their invisibility cloak. Not only is the invisibility cloak hiding the INGO, it also tends to affect their hearing negatively. Johansson (2021) discusses the role of receptive listening, which is not only about waiting for your turn to speak but also about the ability to learn and change based on what is said by the other actor. Johansson discusses that critical perspectives within this field are highlighting that privileged groups have more barriers towards hearing those lower in the hierarchy, which can affect their abilities to be constructive partners in social change. Further, Johansson argues that in order to break these patterns, INGOs have to purposely fail in holding onto privilege by loosening their invisibility cloak and dealing with the difficult emotions connected to exposure (2021).

I intend to use this analogy to demonstrate how actors on the different levels deal with issues within, and discussions about, TPP. This could further help us understand how the invisibility cloak is upholding the hegemony between the levels of TPP.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Data collection

In order to get a nuanced picture from various perspectives, multiple forms of data were gathered (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). This study is in large part based on findings from the field and supplemented by secondary data. The collaboration with the research team has also allowed me to access data that members of the team collected without my involvement. This will be referred to as “*interview recording*” or “*interview note*”, whilst the data I collected will be referred to as “*interview*”. This is the cases of the interviews with the head of the American Company, as well as with the Founder of local NGO.

Besides interviews and observations, I also took notes of informal conversations. We went to the households interviewed on foot and, through these walks, my understanding about the local context deepened.

Secondary data were gathered from the District administration office in the district capital, such as maps and data of population in the villages investigated. The legal document of the Forest Act, shared in English at the Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS) website, was used to triangulate information gathered in the villages regarding restricted forest areas. Information from TPP’s website was used to supplement the information from the interviews with the American Company, the Founder of local NGO and with the Church Coordinator of the local Anglican Church. A Project Description Document concerning TPP’s programme in Uganda (PDD) was also used for this purpose, as well as to enrich my own understanding about TPP at large. Information from the PDD and the TPP website was also helpful when analyzing the interviews with the project participants. For anonymization purposes, these two references will be left out of the reference list.

#### 4.1.1 Field work

The fieldwork was carried out during an 8-week-long visit to Tanzania, where about 4 weeks were spent in the Dodoma Region during February and March 2022. For the first two weeks, I accompanied the larger research team mentioned in the



introduction, which provided me with important insights in how research in local communities could be conducted. While we visited a REDD+ project in a different location during the first week, the second week was spent with introductions and fieldwork in the villages where I would conduct the fieldwork for the thesis. The following 4 weeks in the field sites were spent on my own project together with student colleague Linus Linse. Interviews and participant observations were made jointly for our respective theses, for practical reasons as well as due to the fact that this allowed more perspectives to be included thanks to our different backgrounds.

In order to reach important key actors in the district capital, we visited the Anglican Church and went to a church service. This allowed us to meet different coordinators within the church, such as the present project coordinator of TPP (here referred to as the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, who after this consented to a two-hour-long interview. Most of our 4-week field work contained field visits to two different villages, including sub-villages. The villages will be left anonymous and will be referred to as V1 and V2. Meetings with village- and sub-village leaders (*Mwenyeketi*) and chairpersons were held in both villages at every visit to inform them about our purposes for the day. This was, according to our interpreter, very important in these communities. Hence, it was prioritized.

#### 4.1.2 Description of the field sites

Information in this section comes from my own observations and personal communication with different village representatives.

It is 9 am and we are getting ready for today's fieldwork. The *boda boda* drivers (motorcycle taxis) arrive to pick us up outside the small hotel in the district capital where we are staying. My student colleague and our interpreter squeeze onto one of the motorbikes, while I organise my skirt and my *kanga* (traditional sarong) to fit on the other. The bike ride is around 30-45 minutes both to V1 and V2, which gives me time to plan some interview questions in my head, as well as to absorb the stunning landscapes we are driving through. After a few minutes, we leave the town and the tarmac road behind us and head out on a brown dirt road filled with potholes. It is the rainy season and everywhere I look the vegetation is flourishing in different green nuances. The dirt road stretches alongside a mountain range that is covered with grass and trees. Now and then, we have to slow down, as young pastoralist boys are herding their goats and crossing the road. We cross a river where three women in colourful clothing are fetching water while their small children are laughing and splashing water on each other.

As in all of Tanzania, a number of tribes are living together in the villages. However, most of the households interviewed belong to the Gogo tribe and use

Gogo as their main language. The villages are also the homes of both farmers and pastoralists. Some households have diversified their livelihood strategies in different ways, such as producing and selling local beer, owning a small shop or driving the *boda boda*. Most farmers own 1 acre of land or more, whilst some rent land yearly, which makes it difficult to make long term plans and to be involved in TPP or other similar projects. In both villages, trees of different sizes are growing in the settlement areas, as well as in some people's *shambas* (field or plot). To my untrained eye, I recognize two different species that are dominant. We are just in time for the blooming of one of them and bunches of yellow flowers are lighting up against the green leaves.

The total population in V1 in 2012 was 3764 people divided into 743 households and 4 sub-villages. The projected population for 2022 is 10,435 (District Administrative Office 2022). Despite this increase in population, V1 has only one primary school. V1 is divided by the dirt road that leads to the district capital where on one side, it stretches far down to a valley where large *shambas* are creating a mosaic landscape. The other side is framed by a forested mountain range and this is the side where we always begin. Here, we are greeted by a middle-aged man who owns a small fruit stand. We walk along a narrow path up to the village office building to meet *Mwenyeketi*, who, after sitting down and talking about how things have been since last time we met, gives us his permission to conduct household interviews. We continue the path turning right, as this leads us into the village where dark brown mudbrick houses and small *shambas* with maize, cassava and groundnuts, surround us. Some of the houses are built on a cement foundation, which is very valuable during the rainy season, as the mudbricks on the ground risk being destroyed. Piles of large branches are laying outside of many houses, left to dry for firewood. At this time of day, most children are at school and the majority of the young adults are away, working in their *shambas*, which makes the village feel quiet.



*Fig 1: Trees with yellow flowers planted at the edges of the shambas in V1. Photograph: Therese Engwall*



*Fig 2: Trees planted by TPP to provide shade by the church building in V1. Photograph: Therese Engwall*

The total population in V2 in 2012 was 3,531 divided into 786 households and 8 sub-villages, with a projected population for 2022 of 4,347 (District Administrative Office 2022). V2 has two primary schools. Several of the informants stated that population growth is a big problem, especially in some of the sub-villages. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are recurring simply because there is not enough land for both sufficient pasture and agriculture. V2 is a large village that stretches both far along the dirt road, and wide towards a mountain range further in through lush vegetation. Some of the sub-villages are located far from the village centre, and in order to reach some informants within our time schedule, we have to go there by *boda boda*. Narrow mud roads and meandering walking paths lead us to the different sub-villages that are not marked by any signs or borders noticeable to my untrained eye. Many houses are built on mud-brick foundations, but, in some of the sub-villages, a large number of houses are built on cement foundations. Small *shambas* with maize, groundnuts and cassava are located between the houses, and there is the constant sound of chickens running around between the maize stalks. V2 is very lively and almost everywhere I look I see people: women preparing food or carrying firewood back to their houses, children walking home from school carrying their books in worn-out cloth bags, groups of young men discussing last night's football game, older women resting in the shade beneath a tree in their yard.

When walking from the village and towards the mountain range, we are met by large *shambas*, where families are working hard to cultivate mainly sunflower and sorghum to be sold in town.



*Fig 3: View of the landscape when walking from one of the sub-villages to the village centre in V2. Photograph: Therese Engwall*



*Fig 4: A shamba with maize, 2 trees with yellow flowers, a mud-brick house and the mountains that frame V2. Photograph: Therese Engwall*

### 4.1.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church. Members of the research team conducted one interview with the Founder of local NGO. The Founder of local NGO retired in 2007 and is no longer engaged in TPP, but is still working actively as the head of another NGO that works within the villages investigated. An additional email interview with the Founder was conducted by me for clarification purposes. Members of the research team also conducted a group interview with the director of the American Company and local coordinators and Quantifiers from the Kenyan and Ugandan programs.

8 household interviews were conducted in V1 and 5 in V2. In addition, 2 group interviews were conducted in V1 and 3 in V2. To get a nuanced picture, the interviewees were targeted through both purposive and snowball sampling (Robson 2002). This allowed for conversations with young people, elders, women, men, widows and landless people as well as both present and former Small Group coordinators (in some interview answers, they were referred to as `Champions`), a `Cluster Servant` and village leaders on different levels including *Mwenyekiti*. During household interviews, it happened that people stopped by to listen. In most



of these cases, the informant consented to the other people being around. In two cases, other people wanted to join the interview, which, with consent from the targeted informant, was transformed into a group interview. I perceived this as a way to enrich the data further since more voices and perspectives could be included.

An interview guide was designed, while the structure of the interviews allowed modifications according to the different conversations (Robson 2002). The interviews lasted for about one hour each, which helped to provide an understanding of how the project had affected people's lives, as well as their understanding of the project. All informants were informed that no payment would be provided for their participation in the study. This was accepted by all the informants and they were each given a bar of soap as a small token of gratitude. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church was invited to lunch. All interviews were documented through notes and the majority were recorded after the informants had given their consent. My interview notes and those of my student colleague were gathered and compiled into one document to make sure both perspectives were included, and that we had understood things in a similar way. The recorded interviews were transcribed in order to ensure that information was quoted correctly.

#### 4.1.4 Observations

Observations were conducted throughout the fieldwork, both during interviews and meetings, as well as during walks in the villages. This helped me to better understand the local context and how people in the villages were interacting with each other and the environment (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). I documented my observations, as well as my own thoughts and impressions, through notes and supplemented those with photographs. Participant observations are often combined with interviews as these two methods can supplement each other (Robson 2002) and since observations are very useful when aiming at getting a deeper understanding about how something is functioning concretely (Swedberg 2014). One participant observation per village was conducted during the fieldwork, as a way to deepen the understanding of how local people are perceiving and using trees and forest areas. In V1, we hiked up the mountain that lies very near the village centre where a village forest is growing. Here, we learned how to prune trees and how the pruned branches are left to dry before being picked up by village inhabitants to be used as firewood. This method was initiated by another project, but it was still very valuable for my study, as it helped to provide insights into how important these kinds of forest areas could be for village inhabitants, especially for landless people. The walk up the mountain took about one hour in sloping and somewhat difficult terrain. In V2 we accompanied two women to one of the mountain forests to collect firewood. The hike was around one hour and after

having passed the large *shambas* just outside of the village, we walked uphill on a narrow path before finding a good place to cut firewood. Branches were cut with a dull axe, tied in bundles and then carried back to the village. Both observations were documented through photographs and notes.

#### 4.1.5 Data analysis

Data collected in the field was analysed continuously through discussions with my student colleague and our interpreter. Different themes emerged throughout the fieldwork, which were noted down and this helped me when reading and analysing the transcripts from the interviews at a later stage of the process (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). Transcription of interviews was done throughout the fieldwork, where parts highly relevant to my study was written down word for word, whilst other parts were summarised in detail with time of recording added, which made it easy to listen to specific parts in the audio recordings when needed. The transcripts were then supplemented with my notes from the interviews, as well as my notes from the observations. The themes found in the transcript documents were colour coded and then cut and pasted into different Word-documents holding only the respective themes as a way to structure my findings (Robson 2002). At this stage, I also used the secondary data such as the PDD and information from the TPP website to validate the accuracy of the information gathered in the field (ibid). This was also helpful as these sources of information helped to fill some of the gaps in the data collected. The themes found were turned into headings, and during an iterative process these were restructured and refined into sub-headings in chapter 5.

## 4.2 Limitations of the study

One of the main limitations of this study is the fact that I do not speak Kiswahili or any of the local languages, nor am I used to working in a culture that differs much from my own. Thus, an interpreter was hired. Before starting the fieldwork, we discussed the purposes of my study and planned the fieldwork accordingly. The interpreter came from another part of the country and stayed together with us at the hotel in the district capital. By spending much time together outside of working hours, we were able to build a good relationship, which was very valuable since the fieldwork was so much more than the translation of interviews. The interpreter helped to organise meetings with village leaders and various institutions, and also provided information about different social codes and procedures necessary when conducting research in this area. In terms of interpreting, by having a good understanding of both the cultural context and the aims of my study, the interpreter could help when explaining both *what* the informants were saying, as well as *how* they were saying it.

Being objective is impossible in social science and not an aim in itself. Instead, the researcher should reflect on how their personal world views, gender, ethnicity, class and values have an influence and what biases this could give rise to (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018), as well as how these factors influence what knowledge that can and cannot be gained by a specific researcher (Prowse 2010). In this case, it means that both the interpreter and I could easily have been biased due to our previous experiences, which could have affected the results as well as my interpretation of them (Ibid). Moreover, being given information in a third language would be difficult enough. In this case, informants were fluent in Kiswahili, but many of them had Gogo as their first language. This could also have affected the way that people understood the questions and how they answered. Throughout the research process, I tried to reflect on my biases and how those affected the study design, the research itself and my interpretations of my results. During field work, I tried to keep my mind open as a way to understand my surroundings and my research field in a more objective way (Robson 2002).

When in the field, I realised that it didn't matter how well in advance I had planned my days, as unexpected things constantly happened. Being in Tanzania during the rainy season, for example, could be an obstacle when the field sites are located along mud roads that easily get flooded during heavy rainfalls. This was especially the case on one occasion where we had to cancel all meetings in a village, as the rain kept on pouring. The social structures in these villages, with the importance of meeting, or at least communicating with *Mwenyeketi* on every visit, did also lead to delays. The usual time spent in the villages was from 10 am to 4 pm. During that time, there was usually room for three interviews. This was in part due to these important meetings with the village leaders and in part since we often had to walk some distances in order to find our targeted households.

When conducting a fieldwork like this one, limitations has to be drawn at some point. For example, the farmers spoken to all had different life situations, economic and social constraints and possibilities, as well as their own agenda when wanting to join TPP. Thus, they are not to be seen as a homogenous group. However, while recognising this, I decided to leave these variables out of the study as a way to make it more comprehensible.

## 4.3 Ethical considerations

When doing research about people, with people, a number of ethical considerations have to be considered. Power imbalances could easily occur between a researcher and informants (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). When doing research with people in vulnerable positions in a country that both has a long history of colonialism and

with almost half of the population living in extreme poverty (FN Förbundet n.d.), those power imbalances could be reinforced. I tried to have an open, respectful and humble approach as a way to diminish these power imbalances, while constantly being aware of their existence. In addition, interviews could be stressful for participants (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018). By being responsive, I managed to detect some feelings of discomfort during two interviews in particular. This helped me to address them by again informing the respondents about their rights to withhold and withdraw information and to stop the interview at any time. In one of these cases the informant was nervous as my colleague and I are westerners. So, after only a few minutes the informant requested to stop the interview.



## 5. Empirical findings and analysis

This chapter will provide an overview of my findings in the field. The chapter will be structured according to different phases of the TPP process, starting with a section about the American company, the Founder of local NGO and the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church. Each section will focus on how the actors explained a phase and how that was communicated further. This way, the actor's different views on these phases, the project and the other actors will be more visible. The findings from the interviews with the fourth actor, the farmers, will have their own section.

### 5.1 The American Company, the Founder of local NGO and the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church

This section will begin by describing different phases of TPP and end with a section on how these three actors discussed the information flow within TPP, and how different things have been communicated to the farmers.

The data about the American Company comes from an interview recording of a group interview with the Director of the company as well as local coordinators and Quantifiers from TPP in Kenya and Uganda. Information from TPP's website, as well as from a TPP Project Description Document (PDD) is also included in the analysis and is similar in tone and message to the interview. The interview recording was organised by a secretary at the American Company, where one female and one male per respective country had been invited to share their perspectives, which were predominantly positive. These participants all had leader roles in TPP locally. The director showed great engagement with and knowledge of TPP and had a leading role during the interview. He knew the names and histories of the local participants, while also having a tendency to "lump" them together, referring to them as "they". The participants from the Kenya and Uganda programs seemed a bit reluctant to engage in the discussion even after being encouraged by the director. Their different stories of how TPP had affected their lives seemed genuine and they all shared very positive examples.

### 5.1.1 The project

The Founder of local NGO, who has a leading role in the local Anglican Church, was the person who initiated the Church Small Groups in the 1990s as a way for the group members to support each other socially, religiously and economically (The Founder of local NGO, email interview 2022). The Small Groups had a rotating leadership as a way to steer away from the hierarchical leadership models that, according to the Founder, were inherited from colonial times. Through the partnership with the American Company, carbon credits and tree planting came to mind as a way to support the farmers financially. They applied for funding where TPP was granted 1.2 million USD from a Canadian company. This grant was earmarked for two districts in Tanzania, which allowed the programme to enter the carbon market:

*“Carbon money was paid upfront, quarterly, as their planted trees were verified”* (The Founder of local NGO, email interview 2022).

As mentioned in the background section, improving the lives and enhancing the empowerment of farmers are the main objectives with TPP, which could be understood from the following quotes:

“Participating farmers are motivated - farmers decide whether, where and how to plant trees, change farming methods, source and own the seeds and keep ownership of the trees and land” (TPP website n.d.).

“The farmers see the benefits of the programme overall. The things they are doing is improving their soil [...]. They are choosing to do these good things, planting trees is one of them. Getting a tiny amount of money from planting trees is a benefit. They get firewood, they get fruit. It's their trees that also turn out to give very accurate carbon credits.” (Director of the American Company, interview recording 2022).

[...] “We are focused on the farmers and not on the carbon... The value to farmers from trees and other benefits is 3 times more the money from the carbon” (The Director of the American Company, interview recording 2022).

This suggests that farmers' own will to plant trees, their abilities to make decisions as well as their knowledge being incorporated into the project are important for TPP. This, in relation with ownership of trees that brings a number of benefits are seen as a way for farmers to increase their empowerment. It also shows that the carbon credits are seen as secondary while the benefits of the trees are primary. These objectives are also seen as a way to compete on the carbon market. The text on the website puts a lot of emphasis on how farmers' lives have improved. The data collected by the Quantifiers in the project sites, such as measurements and pictures of trees, is all here in order to secure transparency towards the buyers (TPP website n.d.; PDD 2012). The director of the American Company talked a while about the importance of transparency and that the website is also available in low band width, allowing people with a weaker internet connection to access this

information. The director seemed very proud of TPP when discussing this and, when he was asked how TPP can compete with all these extra costs, he stated:

“You buy what you think is the best, not just any commodity. TPP has always been in the position of making it better to show others how it can be done and in the way that the customer can say ‘wow, I want to buy from the best’” (The director of the American Company, interview recording).

The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church also discussed the role of transparency with regards to the buyers and stated:

“The programme is built on trust between the groups and the organization, even the buyers – they are buying something which they don’t even see or can’t even touch, so it is a business of trust” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

The Church Coordinator seemed proud of the project and the fact that TPP wants to improve the lives of the farmers. He did also, however, focus a bit more on the local challenges. When discussing the project aims, the Church Coordinator stated that agroforestry is promoted as a way to make trees work in people’s *shambas* and that the survival rate of the trees is 30-50%. The Coordinator also mentioned that TPP understands people's hardships and that they may have to cut down some trees each year, which is why they allow a 5% loss of trees per group and year. These are then removed from the carbon trade. The payments per tree was about 50 TZS (USD 0.02). However, this could differ a bit, depending on the tree size and type, as well as on the market situation.

### 5.1.2 The withdrawal of TPP

At some point, the capacity of TPP went down in Tanzania, which all of the actors agreed upon. The reasons why, to what extent and how that happened, however, differed between the actors. The director of the American Company discussed the governmental difficulties in the early days of carbon trade:

“There in the early 2000s TPP got held up, stayed simply because CDM was the only official way to do it and that required a sign-off by the government. There were issues. [...] 20 years ago it was very difficult to sell the carbon, but now we are selling to large companies all over.” (Director of the American Company, interview recording 2022).

On a similar note, the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church mentioned that TPP stopped in Tanzania before the carbon business had matured. According to the Church Coordinator, TPP stopped around 2016/2017 and continued in 2019. However, the Coordinator also said that TPP counts as finished in a village after the last visit of a Cluster Servant (trusted people from the church who are responsible for counting the trees). In this case, different villages were finished in different years, where the Church Coordinator mentioned 2004, 2014 and 2017 as examples. No further explanation as to why the years differed was provided in the interview. According to the Church Coordinator, there were some reasons for the

withdrawal, but the main reason was that the number of trees reported was inaccurate:

“The number of trees reported was not the actual amount of trees. When the auditors came they found two different reports. The programme in Tanzania was questioned. It was noted that there was some cheating in one way or another among some of the small group members. There were some incentives that were paid to them, so people were trying to manipulate numbers so that they could get more money but they forgot that in some way or another, people would come there and verify information.” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

According to this, the reporting of inaccurate number of trees was such a big problem that the entire project had to stop, even though the Church Coordinator stated that *some* of the Small Group members cheated, but not the majority of them. However, according to the information on the TPP website, Quantifiers were responsible for counting the trees. This was also stated by the Founder of local NGO. This should mean that the farmers themselves were not responsible for counting or reporting their number of trees. Even so, they were the ones being blamed. On the one hand, there seemed to be an understanding and a sense of forgiveness in the way that the Church Coordinator spoke about this phase: “[...] since people are poor and are sometimes just doing what they can to get through the day, they can get tempted to cheat.” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

There was also a sense of condescension as the Church Coordinator expressed that the farmers had difficulties in understanding the long-term nature of the project and the contracts:

“It is easy to get tempted to try and get more incentive, but in the end, you are going to [lose] the business itself, which would benefit you and your relatives and your children. Because we are signing a contract that [lasts] for at least 30 years [and] up to 60 years. And when you are talking about 60 years it means you, and your children, and your grandchildren will benefit [from] this contract. This means, if you cheat, you are going to lose” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

The Founder of local NGO, on the other hand, stated that there were some tensions between the local Anglican Church and the American Company:

“In 2002, the first deviation of the programme started. [The director of the American Company] was a scatter brain, wanted to be everywhere at the same time. I cautioned him repeatedly. He’s a rolling stone. We had this grant of 1.2 million USD which was for [this district]. [The director of the American Company] started initiatives in India and Kenya (The Founder of local NGO, interview note 2022).

The Founder of local NGO stated in the email interview that the Diocese felt betrayed when the American Company started investing in other countries with the money granted for the two Tanzanian districts and that they decided to part peacefully from TPP around 2002. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, on the other hand, stated that when TPP grew in Tanzania, it was moved

from the diocese to a newly formed Tanzanian company in 2004. The Tanzanian Company is now responsible for the business side of TPP in Tanzania and is affiliated with the American Company.

Regardless of how peaceful the parting went, the following quote does express some sense of abandonment: “TPP didn’t fail, it was failed. I was left empty handed. But thank God I was invited to go to address DAVOS in 2002. (The Founder of local NGO, interview note 2022).

At DAVOS, the Founder of local NGO managed to get funding for another 5 years which allowed the project to continue. The Small Groups kept on planting trees with incentives from this new source of funding, and when the 5 years had passed, there was no more funding. The Founder retired in 2007 and, according to him, his successor was less supportive which led to a decrease in tree planting activities. However, the Founder also stated that some groups have kept on planting trees up until today without incentives. When asked about the suggested cheating, the Founder stated:

“Tree planting continued more vigorously without the carbon trading element, supported by partners from Australia. So, the TPP carbon element in [this district] did not stop because people were reporting the wrong number of trees. The problem of erroneous reporting for various factors is not unique for such grassroots projects anywhere. That is why the verification mechanism [was] instituted.” (The Founder of local NGO, email interview 2022).

Again, the role of the Quantifiers was mentioned, which suggests that even though a farmer could do the counting alone, mechanisms for verification were instituted to hinder these kinds of errors.

### 5.1.3 The restart of TPP

TPP is currently making a return in Tanzania. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church argued that, even though TPP withdrew, the Small Groups’ trees has kept on growing. Thanks to this, the Small Groups will be paid incentives according to their number of trees retroactively from when the project stopped until now. “*No one will lose anything*” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

As opposed to when the programme started in 1998, the director of the American Company is not visiting the villages but rather seems to be cut off from the localities. When it was mentioned in the interview that some of the Small Groups are still planting trees, he seemed genuinely happy. This seemed to be news to the director, which increases the image of the American Company being distant from the ground level. The distance between the American Company and the local level

was also visible when discussing the restart of the project with the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, who stated that:

“It was very difficult to reinstall the programme here in Tanzania because we had lost trust. And I think you guys understand, if you lose the trust for someone, it becomes very difficult to rebuild that trust. So, we are in a situation in which we need to go together and speak the same language, so we insisted on that.”(The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

The Church Coordinator also stated that: “A lot of people asked questions about why the project stopped, and we were very kind and open to them and told them that they have to give the accurate number of trees.”(The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

The quote about trust refers to rebuilding it in both directions, but it also became clear during the interview that this referred more to TPP trusting the farmers than the other way around. It did seem that the Church Coordinator understood that the farmers had lost their trust in TPP after the withdrawal and that the trust now has to be rebuilt from their end. However, it could also be understood that the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church is still blaming the farmers for cheating and that the large part of trust re-building lies with the farmers.

New routines have emerged with the restart of TPP. Verifying the number of trees is part of this. Now, local Catechists (people employed by the churches) are being given the responsibilities of counting and measuring the trees. As a result, they are getting the title of `Cluster Servants`. The Cluster Servants count the trees and then they are counted again by the Quantifiers. The Cluster Servants are being compensated for their time and are expected to carry out the work when asked to do so. This could include long days with long walking distances, but the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church argued that this is a very important component in the new TPP. The Church Coordinator stated: *“If you have to use a bike, you use a bike and we pay. If you walk, you walk. If it so takes a week. You just go and count. We insisted.”*

Indeed, this seemed to be very important. The way that the Church Coordinator described this and how they insisted, could almost be equated to giving orders rather than asking.

#### 5.1.4 The carbon component

Both the TPP website and the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church mentioned that there are contracts written between TPP and the farmers, where the website stated that:

“Participants contract to maintain the tree groves for 30 years in return for annual carbon pre-payments per live tree, and a 70% share of the net profits from carbon credit sales. In addition, farmers have achieved over \$8 per tree of non-carbon benefit” (TPP website n.d.).

This suggests that every farmer who has joined TPP should have a written contract where it is stated that they are obliged to take care of their trees within a certain time-frame in order to get the incentives which comes from the carbon sequestered by their trees. The director of the American Company gave the impression that the carbon component is understood by the farmers. The interview participants from the Kenya and Uganda programmes, did not mention whether or not this was the case in their respective clusters - they mainly focused on the benefits they had received from the trees. In terms of how the carbon component was communicated to and understood by the farmers at the beginning of TPP, the Founder of local NGO stated that:

“The carbon sequestering element was communicated to small group members through the church structure to the local congregation. [...] Group members understood how their trees would be counted, by a special cadre of their village representatives trained in quantification. [...] It could be said that they saw the long-term perspective in that the sale agreement stipulated the number of years a tree had to be cared for.” (The Founder of local NGO, Email interview 2022).

This suggests that farmers understood that they had to take care of the trees for a certain amount of time before cutting them down and that their incentives would be paid according to their number of trees. The fact that they did communicate about the carbon component to the farmers is stated here. *How* they did so (e.g. use of words, descriptions, etc.), however, is not clear.

The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church stated that the carbon market is now ready for these groups to enter it and that some groups will be able to do so in a couple of months or a year. According to him, the farmers were informed about this from the start:

“Participants were informed that in 10 years’ time business will start [...]. They knew from the very beginning that there will be a carbon business and they signed the long-term contracts. But they were tempted [to cheat] because of the poverty situation.” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

Again, the contracts are mentioned as a source holding all of the information. The contracts were not a subject of discussion during the interview, but when discussing the information given to the farmers and the role of transparency, which seems to be important to TPP, the Church Coordinator stated that:

“Actually it is a very complicated calculation. Even the carbon credit calculation is very complicated. When it comes to a group, it [confuses] them. [...] Selling carbon is not like selling an onion or a mango on the market. It is nothing you can see or bargain over, so it is a very complicated business. So, the calculations are not made available to the groups because of this. They just trust, it is a business where you trust each other. We are trusting the groups but we are verifying the number of trees to make sure the numbers are accurate.”

This suggests that the local Anglican Church decided not to display the carbon calculations to the farmers with the foregone conclusion that they will not

understand them. The idea that the farmers would be confused by the carbon business recurred during the interview, which will be demonstrated below.

### 5.1.5 Information flow

When reading the TPP website and the PDD, the impression is that adequate information and clear communication are important. For example, at the top of the TPP website, a banner states that: “*TPP values transparency - Honesty is at the heart of what makes TPP farmers successful*” (TPP website n.d.).

On the same note, the PDD stated that: “Part of the backbone is a two-way communications network that includes newsletters, weekly meetings at the Small Group level, monthly meetings where groups of Small Groups receive training, periodic seminars at the national level and an award winning monitoring system based on hand-held computers and GPS” (TPP PDD 2012).

Clearly, two-way communication and transparency are important components for TPP. According to one of the interview participants from Uganda, this communications network seemed to be working very well, as people are given information that helps them to make decisions that can improve their livelihoods (Interview recording 2022).

Information about the project is spread locally through a word-of-mouth strategy, as mentioned in the quotation below:

TPP grows by word of mouth: Farmers learn about TPP from other TPP farmers and join small groups of 6-12 people that form clusters of 200-400 local farmers. Clusters coordinate the small groups of women and men and provide leadership opportunities that make a difference in their local community (TPP website n.d.).

This means that the engaged TPP farmers are the ones spreading the information about how trees are planted, what their benefits are and that farmers are provided an incentive. After getting this information, farmers decide whether or not to join a Small Group. In the Tanzanian case, almost all information to the Small Groups is provided by word-of-mouth, where Small Group coordinators and Cluster Servants get the first-hand information and forward it to the Small Groups (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022). This is in line with the way TPP works financially – to do as much as possible with a small budget (TPP website n.d; the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022). Word-of-mouth could certainly be a cost effective way of spreading information. It could also mean that some information might be lost along the way for various reasons, for example information that is more difficult to understand and/or explain. With regards to how well the Small Group coordinators and Cluster Servants seemed to understand the information given to them and whether they ask follow-up questions, the Church Coordinator answered that the main questions were about



nurseries and tree planting, and how agroforestry could be adopted without jeopardising the crop harvest.

“This goes beyond agriculture. [...] “We are trying as much as possible to equip them with knowledge, including the carbon market itself. And, in a nutshell, if you’re going into details you are confusing them \*brief laughter\*. But somehow the basic information about the carbon business they are told. [...] “Then the information will cascade” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

It is not specified what the basic information about the carbon market means, but we do know, as stated in section 5.1.4, that farmers are not provided with the carbon calculations. The statement here is yet another clue as to how the local Anglican Church perceive the farmers, where the Church Coordinator seems to have a strong opinion about what the farmers can and cannot understand. After being provided with the basics, the idea is that those informed will spread the information to make it “cascade” in the villages.

With regards to the two-way communication, the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church stated that farmers can raise their questions or suggestions to the Small Group coordinators and/or to the Cluster Servants. They, in turn, are in contact with staff at the local Anglican Church in the district capital. According to the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, the church is separate from the project per se, even though we were assured that the church is the implementer and functions as a central part in the communities. It works as a link between the farmers and the Tanzanian Company. Even though the local Anglican Church is seen as the most local actor, it does not have any influence over the project design, but can give advice or suggestions about possible changes or modifications. If it is in the power of the Tanzanian Company to make decisions, they do so, and, if not, they bring it forward to the American Company. Any matters raised by the farmers to the local Anglican Church will be discussed during their weekly meetings with the Tanzanian Company, while they in turn holds the dialogue with the American Company. What is discussed or decided during the weekly meetings is then forwarded to the farmers through the same chain of communication:

“so it won't take more than a month without a response, because every week we share information; all the good and the hardships or the challenges, so it means that within a week or two we can have all the answers or the response” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

Given that the above mentioned structures for communication were in place when TPP started to withdraw, farmers should have been informed about the withdrawal one way or another. The different actors again differ in terms of this matter. For example, during a group online interview with the director of the American Company and local implementers in Uganda and Kenya, my supervisor who

teaches at SLU, raised a question about how the withdrawal was communicated to the farmers and the director of the American Company answered:

“Is it possible to communicate so people understand... We tried to communicate, but it's been 10 years... you as a teacher [referring to my supervisor] should understand that people don't understand what you try to communicate. But rumours start from day one.” [...] “Go talk to them [your students] again in 10 years and see how well they understood.” (Director of the American Company, interview Recording 2022).

According to this, the American Company tried to inform the farmers, but rumours and time have hindered them from understanding and remembering. It is not possible for us to know what “*we tried to communicate*” meant in practice. However, we could get some clues in how the director is perceiving TPP as an organisation as well as how he perceives the farmers. One could argue that the director is blaming the farmers for misunderstanding, spreading rumours and forgetting, while the American Company did what they could to inform people. My impression was that the Director seemed tired when this question came up, as if he was not at all interested in discussing this and, by answering the way he did, he seemed to have been distancing himself from this issue.

On a similar note, the Founder of local NGO stated that:

“All TPP groups were informed of the termination of the partnership with the American Company and, therefore the end of being paid for planting trees” (The Founder of local NGO, email interview 2022).

This is in line with his statements in section 5.1.2 about how the diocese decided to part from the American Company as well as their lack of funding where some Small Groups kept on planting trees but without the incentives. How the Small Groups were informed, however, is not clear from this statement.

When discussing this matter with the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, another picture is presented. When asked whether they informed the Small Groups about TPP stopping, he stated:

“No unfortunately we did not. We did not do formal meetings, but only communicated with them through the Cluster Servants and some of the champions, informing them that there will no longer be a programme. Disseminating this information required money and when they said that the programme is stopped, there is no more money flowing so no one is paid, no one is paying for anything. So, we had to stop like that.” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

According to this, there was little or no information forwarded to the Small Groups due to money constraints. However, some of the Cluster Servants and Small Group coordinators should have been informed. Stating that no one was paid signals that the money came from, and was cut by, someone at a higher level. Interestingly, those on a higher level to whom we have been spoken, both claimed that information was forwarded to the farmers. The nature of the perspective chosen for this thesis will not argue whether or not there is an absolute truth. However, the

critical view from that perspective will raise this as an interesting point of discussion, which will be analysed further in section 6. Another interesting point is the fact that TPP is now making a return to these villages where trust has to be built again from both directions. However, not once during this interview is it mentioned that they tried to inform the farmers that the money constraints hindered them from communicating that the project would stop. The focus here lies only in the fact that some farmers reported the wrong number of trees. When asked how the local Anglican Church is informing the farmers that they are back with these new routines, the Church Coordinator stated:

“For now we are not conducting meetings. Most information goes through the champions. We train them and provide information and they inform the groups. But the groups that we managed to meet with directly got the information directly from us, about what happened and how they should behave from now on.” (The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022).

This suggests that even if farmers were not informed about the withdrawal at the time it happened, they should have been by now. *How they should behave* is another interesting point that will be discussed further in section 6. On the one hand, the Church Coordinator is referring to the new routines, while, on the other hand, he is also referring to the importance of reporting the right number of trees.

## 5.2 The farmers

This section contains information from farmers in V1 and V2, including women, men, young people and elderly. Former and present Small Group coordinators, village leaders and a Catechist/Cluster Servant were also interviewed. All interviewees will be left anonymous. The subheadings in this section will differ from the previous one. My intention with this is to make it clearer while still reflecting the statements in the previous section.

### 5.2.1 The project

The majority of the respondents were positive towards tree planting. Several stated that their village used to be “*like a desert*”, whilst it is now “*green*” and “*attractive*”. Many also mentioned that soil erosion used to be a big problem that has been reduced thanks to the trees. When discussing the reasons why people in these villages wanted to join the project, some replied:

“I joined (TPP in the 1990's) because they had the ambition of having more trees, planting more trees. And they were providing the seeds so they were distributing other species. And also another reason is they had a fund, so they were counting trees. If you have a number of trees, then you will be provided [with] money.” (Interview 2022).

“People are joining projects hoping to get money as a first benefit. The trees are also a benefit, but you don’t get that benefit for a long time. So, people just keep it up as long as they get money, otherwise they stop.” (Interview 2022).

“The reason why they jump into projects is to get assistance. They know that when they enter this project they will get assistance. They will get money and use it to take their kids to school and they can buy exercise books and other things.” (Interview 2022).

“Maybe there will be assistance. Maybe they will help me. [...] I expect they will provide money and assistance in cultivating. Because my hand was broken so I don’t have that ability to cultivate, so I’m expecting to get that assistance.” (Interview 2022).

These statements could provide some clues as to how these farmers perceive their life situations. This affects their willingness to join projects without having a clear understanding of the project goals at first sight, as they are hoping that a project will bring money and assistance that could improve their life situation. It is worth noting here that respondents in both V1 and V2 stated that the village reserve forests were restricted areas, which had made it more difficult for people to access firewood and building material in the forests near their respective village. When discussing the benefits of TPP with the interviewees, everyone mentioned a number of benefits brought by the trees alone, such as firewood from pruning branches, windbreaks, shade, a cooler climate and that they attract rainfall. Many also saw the incentives as a benefit and an encouragement to plant trees, where a minority was not interested in planting trees unless there was an incentive.

### 5.2.2 Payments and carbon

When discussing the payments given to the farmers, different amounts were mentioned and very few could say how much they were being paid per tree. One interviewee stated that she was paid 50 TZS (0.02 USD) per tree, whilst most mentioned lump sums provided for all trees planted per farm or per group. Very few knew from where the payments originated. Some mentioned that TPP was paying the farmers as an encouragement to plant trees:

“It was like an allowance for planting trees.” (Interview 2022).

“They were counting the trees you have in your field. If you have 300, 400, you get paid according to the number of trees you have. And at that time (before TPP stopped) they were not specific [about] how much they were paying per tree. They were just giving you a lump sum of the money, so it depended on the number of trees you had. Some had a lot of trees and they were paid up to 100 000 TZS. Others were getting 50 000, 40 000.” (Former Small Group coordinator, interview 2022).

“I can’t tell exactly how much per tree, but I can say because I was a member of a group. The first time when we planted those trees before being counted, we got 34 000. And we were 12 people in one group. So that 34 000 [we] received as one group for 12 people.” (Interview 2022).

Statements like these suggest a lack of information with regards to how the incentives are calculated and where the money comes from. A Small Group coordinator told us that she was recently sent for training by TPP, where she learnt

that large trees harvest carbon and therefore should not be cut. However, no one had mentioned anything about carbon being sold or creating revenues, only that the big trees are attractive. A Cluster Servant was sent on training in August 2021, where he learnt how to plant trees and how to count them. During the training, TPP had told him that the trees are collecting air, the meaning of harvesting air and environmental conservation. When asked to elaborate on what harvesting air meant to him, he explained that trees are providing fresh air in the afternoon which is pleasant and that there would be too much sun without any trees. During this interview, the Cluster Servant asked us what carbon is, what the people who have planted trees are waiting for and what will happen with TPP now. These statements and questions suggest that neither of these two respondents, who are in responsible positions in terms of forwarding information to the Small Groups, have received sufficient information in regards to carbon or carbon credits or that neither of them has properly understood the information given to them. When asking project participants whether they had heard anything about harvesting air, carbon or carbon payments, very few answered yes. In fact, most of them had not heard anything at all about these components. One Small Group member, an older female head of household, told us that people from the District Capital called for a meeting where they informed the farmers that TPP is coming back and that the groups should start to plant trees:

“They told us we have to plant many trees so that we can harvest air.” (Interview 2022).

According to her, there had been no further information about what that means and there had been no mention of carbon. When asked about what harvesting air meant to her, she answered:

“I didn’t understand what they meant when they said harvesting air because I didn’t go to school, I know nothing. So, what I know is just to plant trees. To have trees which will help me like you see here, they will protect my house when you plant them.” (Interview 2022, interviewee refers to how the trees around her house are protecting it from heavy winds).

The same person stated that there had been no attempts to influence the project and, when asked whether she felt like she could raise ideas for improvements, she answered: “*We didn’t have any ideas. Which ideas do you mean?*” (Interview 2022).

This tells us that this Small Group member has not considered any ideas that could improve or change the project. I argue that it rather shows a mentality of doing what you are told, as the project implementers probably know best. This could suggest that one might hesitate to ask follow-up questions about things one does not understand, such as the harvesting of air.

### 5.2.3 The withdrawal and restart of TPP

All of the interviewees were asked about the time when TPP left the area, where the majority stated that they did not receive any information about TPP withdrawing or why. Several of the respondents, including the Cluster Servant, asked us if we knew why TPP left. He did not live in the village when TPP started there, but has become a Cluster Servant in the new TPP, which will be discussed below. This could be a reason for him not knowing what happened, but since he asked us, it suggests that this has been discussed in the village and that few people know why TPP left. In addition, some asked us whether it was true that TPP is making a return to their village.

One of the Small Group coordinators stated that she did not remember when TPP left her village, and neither did she know why. She also stated that there was no one to ask: “*It kept quiet*” (SG coordinator, interview 2022).

A former Small Group coordinator stated that:

“From my side, I can say, I thank TPP for coming to our village. They insisted [that we] planted trees. But I want to ask you why they left. They just came to insist we plant trees and left. What made them leave?” (Former Small Group coordinator, interview 2022).

Again, this shows that a responsible person still does not have any information about why TPP left. There is gratitude towards TPP and the training in tree planting they brought to the village. My impression is also that this person only asked because he wanted answers and not because he wanted someone to blame. There is also a sense of abandonment in this quote: someone came and taught farmers to plant trees and then they left without informing anyone. When the same person was asked about what happened when TPP left his village, he replied:

“There was a time they left [...]. They shifted from here to Morogoro. We didn't get a proper explanation [as to] why they left because the one who was [handling] the project was in the district. [...] When he left for Morogoro, it was difficult to find him. People tried to go to Morogoro and tried to look for him. But it was so expensive. You have to travel, you have to find some guesthouse to stay, and all that requires a lot of money.” [...] “So from that time we decided to keep quiet. Up to now, the issue was silence as it is.” (Former Small Group coordinator, interview 2022).

Not only did these Small Group members seem to have been quite upset about TPP stopping without informing them, but this also shows that it was very difficult for them to get answers. The fact that some villagers tried to find the person responsible despite the high costs of traveling shows that answers were very important for them. A bus ticket from the district capital to Morogoro is 20 000 TZS (USD 8.6) today. As they could not get a proper explanation after doing everything in their power, they decided to keep quiet and move on with their lives. This, I would argue, shows two things: first there is a sense of despair in the decision to keep quiet, as if all energy went down the drain in the search for answers; and, second, there also seems to be a dignity in the way people took this into their own hands - first travelling to Morogoro in search for answers and then when there were none, they decided not to spend any more time and energy on this and moved on with their lives.

The following is stated during a group interview:

“I remember one day when somebody from TPP came here [name of the person] who was dealing with this project. He came and told us to count trees and he told us that per tree he would pay us 200 TZS. [...] We didn’t even plant crops, we just planted trees in our fields. But after counting trees he didn’t pay, he just went another way.” (Interview 2022).

200 TZS per tree is a lot of money compared to the 50 TZS per tree mentioned by another farmer and the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church and it is easy to understand why these farmers prioritised trees over food crops. According to these statements, no one came to count their trees and they were not provided with any incentives. In regards to what happened when they realised that TPP was not coming back, they said:

“Because the one who told us to plant trees ran away, then we decided to cut those trees and we started planting crops.” (Interview 2022).

None of the participants in this group interview remembered which year TPP came nor when they left. Up until the time of interview, none of the interview participants had received any information about TPP restarting.

Only a couple of the interviewees seemed to have an idea of why TPP left. During another group interview, it was stated that TPP first came to the village and encouraged the people to plant trees, but then left. According to the person who mentioned that, TPP was not trustworthy, since they were bad at counting: *“Someone could say they had 200 trees when having 20 trees.”* It is also stated that the ones who counted the trees before were the local people, but that they are no longer seen as trustworthy. Hence, people from the churches are asked to do the counting. With regards to the return of TPP, it is stated that they have not been open about how much they will pay the farmers and that, in order for a project to work, the implementers must be truthful towards the local people.

One Small Group member stated that: “[...] when they were counting, they only counted the seedlings. But later people didn’t bother to plant them. This was a challenge, and later the people recognized that we were lying to them. They were paying but no one was planting the seedlings. They were leaving them in the nurseries.” (Interview 2022).

According to this, there were some inaccuracies regarding the number of trees reported to TPP before they left. What is interesting is that these are the only interviewees who seemed to have this information. The first quotations suggest some of the local people were responsible for the miscalculation mentioned and that they were counting their own trees, but that TPP should somehow be blamed for not counting correctly.

The Catechist informed us that TPP had contacted him through the District Church and assigned him to be a Cluster Servant. With this title, he is responsible for

counting the Small Groups' trees and he stated that he had not been paid anything for his efforts by the time of the interview. Counting was a time-consuming task; counting the trees of 10 groups took him 7 days. He had to walk long distances without being offered food or drink to bring with him. One challenge he mentioned was that people wanted him to count their trees as soon as possible while also having obligations at the church. He said that all work within the church is done voluntarily and that the District Church had insisted, saying that he as a man of the church is expected to carry out this task. The reason for him being asked to do this, he said, is because people from the church are trusted while the local people are not. After counting the groups' trees, he was informed that he had to mobilise the groups and encourage them to prepare to plant more trees. Even though he was not offered any compensation at the time, he is expecting to get some sort of payment:

I accepted those obligations, I was doing them all because those who gave those obligations, I believe they know this, so I am still expecting that they maybe will pay me." (Cluster Servant, interview 2022).

This suggest that the view the Catechist has about himself in relation to the church, is that he is further down the hierarchy. Still, he seems to have faith that hard work will pay off in the end, which somehow suggests that he is accepting the structure and his position within it.

There seems to be scattered information with regards to whether TPP is making a return or not:

"TPP has informed the groups that they will come back, but we haven't seen them yet. It was in October. It is important to join them if they come back because they were the ones to make V2 look like this." (Interview 2022, the respondent is referring to the lush vegetation surrounding us during the interview).

"TPP said: these trees are yours. They said that after they grow up, you can harvest them. First, they were not here for such a long time. Then, when they came back again to count trees we wondered, and they said this time you'll get lots of money." (Interview 2022).

A Small Group coordinator discussed the fact that TPP is making a return to the village: "Now TPP is good, groups are waiting for payment. I don't know how much. People have been asking for payments but we have to be patient. Any sum or benefit we may get [...] we are thankful for. The trees are ours and we are grateful for what we get." (Small Group coordinator, interview 2022).

This shows the position held by many of the farmers: any benefit they may get is helpful and this position does not leave much for negotiation about terms in the project agreements nor a discussion about getting answers as to why TPP stopped. In regards to the statements of the Cluster Servant, one could get an understanding about how the hierarchy within the church functions, where the Catechist accept the obligations with hopes of being compensated.



### 5.2.4 Trust and empowerment

The empowerment of farmers and the incorporation of local knowledge are, as mentioned, stated to be important aspects of TPP. It seems as though this has worked to some extent: farmers know that they own their trees and can use them for the benefits of their choice, which also helps them to save money. Many respondents stated that they have enough firewood from their trees, which means that they do not have to buy firewood nor do they have to walk long distances to restricted areas. This in itself, I argue, signals some kind of empowerment.

Very few know why TPP left, and some respondents expressed feelings of abandonment, uncertainty and doubt. Even so, the majority of the respondents are willing to engage in TPP again now that they have returned. This brings us back to the quotes mentioned in section 5.2.1, where farmers stated that people in general were positive towards joining projects with a hope that they will bring money and assistance. This suggests that the empowerment achieved might not be enough for the farmers to voice their opinions, ask questions, request answers or make suggestions for improvements. In fact, when one of the Small Group coordinators was asked about her perception of her room of manoeuvre within TPP, she said:

“I have that influence. I can say my words to them and they listen to me as I am the chair of TPP. [...] Would I ask [for changes] they would not refuse, they would say they are planning on solving that. But I don't know if anything would happen. [...] Now TPP is back and we will continue giving them advice.” (Small Group coordinator, interview 2022).

The Cluster Servant also said that he could share his thoughts with TPP but, was not so sure whether he could influence the project and, after some thought about that, he stated: *“I don't think I can”* (Cluster Servant, interview 2022).

This tells us that both of these people in responsible positions locally felt that they could speak openly and freely and that they would be listened to. On the other hand, neither of them seemed to be sure that their suggestions would make any difference as regards action taken by higher levels.

Indeed, many respondents stated that they would be interested in joining TPP, and many of those who used to be involved sounded interested in re-joining. Some stated that they did not know how to join, but many knew where to ask. One respondent stands out from this crowd, however:

*“Last time they came, they counted 700 trees and they paid me 10 000 TZS (USD 4.3). I think it was in 2004.”* (Interview 2022).

This interviewee argued that the payment was too low and, even though TPP went to count the household's trees and promised a lot of money, the interviewee did not trust them, but preferred to enjoy the benefits of the trees without any engagement in TPP: *“I've told them that I'm free with my trees. I'm not in need of your money. Just leave me alone with my trees.”* (Interview 2022).

This is the only respondent stating no interest in re-joining TPP, regardless of the promises of high payments. The informant also expressed mistrust towards TPP and that he did not believe that the payments would be any higher than the previous ones. Even though distrust was raised by other informants, he is the only one not interested in re-joining. This person excludes himself from TPP simply because he does not want to join. It should also be mentioned here that the statements made by this farmer suggest an increased empowerment gained from ownership of the trees and, by not being involved in TPP, the decision to cut trees is entirely his.

## 6. Discussion

Section 6.1 provides a short overview of how information flows between the levels within TPP. The following sections will discuss different phases and variables of TPP, how the different actors spoke about how they have been communicating with the farmers and how the farmers spoke about these phases and variables during interviews. By so doing, we could find keys to understand how the different actors perceive the project, their own and the other actors' roles within it, as well as how the farmers perceive and understand the project. I will conclude this chapter with a short discussion about what impacts this understanding about TPP could have had on the project goals.

### 6.1 Communication and the information flow

As mentioned in section 1.0, local organizations bridging the gap between local people and those on higher levels in an organization could play an important role in giving local people a voice (McElwee et al 2014). My findings from TPP in Tanzania show that this has only partly been working. According to the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, any information given to him by Cluster Servants or Small Group coordinators, is forwarded to the weekly meetings with the Tanzanian Company. The local Anglican Church has no power in decision making. Sometimes, the Tanzanian Company can make a decision regarding TPP and, sometimes, they have to bring it forward to the American Company. This chain of communication increases the distance between the farmers and the American Company while also displaying a hierarchical structure between the actors. This hierarchy is also visible in how the Small Group coordinators and the Cluster Servant describe their positions in relation to the local Anglican Church. They all feel that they can voice their opinions, but none of them believes that their opinions will lead to any action. Even though there seems to be some kind of two-way communication, which is raised as a major key to project success as regards to local people (Dyer et al 2014), this does not equate to any decision-making power, which leaves little room of manoeuvre for both the farmers and the local implementers. This will be discussed further below.

### 6.1.1 The word-of-mouth strategy

TPP insists on doing as much as possible for the lowest budget possible (TPP website n.d.; Interview 2022). As stated by the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, information to the farmers is today spread through a word-of-mouth strategy where Quantifiers, Cluster Servants and Small Group coordinators are the first to receive training and information. Cornwall (2008) argues that information could easily be made available, while ensuring that it reaches people and is fully understood are another matter. Cost-effective as the word-of-mouth strategy is, it also, however, puts a lot of responsibility on the people on the ground to spread accurate information and make sure that it reaches all participants. Those providing information during training have to be well informed and equipped to communicate in a comprehensible way and the receivers have to get sufficient information that is understood by them (Aruma 2018). The receivers also have to be able to forward the information to the Small Group members. Rather than organising meetings with the Small Groups directly, TPP creates a chain of communication where every link is important for the project outcomes. So, what happens if some links fail because some information is not provided or if information given is not understood by the receiver? According to the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, most follow-up questions from farmers concerned tree planting activities. Fewer questions seem to be about incentives or carbon. One way to look at this is the fact that tree planting is concrete and has visible benefits, while the carbon component is more abstract and more difficult to grasp, which could be one reason why this is more difficult to forward to the Small Group members. Carbon could be understood very differently in these localities compared to countries in the Global North (Twyman et al 2015). This calls for both a greater understanding of how those concepts are perceived (Ibid) as well as an improved way of communicating according to these perceptions.

This communication system seems to be working quite well in the Kenyan and Ugandan programmes, according to the local group coordinators and Quantifiers. However, one could argue whether or not it is fair to have this kind of system now that TPP is just re-entering Tanzania and, as stated by the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, there is a need to “*speak the same language*”. As the following sections will show, it is not only the carbon component that is poorly communicated. Where both the director of the American Company and the Founder of local NGO stated that farmers were informed, the majority of the farmers do not seem to have received that information.

## 6.2 The withdrawal of TPP

As my results have shown, the different actors state different reasons as to why TPP stopped in Tanzania. The director of the American Company mentioned governmental issues and a slow carbon market as the main reasons, while the Founder of local NGO stated that the director of the American Company took their funds and started projects in other countries. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church claimed the main reason to be the inaccurate number of trees reported by farmers, which is also explained by three of the farmers interviewed. One reason could be just as correct as another, and I will not discuss these further. However, it is important to bear them in mind when entering the following discussion about how these three actors discussed their communication with the farmers, since they shape the way the actors talk about this phase as well as their own and the other actors' roles within the project and this phase.

According to the Founder of local NGO, farmers were informed that the American Company left Tanzania but that some kept on planting trees without TPP and the carbon component. The director of the American Company stated that they did try to inform the farmers, while, at the same time, he sounded very tired when asking whether it is possible to communicate so that people understand. My interpretation here is that the director of the American Company blamed the farmers for not understanding and for forgetting and spreading rumours, rather than taking on at least part of the responsibility for failing in a way that is understood by them. This reaction exemplifies the usage of the invisibility cloak, where the American Company is hiding beneath it and hence fails to handle this discussion in a constructive way. The invisibility cloak, as mentioned by Johansson (2021), also muffles the hearing of those hiding beneath it. This is demonstrated in the way the director of the American Company acts when some perspectives of the farmers are revealed by the researchers in the interview: by not wanting to discuss the perspectives of others and instead directly sending the question back, arguing that a teacher should grasp the difficulties in making people understand. Again, my intention is not to find one truth. Perhaps they really tried hard to explain to people and they failed to understand. However, this is not how the farmers experienced this phase of the project. By responding to the perspectives raised in this way, the American Company fails to take responsibility for their communication failure. They hide in the background while focus is put on the local organization and the project participants. As a result, the American Company manages to remain dominant and upholding the hegemony, while the hierarchical structures both within the organization as well as in the deeply rooted colonial structures allow them the privilege to do so.

The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, on the other hand, stated that they only informed a few Small Group coordinators and Cluster Servants due to money constraints. The Church Coordinator is not even looking for an invisibility cloak during our conversation, but rather takes responsibility when explaining how they handled the situation. Even though the Coordinator stated that no one was paid to visit the groups, which is arguably a way to explain why they could not inform the farmers, there is no blame put on either the Tanzanian Company or the American Company by the local organization. Even though the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church seemed a bit sad about how this situation ended up, he does not question the fact that no money was provided, not even for the dissemination of information when TPP stopped. This is yet another way that the colonial structures are demonstrated: the idea that the American Company probably knows best and that its way of handling this situation should not be questioned or criticised.

In regards to the return of TPP, I get the impression that the farmers have not been given any apologies for the fact that they were not informed about the withdrawal. According to the Church Coordinator, they have received many questions about why TPP left and he stated that “(...) *we were very kind and open to them and told them that they have to give the accurate number of trees.*” This suggests that this information was given to the farmers out of the goodness of the local Anglican Church, rather than as part of a strategy aiming at increasing their understanding and transparency. Johansson (2021) uses the invisibility cloak when focusing on INGOs’ practices with respect to local partner organisations. However, I argue that the local Anglican Church through this practice also uses the cloak but with respect to the farmers and, hence, fails to take responsibility regarding them. In line with the arguments of Cornwall (2008), information in this case could be seen as a symbolic gesture rather than an attempt to include farmers, their perspectives as well as recognising their entitlement to information. I argue that this reinforces the hegemony, where my impression from this interview is that the farmers have no say with regards to the withdrawal nor the lack of information, but are completely under the dominance of the local Anglican Church’s narrative about what happened.

This study has not focused on contracts or legal matters. However, it is worth noting that both the TPP website and the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church stated that farmers sign a contract to maintain their trees for at least 30 years (TPP website n.d.; The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, interview 2022). These contracts should mention the fact that a farmer is under an obligation to maintain the trees in order for carbon to be sequestered and sold. However, none of the farmers mentioned anything about contracts, nor that their trees had to

survive for at least 30 years before being cut down. This does not mean that there are no contracts, but I find it rather interesting that farmers who were asked to explain their involvement in the project didn't mention them. The Church Coordinator stated that TPP understands that farmers sometimes have to cut their trees before they have reached 30 years, which is why they have a 5% marginal within the contracts. This should mean that if a farmer breaks a contract by cutting more than 5% of the trees, the payment would be lower; meaning that the only one suffering from a broken contract is the farmer. The same rules does not seem to apply to the project implementers. Should this be the case, TPP would have been the ones breaking the contracts with the farmers when withdrawing from Tanzania, where, according to the statements of the farmers, this would have been done without informing them.

### 6.3 Payments and the carbon component

As argued in the background section, sufficient and precise information is required to reach the goals set in a development project (Aruma 2008). In this case, farmers seem to be given sufficient information regarding how to plant trees, why it is good to conserve the environment and that they are given an incentive to do so. My findings show that the amounts paid to the farmers have varied between groups, individual farmers and the time of payment. According to the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, this is due to the fluctuations of the carbon market, tree species and the size of the tree trunks. All farmers interviewed knew that they were paid according to their number of trees, but no one mentioned other variables. None of the farmers knew that the payments came from carbon offsets. In fact, very few had heard anything about carbon at all. Only three informants stated that they had heard that trees were "harvesting air" and the Cluster Servant responsible for counting trees, asked us to explain what carbon dioxide is. This, I argue, could not be viewed as sufficient information. Dyer et al (2014) raise the example of market fluctuations and their effects on a local level, which, among other things, calls for communication strategies to be adapted to handle global processes like this one.

According to the Church Coordinator, farmers are only provided with partial information because they are believed to be confused if provided with more than "the basics". By not being provided with information about the carbon market, they are unable to gain knowledge about this subject and are, hence, left unknowing. I argue that this reinforces the hegemony on the local level where the local Anglican Church is creating a narrative of the farmers having difficulties in understanding. Hence they are not explaining these elements. This becomes a vicious circle that manifests in the farmers consenting to this narrative, believing that they "know nothing", which is yet another way that the colonial legacy is being demonstrated.

Practices like these have proven to increase the power imbalances between project implementers and participants (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021), which could be seen as contradictory to the aim of increasing farmers' empowerment set by TPP. I argue that when withholding project-related information, the farmers are provided with a false empowerment that does not include the possibility of making informed decisions.

The colonial structures are difficult to bypass since they are so deeply rooted in the participants of this study and highly affects their ways of interpreting the project and their respective positions within it. Many development initiatives in the Global South arise from a dominating development discourse that has been argued to reproduce these structures (Pain & Hansen 2019; Engström 2018), making it even more difficult to break the pattern. Is it even possible to break free from the colonial legacy and hegemony in development projects? When it comes to research, different codes of conduct have been developed as an attempt to do just that. To completely break free from these structures is probably impossible, but, by following some of these codes, development initiators could distance themselves from them to some extent. One such code states that hiding or providing only partial information due to barriers such as lower education, illiteracy or language should never be an excuse for withholding information (Global Code of Conduct 2022). When comparing this to how the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church argues about what can and cannot be understood by the farmers, I argue that this is the exact opposite of the code. The code also states that information always has to be presented honestly and as clearly as possible and that "Plain language and a non-patronising style in the appropriate local languages should be adopted in communication with research participants who may have difficulties comprehending the research process and requirements" (ibid). We cannot know how the local Anglican Church presents information to the farmers, but, when discussing this matter with the Church Coordinator, there is a general sense of patronising the level of knowledge among the farmers. If following the code, the information would be adapted according to the participants' level of knowledge, rather than being withheld. Personally, I am certain that the Church Coordinator really wants to help the farmers to improve their living conditions, which the project has also proven to do. This view of the farmers in relation to the organization, however, is reproducing the hegemony. This could place the farmers in positions where they do not want or dare to ask questions when provided with information that they do not understand (Cornwall 2008; Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021). Not displaying the calculations behind the farmers' payments due to these preconceptions about what the farmers do and do not understand is also highly contradictory to the statement "*Transparency being at the heart of what makes TPP*



*farmers successful*” (TPP website n.d.). They are thus counteracting their own stated intentions.

In this case, farmers understand that payments are based on their number of trees, but by not being provided with all of the information, they still lack some pieces of the project puzzle. This hinders them from truly gaining ownership of the project goals simply because they are not aware of the existence of some of them. This could also be argued as another way that the farmers’ empowerment is being worked against by TPP themselves, even though this is one of their main objectives of the project.

## 6.4 The effects of the farmers perceptions of TPP

This last section will try to filter the above sections into how the farmers perceive the project and its goals. I will discuss the benefits and challenges from their perspectives and tie the discussion to the analytical concepts.

The drivers behind the adoption and shaping of participatory practices, Cornwall (2008) argues, are the motivations. The main motivations of TPP at large are to improve the lives of the farmers, whose lives to some extent are improved by the benefits of the trees. What motivates the farmers to join seem to be the hopes of assistance, incentives and the benefits of trees. Farmers seem to be making their own decisions on where to plant their trees, which is in line with the description of the TPP website and the interview with the American Company. Incorporating local knowledge like this is important with regards to local engagement (Lovera-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021) as well as increasing the farmers’ influence over decisions which could enhance a sense of project ownership and community empowerment (Dyer et al 2014). As showed in the results, the majority of the farmers are satisfied with TPP with regards to the benefits they have received from the training and from their trees. Many stated the fact that they are the owners of their trees, suggesting that a sense of ownership is important. Several stated that they now get enough firewood from their own trees and hence do not have to walk long distances to collect firewood in forest areas that are restricted as regards cutting trees. To some extent, farmers also manage to get enough building material from their own trees. However, since they are not allowed to cut their trees in order to get the incentives, many still have to buy timber. This builds on previous research showing that material benefits, such as firewood, fodder, etc., are important factors with regards to project success from the perspective of the local people (Baynes et al 2015; Brown et al 2011).

Only one of the interviewees mentioned that trees had been prioritised over crop production. The three necessary design elements mentioned by Brown et al (2011), e.g. enable groups or individuals to sell carbon, promote trees with multiple benefits and do not pose a threat to local livelihood systems, seem to be adopted in TPP to a large extent. This seems to be one of the positive effects of the incorporation of local knowledge, where farmers decide where to plant their trees. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church claimed that farmers were impatient and struggled to see the long-term benefits, which according to both Jindal et al (2012) and Brown et al (2011), could be a challenge, as these systems require long-term planning from farmers who might be in difficult situations. Even so, most farmers who adopted the TPP methods seem to understand the long-term benefits that come with the trees very well. In line with other studies on similar projects, the environmental benefits of the project activities are, in general, also primary in the TPP case (Jindal et al 2012; Brown et al 2011; Shames et al 2016). Apart from the long-term benefits, short-term cash income is also recognised as important for community engagement (Baynes et al 2015). The incentives are seen as one of the main drivers for farmers to join TPP now that it is making a return. Previous research has shown that local governance in the form of small groups that focus on equal leadership is a highly preferable but not necessary component for project success (Baynes et al 2015). Many of the farmers mentioned the Small Groups as being good and supportive, but that they stopped being active when there were no more incentives. This suggests that the cash income was more important for the enhancement of community engagement than the groups alone.

My results show that some farmers seemed more eager to get the incentives than others, which could be due to many reasons that will not be discussed further. However, some farmers were informed that the incentives they will be provided, will be retroactive from the last visit of a Quantifier until today. Some groups have not been paid since 2004, which will generate a large lump sum. Moreover, several farmers stated that they had been promised a lot of money from the new TPP, which was also verified by the Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church. How much a lot of money is has not been stated, but the Church Coordinator mentioned that the carbon revenues could be very high. The interviews with farmers showed that the withdrawal of TPP still lingers in their memories. Collective memories about certain events could affect how participants perceive a project (Bartholdsson et al 2019). The fact that all but three informants lacked information about why TPP left their area, could imply that this is such an event. There are no guarantees that TPP will stay this time either, which could be a reason for the farmers being eager to receive payments. By not being open about the carbon calculations and expected amounts but only promising “a lot of money” keeps the farmers in limbo that they cannot escape. This is another way in which hegemony is upheld within TPP, and

that, I argue, is another way that the practices used by TPP are counterproductive in relation to the goal of empowering farmers.

As mentioned in previous sections, many farmers seemed to be empowered by the ownership of the trees and the incorporation of their knowledge in the project. However, the ways in which the farmers discussed the role of development projects, what TPP meant to them, how they felt when TPP left and how they feel now that TPP are back suggest that many farmers find themselves in vulnerable positions. The quote “anything we get we are thankful for” was only stated by one informant, but my general impression is that several shared these thoughts. When being given an opportunity to ever so slightly improve your life situation, you might need to take that opportunity regardless of your previous experiences. Only one of the respondents showed distrust towards TPP and stated no interest in joining them, even though they promised a lot of money.

## 7. Conclusion

These rural communities have benefited from TPP when looking at the benefits provided by the trees. Farmers have increased their supply of firewood and the trees serve as wind- blocks which protect their houses, provide shade and help to cool down the air, which makes it more pleasant. This result is in line with the importance of material benefits shown in previous research (e.g. Brown et al 2011; Jindal et al 2012; Shames et al 2016; Baynes et al 2015). To some extent, the way in which the farmers talk about themselves as being the owners of the trees suggest that there is a sense of ownership and empowerment, which is one of the objectives of TPP.

The actors express different views about why TPP withdrew and how this was handled at the different levels. Both the Founder of local NGO and the director of the American Company stated that they informed the Small Group coordinators about the changed situation, whilst the local Anglican Church, which functions as the local implementer, stated that they did not. According to the majority of the farmers, no information about the withdrawal was given to them then nor now when TPP is making a return. Some expressed frustration and abandonment. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, however, stated that they received many questions about why TPP left where they were “very kind” and explained how the farmers should behave now at the re-launch of the programme.

Same causalities could be drawn for the carbon component. The general impression from the TPP website, the email interview with the Founder of local NGO and the group interview with the director of the American Company is that project participants are informed about the carbon revenues. The Church Coordinator at the local Anglican Church, however, stated that only the basics are forwarded to the Small Group coordinators, since “too many details would confuse them” and the calculation is “very complicated”. By not being provided with information about the carbon market, farmers are unable to understand why the payments differ between the times of payment and between groups. This lack of information could also make it difficult to make informed decisions that relate to cash income. This stands in contrast to the statements from the Ugandan Small Group coordinator,

who stated that they are teaching farmers to make decisions that improve their livelihoods.

The cultural hegemony within the organisation highly affects the way the different actors perceive themselves and these views, in turn, reinforce the hegemony between the levels. I argue that Gramsci's floor of civil society could be seen at every level where every actor in the hierarchy creates a narrative that serves their interest and dominates the ones lower in the hierarchy. This is demonstrated in the ways that the respective actors discuss the project and the other actors, not least the farmers. I argue that the American Company's usage of the invisibility cloak also works as a force to uphold the hegemony within TPP, while affecting how the local Anglican Church perceives the project and its role within it. The invisibility cloak does, to some extent, work as a means for the American Company to remain dominant while also upholding neo-colonialist structures within TPP, where much focus lies on improving the local partner organisation (Johansson 2021). This organization has no decision-making power, yet functions as a decision maker with regards to what information that is and is not being provided to the farmers. This reinforces the hierarchical structures, making sure that the farmers remain on the lowest level.

The actors' views of the farmers affect what is and what is not being communicated to them, which in turn reinforces the hegemony, as they are unable to understand information not provided to them and, hence, are perceived as unable to fully understand. Through this structure, the farmers are consenting to the narratives created by the local implementer. That is, farmers are well aware that they are at the bottom of this hierarchy, which can be seen in the ways they discuss why local people usually want to join projects, what TPP has meant to them, how they felt when TPP left and how they feel now that TPP is back. Statements from some farmers show that they do feel empowered to some extent, which is one of the main objectives of TPP. However, due to the lack of information being provided to the farmers, TPP fails to truly empower them.

Power imbalances like these are not unique to TPP, but they are a rather common phenomenon (Lover-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; McElwee et al 2014). Even though research has shown the importance of participation and involvement from an early stage as success factors (Lover-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; McElwee et al 2014; Dyer et al 2014), many projects fail in doing just that (Lover-Bilderbeek & Lahiri 2021; McElwee et al 2014; Baynes et al 2015; Measham & Lumbasi 2013). This study builds on this research, showing that the withholding of information from project participants also occurs within TPP in Tanzania. This case, however, has not only focused on the carbon component, but also on communication during

project failure. TPP shows an example of how bureaucratic processes somewhat hindered the dissemination of information to the project participants, which highly affected them.



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