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Transcription of Tet Ansanm: working with "Heads Together" in Haitian reforestation, 2/25/2014

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BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

[00:00 - 01:39] John McGreevy: Like to thank the CCC. They funded me to do this research and it's been great working with them. It's a really interesting program. If you don't know much about it, it brings together graduate students, practitioners, faculty to really decide what is collaborative conservation and how to apply it. So, my talk obviously is [unintelligible] that's Haitian Creole, might seem similar to French. Some of these phrases, if I use any. That's because it was a French colony, as any of my students could tell you. And it's, this is working together, working with heads together and Haitian reforestation. Whenever you talk about working together in Haiti, they love to use Tet Ansanm. That means heads together. I love that visual. Love that idea. And we're going to go with that, today. So all these pictures, except for the ones with me in them, I have taken. So, obviously. So, just to give people a quick background on the tree problem in Haiti, a lot of people know Haiti as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. And we'll talk about that a little bit. Some people know Haiti for the massive environmental degradation. Various factors, we're going to go into them a little bit, but basically from 80 percent to 1.5 percent, since the arrival of Columbus, in 1492. And yet there's still this Haitian reliance on trees. They still rely on them for many different uses. A big part of my thesis research, this went into my Master's thesis in anthropology, was how Haitians use trees, why they use trees, and what is overlooked, when we look at this from strictly a business aspect, because I went with some business students and I was looking at the more cultural or non-traditional market economy uses of trees.

[01:39 - 03:13] John McGreevy: And then there's been reforestation attempts for 50 to 70 years. And yet that number of trees cut down is seven times as much as the trees planted. So, there's some disconnect there. There's something that's missing. And that was the question of my research

started out, very vague. And then as I went through with this kind of grounded approach of talking to the people and letting them tell me what those issues are, came up with some of what that was. So I broke it down into these different, a lot of this introductory stuff. I go into a lot more deeper in my thesis. If you're really interested in it, I can give you a copy of that. But I'm going to kind of fly through this so I can get to the heat, the heart of working together. So there's four stages in Haitian history as I broke them down, each with 200 years, 300 years, 130. Something to note is that back in the early days, actually, when the Haitians ruled them, or right before the Haitians ruled themselves, there wasn't that much deforestation. It wasn't until more recently that that occurred. There's many different reasons for that. We'll be talking about some of them. Something interesting to note is that there was anywhere from 1 million to 8 million people on the island, and they still had 80 percent tree cover. So this whole idea that Haitian like, before slaves came, before colonizers came, there was 80 percent tree cover, 1 to 8 million people in the island. So this whole idea that Haiti is just too overpopulated, that does come into play. But people have shown that you can live on that island without deforestation. So why Haiti? Why trees? I just kind of happened chance got into Haiti.

[03:13 - 04:41] John McGreevy: My aunt called me up one year and said, "Hey, we're going to Haiti on a medical mission trip. Would you like to come?" And I said, "Yes." It was my first time out of the United States. And I was floored. I just was, I've always had a passion for the environment, and I thought I wanted to be a doctor, before I went there. But after I saw the deforestation, that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to work with local people to figure that out. I was there during the 2010 earthquake. If you guys want to talk about that sometime, I could. I saw a lot of stuff, did a lot of medical things that I would not be allowed to do in the United States, and really connected a lot with the local people, saw how NGOs worked and how they didn't work. And we're going to talk about that. So why anthropology? Some people, especially if you're a numbers person, might think that, hey, this is kind of just lofty ideas. Why are you doing this? But anthropology gets to the root of local uses of resources. So, as Berke says, "People who are dependent on local resources for their livelihood are often able to assess the health of the environment and the integrity of ecosystems better than any evaluator from the outside." So, that mindset is something that's very counterintuitive to us and counterintuitive to a lot of NGOs working in Haiti. That's why I focused on anthropology is because I believe and research supports that the big missing factor, one of them is culture. One of them is history. One of them is sitting down and talking with the local people, and the Center for Collaborative Conservation was a great place to do that. So, it gets at the local and outsider knowledge.

[04:41 - 06:14] John McGreevy: It doesn't rule out either of them. It talks about the lived experience of people, and then Haitian reforestation projects that haven't used local understanding, have failed

miserably; ones that have used local understanding, a little bit more collaboration, though I'm going to argue that they can all do more, as we can in any project, have done better. So this is my research methods. Really quick, interviews in different regions, three different regions. 28 in-depth interviews. That might seem like not a lot to some people, but that entails a lot of sitting down and talking for hours, and then four hours of writing that up, and then a couple more hours of picking out all the codes. It's actually very time intensive. So, 40 hours of recorded audio take about seven hours of added work onto each hour of those audio. And that's a lot that comes into play. Field observations, participatory observations, working in the fields with people, that more than anything, help them to just trust me and to work with me, was really great. Focus groups and then a little bit of website analysis, which we'll talk about here. So I went to these three different places, Petit Bois, Deschappelles and Anse Rouge. Very distinct, different ecosystems. That's kind of what I was going for. See how projects in these different ecosystems work? So some of, most of this, I go into my thesis. We're going to pull out the bottom part and focus on that, because we are focused on Collaborative Conservation, and Ted and Sam could be substituted in there. So what is missing from the literature, from my research, from these interviews, I came up with culture and the lived experience of people, the local context, local uses, systemic causes.

[06:14 - 07:55] John McGreevy: So causes that aren't direct causes. But throughout history, how have, how has deforestation taken hold? And then local knowledge. And we'll talk about that a little bit in comparison to scientific knowledge. And then this Tet Ansanm mindset. Shifting completely this mindset. It's not just a little bandaid. It's a complete shift from we're coming to do work, to we're working with these people. So the literature on Haitian reforestation talks about land tenure and charcoal production. They talk about things that the local people are doing that are impacting the deforestation, and they're talking about corruption. And these things do have an impact. But, when I talk to people and ask them, why do you cut down trees, these didn't make the top list. Charcoal production did, but that was an afterthought from these systemic causes that we'll talk about in a little bit. I needed money to feed my children. I needed money because of the influx of USAID. My food crops are no longer viable. I needed money because of the changing climate. My food crops no longer produces they used to. So, I need to cut down trees for easy money. And so there's, the mindset is a focus on current citizens and increasing. There's a little bit of increasing emphasis on local needs, but there's a lot of we need to educate people about how important trees are. I think that mindset should be shift as supported by my research. People talk to me all the time about how important trees are [unintelligible] trees are life. They would throw that out there whenever I talked about trees. So, I'm looking at more how do, talk about interacting factors, historical influences and how to really work together? This we're not going to go through everything.

[07:55 - 09:30] John McGreevy: Just just shows you a little bit of how I broke down four different NGOs working on deforestation in Haiti. And I looked through from Kathy Sherman. She's actually in our department. She has these barriers to Tet Ansanm or participatory mindset. And I'm sorry, it might be Burkey's too. I forget which one it was, but one of those great authors, and they came up with this, and then I broke them down on what barriers there might be. That's a lot there. If you want that emailed to you, I can, but we're just gonna. I broke them down a little bit into some issues from projects. A lot of these projects did really good work. Some of them they've been planting a lot of good trees. But those trees aren't staying there and there might be something that's not connecting. So, IK stands for Indigenous Knowledge. SK stands for Scientific Knowledge. So, issues from many but not all projects. I'm not throwing all projects in this same loop, and I didn't really look at any projects that are based here in Fort Collins, because I have a bias. So, I'm close with them, and I feel like that might get in the way of my analysis. So, anything from here can be applied to all projects, but I don't focus on it. So, Indigenous Knowledge is occasionally recognized, but it's rarely implemented. People are interested. Oh, you think that spirit's live in these live in these trees? That's interesting. What? We're going to plant something different and not worry about that. Some projects were better at than others. Most of them focus on hard science and numbers because that's what the donors want to see. They want to see numbers. Some of that social/spiritual expression about the spiritual uses of trees was talked about, but not taken into effect or just completely ignored.

[09:31 - 11:02] John McGreevy: Outsiders coming in, who has heard, what people in the community most often is people that speak French, because a lot of NGOs that come into the country don't take time to learn the local language. And so, if you have that, the people that come up to you and say, "Hey, I'll be your translator." There most often, the people you work with, the people you listen to, that's the funnel through which all the interviews are fed. If they speak English, even better. So, I tried to go out of my way to talk to people that hated NGOs. People that, to get a whole different wide view because there is wide view. NGOs do a lot of great things. They also do a lot of bad things. And so, some people call Haiti the Republic of NGOs, just based on the number, which is more than, more per capita than any place throughout human history is in Haiti. And then there's this perceived benevolence of people. You hear a project is doing work in Haiti. It's perceived it must be good work. But just like any business, any organization, not all of them are good. And so there's this lack of checks and balances. The interesting part, if you want more on this, you can read Mark Schuller. He talks about how the reason that so many NGOs came to the country was we wanted more increased transparency, and we wanted to be able to, so we wanted to be able to see what people were doing. We wanted less corruption. And yet, these groups don't come together. There's not much feeding back. There's not much of that transparency going on. So we have that problem

being fed over and over again. Moving on into the heart of what I want to talk about Tet Ansanm working together.

[11:02 - 12:27] John McGreevy: Sorry, I flew through some of that stuff about my research, but these are suggestions from the local people and from myself, after meeting with local people, after meeting with NGOs, after reading the literature and working that all together. So, just some quotes, because I feel like they're more powerful when they come from the people. When I ask them after getting to know them over months or a month, sit down and speak with people before doing projects. Sounds pretty simple. These people live here. They're the ones that you're impacting. If somebody came into the United States and said, "You see all those cars that you have. That's really destroying your environment. You need to stop doing that. So we're just going to shut that all down." What would that do to our economy? If you put it in that perspective, it's a little different when you come and say, see all these trees that you're cutting down. Stop doing that. It's bad for the environment. It's a little bit different when you shift that mindset. You need to consider the day-to-day needs, not just the long term. So, a lot of these projects look at long term, but they don't think about what happens if maladies come up, illnesses. If, since now schools are not taught in the home, are not taught in the community, you need to purchase schools. Don't think about what happens each time you need to buy schooling. Have multiple NGOs that people can choose from, so that people can choose who is the best job. I love that idea. Not just one NGO coming in, staking the territory, saying, this is my region. All the NGOs stay out. But multiple coming in and the people saying, hey, which one should we choose?

[12:27 - 13:56] John McGreevy: Which one works best? Is what we do in the United States for business practices. We want to build a school. You have a bunch of contractors come in which one can do what we want to do for the least amount of money. Keep promises. I saw this one over and over again. I should have that in bold. I myself have not done the best of this. From time to time, I have gone back to the community to keep my promise of coming back, and bringing my results back there. But that was the biggest thing. And you see, I call it NGO contamination. The places that NGOs have been over and over again, there's kind of hard and hearts there towards outsiders, and there's this mindset of, are they going to be just like the last people that promise that they would bring something back, but they didn't and left. And and then this is kind of paraphrase. I only do projects that address the day-to-day needs, not just long term benefits. I believe they talked about that up there too. So, one suggestion from all that bringing together all that they say, alter donor relations. A big part of the reason people do what they do in these NGOs is because donors give them money and say, "I want it for this. I want it for that." The example of this, the first time I went to Haiti, I went to this rural, rural village, and there was a big generator there, and it hadn't been used in

years. And I asked, "Well, why is there a big generator here?" It looked brand new, but it was inside this really nice concrete building, the only concrete building in the village. And they were like, "Well, somebody gave us \$40,000, but said it had to be used for a generator, had to be used for a generator", because in America, the donors were telling them they need electricity.

[13:56 - 15:36] John McGreevy: That is what they need right now. They will be okay if they have electricity. But they didn't take into account is that it's an eight hour drive through bumpy roads. Diesel is very expensive, and they didn't fund for the increasing cost of diesel. So, and some people even said we are slaves to the donors. We are slaves to the people, particularly large scale donors that tell us what we need to do. Change that, change of that presentations to donors can happen in multiple ways, can happen in websites. I looked through a bunch of websites and looked how people, the local people were presented. Most of it was presented as we're going in to help this country that we've never been before. The US isn't, hasn't really been involved with, and we're going to basically save them from their environmental despair, not with all of them, but with some of them. That's what came across. Most of them had some sort of outsiders teaching these people how to farm their land. And very rarely did I see local to local connections or a sort of talk back and forth, a collaboration, if you will, going on. This idea of education, we'll talk about a little bit. The US is infallible. If the US brings something, it's assumed to be correct. And it's the only country with the last name used over and over again. And it is true. But the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. But if that's all you hear over and over again about the Haitian people, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, what does that make you think about their ability to work and to really build their own country up? So understanding historic reasons for this, all of these, this deforestation or for which is a whole different thing, but I'm going to talk about two local resistance.

[15:36 - 17:07] John McGreevy: So, if you go into a, I've had a lot of NGOs say, we come here and we bring these projects and these people just don't want them. They're not appreciative of us coming here. From an outsider, I can completely respect from that point of view. That could be very troubling. You spent a lot of money, you spent a lot of time. You really worked really hard. You want to do good things, and yet they don't want you there and there needs to be an understanding of why that might be. So really quick, I'm going to ask, and it's okay if you didn't know this, my class, if I told you this, it doesn't count. Raise your hand if you knew that the United States ruled Haiti, ruled over Haiti, kicked out the government and stayed there for 20 years last century. Does anybody know that? A couple people. Okay, cool. Does anybody know that the amount of deforestation during those 20 years was more than the entire history of the country of Haiti? Okay. I didn't know that until I researched it. Did anybody know that we sent funding to dictators, but we didn't fund the only democratic elected president? I did not know that. Did you know that in the 80s, this is the 80s, this

is in the past, we decided that we wanted to teach them about their pigs, which were having swine flu all around the Caribbean? So, we killed all the millions of their pigs, brought them white pigs, and all the white pigs died. And that was their farming, their system of banking. I didn't know that either. Does anybody know that we, this is a very controversial, so I'm not going to say we did it, but we were present during a coup d'etat?

[17:09 - 18:56] John McGreevy: And flew the only democratically elected president of Haiti from Haiti to the Central African Republic, and forcibly made him stay there? Also, that US businesses have encouraged minimum wage to stay at a low below a couple of dollars a day, including Disney, Old Navy, other places like that, and also that Monsanto has delivered tons and tons of seed as aid. And the Haitians were eventually, right after the earthquake, and the Haitians were like, we are fed up with this, and they burned it all. So, this stuff, some of this is done with good intentions, is maybe why these Haitian people, they know this stuff. We don't know this stuff. Maybe why they're a little resistant to another white man coming to their country and saying, "You're doing it wrong. I'm going to show you how to do it." So that needs to, we need to have a humble attitude. We're not coming there to save these people. We're coming there, people that have really screwed up stuff in the past for our history, maybe not as personally. And we can work together. Some anthropologists say don't go to the country at all, don't go do development work. And that's a different mindset. Some of that is valid. I'm not that way. I think that things can get better by working together. We can improve these relations. But, if we come with a mindset of why don't these people want us to help them, that's not going to do as much good as if we come in and have a humble attitude. In my opinion, my humble opinion. So, rethinking this model of educating and training local people. So, there is this idea. A lot of donors say, hey, we need to, we're going to fund this, but we only will fund it, if there's a big portion related to educating local people. Educating them about proper farming techniques, educating them about the importance of trees.

[18:56 - 20:33] John McGreevy: Well, like I talked about earlier, I haven't met many Haitians that didn't know the importance of trees. There were even people that almost broke out into tears, talking about how they had to cut down their trees that their grandparents had planted, and they felt so sorry about that, but they just had to feed their kids. Rethinking that mindset of, do we really need to educate these people? One example of this that there's still videos coming out. I showed my class one the other day of a USAID funded millions and millions of dollars. Huge impact, telling them that Monocropping, you hear, you see one Haitian that's interviewed and he says, well, I learned that I've been doing it wrong my whole life, and that Monocropping is the only way to really get good value out of my crops. And you have these scientific tests that show, yeah, next year their crops went up, they got more and more crops. And then, we're starting to learn [unintelligible] and science because

science isn't infallible. It's constantly changing. Just like local knowledge. We're starting to learn maybe Monocropping isn't as good as we thought it was. Maybe we're having problems here in the United States. Maybe for these countries that have very thin topsoil because of the deforestation, Monocropping, a couple of years good, done and decertified. And that's something we're seeing in the northwest. That coupled with the changing climate, is leading to people being unable to feed themselves, being unable to even harvest back enough seeds to plant crops the next year. So they need to buy them to cut down more trees. The cycle continues. Because of this idea that we need to train them to use monocultures. So this was a Monocrop farm right here. Climate change came up the next year.

[20:33 - 22:04] John McGreevy: Some of the more drought resistant plants weren't there. They were told that they would compete, over-compete with each other. They should be out of there. And so this farmer lost all of his corn crops, 100 percent of them. So, then what do you do? Do you apply for a loan? Do you get indebted to that? It's a very tough situation. Most people, if they had trees, they cut them down. So, if we're looking at why, this comes full circle, if we're looking at why deforestation happens, are what we're doing when we're telling people they need to be educated on our uses of land, does that increase deforestation or and so when we're funding these projects, are we funding more deforestation? So, that's my thought, and it's not my idea, it's ideas from local people, is have conversations. People in one ravine of the mountains are really good at splicing different types of mangoes together to create a tree that's very profitable, has lots of mangoes in it. Other, on the other side of the mountain, they're asking me, do you know how to do this? Can we pay somebody to do this? And yet, on this side, they know a little bit more about permaculture, how to use different groups together. And so, creating a sort of dialogue between people that have this local knowledge. And if we have stuff to add that we feel like is pertinent, we can put it out there. If they tell us that that's not right, then we have to be okay with that. And so these are ideas that local people had. Hey, how about we bring people together? How about we talk about this as a community? So, rethinking who's doing the educating, who's doing the training.

[22:05 - 23:42] John McGreevy: And if there should be really a training or a group growth. So, we don't need to really understand this a whole lot. This is the basis of my thesis. But understanding complexity and connectedness, understanding that there's these causes that are not directly apparent, that there's causes that have occurred over time, that might be still impacting from history. Causes like, which I'll go into in just a second, but just that it's really complex, that you can't really say, well, these people that are living there right now, they're cutting down the trees. They're the problem. We need to educate them. Goes back to that, learning more about our own history, history of connections. So, this is a cycle that by working with local people, we came up with this. I, from

research came up with some things, went to the country, talked about, talked to them, was like, hey, is this what you're seeing? And they were like, this this, yes, this, no, this, heck no. And then adjusting all of those and then bringing back. And then this is the new model that I have. Is this what you think? And they're like, yeah. That looks like right. That's what my focus groups were about. So, this poverty, illness and hunger, leading to the need to deforest, leading for for charcoal use and timber, leading to soil erosion, leading to more degradation, leading to poor crop yields, disaster vulnerability, leading to more poverty, leading to this cycle. So, this is the cycle. I call this the Pwoblem Pyebwa cycle, which is the tree problem cycle. And then I've identified factors that initiated this. A loss of indigenous stewardship when all of the million, at least people on the island were killed through mainly disease, some slaughter initially.

[23:42 - 25:22] John McGreevy: So the people that best knew through generations how to really work this land were gone, because a lot of the species that they worked with were endemic. They don't, they're not on other islands. Sugar cane plantations. When the United States came in and occupied the land, they said that, okay, you're doing it wrong. We need to put a whole bunch of sugar plantations here. So when that occurs, you de-forest a whole lot of land. Timber exportation, mahogany desks, that sort of thing. Post-independence foreign relations. The fact that after Haiti became its own nation, nobody wanted to trade with them. They refused to help them in any way. They refused to trade with them because they thought black people should not be able to rule themselves. And they wanted to make that a self-fulfilling prophecy. And then the foreign occupation that we talked a lot, a little bit about. So, if you see from what we looked at in the very beginning with those numbers, most of this deforestation came before this generation, before the way of living that is currently there. So that was factors that initiated this cycle. And and then there's factors that catalyze this cycle, climate variability. The number one reason people told me they cut down trees was [foreign language] the rain doesn't fall. And they use that as a kind of a whole overarching theme for climate variability in general, changing amounts of rainfall when the rainfall occurs, leading to them lots of little bugs coming up and eating their shallots. I've told people this before, but they call these grubs, shallot eating grubs aids because they are the worst, is what I've been told. So they told me that's, that aids, aids, aids is a problem, and there's a little translation error there.

[25:22 - 27:08] John McGreevy: I was like, aids, I don't really understand that. And they're like, aids like going in they're eating our growth or eating our shallots and stuff like that. So, there was a lot of funny things like that and going on and natural disasters, when a big hurricane comes that wipes out a bunch of trees, it wipes out a bunch of people, unfortunately. And you see in Haiti, this susceptibility to natural disasters, that a lot of people argue is not their own issue that came about from outsiders. The earthquake in 2010. Terrible, right? Hundreds of thousands of people died,

depending on who you ask, 300,000. And yet there were five other earthquakes of that magnitude that year. But, it was the most devastating for hundreds and hundreds of years. There was a, there's Hurricane Jeanne a lot of people talked about. Was a class four hurricane. It hit the Dominican Republic. Two people died in the Dominican Republic. 400 people in one town died in Haiti. And so, why is it that they're so vulnerable? And so a lot of this has to do with the trees. It all comes full circle. I'm talking about this complexity. It comes back to the fact that it's really complex. And if you want to address the issue of reforestation, you have to talk to local people and talk about their history. Water tenure and access is very big. Not being able to get enough water to plant trees, even if they want to. Dependency on outside food sources. Making those prices change for their crops. Population growth is definitely something. Commoditization of goods and services, things that they used to just make or get off the land. Now they pay for medicine, education, food.

[27:08 - 28:38] John McGreevy: And then Haiti's stock market crash, what they call it the when the pigs were eradicated in the country because that was a method they have of keeping some money, in case somebody got sick, they would kill a pig and sell it. It's very common in a lot of different cultures. Once pigs [unintelligible], all they have was trees. So, and then I argue for a fundamental mindset shift, not just a Band-Aid, not just let's do a couple interviews and then do what we want to do. A fundamental mindset shift on local knowledge and local culture, that just like our knowledge that we told them Monocrops are great. Just as one example, that changes what we understand about that. Local knowledge has been based in local culture, based in the local environment for a very long time, and it might change to or it might be the correct thing. So valuing that, valuing that these people have lived here a lot longer than we do. And if we work in 20 different countries and do reforestation projects in each, we might not know about the specific uses. So, this is just one example from [unconfirmed name], a great woman who knows a lot about medicinal and spiritual uses of trees. There are no trees in the country that I'm already dead. I need children to help my, or need trees to help my children survive. Medicine, shade. Because it was really hot. I thought that was just a superficial thing to begin with, but they really need it for shade. For preserving water sources. For bringing the rains. For protection against evil spirits. That's their local knowledge. And we need to respect that. And then this is Poppy standing up and saying, well, [foreign language]. And just repeating it over and over again.

[28:38 - 31:23] John McGreevy: When we're trying to talk about when different NGOs are saying, maybe we should do this and this and this, and he's talking about the issue is the rain. It's not that we don't know about the trees. So, a couple more contributions of my research and my thesis. If you guys want to learn more, I have my email up here at the end, and I can send you my thesis. It's very long, 100 pages. Don't read it all, read the abstract and whatever you want. But, I provide this model

called the Pwoblem Pyebwa Model, and it puts that, let's see if I can do this. Puts this in a historical context. And it looks very crazy. And it looks lots of errors going everywhere. I probably could have made it a lot simpler, but I wanted to get at that complexity. And it looks at on one side what events were happening through history, and on one side how much deforestation has occurred. And it links them together. It links together how it's not just the current population, how it's this history of systemic causes. So that's one thing I provide, and I provide that as a, an education tool and get this, this is going to blow everybody's mind not to educate the local people, but to educate the people coming into the country about what's going on, in the country. And so, even I go further than just a little bit of collaboration, but actually, maybe who is being taught might need to be those people that have worked in 20 different countries, don't know anything about the local country. And so, also local knowledge on trees and different uses, a broke down a lot of different tree species, different types of tree species, and what they're used for. So that can be used in project planning, understanding that these tree species, they like to build along the road. So, don't take something that we have, we found in Asia to work pretty well and put that along the roadsides, use what they know and what they're likely to use. And then even the idea of a research process with research partners. So, this research that I did, I argue, was different because I treated the local people as partners in the research, not as people that were participants. We're subjects, which has all different connotations, but people that know more about it than I do and whose names should be up here, probably instead of mine, because they taught me on this information. I'm just synthesizing it and presenting it to people in the United States. And this Tet Ansanm Collaborative Conservation. So, so I think I did I fly through that a little bit or is that, okay. Well, that's okay. Yeah. Time for questions. I'd love to have a dialogue. Sorry. I plan on that going a little bit longer. I could lecture more in a little bit if you guys want to. So questions about working Tet Ansanm. Working with heads together. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

[31:23 - 31:23] Speaker 1: [inaudible]

[31:42 - 32:36] John McGreevy: Definitely. Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry if I misrepresented that, because that's more along what I was talking about. And that's definitely a good point is that this, the main thing that they were saying was that day-to-day needs were just ignored completely. And so, the idea is that if you have a project that says, we're going to put a bunch of trees over here, and you can't touch them for 50 years, that those look pretty enticing when people in your family are dying or when your crops are failing, that sort of thing. So, what the local people were saying was to bring more of, we can have that, but some of the trees were allowed to cut down, or we can plant crops underneath them so that land isn't just lost for that amount of time. But that's definitely important is that, in ecological restoration, and perhaps this is something that scientific knowledge does bring to

the table. I'm not saying scientific knowledge is irrelevant. Is that it is a long term look at it is needed for sure. Anybody else? Yeah. [unintelligible]

[32:40 - 32:40] Speaker 2: [unintelligible]

[32:45 - 34:24] John McGreevy: Yeah. That's a very good question. A lot of different reasons. A big part of it is the deforestation itself. Not necessarily the earthquake, but when you see hurricanes, hurricanes, one of the main uses people say in Haiti for having trees is that it protects you from hurricanes. Natural wind blocking, natural holding of soil, if a hurricane does occur. So if that hurricane comes in and wipes out all the soil on your land for the next few years, that land is irrelevant, obsolete. And so that's a big part of it, is having these blockades of trees. We're actually going to do a, something in class where we do a hands on experiment about what happens when you have less trees. So it'll be a little different than me just lecturing to you guys. In a couple of days on Tuesday. But, yeah, that's a big part of it. The other part of it is the lack of some infrastructure coordination in Port-au-Prince. So, if you're talking about the earthquake, a big part of that is the local government, while corrupt at times, has not been supported throughout history. It's been undermined again and again. As part of this neocolonialism, is that 1 percent of the money that went to Haiti, out of the billions and billions of dollars, actually went to the government. And so, if you take that into history, that's that's not new. That's a trend throughout history. So if you have a government that hasn't been able to function, yes, corruption has occurred. But who put those corrupt leaders in power? People that came in and occupied the country for 20 years and then said, okay, you guys are doing the kind of things we want you to do, so you're in power.

[34:24 - 35:58] John McGreevy: So, this history of corruption, not necessarily locally caused, leads to less money being put into infrastructure. And if there's less money into infrastructure, people build their own houses out of materials that they have. And these are very heavy concrete bricks. So at the most immediate level, it was the materials that they used, how those were used. No building codes, which comes from governmental stuff. No support systems. No readily, like after the earthquake, they were still a big delay before stuff actually started to happen to, to make a difference there. I was there for three days of chaos. Not in the sense of violence, not in the sense of, the people are actually very peaceful people after that, which I was floored by. But not much was getting done. There was people that were dying and having their legs amputated, without anything but aspirin to help with it. And so you're thinking, in this day and age, in three days, you know, how does it take three days to get there? And so a big part of that is the local government, a big part of that is why does it, why is it that we can go and deploy in one day a military strike, but it takes us three days to get antibiotics to a different country? Which is a different question you could ask. So those

are a couple of things. It's unfortunately not very simple. It's very complex. But, and that's part of it also is the, the long term impacts of that is that there's not a sort of system that people have to back, to fall back on, like the pigs, like the trees, that sort of thing.

[35:58 - 36:07] John McGreevy: So if something happens wrong to us, we have insurance, we have places we can go. We have family members that have money, that can give us money to support us. That might not be the case in the country.

[36:11 - 36:11] Speaker 3: [inaudible]

[36:12 - 36:14] John McGreevy: I'm talking about a couple different things. So there was the-

[36:15 - 36:15] Speaker 3: [inaudible].

[36:15 - 36:17] John McGreevy: I was there for the earthquake. Yeah.

[36:18 - 36:19] Speaker 3: [unintelligible].

[36:19 - 37:37] John McGreevy: Yes. Yeah. So I was in a, I was out in the central part of the country and then, and I was doing work on solar cookers and kind of when I look back on it, I'm like, oh gosh, I was like, but you learn. And so, I was an undergrad. And then, after it happened, I went into the city the next day and was there for eight days. So, got to see very few white people there. So, I got to see er, blondes, as they call them. So, I got to see from ground zero all the way up eight days afterwards what it actually looked like. And in those first few days, I was amazed by the way that local people bonded together, created their own hierarchies, created their own different people to do different things, which were immediately when other people came in, instead of working with those communities that knew how to get stuff around, and this lack of infrastructure was totally wiped out and said, okay, we're going to take control now. So, and then four days later, they came to us anthropologists and us people and said, we're really messing up and we need somebody's help. We have no idea how to transport stuff in this country. We have no idea how, how to work with these people. And so that's when they started to look at smaller NGOs, people that have been there for 12 years, that sort of thing. So, yeah. Yeah.

[37:50 - 37:50] Speaker 4: [inaudible]

[37:51 - 37:54] John McGreevy: Okay. So we're talking about what caused them or what their impacts are?

[37:56 - 37:56] Speaker 4: [unintelligible]

[37:56 - 39:18] John McGreevy: Yeah. That's, that was another big part of my research was what the impacts of not having trees on your land are. And that goes a lot back to what are the uses of trees. A big one they talked about was keeping soil on the land. There's many stats out there. I don't know right offhand about how much soil is lost every year. And it's an incredible amount. And so, people that in the rural areas that live a subsistence lifestyle maybe sell some things. That is a big deal when their soil erosion goes away, that leads to their quality of life. And so, a big part of it is soil erosion. A big part of it is the things they get from the trees, the trees they use for different food sources. Mangoes are huge. There are incredible amount of mangoes in the country. The first day that I was in the country, they were like, well, we don't have a lot of food to give you, but do you like mangoes? I had never had a mango before in my life. I ate ten the first day because they had just a huge bowl of the ripest, juiciest mangoes. Over a 100 varieties of mangoes on the island. We only see one. We only see mango [unintelligible] mainly. And they're all edible. [unintelligible] and passion fruit. All different types of foods. So when they lose trees, they don't, they oftentimes don't just lose a tree like we would say, oh, that's a pretty oak tree that on our oval we have trees. They lose resources, they lose a substitute of food.

[39:18 - 41:18] John McGreevy: They lose vitamins, lose minerals, that sort of thing. That we now are trying to instead of dealing with that issue, we're trying to bring in food aid, which has all different sorts of implications. That's part of it. Another is spiritual Uses of trees. I looked in that as an anthropologist. It was hard to really break through to get people to talk about that, because they've been talked down to a lot about how voodoo is evil and how voodoo is terrible. The more and more I learned about the voodoo, the more that I learned that it was very similar to Native American religions. It's just been personified as really an evil, evil thing. A lot of animism, a lot of spirits in the trees. And so people believe that the maple tree, which is this huge tree, be crazy. You walk through the middle of nowhere, there's no trees, no trees, and then there is a tree that I cannot grab my arms around. And I'm like, what's that tree there? And we're like, well, evil spirits live in that tree. And I initially wanted my thesis to be about, well, why don't we plant more maple trees? Then I learned that they're not good for anything. So which came first? The chicken or out of the egg? The beliefs about their spirits living in there, or the fact that they can't be used for really anything? I don't know, but those are just a couple. They plant trees next to sources of water all along canals. You'll have trees, and so that prevents evaporation from occurring, so their water can get to their croplands. There's a lot of different. The number one thing that they said again and again was shade. Mainly because this was a really hot region, uh, perfect picture. Hiking for miles and miles and miles and then you get to this one guaiac tree, which is a hardwood tree. It's actually called [unintelligible] to

them, which is God's tree because it's so many uses. It's three times harder than any other charcoal they can make out of it. And so you, you're there and it's actually a health thing. It's a thing that after you work in your field for hours, you go and sit by that. So, air conditioning for your house. Those are just a few of the things that they use them for. Question. Yeah.

[41:30 - 41:30] Speaker 5: [unintelligible]

[41:30 - 41:32] John McGreevy: Oh, me in particular?

[41:32 - 41:32] Speaker 5: [unintelligible]

[41:38 - 44:31] John McGreevy: Yeah, it's it's a shame sometimes how distant academia is from what's actually going on. And so, I'll start with that. For what I'm saying is not completely new in some of the aspects, in that people in writing have been talking about the need for a little bit more collaboration and more local knowledge. They've been talking about it more [unintelligible], like we need to know what they use so that we can implement our business plan on top of that. But that's shifting a little bit. Doctor Gerald Murray did a 20 year study where he actually, for the first time, looked at the local uses of trees and what they needed them for an income source and put it in an income model, which was interesting. I'm taking that next step of saying, yes, we need to work Tet Ansanm with heads together. The hard part is that a lot of stakeholders on the opposite side that NGOs, nonprofits, they're businesses, they say non-profit and in some senses they are. But also these people make salaries. They, and if you're telling them that we need to decrease the number of NGOs or we need to change your role, decrease the number of personnel that are outsiders, compared to local. There's a money real stakeholder there. So there is some opposition to it. And it's a lot of why I didn't name names of anyone in this. And so what I'm proposing, and when I do my doctorate research starting in the fall, I'm I'm using an applied approach to try to implement some of this training of local history to outsiders. So I think, I think that that's a big starting point to get to, because I think in this room a little bit, when I talked about the things that United States have done, it was like, oh, this presents a little bit of a different picture. So, that I think is where it starts. Seeing us as not being infallible. And then from there, I think if you want a really good example of how it's been done in the health field, they've had some difficulties. But partners in health, doctor Paul Farmer, Mountains Beyond Mountains is the book. He's done a similar mindset where instead of having 4,000 employees in the country, while, for example, Red cross had 4 or 10 employees in the country before, before the earthquake happened, after the earthquake happened, they had 4,000 and they had the majority of the money. But then, on the other end of the spectrum, there is partners in health who have 4 to 10 outsiders working there and then the 400 local employees. So shifting who gets the money? Because to be honest, Americans want a lot more money than those people want to.

And so, if you hire local people, that's a huge step in that. So does that answer some of it? So any other questions? What did you have a different idea with that questionnaire.

[44:31 - 44:32] Speaker 5: No. Yeah. [unintelligible].

[44:34 - 44:37] John McGreevy: Yeah. What's being applied right now?

[44:38 - 44:38] Speaker 5: Yeah.

[44:38 - 45:50] John McGreevy: From me, not much. I am going to Haiti in, in May and starting, we've talked about, Kim talked about a little bit about parish to parish twinning program between Catholic churches. And that's a long term model. Instead of coming and saying, we're going to do like a trip and we're going to fix things and we're going to leave. It's a model of partnership coming saying, hey, we want to work with you. Do you guys want to work with us? Oh you do. Okay, cool. We're going to work with you for a little bit and see what your main concerns are. The problem is, if they don't bring up reforestation first, as an anthropologist, I'm supposed to not push it. Not say we need to reforest your area, but maybe they're bringing up things that lead to them being deforestation, like having canals that are made out of concrete rather than mud will allow them to plant more crops. We'll have less need to cut down the trees and so, I do want to have a reforestation program. If they are interested in that, then we'll do that. And hopefully I'm going to apply the stuff I have here and, and not start to switch over to the other side. So let's see if you guys can keep me in check with that.

[45:51 - 45:51] Speaker 5: Yeah.

[45:51 - 45:54] John McGreevy: Good question. I got one in the back first and then Kelly. Yeah.

[45:59 - 45:59] Speaker 6: [inaudible]

[46:08 - 46:08] John McGreevy: Yeah.

[46:08 - 46:08] Speaker 6: [inaudible].

[46:08 - 48:47] John McGreevy: For sure. I write a lot about that in my method section. As I said in class, my method section was a quarter of my paper, 25 pages. So I really love methods because I think it gets to the root of, where does this information come from? Am I, I have a lens that I see it through. I have a lens that they see it through. A lot of different things. When you go down the road, they'll yell out blonde, over and over again. Particularly the more rural you get, the more little kids

just run out of nowhere. And I just think, oh my gosh, blah, blah, and then run and tell their friends and then you get followed for a while, which is great. I love kids, so it worked out all right. So, it's really hard to blend in. You can't go under the radar. So instead, the way that I dealt with that was presenting who I was, what I was studying. When I sit down with people, I tell them I'm not an NGO. I don't have money to give you. Number one, I, whatever you want, I don't have money. I've worked with a lot of people before that have, I talked about how I love learning about different religions and voodoo, and different uses of trees and that sort of thing. That's what I want to hear. Because a lot of people don't talk about that at all when they're presented by an outsider, because they'll be chastised if they do talk about it. So really being careful about how I present myself and all this was a big part. I've also had, they don't like beards in the country. Not a lot of people grow them. So it's a little funny anecdote, but I had a big full red beard by the end of it. Very big. And walking down the road in the middle of a city, and somebody came up to me and just said something and pointed at me and then walked away. Different cultural norms and everything. And I couldn't understand the words that he was saying. And then I, so I asked my translator, I was like, "What did he just say to me?" And he said, "Oh, he just said, you're a really, really ugly person." [laughs] And I was like, "Oh, okay." But the funny part is he didn't seem to have malice on his heart. He was just telling me, "Hey, in case you're not aware, you're really ugly." [laughs] And I and part of that goes to they just don't honor, they don't have beards. It's not part of their social norm. But there's a lot of that, um, a lot of different funny things like that. Really quickly, one person, we had a larger woman on one of the trips with us, and we were crossing a river, and it got pretty dangerous, and they almost had to carry us whatever. And later he says, oh, I would have carried you guys. It would have been great. Except for you. You're really fat person. You're so fat and so, different norms. And I have friends that come to the US and I tell them they're like, so we're not supposed to copy with that. I'm like, no, don't say that here. So, definitely different. I'm learning more and more. I make mistakes all the time. But yeah, it's very interesting. Sure. Cool. Kelly.

[48:50 - 48:52] Kelly: I'm [unintelligible] looking at all of your pictures [unintelligible]

[48:59 - 48:59] John McGreevy: Mm-hmm.

[48:59 - 48:59] Kelly: [unintelligible]

[49:03 - 49:04] John McGreevy: Yeah.

[49:04 - 49:04] Kelly: [unintelligible]

[49:05 - 49:05] John McGreevy: Definitely.

[49:05 - 49:05] Kelly: [inaudible]

[49:07 - 49:07] John McGreevy: Definitely.

[49:10 - 49:11] Kelly: [unintelligible] you planning to work with ecologists [unintelligible]

[49:17 - 50:24] John McGreevy: Yeah. I think working with the ecologist would be a great thing if, if the mindset is right too. You know, and there are different, varying degrees of ecologists. This particular area, I didn't show as many pictures from other areas. Some, this is in a lower lands. This is very dry than some are very lush. And I was surprised at how the lush they are, and they have a lot of trees nearby, the homes, a lot of homes, fruit and stuff like that. It would take a lot of rebuilding. Part of that is the local people have helped and we thought about this a little bit, have helped identify those trees that are best in salty soils, and soils that are very thin. So this is one of the, I show this because this is the extreme of the extreme. But, there were places where only one species of tree could grow, and it might take a lot of time where that was the only tree species that could grow until there was more and more depositing on the land over time. But, yeah, I'd, I definitely am all about interdisciplinary work, and I think that that would be great too. So, yeah. Do you want to tell me things too? Right. Cool. That answer it?

[50:24 - 50:24] Kelly: Yeah.

[50:24 - 50:27] John McGreevy: Yeah. Cool. Any other questions? Yeah. Sure.

[50:32 - 50:32] Speaker 7: [unintelligible]

[50:33 - 50:33] John McGreevy: Yeah.

[50:33 - 50:34] Speaker 7: I mean stuff like [unintelligible]

[50:35 - 50:35] John McGreevy: Mm-hmm.

[50:46 - 50:46] Speaker 7: [unintelligible] or it cover [unintelligible]

[50:46 - 52:41] John McGreevy: Yeah. You've hit on something very difficult. In that a lot of the groups that come in that are actually doing work in ways that I would tell people to do work, in terms of having long term, and it's not the case for all, but having long term partnerships are religious. And so, what do you do about that? That's been something I've been struggling with. A big part of it is, how you present it to the people that are going on the trips to do this, the people that are partnering

with it? First of all, the group that I'm leading is not an evangel group in any way. It's just Catholic people that feel like in their religion they're taught to do things for the greater good. And so, while religion is do a whole lot of really horrific, horrific things. There is this resource, if you will, of people that want to do good things. And so, instead of totally getting out of that and dismissing it as something that's evil, people are still going to do it. And so that's where I came in and said, hey, I was raised in this church, and I feel like I can help to make these projects better. To make these, to shift the mindset from, it's not our job to come in here and disregard their knowledge, but to appreciate it. And I'll let you know how it goes. But I have been on trips with different parish to parish connections. This is not, I'm not starting the idea of twin this parish to this parish. I'm just starting it with two new parishes. This is something that's been going on for a long time. And actually, I've seen more good work done by this program than any other NGO I've done. And I am a little biased, but I'm really partnering with the local people listening to what they have to say. There is not enough of taking in voodoo leaders into that, and that's what I hope to bring in, is not to make it a spiritual thing. And just make it more that we're all fuelled to do stuff together. Does that answer your question?

[52:41 - 52:46] Speaker 7: Yeah. This is the [unintelligible] I'm assuming [unintelligible] challenge.

[52:46 - 52:46] John McGreevy: Yeah.

[52:46 - 52:46] Speaker 7: And so do they [unintelligible]

[52:51 - 52:51] John McGreevy: Mm-hmm.

[52:51 - 52:51] Speaker 7: [inaudible]

[52:54 - 54:40] John McGreevy: Definitely. Definitely. So the majority of people you talk to when you ask them what they are, they'll say they're Catholic, in Haiti, by far. There's stats out there that 100 percent of people are voodoo. That's not true. That's just in popular magazines. They say that. But 100 percent of the people, I would say have some sort of belief system about, about their lives. It would be similar to you in the United States. You know, if you say, oh, you do good things to other people, good things are going to happen to you. Just some sort of beliefs, and some of them are associated with trees. There's a lot more that people don't think is not Catholic, that people in the United States were saying, hey, that's not Catholic. A big part of that is the veneration of the saints. They have saints that they believe are almost deities, so they be called almost polytheists. And yet, and so I found this group to be very, very receptive to that. But yeah, in Haiti you do get a lot of synergism of religions, their syncretic religions. And a big part of that is worshipping Mary, worshiping the saints. And even some of these saints have taken the form of voodoo Gods in the

past, including Saint Sebastian, I believe, tied to a tree and shot with arrows. I don't know why I went like this, but shot with arrows. He, he has taken the form of Grand Bois, which is the great tree, which is a Haitian God. And so, a lot of the times when they talk about trees, they'll talk about Saint Sebastian, which I know historically leads back to Grand Bois. So voodooism is there. But if I go in as a Catholic church with open mind about what voodooism means or what Catholicism means, it's not necessarily shunned. That makes sense. Cool. Did I get it this time?

[54:41 - 54:41] Speaker 7: Yeah.

[54:41 - 54:44] John McGreevy: Yeah. Cool. Cool. Yeah.

[54:49 - 54:49] Speaker 8: [unintelligible]

[54:49 - 56:13] John McGreevy: Yeah. Super nice to me. And a lot of them, some of them did really great work, and some of them do do good work. I'm just trying. Anthropology is all about being hypercritical sometimes and really trying to push things to the next level. I loved the NGO people. Sometimes they did say things to me. And some of this I use from not just my most recent trip, but a lot of trips that I've had there. Some of them do talk, like, I don't know why these people aren't more appreciative of us, that sort of thing. So there, I did have chances, though, to sit down with people and be like, hey, can I teach you a little bit about Haitian history and the history of us in this country? Because a lot of these NGOs have worked in many different countries. So, great people. I will say that when I was in Port-au-Prince, even though there's more outsiders working in this country than anywhere else in the world, I didn't see any of them on the streets, as in zero. Still, when I drive around, I see them in really nice supermarkets. There's three of them in Port-au-Prince that I know of, and I see them when I go to their offices. So I'm wondering how much is there. And they were really nice to me in all this point in time, when I'm reading how, how much of a local cultural knowledge is there with all these NGOs, if they're never interacting with people except for in this charged environment of their office? So good questions. Anyone else? Cool.

[56:15 - 56:15] Kim: Oh.

[56:15 - 56:15] John McGreevy: Is that all about it?

[56:15 - 56:15] Kim: Thanks all for coming.

[56:16 - 56:17] John McGreevy: Yeah. Thanks. [applause].

END TRANSCRIPTION

