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Erika Mosonyi

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Introduction

This thesis investigates contemporary conditions for raising sheep in the Navajo Nation based on anthropological field research. What kind of a role do regulations from the 1940s and a near extinct sheep breed play in contemporary social relations, politics, economy, and cultural practices? How might these processes trigger changing perceptions, visions, and aesthetic practices?

A classic topic

The establishment of the Navajo reservation dates back to 1868 (Bailey 1999), the size of which today is 18 million acres. The Navajo are the largest Native American group in the United States. The population grew dramatically at the end of the 19th century from approximately 9,000 to 18,000 (Bailey 1999:73). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, today there are 286,000 Navajos living on and off the reservation.

Starting in the 16th century, sheep raising became a central element in Navajo economic, social, and cultural evolution. The historian Peter Iverson has pointed out that “without the addition of livestock, the Navajos might have been just another Native community in the region” (Iverson 2002:24). Iverson explains how flocks provided security for Navajo people and how this influenced their prospects. “Their skill as farmers and their ability to care for sheep provided the base for social cooperation and mutual interdependence” (Iverson 2002:23).

Although Navajo economy shifted considerably from farming and hunting to herding in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, scholars do not agree on the actual economic importance of herding. Bailey has pointed out that the dramatic increase in the number of sheep and goats on the reservation dates from around the 1870s (Bailey 1999). In the 1890s they must have owned approximately 1,700,000 animals (Bailey 1999:42).

By the 1930s land erosion and depletion due to overstocking and overgrazing reached a critical level on the Navajo reservation. Unlike many Navajo people, the federal

government saw an impending disaster and an economic collapse because of the Great Depression, and initial conservation programs failed to work. The federal government prepared a “Unified Program for the Navajo Indian Reservation, which in essence was a recommendation to reduce the some one million sheep units on the reservation by about 50 per cent” (Fogaroff 1963:2003). The decision was made by the Indian Commissioner, John Collier. Such plans resulted in methods calling for the shooting of thousands of sheep and goats before the eyes of their owners and leaving them to rot in piles. These policies led to an ongoing reduction and the near extinction of the Churro sheep.

A present issue

About 30 per cent of the people still raise sheep. The proportion of animals has reversed course over the past decades. Today the number of cows and horses greatly exceeds that of sheep. Although the importance of sheep has been diminishing, there is growing public interest to change grazing policies. It was recently put on the Navajo policies agenda again in 2012, after a series of unsuccessful attempts over the years.

Since the end of the 1970s, there have been initiatives to breed back the old Navajo sheep – the Churro – and to reinvigorate herding practices, as well. One of the organizations which has been working for the reestablishment of flocks is the Navajo Sheep Project, established by an Anglo-American veterinary scientist. In addition, there are grassroots organizations on the reservation with the goal of technically assisting and helping sheep, goat, and fiber producers.

Suppositions about the commons

While preparing for my research, two topics became particularly visible; the presence of the stock reduction period and that of a discourse by grassroots organizations about the Churro sheep. From the literature discussing grazing regulations, two important aspects gained particular significance for me. The discussion of the regulations is based on a misunderstanding and opposition between Navajos and the federal government (Fogaroff 1963). The discussion focused mainly on larger political processes and binary oppositions. The literature explains how the regulations brought a new era of Indian

policy and a dramatic change in power relations between the Navajo people and the federal government (Bailey 1999). Moreover, several books deal with the execution of stock reduction, representing it as a devastating and horrifying event (Boyce 1974; Roessel 1974). The two themes – stock reduction and Churro sheep – appear to be connected to one another in the grassroots discourse. These have argued that the stock-reduction period almost resulted in the extinction of the Churro sheep. John Collier, the Indian Commissioner, has always been blamed by the Navajo for this cruel decision and was seen as being responsible for the “sheep holocaust.” While Fogaroff and Bailey describe Collier’s program of stock reduction as having started on a voluntary basis, some of the literature and the present grassroots discourse emphasize his cruelty.

From the perspective of my research I have found further connections between these themes. They have left me with impressions about essentializing categories. They also left me with a view of the Navajo as representing a unit in opposition to the federal government. Power relations between the two governments were drawn on as binary oppositions. The Navajo were represented as victims of stock reduction. I also gained an idea about a particular variety of sheep which ought to be fundamental for Navajo culture and which has now been re-bred for the benefit of the whole Navajo Nation.

What kind of a role could such a regulations and the near extinction of a sheep play today? How does one approach the present-day importance of these themes through anthropological research?

I consider animal husbandry and grazing practices to be a dynamic field constructed by normative processes, complex power relations, and changing social relations and social tensions, such as a lack of collaboration or family disputes over grazing permits and grazing areas, changing values and morals, the great diversity of social practices, and the constant production of symbols.

Connections

The evolution of Navajo sheep raising over the centuries resulted from the incorporation

of different techniques and ideas from diverse cultures. In 1948 Kluckhohn wrote the following: “Yet, although The People have not always lived by sheep raising (...) they now feel that sheep have always been the basis of their economy. The emotional value and prestige value of their sheep has come to be so great (...)” (Kluckhohn 1948:41).

The question of whether one can talk about Navajo livestock economy and sheep culture without reference to outside forces and spaces is a good example for pointing out the premise of Ferguson and Gupta about culture, power, and place; according to them “spaces were always hierarchically connected” (Gupta, Ferguson 1997). This premise shifts the focus to the inquiry about connections. This is an important premise for considering social change, which instead of contact is a matter of connections. I take this approach as a key premise for my inquiry into the present conditions of Navajo sheep raising.

Considering space is an important anthropological tool to approach interconnectivity in a globalized world driven by the forces of capitalism. Since this is my context, I will approach the field of Navajo sheep raising through connections, relations, and movements. I will inquire into processes on the local and global level which are involved in shaping Navajo practices. This will lead to the question of the unit of analyses. My intention is not an examination of Navajo sheep raising practices, or Navajo as people that produce sheep, but an inquiry into a locality defined by connections, actors, institutions, and their relations. However, locality does not only imply the examination of local processes, or of how global processes are taking shape on the local level. For Gupta and Ferguson, the local and the global are not opposing concepts.

Although Navajo practices are connected to larger processes, the analytical focus is rather on the mutual existence of localizing and globalizing factors that are happening simultaneously. In this fashion, locality is formulated by a combination of inside and outside forces. Moreover, locality is both physical space and the forces between inside and outside through relations, ideas, politics, and flows. This consideration of the mutual influence of the local and the global will be important for both sides of my inquiry.

Although in anthropology several concepts of space stand for the conceptualizations of flows, I will argue that even the anthropological perspective begins with this premise, but the problem begins with the examination of the nature of connections. Referring back to Ferguson, there are hierarchical connections between spaces. The question for an anthropological research is how spaces are produced, enforced, and contested. Moreover, what kind of power relations are at work in all these processes?

In the first part of the thesis I will inquire into contested spaces and in the second part into the production of spaces in the field of contemporary Navajo sheep raising. The question is how to inquire into these issues through an anthropological research which emphasizes connections and relations, and how to locate myself in the field and into the way of knowledge production.

Methodology

The major body of data for this thesis was developed during my two-and-a-half-month field research on the Navajo reservation in 2012. Perhaps the first point about the production of anthropological knowledge is what Descola pointed out. The way anthropologists construct their knowledge depends on the rhythm and duration of their fieldwork (Descola 2005). While being aware of these crucial factors, the material and the experience I can work with is based on my stay at host interlocutors which resulted in ongoing informal talks and participant observations; circulating between more than 10 diverse places inside and outside the reservation; and the approximately 25 hours of interview material and 100 pages of field notes and photographs.

Although I started out at particular places on the Navajo reservation, through the establishment of my connections and through the “let the field decide for you” principle (Descola 2005:69) my research started to broaden and to develop into a multi-sited field research. As for the writing of ethnography, I take one of its major concerns to represent different contexts of knowing and acting, and to explore the different relations people are involved in. My focus is on the premise that “ethnography is an exploration of a world of experience” (Descola 2005:36).

With the narrative style of writing, my intention is to reveal details of these experiences and its controversies. Moreover, I also reflect on my physical presence as being part of the field, as ethnographic writing is part of a continual process of discovery. The authors of the book *Knowing How To Know* call it the “ethnographic presence” (Halstead 2008), while referring to the processual and transformative nature of knowledge production. This is a process formed by past encounters and new understandings (Halstead 2008:5). Perhaps what makes this process distinct is the nature of encounters which are never identical. Thus, anthropological understanding and knowledge may be conditioned by the fact that the “ethnographer’s workshop is their own self and the relations they have managed to establish between this self and some members of a society” (Descola 2005:69).

Themes

In Chapter 1 of the thesis I will address grazing regulations by drawing upon anthropological concepts of policy making. The basic concern for anthropology is to position policies within social life. The regulations implemented in the 1940s created a new spatial order for livestock economy and land use. Livestock ownership was conditioned by the holding of one of the 10,000 grazing permits which the federal government issued. In the first part I will consider the grazing permits as active agents in the field of animal husbandry. While turning policies into actors, the inquiry is focused on the mundane practices of how people interpret, use, and relate to those policies. How are the grazing permits socialized? What kind of power relations are present between social relations? To what kind of other phenomena does the inquiry lead? I understand this field as a regulated space. The key question is how and by whom is it contested?

In Chapter 2 I will address a present initiative taking place on the reservation, the renewed interest in changing grazing regulations. Why is it important to change the regulations? Why is it so difficult to accomplish it? While using anthropological concepts of state and spatialization, I will further inquire into power relations between Navajo individuals and the Navajo government. I will not only be concerned with the problem of arriving at a unified solution, but also with addressing different viewpoints of how

institutions and individuals imagine the new policy.

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the maintenance and cultural importance of raising sheep as a significant social (and global) activity. In doing so, I will address the production of a social space around the Churro sheep. This contains and connects people, ideas, and practices across the USA. I will address the cultural and economic production within this space and Navajo involvements in it. I will argue that one important phenomenon within this social space is the engendering of new ways of looking at, assessing, and valuing sheep.

Chapter 1 Grazing permits as socialized things

The present chapter is devoted to the examination of the contemporary problems of grazing regulations. My first encounter with the prevailing problems in the field of sheep raising was characterized by dealing with a particular document and how it shaped people's social relations and practices. Thus, in this chapter I will focus on a crucial document necessary for animal husbandry on the Navajo reservation, the grazing permit. Besides its role among sheep owners, why is it relevant to examine this document through ethnographic methods?

Encounters with permit holders

I had agreed to meet Alice in a larger town on the Navajo reservation. We were about to meet for the first time and begin our shared journey up to her summer sheep camp. It was flea-market day and the parking area where we were supposed to find each other was billowing with people selling wares or looking to get a ride.

As we spoke next to our cars I realized I should put my hat on. It was already 11 am and so hot that I had to put my hands over my head. I had no idea what I was going to need for the following days at the sheep camp. I had intended to briefly discuss my shopping list with Alice so I could run into the grocery store to buy the things I needed. Looking over to her car, I saw that her truck was filled with large plastic bags. I was interested to know what was in them. As soon as this thought crossed my mind she began to explain. She was upset about the fact that the bags were there. She suddenly erupted: "This is not cooperation" (field notes 02). She then started talking about her latest experiences with an organization on the reservation that she is part of. The idea of their latest initiative was to share a booth at a fiber show on the east coast to sell some wool. She explained disappointedly that the organization had not allowed her to use their exhibition space. She had traveled all the way just to find out that she could not exhibit her wool. "This is not help," she finished her story.

Having shopped, I followed Alice's car to her place. She took some hitchhikers for a distance, a lady with four children trying to reach a shelter in Gallup (NM). We kept driving. We stayed for a little while on the highway and then turned onto a paved main road. But after an abrupt curve, I found myself on a dirt road. It was perhaps functioning as a dirt road, but actually it was more like a sandy path. The path led us up and down through and along the course of a dry river bed. Soon there was nothing familiar on the road anymore, neither the highway, the houses or anything else. I had no idea whether we were heading north or south. I simply followed the person I had met an hour before.

Now and then I could see the horizon as it kept bopping up as we traversed the river course. The deep sandy wall of the river blew sand against the car and blocked my sight. There was not a sign of permanent human activity to be seen. Finally the road led us out of the river bed and we arrived at three houses built tightly next each other. The three small houses nestled in the desert environment with some patches of green in the sand and mountains in the distance.

On the side of my interlocutor's house there was a shaded area and a bit further away, but still on her side, an empty sheep corral. This remoteness and the adjoining houses made me wonder. I looked around and saw that somebody was living in the adjacent house. So I asked my interlocutor:

"Who lives in that house?"

"My brother, and in the next one is one of my sisters."

"What does he do during the summer?"

"I don't know. We don't ever talk."

I took this statement for what it was, a rather extreme but unique incident, and did not attribute much significance to it in relation to my research question. However, the environment, the setting, the close habitation all made me wonder – what could be the reason for not speaking to members of your own family?

Sometimes I could hear the distant noise of the highway, but actually the place appeared

rather motionless. An old pickup truck stood front of her house. The wind had covered its tires partly by sand and its wavy forms looked like a sand sculpture. I saw the empty sheep corral and some little patches of green grass highlighted against the light terracotta sand.

While we were getting her car ready for the journey, Alice showed me her place. “Well, this is where I keep the sheep for the winter. But I only have two pastures instead of three as we used to have back then.” As a child she used to spend the summer months helping her grandparents and parents herding sheep in the mountains. She still keeps her flock at the same place as her parents did for the summer months. The time between June and October is spent in the mountains. Then she comes back and keeps them around the house for the winter. Since it was July, her herd was in the mountains.

We filled the car with water, dog food, fresh meat and vegetables. The food supply we had appeared to be enough for a week. We made ready and drove back the same way we had just come. However, the path leading up to the mountain was a different adventure. The steep path was now made up of bumpy rocks and deep holes and fissures on the ground. The journey took about 40 minutes through the forest. When we arrived at a certain height we saw before us a lush green pasture valley between hillsides. I saw a little house in the background. She told me that her cousin spends the summer there. But besides them there were no other sheep camps there. When she was a child, the mountain had held several summer camps. Now it was only her, her cousin and some weekend sheep herders. As we approached the pasture some cows came into view. She told me that the cows were hers, but that they stayed here and only came up to her place once in a while.

The first thing I learned during our journey was the notion of a “*customary grazing area*” which “started right there somewhere.” She explained that this area was still the same as when her parents had been alive. She recalled the yearly task of bringing the sheep up to the mountains. Her parents, siblings, and cousins had all helped in organizing the sheep. The whole family had been engaged in herding the sheep to different pastures and

bringing them to water. Now she does this all on her own, but during the ride she briefly mentioned that she had a helper. She also mentioned that I had better be careful with him and keep my distance because he had alcohol problems.

Our journey to her sheep camp continued further uphill for another twenty minutes. We crossed the green pasture and a river and drove through a forest. The pines and ponderosa trees were growing in even greater abundance. There were lots of bumps in the road again. I could not believe how we were able to drive or find our way among the many large and sharp rocks and between the cracks. Finally we arrived at her sheep camp. The camp was situated in a small valley where several hillsides ran together, all covered by grass. In the center of the camp, on a somewhat elevated hillside, stood a small wooden log cabin surrounded by huge pine trees.

As soon as we arrived, a man, her helper, immediately appeared at the car. Without any hesitation he started taking items from the car into the cabin. After a little while he started the fire on the outside fireplace and cooked the meat. We did not talk much with him; he appeared to be quite reserved. The cabin was a one-room building which offered a comfortable space for two people. There were two beds, a table, and a wood stove, shelves and drawers for food. He offered me his bed and moved outside to sleep in a tent.

Close to the house but at a lower elevation stood the sheep corral. Its large round shape was held together by wooden logs. It catered for more than 100 sheep and goats at night and during the midday hours. In the early morning we often looked upon an empty corral. The sheep were able to open the gate themselves and run off to the pasture with the dogs. Our days were spent with herding twice a day, each time in a different direction. The sheep grazed twice daily, each time for about three hours. The sheep herder is supposed to follow the sheep and keep them moving from one pasture to the next, moving from the lower valleys up to the higher ones. This is what Alice calls *rotational grazing*. She can afford to do this in the mountains since all the pastures around her sheep camp are available for her use. There are not many camps in use anymore. She explained that it used to be different in her childhood when families had put their flocks together. Now

everybody tries to avoid mixing their flocks and everyone manages their own. The daily herding takes approximately six hours. In four days, Alice took me through more than six different pastures.

These mountain fields are her customary grazing area. This is where her parents used to herd each year during the summer months. Now she uses it because she holds the permit and has sheep which need to graze. During these herding trips I learned that after spending more than twenty years in the city she had returned to the reservation to be a full-time sheep herder. Today she raises approximately 130 head of sheep. She is allowed to raise sheep legally because she holds a grazing permit which she inherited ten years ago from her father. This document belongs to her and entitles her to raise a particular size of flock. However, “my father used to say, don’t count the sheep. If you start counting you are getting greedy” (S06b 24.07.12).

Since she has a permit she has the right to use this sheep camp and the land necessary for the maintenance of her flock. She explained that this is the land where her family used to keep their animals. Since she now has the permit, she has the right to continue using these areas. She explained that the size of this land is not a given, but rather it changes according to the seasons. The permit only informs about the number of the sheep one is allowed to have.

In my conversations with Alice, one particular topic gained an important role. She often recalled the fact that she had inherited the permit. Her father had not wanted to split the permit and divide the rights between the siblings. His intention had been to keep it as one entire unit. Her father’s decision had created a dispute with her siblings.

“I told my father that I wanted to have the permit and that I would take care of the animals. But my siblings didn’t want to believe me since I was living outside the reservation. My parents did not want to divide the permit. So I took it. Then my siblings did everything to turn my life into hell. They burned the corral. Then I was standing there without any help. I had to learn how to build a corral on my own. I had to do everything

on my own” (S06a 23.07.12).

I spent most of my time with Alice. But we usually sat down for dinner with her helper. These occasions were particularly interesting and often amusing as they recalled their childhood and youth on the reservation. After a little while Alice’s helper started to talk more, and soon he was telling me stories and talking more about himself. These conversations were always held by the three of us. If I asked him about the sheep, he always referred to them as “her sheep,” or “her dogs”. If they were talking about the animals, he would say, “your dogs were barking last night,” or “the hooves of your sheep have to be trimmed.” But many times he spoke about “our plans,” or “our cabin.” He would say things like, “we used to do it this way” or “we are going to do it that way” or “we need this and that,” etc. This way of talking led me to believe that they shared their activities and planned together.

Any conversations between her helper and myself were short, random conversations. He entered the cabin each morning at 6 am to start the fire and make coffee and breakfast. While Alice was feeding the dogs outside, he would be cooking inside. Often I was still in bed at this time. This is how we conducted short conversations. I was impressed that he always had an opinion about politics and other issues. He could express these in the middle of a couple of sentences, for example about the latest initiatives of the government. Our short conversations ended upon Alice’s return, who usually then started a new topic.

When we were on our own again, Alice often expressed her reservations about him. The term “us” that her helper used seemed to annoy her. When there was a quiet moment between us, she often corrected some of his stories. “No, it was not like that. Don’t believe what he says. I don’t like how he talks (...) He thinks that he belongs here. He doesn’t belong here. This is my place.” This was something that cropped up every now and again filtering in through stories or sentences while we were talking about something different. I was always surprised about how our conversation ended up with such remarks. “He actually doesn’t help me a lot. And actually he is often a hindrance to me.

For example, I cannot tell him if I am going somewhere, because if he knows that I am planning something, he will do everything to prevent my trip.” Unfortunately I was never able to find out his point of view, as I was not able to interview him because Alice said that she would not be comfortable with this.

Everyday concerns and unease with the family were not unique to Alice. I encountered Sarah, a younger Navajo in a situation with similar concerns. She spoke about her future journeys abroad. My ears picked up on a similarly strange statement. She was desperately looking for someone to take care of her animals while she was away. She said that she needed to find someone who would watch over the animals, but she would rather not tell her siblings where she was going. They would do everything to prevent her leaving. My impression was the same as with Alice and I felt that this conversation gave me a personal and private insight of unease with her family for a series of reasons.

I found out that Sarah had also inherited a grazing permit but some legal process was still pending regarding the building of a fence. She had a few sheep but no more than five. They were confined in a small pen throughout the year. Sarah was not able to spend the summer in the sheep camp anymore. The last time she had spent there was as a child. Now she had a full-time job and could neither spend her summer in camp nor keep the sheep on her area. Putting a fence around it would require a long legal process, and letting the sheep graze on the open pasture was dangerous.

Sarah showed me the land around her house. The lush green environment on the reservation was different. Alice’s winter pasture was now a desert. But here at Sarah’s it was significantly greener. During our walk I was impressed how the green landscape was affecting her emotions which expressed themselves in her elevated way of talking.

We walked through a river bed which had already dried up. However, its course was covered with thick green grass. We walked along the uneven green ditch. My sight was drawn to some hills a few miles away covered in pine trees and juniper bushes. I heard dogs barking from all directions but could see neither the dogs nor any neighboring

houses. There was no way to tell where one area ended and the next began, since we were walking on a wide open field sided by modest hills, pastures, and bushes. I thought that the pasture would be quite a good grazing area, but she was not allowed to release her sheep here and use the area even if she did have a permit.

As she spoke, her stories floated between past and present. At times she would stop walking and stand for a while to let her words sink in and stir my imagination. She stretched out her hands, and marked out the area she was talking about. Then she started to point with her arms. “You see that area over there, that’s where the sheep used to graze. Back then it didn’t look like it does now. Today it’s eroded. The water system doesn’t work. There’s the soil problem, the plants which shouldn’t be here. When it was maintained, we had several other plants. You see, that tree was planted by my grandfather. I want to do more agriculture here and raise more sheep.” She was starting to talk with heightened emotions. Then suddenly she was still as she stared disappointedly at the environment around her. I felt that her dreams and aspirations were embedded in the land. But she continually repeated that she was not able to realize her plans. “My family just won’t let me to accomplish my plans for this land.”

Sarah had a grazing permit with which she could graze the sheep legally. She also had a customary grazing area. However, she needed to put fences around it in order to let the sheep graze freely and safely. Because of the family dispute, she was struggling to put fences up to contain the herd. If she opened the corral gate, the sheep would be facing the open field with no protection. Her family members were constantly voting against her plans to build any fences. “I want to put fences around the area in order to protect the animals. But as soon as I start the legal process at court they vote against me. This is a long process and everybody has to agree” (S03a 22.08.12).

Permits and beyond

Inheriting a permit

Both of my interlocutors, Alice and Susan, had inherited their grazing permits. It means

that they are permittees. Today they are each holders of one of the 10,000 grazing permits that were once issued by the federal government in the 1940s. The goal of the federal government at the time had been to implement regulations to limit the number of sheep raised on the Navajo reservation. The regulations had restructured Navajo animal husbandry. Raising sheep had become conditioned by the possession of a grazing permit (Austin 2009). A person who did not hold a permit could not legally own large amounts of animals. The grazing permits had created a new status, that of the so-called permittees.

This title set the ownership over livestock within a legal framework. Navajos had owned livestock in the past, too. Animal husbandry had been structured matrilineally. The sheep had been owned by the women. However, with the grazing permits ownership over livestock had been placed in the hands of a single person, the permit holders. Permits are extended to particular persons who receive the special entitlement through inheritance. (Austin 2009:190). According to Austin, the most logical person to inherit the permit within a family is still usually a woman. Today “grazing permits is one of the most important items of property which a Navajo may own” (Austin 2009:196). Theoretically, permits should be kept together rather than being split up amongst siblings. This is the case for both of my interlocutors, Alice and Sarah.

However, asking people about their inheritance and who the most logical person might be to inherit, the process does not seem to be clear cut. How do people negotiate or receive a permit today? The following example gives a short insight into the speculations among siblings when it comes to the negotiation of the content of the permit:

A younger woman revealed to me some possible scenarios of the family’s permit. She told me that the permit had been passed down through the generations. Today her grandmother still holds it. The permit will most likely be split between her mother and her brother. She explained the different ways of splitting the rights: one person may receive the exclusive right to raise sheep. In this way the other party will most likely be entitled to raise a particular number of horses or cattle which the permit allows. It can also be split differently by splitting the rights over horses. But however they work it out,

splitting a permit is long procedure through the courts. “It has to be legal,” she said. She was thinking ahead of time to when her mother and brother were older and did not want to keep it separate and perhaps put it back together again. In this case the other relatives would have to figure out how to keep track of the livestock (S04 26.07.2012).

Besides the long process of negotiation over an inheritable document, getting the permit very often has negative consequences for one’s own family relations. The website of the Navajo Court has hundreds of cases of family disputes centered on the grazing permit (www.navajocourts.org). For both of my interlocutors, Alice and Susan, receiving their permit caused deterioration in their family relations. Moreover, my recurrent encounters with people engaged in animal husbandry revealed similar problems. The things people wanted to tell about most from their everyday lives and current situations were very often their concerns with their own family or neighbors.

The following statement shows how, for one of my interlocutors, inheriting the permit brought with it a dramatic change in her family relations. My interlocutor explained how after the court decision relations with her siblings went to ground.

“They were all looking for something negative to use against me. They were picking on me for whatever reason, I don’t know. They tried to take my sheep away from me (...) they even burned the sheep corral once. They didn’t understand that it was my father’s choice for me to take the sheep over” (S06b 24.07.12).

One of my interlocutors at the government reaffirmed this often dramatic tension among family members and neighbors. He pointed out that “there are instances where people are doing physical harm to each other, damaging property, shooting other people’s cows. We are getting to the point where somebody could really get hurt” (S16 11.09.2012).

Although Alice and Sarah are both permittees, their case is different because of the possibilities of them using their available land. After receiving her permit, Alice established her flock. She continued using the customary grazing area which her parents

used to use. In the case of Sarah, there are legal processes which are still in progress. The outcome is that she is not able to build fences for the protection of her animals and she is not able to maintain her land. However, besides inheritance, my second example refers to a different problem – how does land use on the Navajo reservation function. How does it relate to the grazing permits?

On a restricted land

Once I asked an elderly man what the permits are about. His answer started with: “Well, that’s a long story”. After a couple of minutes of pondering whether he should actually tell the story, he simply said: “It is just that they wanted us to graze on tribal land” (S12 30.08.12).

Sarah’s pending legal process over putting a fence around her area to secure the grazing area for her sheep is one of the many instances to which an official referred while talking about the process of the function of land use on the reservation. The official explained that anything that an individual or a family intends to do, build or use on the Navajo Reservation requires a permit or a lease. This is due to the nature of Navajo land. The reservation is trust land. Land is kept in trust by the federal government for Navajo people to use, such as grazing or any type of development. None of the trust lands can be owned by an individual. Any land an individual wants to use legally requires the approval of both the federal and Navajo governments. This request has to pass through a legal process. The government can only give individuals approval for use for a certain amount of time and only for its intended use. The Navajo Nation official explained how the process of application works.

For example, to build a home, a member of the tribe can apply for a home site lease. The process starts with filling out an application. The next step is that the individual has to contact the local grazing official in his chapter (The Tribal Council was created in the 1920s [Bailey 1986]. Since then the Navajo Nation is politically structured according to a chapter system. The reservation is divided in 110 chapter governments). They have to

find out whether anybody else at the area holds a grazing permit and whether they are already using it. The task of the grazing official is to identify any permit holders on the area. If there are any, the permit numbers have to be recorded to find out who the permittees are. The next step is to request consent from the permittees. Only if they give their approval can the process be continued with an archaeological and a legal survey. If the applicant passes all these levels, the land department will approve his request in the name of the nation. The department then sends it on to the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs), then on to the next agency level. The Navajo government plays the role of a liaison, making sure that everything is recorded by the BIA. The situation is similar for private usage. In order to use a piece of land for private purposes, for agriculture, housing or animal husbandry, one might want to put up a fence for protection. To do so, one also needs the allowance of all those people who could claim the piece of land to be their customary grazing area. (S13 28.08.2012)

My interlocutor, Sarah, is an example of how long and troublesome such a procedure can be. “Everything has to go through court (...) everything has to be legal” (S03a 22.08.12). But the court can only arrive at a positive decision if all permit holders agree. So even though she has a permit, she cannot use the land for grazing sheep. But before turning to this problem, I will give a background about the notion of customary use areas from the viewpoint of my interlocutors and the regulations of Navajo land tenure.

Customary use rights

As I wrote at the beginning of this chapter, the first notion I learned from my interlocutors was the notion of a *customary use area*. For Alice, this area is the land which had been occupied by her parents and grandparents for raising sheep. My other interlocutor associated the amount of land which one may use in order to maintain a flock with the idea of survival. Other people explained the idea to me that customary use was defined by clans. A particular area was continually used by a clan or it was shared by people in close kinship. These areas were self-regulated, based on the mutual respect of one's area. My interlocutors called this principle the “*ké*”. My government official

interlocutor explained the principle of the mutual respect of sharing land and water resources through a visual image. He called it “*imaginary boundaries*” (S13 28.08.2012). Such boundaries were the result of the herding practices based on seasonal movements. Moreover, it was based on the way flock owners mutually used grazing areas and water resources.

Despite this principle, my interlocutor admitted that he had no idea why his grandfather had decided one day for one particular pasture and the next day for a different one. His grandfather steered his herd in various directions. Only now did it make sense to him that his grandfather had been practicing a kind of rotational grazing, as one would call it today. His grandfather had had a sense of how many animals he could keep or how many rams he would have to slaughter in order to keep the land healthy and not let it degrade (S13 28.08.2012).

Although the grazing regulations (Navajo Reservation Grazing Handbook and Livestock Laws 1967) do not mention the notion of *customary use area*, land use for grazing is still based on the principle of customary use area. Today Navajos are not able to own land on the reservation. Permittees only have use rights in the Navajo Nation and are entitled to graze their livestock on tribal land (Austin 2009). However, at the time when the reservation and its legal framework were created, Navajo were a herding society using large parts of the reservation as grazing land. The original idea of the permit allowed herders to keep their customary use areas in use since they needed land for the maintenance of their flocks.

Austin analyses the present-day system of land tenure. He argues that “modern Navajo land tenure” evolved from the traditional practice of using land (Austin 2009:191). On a normative basis there are two principles to mention, the “*use it or lose it rule*” and “*customary trust*” (Austin 2009). The original intention of the grazing regulations was connected to land use rights. On the one hand, according to the regulations, only those people can have a permit who also have land use rights to maintain their flocks. On the other hand, holding a permit entitles one to legally use land. The interest of land policy is

to entitle individuals who “will make the most beneficial use of land” (Austin 2009:190). This land tenure principle is based on the traditional Navajo use it or lose it rule.

Besides the most beneficial use of land – actually keeping it in use – is the ownership of a permit called a customary trust which is aimed at benefiting and protecting group property rights (Austin 2002:192). The modern legislature understands these as community use. According to these principles of land tenure based on communal use, the Navajo reservation today as trust land means that land belongs to the tribe and is kept in trust by the federal government for the benefit of the whole Navajo Nation. The permits do not say anything about the size of the land to be used. Thus, the customary use areas are not fixed entities. They can change according to the seasons.

Turning back to the previous part of how land tenure on the reservation functions, I pointed out that any type of initiative for either private or public purposes becomes involved in a process of application. One has to determine potential customary use areas and ask the permission of a permittee or other people who have land use rights.

However, the following example demonstrates a recurring phenomenon that my interlocutors referred to and which my interlocutor Sarah is particularly a victim of. With these examples my goal is to put the functioning of the principles of the use it or lose it rule or customary trust into question:

“Very often somebody, a permit holder, will use his or her right to vote against your will. Even if they don’t use that area, they vote against you. People don’t use the land, but they have a claim to it. Even if they don’t use it, they don’t let you use it either” (S15 31.08.12).

Based on the comparison of the normative background and the practice, the question is why and how are the rules contested? How are customary use areas defined? Who can claim customary use and why? How are these principles and notions reconfigured? Do they hold any new meaning in practice? In the following part I will show the potentials

for the strategic use of a permit where it is related to land use rights. With the following example I will demonstrate the problem of the voting rights of permittees over any developments on the reservation.

I visited my interlocutor Regina at her home. She had been living off the reservation for more than 30 years. She did not have sheep anymore. She had established her life in the city. She was 60 years old and had to take care of her grandchildren. She explained her time arrangement. She spent 80 per cent of her time in Farmington (NM) and California. The remaining 20 per cent was for the reservation. She tried to visit Kayenta (reservation, AZ) every few weeks where she was born and where her family raised animals. Her brother still lived there and had some sheep. She explained that if she had more time, or if she did not have her existence in the city, then she was sure that she would still be raising sheep. She could do this because she still held a grazing permit. I asked her whether she could show me the document. She said she could not because she kept it in the bank. But she was reachable by phone. If there was any meeting or if they needed her permission for something other than grazing, then the office knew her telephone number (S23 09.08.2012).

According to an article of the Navajo Times, of the 10,000 grazing permits only are 3,000 were in use (Navajo Times July 26,2012). Austin argued that the permits represent valuable properties among the Navajo people (Austin 2009). Their limited number may define them as scarce goods. However, their officially recognized condition of being out of use questions their value based on scarcity. I argue that they are prestige goods and their value is rather defined by their potential of strategic use. They are valuable objects which potentially secure land use rights or they empower their owner to control land use on the reservation. Regina had no sheep and thus did not use the customary use area, nor did she live on the reservation. However, she stored it like a treasure in the bank. In other cases, through the same principle of having voting rights, people might sell their customary land use rights for money in the case of any type of development programs on the reservation (S16 11.09.2012).

Anthropology of policy making

The grazing permits are valuable documents which are inherited, shared, stored or sold. People might fight over them. They interpret them differently and formulate their rights and claims. How can anthropology map how regulations and policies work in a society? How do people engage with these policies?

In their text on policy making, Shore and Writh (2011) draw on the premises of the anthropology of policy making and adopt a different approach than those of political science for analyzing regulative forces. For anthropological analyses, policies are not external forces, nor are they confined to texts. They are viewed rather as productive, performative and continually contested. The creation and the implementation of the regulations reflect a particular political and social field. They restructure the environment where they have been introduced. However, they have unintended consequences. In the process of implementation, “fragments of culture and society are brought into new alignments” (Shore and Writh 2011:2). For anthropological inquiry these new social and semantic terrains are particularly important.

Firstly I would like to point out the matter of illustration and conceptualization of regulations. Anthropological analyses should put into question the common-sense metaphors about the way regulations function in a state and between the government and society. By taking an example for such naturalized images, Wenger and Shore draw on the *linear model* as a way of conceptualizing policies. They argue that the linear model depicts policies as objective external entities. Moreover, it assumes an ideal-typical and mechanical way as to how policies are constructed through some rational authority. In my case, a linear model of imagining the function of regulations would be the government official’s example of how land use on the Navajo reservation functions. Referring to a rational authority, the construction of the regulations and issuing of the permits could be also put in a different perspective.

However, apart from the conceptualization, policies themselves are to be viewed from a different perspective. They are viewed as agents interacting with different concepts,

actors and sites. Policies are also a methodological tool to focus on connections between actors, discourses, and sights. The authors suggest analyzing regulations by how they are socialized and looking at things as having social lives, a notion taken from Appadurai. From this perspective the question is – what is the social potential of these permits? This way refers to the focus on people's interaction with such policies.

Grazing permits are valuable properties and due to their limited number they might represent scarcity. Through Appadurai's concept, one could ask how its special value has been created. How do these documents circulate in society and how are they exchanged (Appadurai 1986)? What kind of relations might they create between institutions and other artifacts? Moreover, by treating policies as having social lives, one examines things as being in a particular situation, in a particular phase. Appadurai argues that the different stages of things, their meaning, value, and social potential all depend on temporal, social, and cultural factors (Appadurai 1986).

In my case, the important question for considering the enactment of these policies is to ask how people use the permits in diverse situations. In which situations are they used and what kind of social forces might be in action? One could examine particular sites and their relationships and claims. I refer to my observation that I never encountered a sheep herder who adhered to the law and the contents of a permit. Moreover, people might also use permits as a rhetoric tool to formulate claims which reach beyond the permit's intention. The question is how different agents use the permits as options for a different claim? If policies are a methodological tool for examining connections and relations to things, agents, and sites, then the examination of regulations might provide a window into larger processes.

In this part I have shown how two basic principles on which the present-day system of land tenure on the Navajo reservation functions. I was especially interested to show how these relate to grazing permits. Although the majority of the permits are not in use, I showed that having a grazing permit is a powerful tool today which entitles one to make decisions over land use, not only for grazing but for other purposes as well.

Based on the premise of Appadurai, if we view permits as things that are socialized, then their meaning is temporally constructed as being in a certain phase, just like viewing the biography of objects. If permits are valuable possessions, then I argue that the value and meaning of the permit should be viewed at the intersection of the enactment of abstract laws and cultural rules in social relations. Thus the focus on the sociality of permits might give a clue as to other social values.

Moreover, it seems that grazing permits and the definition of customary use rights are entangled with other phenomena. Traditional principles and modern rights seem to function simultaneously. The examples above suggest that the possession and the use of the permits might be linked to other phenomena, rather than solely to animal raising and to related social and economic tension. Focusing on the permits, the question I came to face early on is how permits are related to ways of how people are engaged with the land, rather than with animal units and how many animals one is allowed to have in order not to overgraze. During my research I only confronted the ways in which normative rules are contested. This issue does not only concern land use but more general ways of how people express claims to the land and how they feel they are related to it. The following encounter provided me with further aspects for considering the value of land. In the previous examples I showed how people claim land based on their permits. However, what could be the culturally constructed world behind such claims? How do these claims make sense? I became puzzled as to how these claims take place on the basis of grazing permits and how these are entangled with other phenomena or with other cultural codes or rules.

“It all comes back down to the land”

Susan is young lady working on a farm where she takes care of a particular sheep breed called the Churro. I found that she also had a couple of sheep herself at home. I was interested to ask her about the possibility of making a living from sheep on the reservation. The beginning of our conversation drifted between different types of sheep. I was interested to know how a young person could start a flock these days. How many

sheep would secure someone's income? I asked her whether, for example, 30 head of sheep were enough to make a living.

She answered quickly without considering her answer. She answered simply that it all depended how much land one had. It was not about how many vaccinations one had to pay for, how much the alfalfa cost, how much wool one got or how much meat one could sell. In her view, it depended on how much land one had at one's disposal. Land came into our conversation just as easily as her answer about the requirements of making a living from sheep. It gave me the impression that land was a clear and direct notion her mind associated with. But I was further surprised by the explicit direction of her thoughts and the direction our topic took. She did not answer my question about the 30 head of sheep. But we did not linger on the topic of how much land one needs either. She had never counted the amount of acreage one would need. Her answer avoided all these issues. But her remark brought a particular issue to the fore. In this way our conversation rapidly changed from sheep to the issue of land and claiming land, as well as back to disputes. My question was again, what do grazing permits and their legal aspect have to do with all of these?

"That is another issue here with Navajo. People fight over land out here. If somebody sees that another person's sheep are grazing somewhere else, then that person starts complaining about how they could let them graze over there when they have a grazing permit to graze on that side. This is a big issue out here" (S04 26.07.2012).

"Neighbors start complaining about adjacent lands, claiming that this belongs to them because this is their grazing area. They will try to educate you. Let me grab my grazing papers and show you what I mean" (S04 26.07.2012).

People might formulate their claims over a piece of land on the basis of their grazing permit. Since a permit warrants land use right without any specific legal determination of the size of the land, the definition and share of one's customary use is very often a source of dispute. But more importantly, this example shifts the focus to land claim based on a

specific argument. It is also not clear whether people actually have a permit or not, but they state that a piece of land is their grazing area, thus, they have the right to use it.

“The problem is when you start asking for land. It has to be legal again. Everybody has to agree that the person is capable of getting that piece of land. Even if it belongs your family, it will escalate into something big. They start talking about it and there will be some people who don’t agree with you. Or even, they might want you to move just because of the land. You are actually lucky if your family keeps side by side and has a homestead next to each other. This is not because they don’t like each other. They just want that land. The majority of people fight just because of the land. They rather don’t communicate with each other” (S04 26.07.2012).

“Or the other hand, if I let my sheep graze somewhere but don’t take care of them and another person sees it, then it will be an issue there. It will be a controversy and people will start saying that this is their land” (S04 26.07.2012).

Besides the grazing permit, what kind of other claims might be made over a piece of land? As mentioned above, the present-day system of land tenure is built on certain traditional principles, like the use it or lose it rule. There might be other cases of claiming land in connection with raising animals but without the permits. As the conversation with Susan progressed, she explained another case of how people tend to hold claims over a certain area of land. She said that, “if one works it, they tend to claim it” (S04 26.07.2012).

I came to understand the significance of land as the subject of a special claim when I faced the following phenomena. While driving on the reservation I often encountered signs on the road which informed the traveler that at certain households sheep are available. I also learned that one of the last significant cultural roles of keeping sheep is for ceremonial purposes. For a ceremony, people usually buy sheep instead of using their own. As we talked about this purpose of sheep today, Susan pointed to another phenomenon. She explained that there are instances when one would need sheep for a

ceremony, so they visit sheep producers. However, it is not sure that one can really buy sheep from somebody who actually raises them. The sheep owner might say that they do not sell any. Susan explained that in such instances when people say that they do not sell sheep, it can mean that they do not want to make money with the sheep themselves. They only keep sheep in order to keep a grazing area for themselves. “They are just there because they want to keep the land, that is all” (S04 26.07.2012).

Another perplexing phenomenon was the abandoned houses and sheep corrals on the reservation. While spending time in mountain sheep camps, I learned that there are only a few people today who manage to move their flocks up to the mountains for the summer season. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, several cabins and corrals are empty and abandoned in the mountains. However, while also spending time in the villages, I also encountered abandoned houses with sheep corrals. Through my conversation with Susan, I became aware of a further aspect of building a home site and raising animals. She explained that people might raise animals and build a corral for them. But in a couple of years they would abandon it. “They only build the corral to claim that piece of land” (S04 26.07.2012).

A product of globalization

Through the conversations above, I have demonstrated how people make claims over land as a form of customary use area. The permits are powerful tools for making such claims. The notion of legality and role of the law seem to be very effective in social relations. With a grazing permit one can legally have use rights over a customary use area. But apart from the grazing permits there are also certain cultural rules according to which people also make claims. These are customary trust or the use it or lose it principle. It seems that traditional principles and cultural codes are mixed with legal procedures. To put it simply, people tend to claim their traditional rights to land through abstract law. People define their land use areas through traditional principles but individuals stay in legal relations to one another. I would also like to argue that through the simultaneity of cultural rules and abstract law people tend to claim customary use

areas for their own individual purposes. This practice is in opposition to the present-day system of land tenure, according to which the entire land is kept in trust for the benefit of the whole nation.

In order to move closer to an understanding of these phenomena – also of the special importance of the customary use areas – in the context of capitalism and globalization, I will argue through connections. Based on Piot's analyses of traditional practices in an African society, I would like to argue for an approach to the understanding of nature and function of traditional principles – like customary trust or the use it or lose it principle – in today's context and for claiming land for individual purposes. Piot argues that one would assume that certain practices (in his case economic exchange forms) are a “residue of temporally prior or spatially exterior social formations” (Piot 1999:71). He argues that these are rather products of modernity and capitalism. Taking his argument further for my case, I would view the enactment of traditional principles and abstract law for today's land use claims as functionally related to one another. The social value and function of the grazing permits should be understood through this lens. The present value of the grazing permits, rather than the cultural or economic significance of sheep or other animals, represents the value that people attribute to land.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the social life of grazing permits. They represent value and prestige on the Navajo reservation due to their present social significance that reaches beyond those of the livestock owners and rather relate to land use questions. Through an anthropological analysis of the permits, I located a field of social tension. The production and maintenance of power relations became visible not only through my interviews. Its complex dynamic became tangible while staying with my interlocutors and being positioned in their personal conflicts.

While focusing on the social life of the permits, I also revealed that these documents not only play a role in the field of animal husbandry, but also on the issue of how land is being occupied and used on the reservation. The permits influence how land on the

reservation could be used. The question I came to face is how to make sense of the culturally constructed world behind contemporary land use claims. Land is claimed both by abstract law and traditional principles. This simultaneous functioning of both capitalist and cultural principles shows Navajo's entire connection with global forces.

Chapter 2 Changing the grazing regulations

In this chapter I progress further with the discussion of grazing regulations. This chapter is an inquiry into the political conditions of initiating change in those regulations, which have been never considerably altered since their implementation. My question is why is it important to change the regulations? Why is it difficult to accomplish it? My method is to spatialize the policy to detect further problem areas and power relations. The question is how do power relations play into these processes? How do they function? How do diverse actors perceive problems and their solutions?

A renewed interest

Upon my arrival at the reservation I found an article in the Navajo Times which carried a particularly important piece of information for my research. The article talked about the renewed interest in changing grazing regulations (Navajo Times, 26.07.2012). According to this article, the ongoing drought in 2012 had made people aware of the degrading condition of their land. After a decade when the last attempt to introduce a new Grazing Act failed because of opposition from livestock owners, the article pointed out the present developments. A growing number of people – individuals, grassroots organizations, and the government – realized the pressing importance of renewing the grazing regulations and taking part in the political process.

The political process of changing the regulations was visible in the media and through diverse public events such as public hearings and conferences. Upon my arrival I had just missed the so-called *public hearings*. This venue provides a space for the public discussion of current problems. Individuals are allowed to speak out, express their opinions and concerns within the four minutes available to each person. Moreover, information gathered by public hearings may provide important input for the government. The problem areas the hearings uncovered were put together in a list. The topics were among others: “Too many land disputes; ultimate authority of the grazing permits; permit

holders without livestock; using grazing permits as a business; grazing permits issued to Navajos living off the reservation; grazing officials changing the names on the grazing permits; younger generations not being prepared to inherit a grazing permit; authority to fence grazing areas (...)” (Navajo Times, 26.07.2012). According to the Navajo Times article, these hearings showed the government that there is the possibility to come up with a new solution to cope with grazing problems.

In the previous chapter I dealt with several problems mentioned above in the article. What other aspects add to the problem? Why did such attempts to change all fail in the past? In the following part I will deal with the problems, initiatives, and arguments for a change in the regulations. I will draw on some of these aspects by including my interactions with different actors. Finally, I will describe how diverse actors view the problem and imagine the solution.

Spontaneous encounters

My research went in parallel directions. I spent most of my time with Navajo individuals, but I also made several visits to state offices. The simultaneity and being present and communicating with each party considerably shaped the results of my inquiries. I realized very soon that writing email messages was unhelpful and ineffective. I stopped investing my time in electronic communication, even though it meant driving long hours between dispersed cities on the reservation. I did make some successful phone calls but a personal appearance remained crucial for arranging interviews. Moreover, I realized that actually meeting people and receiving information were spontaneous and random encounters. Despite the silence in cyberspace, the meetings were characterized by an official’s welcoming attitude. This is how it happened at the offices of the Navajo government.

On the phone a lady gave me directions to the government office. Explaining directions through the cardinal points was never helpful for me. I had to turn south off the main road after a couple of miles and then follow a dirt road leading to the mobile houses scattered on a fair ground. The secretary introduced me to a lady who, after some hesitation,

invited me into her room. She was not sure if she could help me. She left the room to talk to colleagues. Her room was small and arranged with furniture which did not match each other, neither in size, shape, or color. It seemed like a temporary solution. There seem to have been mice, too, seeing mouse traps under her table.

Finally we arranged a meeting for the following day. She affirmed that she had spoken to her colleagues who were going to answer my questions. When I arrived the next morning, I could not find her. I bumped into someone else instead. He had not heard about the meeting which was supposed to be taking place in a few minutes. However, without any hesitation he invited me into a smaller meeting room. Colleagues who I had not seen the day before started to join us. After a few minutes, there were approximately five people gathered in the meeting room. The lady from the day before arrived later and departed after a few minutes. However, the spontaneously gathered group gave me a two-hour interview.

I arranged a meeting with another official, too, who directs a department important for my investigation. He accepted my request and we made an appointment. However, when I arrived the next morning, I found an empty office building. The long hallway was totally dark. I walked through the dark hallway looking for his office. The door had been left open but the room was empty. I turned and was walking back when I bumped into someone. He was holding some papers in his hands. He and some other people had gathered in an office, around computers on the tables. I asked for Mr. Bennaley. The person explained that the governor had just decided on voting. Thus, all the government officials had a day off. The surprised colleague asked me how I could have missed that information. I answered that I was supposed to have a meeting with Mr. Bennaley and that he had not told me. The person thought for a few seconds, then took his cell phone to make a call. He called Mr. Bennaley and explained to him that I was in his office. Mr. Bennaley suggested that I return another time. However, as soon as I expressed my concerns about my lack of time, he showed sympathy for me. Later he came by to his office and gave me the interview. During our interview I felt delighted by finding new connections in my research question. I felt I could locate new problem areas.

Understanding his goals and programs made me feel that my research might have arrived at a landmark.

I spent the same evening at an interlocutor's house. I told my interlocutor about my experience at the government office and about my interview with Mr. Bennaley.

"What?" She appeared to be shocked but tried to keep her voice calm. "You met Mr. Bennaley?" she asked with a raising voice and emotions. "What?" she repeated and remained quiet for a while. Then she continued. "I have tried to meet this person for a long time. He is unreachable. He doesn't respond to emails. He doesn't answer phone calls." She was raising her voice higher with each sentence. "He met you because you are European," she concluded disappointedly and with some detest. After a couple of minutes she calmed down and took a different approach in talking to me. "You should be careful," she said slowly. "They talk to you wonderfully. They tell you everything. It is wonderful how they talk. But as soon as they ought to do something?" she concluded with a kind of poetic question. However, I felt that her reaction was dictated by her frustration towards the government.

People and the government

The same old story

I came to understand the tension and disappointment of people towards the Navajo government at a conference organized by a state department. The central theme of the conference was the grazing regulations and their intended change. Several government officials held a presentation. Most of these presentations were incomprehensible to me since presenters were talking in Navajo. From the PowerPoint presentations I could gain some clue about the themes they were dealing with in their talks, such as the historical background of the regulations and their chronology. Many speeches seemed to address the changes and necessary steps – for example, conducting feasibility studies.

Since I could not understand a word of the Navajo presentations, the main program of the conference left me clueless. I continually had to ask people for a translation. This gave

me a good opportunity to meet people. My main source of information proved to be other visitors that I engaged in conversation. Through my encounters with these people I detected two common attitudes as to how they received and responded to the message of the conference. Some people were actively engaged in expressing their worries and current problems. Such an opportunity was created by the question time held after each panel. However, most of these questions were rather like single little presentations. After a while, the organizers set a time limit for the length of such speeches. An interlocutor pointed out that it is the same with public hearings. It is important that they limit the talking time, so people have to express themselves clearly.

Despite participating actively, I could read resentment and disappointment on many faces. From many visitors the answer I received to my questions was a gesture or a wave of the hands. For example, I was witness to a conversation between two visitors who had met at the conference. After a short introduction they recognized their common field of activities on sustainable agriculture and sheep production. One person explained that she was part of a project conducting a feasibility study. They wanted to make a survey about the numbers of sheep production. This was a grassroots initiative based on a GPS system. However, the project could not progress any further. She lamented that she could not cooperate with the government department, as they did not share any information with her. The man commented on her experience calmly. He stated they already had such data. “A lot of information has already been gathered but they don’t release it. This is what we have heard. They only sit in their offices and they look surprised and annoyed when you arrive with a request. All they do is surf on the internet”. “This is the same old story,” the man put it simply. He concluded with a gesture of waving with his hands as a concluding remark (S02 22.08.12).

However, there are many shared goals. There is growing interest from both sides – grassroots organizations and the government – to launch fundamental steps toward change. Both sides see the basis for change in preliminary studies and feasibility studies in order to determine the condition of the land, animals, and people engaged in the issue of grazing. There is a GPS study to map sheep producers and their lands. However, from

the conversation it became clear that there is interest to gather data but they do not share it. Such concrete initiatives come back to the “same old story” reflecting a deeply anchored mistrust towards the government. I learned that my interlocutors are actively engaged and concerned about the future of the regulations. Many of them want to change the policies and there are grassroots initiatives to make concrete studies. They are disappointed in the government’s ignorance, non-communication, and uncooperative attitude. “They say something but as soon as it is time to act, they don’t do anything. They don’t communicate with you” (S02 22.08.12).

My conversation with a Navajo Nation official touched on some of these problematic aspects of communication between the government and the people. He stated that the implementation of the grazing regulations in the 1940s and the stock reduction were a communication failure. Those generations who had experienced the stock reduction period developed a general mistrust towards the government. This attitude has since influenced communication. From the government’s perspective, people still tend to oppose everything the government tries to do (S16 11.09.2012).

Metaphors

The “same old story” can be understood as a metaphor of how people imagine their relations with the government. Recent anthropological concepts of the state emphasize implicit, unmarked, and mundane practices through which the government’s practices should be analyzed. Gupta and Ferguson call for a *practice oriented conception* of the state. Their goal is to overcome common-sense metaphors of state bureaucratic practices and the taken-for-granted images called *verticality* and *encompassment*. “State is not simply functional apparatus but sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways” (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:982).

While verticality refers to a top-down nature of state planning, encompassment depicts states as widening circles between family, community and state. *Vertical topography*

could be taken for an image of political struggles. This topography suggests that struggles develop from below and are grounded in actual lives and experiences. At the opposite end, the state reaches down into communities. Civil society ought to be functioning as a “middle latitude.” They conclude that the problem does not lie in these images. However, anthropology should treat such images as being constructed. The task for anthropology is to investigate social practices whereby these images are made effective and experienced (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:983). For my case the question is to look at how the political struggle functions, which, due to the nature of social relations, cannot be understood with a vertical topography.

Spatializing a policy

What kind of methods could help to approach policy processes and struggles? How could I come closer to the question of why it is important to change the regulations? My theoretical argument in the previous chapter focused on the view of policies as having complex social lives. In this section I will take the method of spatialization to detect how power relations become effective in the functioning of the policy.

To understand ethnographically the consequences of state policies, Gupta and Ferguson work with the *spatialization* of the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Due to the location of my study in the USA the term *state* may be ambiguous. The reader might associate with state the administrative unit of the federal government or of the state governments of Arizona or New Mexico. However, the goal is to look at the relation of people to their government from an anthropological perspective. In this fashion “state” will be used as an analytical term, and in my study it can refer to both the federal and the Navajo tribal government.

With recent theories of the state, and the naturalized imagination and function of institutions and regulations, the bureaucratic setting can be put in a new perspective. One important point is how the anthropology of policy and states maps the structure of regulations in their function, setting through an interpretative frame. According to the

premises outlined above, an anthropological analysis of the images and the functioning of policies in states are discussed not only through explicit discursive representations but also through unmarked practices. The analytical method for this practice oriented conception is the “spatialization of state.”

Spatialization as a method is the mapping of state bureaucracy in society. For this spatial consideration, verticality and encompassment are seen as having a topography. However, at the core of spatialization stands the investigation of mapping the ineffectiveness of certain bureaucratic practices in society. The point is how they are effective and how are they perceived and interpreted and imagined by social actors. Spatialization means the operation of metaphors and practices in social and imaginative processes making state images effective. Spatialization refers to the ways how certain institutions are understood as being superior to others. Moreover, it investigates institutions in their search to secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority over others (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:982). The question to be asked is how people come to experience the state as an entity with certain spatial characteristics.

In the previous sections I have shown the communication and cooperation problems people experience when dealing with the government. This could lead to the assumption that the problem with regulations is the power of government officials. However, the problem is more complex. In the following section I will address the problem of law enforcement.

Spatializing enforcement policy

An example for spatialization in my case may be the inquiry into the mechanism of the enforcement of these regulations. During the livestock reduction program, the reservation and its off-reservation areas were divided into land management districts. Bailey wrote that these geographical and administrative units aimed at improving the planning and control of the livestock economy (Bailey 1986). The primary intention of this program was to manage land and livestock at a district level. This entailed vegetation studies and

the measurement of the carrying capacity of the ranges. Today grazing officials in each land management district would conduct these studies and oversee the ranges. Their mobility to keep personal contact with livestock owners and personally address their problems would be crucial for control and adjustment of livestock and the soil's carrying capacity. They would play a significant role in problem solving on a local level and enforce the law. Today the grazing officials are still elected officials. Their status as elected officials was a burning point at the discussions I participated in during my research.

My interlocutor pointed out that the regulations have never actually been enforced (S16 11.09.2012). The role of those officials who were central to the functioning of the enforcement was reduced to mitigation and the making of recommendations. In order to understand some of the key problems, the Navajo Nation official asked me to imagine myself in the role of a grazing official. I have to do the yearly inventory on animal production. But how do I do this? Do I ask for a grazer's permit? Do I really check how many cows and horses they have? Do I really determine their carrying capacity? Do I even know how many animals their land can handle or where their use areas are to be found?

The answers are mostly negative. The grazing official will probably not check all this information. On the other hand, if one asks, the permit holder is not going to admit that he is overgrazing the land. But why do the grazing officials not carry out their duties? For further illustration of the problem, the official took the role of a permit holder who may be a member of one of the largest and most powerful clans in the region. "You don't want to deteriorate your voting basis, do you? You would be a fool to act against those people who elected you" (S13 28.08.2012).

Clan as strategy

I was interested in the role of the clans for today's grazing. People repeatedly stated that the determination of the customary use areas was up to the clans. I also heard people

often say that one can always find out that “you can have a family member on the opposite side of the reservation” (S06c 25.07.12). My interlocutors often talked about persons as their clan brothers or clan sisters. However, I imagine the clan system as a clear-cut network, representing a powerful and strategic mechanism.

The answer I received to my question about a clan’s role in grazing practices was rather negative. However, according to my observation, people clearly used it for help. A Navajo Nation official pointed out some of the arguments based on clans: “My brother, give me a day off.” “How can you do this to your brother?” (S13 28.08.2012). The strategic role of the clan became somewhat extreme through the example of an official with Mexican roots. He recalled that people often approached him to ask for help based on their shared clans. They would tell him that he was their brother since the person was also from the Mexican clan on his mother’s side. He had to state firmly, “I am not from the Mexican clan, I am from Mexico” (S21 25.08.2012).

Solutions

In the previous part I used the concept of spatialization to approach the ways the enforcement of grazing regulations function in society. This method is aimed at detecting power relations between the government and individuals. I pointed out that there are multiple ways and structures how power is practiced and maintained in the field of grazing regulations. Moreover, this method is an inquiry into the mundane practices of how state policies and the state itself are imagined by people. For this problem I showed a metaphor which is present in people’s thinking about the Navajo government. At this point the question is how people perceive the problem and imagine adequate solutions for changing the grazing regulations? In the following part I will join the speculation of both livestock owners and Navajo Nation officials to learn their view and its controversy.

Mobility

We met Robert at his summer sheep camp in the mountains. Our encounter was special

and one of only a few encounters when I was able to visit adjacent sheep camps in the mountains. Robert is one of those contemporary herders who tries to hold down a job and at the same time take care of his sheep. Besides, he is one of the few people who still moves up to the mountains for the summer season.

We drove to Robert's place from my interlocutor's camp which stood on the other hillside. My interlocutor and Robert were almost the only sheep herders who shared the mountain during the summer months. Apart from their camps, all the other sheep camps on the mountain were abandoned. While we were driving to visit Robert, my interlocutor pointed to the conjunctures and the roads leading to the old camps which were out of use. When we arrived at Robert's, it was already twilight. His approximately 80 head of white sheep were confined in a large corral. We sat around the fire wrapped in covers. The four men in my company were mostly talking in Navajo. They also grabbed their hand spindle and span during their conversation. I asked Robert how he would resolve the grazing problems. "We have to go back to where everything went wrong. We have to go back to where they cut free movement. The fences caused all the problems for us" (S08 31.07.2012). For Robert, the grazing regulations made the free movement of his sheep impossible. He talked about the earlier practice when sheep raising was self-regulated. People moved according to the season. The so-called *ké* principle founded the mutual respect between the sheep herders for sharing land and water. With the regulations, this movement became impossible. For Robert, the regulations set clear boundaries on the practice of sheep raising.

By the law

Back in the town at the government offices, I used two of my encounters with Navajo Nation officials to further investigate the problem areas and their solutions from the viewpoint of different actors on the reservation. In the next part I will refer to my conversations with Mr. Bennaley and Mr. Yazzi. Both of them are officials of the Navajo Nation today, working for different departments of the tribal government. Both were also engaged in animal husbandry before they worked for the government. I met both of them

in their offices.

When I asked them about the *ké* principle, they started talking about more general problems on the reservation. These examples point to the results of population growth when it becomes increasingly problematic to handle issues face-to-face. They pointed out the increased need for bureaucratic control and normative regulations in the field of animal husbandry. “The unwritten word, the cultural philosophy doesn’t hold water anymore” (S13 28.08.2012). The role of the written law is strong in people’s dealings with one another. “Everything has to go through the court. Everything has to be legal” (S04 26.07.2012). The attitude they refer to is that “if you cannot show where it is written, then I can do this” (S13 28.08.2012). Mr. Bennaley explained these changes through different examples. Areas where there was previously no need for regulation now needed to be regulated. An extreme example of the cultural rules was the burying a dead person. Before this was a taboo which did not have to be explained, but today it needed to be regulated.

Mr. Yazzi pointed out that in his view the problem was not only with the growing number of regulations for each sphere of life, but that people interpreted the law differently. Where this phenomenon becomes visible is in the field of grazing permits. Permittees holding a grazing permit are guaranteed land use rights. However, they interpret their rights and delineate their customary use area in their own favor. “On the basis of the law they determine their imaginary boundaries” (S16 11.09.2012).

This individual way of interpreting the law and delineating land use areas are sources of several disputes. Mr. Bennaley explained that very often the process with grazing rights started with a dispute. “If it starts as a dispute it continues as a dispute.” He gave me an example. “In the case of an inheritance of the permits, siblings might come to an agreement to split them. But as soon as they leave court and have to share the land at home, a further dispute will start. In this fashion, dispute leads to dispute” (S13 28.08.2012).

In the middle of my conversation with Mr. Yazzi about the grazing regulations, he started packing files on the table. He opened a couple of them. Gauging from the yellow color and the aged quality of the paper, the files seemed to be decades old. However, each file was precisely organized containing detailed maps, descriptions and texts. Mr. Yazzi opened the maps and started to turn the papers. He glimpsed over some of the texts and maps. He stood silently over them for a couple minutes. Then after a while he started to comment on them. “Well, there were already many plans, suggestions and recommendations. This is what we can do, give recommendations. But they have never been realized” (S16 11.09.2012).

While Mr. Yazzi was explaining the cases to which the content of the files related, he also referred to the problem of when apparent solutions in the present can lead to future complications. People tend to come up with their own solution. There are several instances where two parties, family members or a neighbor, could agree on a solution. They are able to delineate their lands and determine which part of the land belongs to which party. They might be able to find a solution to resolve a dispute. They agree on a solution for themselves which seems at that time and in that case logical for both parties. But as soon as the permit is passed again, or another party gets involved, the solution which seemed to fit for that particular case in the past no longer applies and leads to further disputes.

At some point in our conversation, Mr. Yazzi turned back to the origin of the grazing regulations. He stated that in the 1940s the federal government did the best thing possible for the Navajo people. He stated repeatedly that the regulations are actually good regulations, but one needs better policies to enforce them. “The regulations have never been really enforced.” He viewed the present problem with the grazing regulations as being only individually enforced. “It is up to the individual to take it on”.

However, today would be the time to address the problem and implement a stronger enforcement. In his view there was a stronger desire for change because of the many disputes among neighbors and family members. Many people whose customary use areas

have been encroached on by others would want an effective way to protect their resources without having to deal with the other party. Many people would rather use the opportunity of a third party whom they can turn to directly for law enforcement. The problem which Mr. Yazzi faces is the addressing of the enforcement of the grazing regulations in a uniform way. In order to explain this problem area and the related tension between a uniform and individual way of enforcement, I have to go back to the discussion of land.

Enforcement

Mr. Bennaley clearly stated that there is a need for enforcement. There is a need for grazing officials who are employed instead of elected in order to be entitled to check people's flocks and their use areas. Employed officials could actually ask how many cows, horses, and sheep does a permit holder have. If they have more than allowed, then officials can force the person to reduce them. In this way there would be people whose permits need to be taken back. Grazing officials should be trained to act and make changes. At the moment they are not able to do anything. They are mostly not trained for range management. As pointed out above – referring to the clan system – they depend considerably on the people who elect them.

Land use plan

My conversation with Mr. Bennaley kept returning to the issue of permit holders. He stated that the government was dealing with the massive results of neglecting the enforcement. He referred to two related phenomena:

“Here everybody still thinks that they can build wherever they want (...) and then they lament that there is no electricity anywhere. But they don't count on the fact that we have to pay tens of thousands of dollars to get to one single customer” (S13 28.08.2012).

“The permit holders still think that there is this idea that with a permit one decides over an entire piece of land. The permit holders hold back development. They want more

grazing area. We must stop the permit holders thinking that they can hold back development” (S13 28.08.2012).

He pointed out that the reservation needed houses, government buildings, business facilities and schools and, moreover, a plan with which they would be able to plan 15 years ahead. The solution for him would be a land use plan. In order for it to be developed one needed land for all types of purposes. There was plan which regulated how land was used for each purpose – houses, economic facilities, schools, and offices. This was a development program which would carry serious consequences for the livestock owners. He insisted that land is not for grazing. The reservation needed more space for development. Through a stronger mechanism of law enforcement, the government would be entitled to act against permit holders. “If a permit holder resists the plan, we have the right to take the land from him and get compensation” (S13 28.08.2012). He concluded that there is less and less land available. However, one also needed enough space for recreation. He recalled an American president who insisted on keeping the national parks. He concluded that one had to think in advance in order to secure the environment for the next generation. So should it happen with the grazing areas, as well.

Emotional ties

After a while we were still talking about the present problems with development on the reservation and how the livestock owners held back development, something he took personally. As we touched on certain themes again, like the *ké* principle or his herding practices with his grandfather, he started to approach the enforcement problem from another perspective. He recalled how he had learned and experienced herding practices from his grandfather and had drawn on its consequences for perceiving the land. Although his grandfather had had a grazing permit, he had learned in the following fashion: “It is for the whole area (...) it is all ours, from that mountain top all along the range and all around it belongs to us. I grew up knowing that, hearing it, thinking it. I believed it (....) until I got more educated and started learning...Hang on, no, it’s not. I

don't have a title for it" (S13 28.08.2012).

He started to talk more slowly and tried to explain something which "I cannot explain (...) usually we only say to each other – I know what you mean" (S13 28.08.2012). Each letter of this sentence was specially pronounced, in such a way that I gained the impression that his mind was thinking of the past and we had touched on an especially sensitive topic. "A tie I cannot explain. Where my father and grandfather were born and where they were buried. This is such a strong tie, an emotional tie" (S13 28.08.2012). He continued that these facts led to difficulties of any type of land issue. "Each land issue is an emotional issue. You can hardly make any decisions without emotionally hurting somebody. We have here something that nobody else might have. We have an emotional ownership of the land" (S13 28.08.2012).

His goal with the above-mentioned land use plan was firstly to build communities and secondly to give back this sense of ownership to people. He imagined this plan in such a way that each community set up their land use plans. They could all determine how they wanted to use the land. In this way each community could regain a sense of ownership. For him the question was how would they leave the reservation for the next generations? "Do we leave it in chaos or do we leave it livable?" (S13 28.08.2012).

Throughout these encounters I have shown that today the changing of the regulations carries legal, political, and enforcement problems. Besides that, it is also an emotional problem. Moreover, it is also a problem of decision making.

Decision making

In order to realize the new plan and have it function, all 110 chapters need to come together. In order to make changes to the regulations, it has to pass through the courts. In order to create a new law, it has to pass through the legislation. That means that more than half of the 24 delegates need to vote for it. According to some people, this legislation will never happen. There will be never a majority vote for it.

Mr. Yazzi pointed out that in the past initiating changes was a type of political suicide. The difference between back then and today is that today not as many people were affected. For Mr. Bennaley it would still be difficult. “It will take a person who sees and understands what will happen if we don’t make changes. A person who thinks in the following way – how can one see it and not do it, how can one know it and not do it?” (S13 28.08.2012). In Mr. Bennaley’s view, in the next four to five years there are some very tough decisions to be made. People are not going to like it. This person will be not popular for a while. But it needs a person who undertakes this role of unpopularity, someone who is able to act and make the best possible decision he can. There is need of a person with a vision. Who can see into the future? “It will take a leader” (S13 28.08.2012).

Making decisions in the Navajo Nation is not an easy process. A good example for illustrating this is the 1940s when the Indian commissioner Collier came from Washington to intervene and decided on the livestock reduction. As I depicted in the introduction, his name is still renowned for its cruelty. However, to further illustrate the present problems of decision making on the reservation and the role of a leader, I will draw on another interview.

“This took place at a meeting about wild horses and the drought affecting the reservation. It was several years ago, maybe 10 years. The issue was about rounding up and killing wild horses, there was no rain, so no water or grass for the horses. Everyone agreed that there was an issue, but no one could make the decision. Horses in traditional belief are thought to represent rain. After much discussion no decision was made. Someone in front of me turned to her friend and said, ‘We need another John Collier’. He is associated with the livestock reduction in the 1930s and 1940s, which occurred during a drought” (S21 25.08.2012).

Conclusion and theoretical considerations

In this chapter I have investigated the question about the changes to the grazing regulations. I was especially interested to find out its necessity and the diverse viewpoints

of actors imagining both the problem and the solutions. I argued that part of the political process of initiation and the realization of change is an internal Navajo problem. Referring back to Chapter 1 where I drew on power relations among individuals, I pointed out that the grazing permits represent power and that they play an important role in the maintenance of power relations. In that chapter I further analyzed power relations between Navajo livestock owners and the government. I started with a demonstration of the power of the government while including my connection to both sides. Drawing on recent concepts, especially the anthropological concept of the state, I firstly referred to metaphors about how people might imagine their troublesome relationship with the government as it exercises its power. However, through the concept of spatializing the state, I outlined the function of law enforcement in the society. While referring to clanship, I pointed out the power of Navajo individuals toward the government.

Some of my interlocutors pointed out that the problem with the grazing regulations was that they have never actually been enforced. Referring back to the anthropology of policy making, Shore and Wright define policies as being processual and continually contested. One might ask “when can a policy be said to exist” (Shore and Wright 2011:14)? According to my interlocutor, Mr. Yazzi, it was up to the individual to interpret the regulations and there are only cultural rules to enforce them. In his view, one needed a uniform way of enforcement which did not exist at the moment.

In the final part of the chapter I introduced different viewpoints about problems and solutions. My interlocutor, Robert, saw the problem with regulations as diminishing the freedom of movement and demolishing cultural principles of self-determination. His reference to the problem of boundary pointed to a spatial problem of animal husbandry. This phenomenon has been described by Hirsch. He defines boundary, place, and map as particular entities for anthropological consideration for a connection between economy and environment. These concepts are aimed at creating a contrast between qualitative and quantitative ways of assessing, valuing, and relating to the economic activities within specific environments (Hirsch 1995). In my case, the principle of *ké* referred to this qualitative measurement. This principle represents self-determination based on mutual

respect and sharing of resources. According to this principle, there are imaginary lines between customary use areas.

Mr. Bennaley represented me with a contradiction. It might be the depiction of the contemporary struggles of the Navajo government as negotiating between globalizing and localizing forces. I refer here to the concept of “state scale,” a notion analyzed by Brenner (1997). The state scale plays a role of mediating globalizing forces and everyday life. According to this concept, an analysis of this scale should focus on the intersection of diverse phenomena and flows which are connected on the same scale. Such global forces might be represented by land use plans for development programs on the reservation, carefully planning each place in the communities. He also referred to the role of communities as cooperating entities which are planning their own land use. He viewed it as the key for the communities to regain a sense of ownership over the land. If we consider his view about communities as sharing and developing their land, is it an image of citizenship? I see a further controversy between the idea about a community and a central problem of decision making. Even if Mr. Bennaley repeatedly talked about the role of cooperation, he imagined a new grazing act to be a decision that had to be made by a leader.

Chapter 3 Social space of the Churro

In the previous two chapters I have shown how the present conditions of sheep raising on the Navajo reservation as a field is considerably shaped by social tension and political struggles. Through the inquiry into the grazing permits, I pointed out the role of the documents in causing disputes. Grazing regulations represent a contested space. There are many permit holders who do not own livestock but strategically use their rights for other purposes. I mainly dealt with the strategic use of permits and with other phenomena where these may be enacted.

For this chapter my question is the following – what possibilities do those actors have who would like to use their permits for their original intention and raise sheep? As a starting point I will take the previous two chapters which provided an insight into the rather insecure situations for actors engaged in sheep raising. This chapter begins with an outline of the details of those insecure conditions. What are the limits and possibilities of the process of establishing a flock today? What kind of social relations and institutions play a significant role this process? Which connections, spaces, exchange forms allow agents to act? In order to show the dynamics of these alliances, I will also include my connections to Navajo individuals. The second part of the chapter will demonstrate the social space around a particular sheep breed called the Navajo Churro. What kinds of relations, practices, and discourses constitute this space? What kinds of processes take place in this field? How are Navajos connected to this space?

Helping out is normal

For my premise I take Piot's approach for a conceptualization of society. Piot argues against prior categories for the analysis of social context as containing simply interaction and relations between individuals and groups. He suggests the term "being together" when he refers to a condition of "radical reliance on others" (Piot 1999:17). Although I argue for the individual nature of Navajo's actions, this approach helps me to understand

the ways in which my interlocutors create certain social relations, friendships and even alliances. Piot also points out that the term “being together” refers to a condition when people are found to be in relationships, even if these relationships are motivated by self-interest. Moreover, while considering people to be constantly present in relations, he points out that these people might actually be defined by these relations (Piot 1999). Piot emphasizes the actions, exchange forms and interactions which individuals might take in a context when social insecurity prevails. I start this chapter by drawing on such a condition when one finds oneself reliant on others.

A full-time sheep herder

We were driving back from Alice’s sheep camp. The 7 miles between the mountain camp and the small town took about 40 minutes. The road curving down from the hill was rough. Rain had formed even deeper holes in the ground. As the rain washed the dirt away, the road was often split apart and the sharp rocks appeared to be even larger. Alice had to maneuver the car across these hurdles. The bumpy road shook the car and it was hard to speak. I focused on the curves the car had to make and tried to keep my body on the seat. However, Alice kept talking. She commented on the condition of the road, about the forest fire last month and about her car. Later her thoughts turned to her plans at the end of the summer season when she was going to move the herd down again. She hoped that her Anglo-American friend would have time again. She did not trust her Navajo herders. As we reached the town with its paved road, houses and people reappeared. She recalled an Anglo-American trader in town. “As far as I know Jim, I am okay. He is a good guy.” She continued discussing her plans for the future. “I think I need a new car. Mine is old and these roads are killing it. I might talk to Jim and ask whether he could give me a truck. I could weave him some rugs in exchange.”

Alice is a full-time sheep herder today. After inheriting her grazing permit she returned to the reservation. The years since she had become a permit owner and had been working on the establishment of her flock had reshaped many aspects of her life. Because of her family dispute about the grazing permit, she could not count on her siblings anymore to help her out. However, she was eager to become a sheep herder and live from what it

could offer her, the meat, wool and the rugs that she wove. She wanted to practice sheep herding the traditional way by moving the sheep to different winter and summer pastures, as she had learned from her parents. She spent her summer months in the mountains at the same location where her parents used to maintain their customary grazing area. In the mountain camp there was no running water, electricity or telephone. But there was a solar shower, though, and enough coffee. However, fresh food soon became a scarcity and canned food became the norm. She explained that it was not easy to get used to this when she returned and spent her first summer there on her own. She used to commute between the city and the camp almost every day.

It was not only the family dispute and the fact that she could not count on any help from her siblings. It was the practice itself. It took years to get used to the new practice of being a full-time sheep herder. She had to rethink and reorganize her preferences. She had been living in the city for more than 20 years. She had had no financial problems until her divorce. The separation and the launching of her new project had confronted her with new challenges, sacrifices and the necessity to rethink her needs and reorganize her finances.

The first step had been to reject all her preferred products and start buying the cheapest brands. In the beginning she had relied on tribal food aid. She had used public assistance for about six months. She used to get food from food stamps, but she had also received some financial aid from the tribe. However, tribal programs had not suited her since her intention was not to reenter the job market. She wanted to manage her sheep. She continually had to seek alternative ways. She had even collected aluminum cans for the deposit. She also used the sheep to barter with or she sold them at auctions.

During my conversations – not just with Alice, but with several interlocutors – I asked about their friendships with Anglo-Americans. Some even stated that their best friends were Anglo-Americans.

An accommodation

In the course of my stay on the reservation I was in need of accommodation. I had not been able to establish any contacts from Vienna when I was planning my research which would have secured my plans. The possibility of staying at somebody's house often happened spontaneously by chance when I got to know somebody or was introduced to them. My personal presence was indispensable to successfully negotiating a room or a bed. As for compensation, it was often not clear what they actually expected. My interlocutors never told me what price I should pay. Some stated that I did not have to pay anything, but later asked me whether I could lend them some money. In other cases I bought food. In many cases, however, the fact that I had a car proved to be a means by which they could use my help. One interlocutor asked me several times to give him a ride. I drove him to adjacent communities or sometimes even longer distances of more than 100 miles. Each time we met an opportunity appeared where I could be helpful. After some time had passed he started to call me his friend.

Once I received an invitation to stay at the hogan of a Navajo interlocutor (a hogan used to be the traditional dwelling of Navajos constructed of earth and branches and covered with mud or sod. Today people still construct hogans from wood or cement for ceremonial purposes or for temporary dwelling). Sarah's place was particularly green, a sight that I was not used to while driving through most of the reservation. I could not get a real sense of the size and extent of her area. Small buildings, cars, a sheep pen and the hogan were placed somewhat spread apart. The area led to a little green valley where a river might have flowed once. Now it was just a deep pit covered by green grass. The hogan was the largest building in the area.

This white hogan was quite modern and made of logs. The round shape had an extension of a rectangular building made of concrete. That was the bathroom. I had all the comforts I could have enjoyed in a normal house. The large round-shaped room had two large beds, a large wooden table in a well-equipped kitchen. I found everything there I needed for cooking. My impression was that somebody was still living there. While I was unpacking my things from the car and bringing them into my new abode, Sarah stood in

front of the door. She never entered the hogan, but stood at the doorstep. She was immersed in her own thoughts. She was hesitant, but her gesture indicated that she was focused and was going to say something she did not want to forget. Finally she asked me whether I could find a piece of paper under a floor lamp on one of the shelves. That was very important because it had the password for the Internet on it which she had just lost.

Later she asked me again whether I could give her a clean towel from the bathroom. She asked me whether everything looked okay. She explained that last week a friend had been there and she hoped that she had cleaned up. But she said that I did not have to worry, I would find a blanket for the evening. Then she asked me again whether I could check the fridge. There might be some leftovers for the dog. There was indeed a portion of old spaghetti topped by a type of and Bolognese sauce in a plastic container. It did not seem fresh. As I turned the container over to pour it onto the dog's plate, the contents fell out in the shape of a brick.

The question was why could she not come inside and do all those things herself instead of asking me? After a little while I found out she was not allowed to enter the hogan. Years ago somebody had died inside the house. The medicine man had forbidden her to enter ever again. Since I was not Navajo, in her eyes I fell into a different category. She believed that the negative spirits at night were not going to affect me.

Her constant problem, amongst others, was that the only source of running water was in the hogan. She had to go to a friend to take a shower, and in exchange she very often took care of his cat while he was away traveling. During my stay I was in charge of the water. I had to make sure that the dog had enough to drink. I also had to fill the water container for the sheep. Her sheep pen was a small rectangular area fenced in by steel wire. In the pen there were two large iron water containers plus three plastic ones for storing the water. When these were empty, I pumped the water through a hose attached to the kitchen sink in the hogan.

Regina was in constant conflict with her family because of building fences around her

area. She sometimes received visitors but not regularly. Also, often friends who would announce that they wanted to visit never turned up. She could not rely on her friends. However, she put it simply, “I need help.”

Regina had a full-time job in an office. She usually arrived home at about five in the afternoon. She would give the sheep some hay but did not really have time for herding. At the time she only had six head of sheep. She would like to have had more. But in her case this was the hardest thing to do and maintain. She could not afford a sheep herder as she did not have enough time and money. This combination of hurdles was constantly on her mind when we were talking about the sheep. All I could do for her was something small but important, such as giving the animals water, but it helped her day run more smoothly.

Ram exchange and the co-op

For Alice, who was in the process of establishing herself as a full-time herder, particular organizations and a particular breed of sheep played a crucial role, namely the Churro. While working on rebuilding her flock and trying to find ways of living off the sheep, she encountered the Navajo Sheep Project founded by an Anglo-American veterinary scientist in the 1970s in Colorado, and later she found an organization run on the reservation called Sheep is Life.

She came across both organizations through an advertisement in a newspaper. During that time the Navajo organization was still new on the reservation. The yearly celebration of the sheep and diverse events of the organization offered Alice a new community. She learned new techniques of wool processing. It was even more for her, stating “this was my new family”. She also found out that she was clan-related to the Navajo family who ran the organization on the reservation. “They accepted me and treated me like a family member (...) we even called each other on birthdays” (S06b 24.07.12).

The goal of the organization was to provide sheep breeders with new techniques of wool

processing and taking care of the animals. Regina recalled early initiatives to work as a co-op and they also encouraged exchange. One such exchange project was the ram exchange. The linchpin of the organization was rebreeding the Churro sheep. The organization aimed at helping breeders increase their flocks. “All I wanted was a ram,” and the organization had been advertising a ram exchange project. The idea of the ram exchange project was to bring old rams to the organization and exchange them for one of the new breed, the Churro. After keeping the ram for up to two years, people were then supposed to bring it back. This is how she started raising Churro sheep. They also had a ewe exchange project. One brought 15 old ewes and in exchange received 20. After two year she brought back several good-looking sheep.

She was continually looking for people in newspapers or through diverse connections to negotiate new rams. She recalled that the first ram had come from Colorado, where the Sheep Project was founded. At some point the flock had started to grow to 500 head of sheep. She stood with several Anglo-American and Navajo breeders in contact. However, she emphasized that today her way of trading and selling the rams and ewes had become very private. People might find her through breeders she is in contact with. However, she did not give out her information over the phone. Somebody has to be seriously interested in getting a ram in order negotiate and talk to her.

During our conversations she emphasized that over the years and during the ram negotiations she had experienced some strange things with Navajos. After she had established her Churro flock, she stopped negotiating with Navajo herders. She recounted a story about when she was trading with a Navajo lady. Alice had explained to the breeder that she needed a new Churro ram for its fleece. She knew Churro sheep already quite well – their fleece had to be long. However, she noticed that the sheep she received had rather short fleece. The lady said that that was because she had just sheered them recently. All Alice had to do was wait a couple of months and it would grow back. She waited. The months came and went but the fleece did not grow back. In the end Alice had to castrate it in order to keep its blood line out of her Churro flock.

Another experience was when a lady had wanted a ram from Alice. She gave her a good one. After two months the new owner called her back saying that Alice had not given her a ram but a wether. She demanded a new ram. Alice asked her to bring the other sheep back so that she could be sure that she had not made a mistake. The lady never called her back.

She also experienced several other negative occurrences with Navajos. She once sold a ram to people who could not pay her directly. They promised that they would pay as soon as their pay check arrived. However, to that day they still had not paid. In another case people had asked her for a favor. Their grandson was graduating and they needed a lamb to celebrate, but they could not pay that day. They promised they would pay the following week. The week came and went but they also never paid.

She found similar phenomena with the ram exchange project run by the organization. The idea of bringing the ram back often did not work. Many Navajo breeders simply did not bring the sheep back. Over the years she not only experienced disappointments with Navajo breeders, but also with the organization on the reservation. As time passed and directors changed, she started facing the dysfunction and the lack of collaboration among its members.

My first encounter with Alice in Chapter 1 is an example of her disappointments in how the organization is run today. When I first met her, she had just arrived back from a wool show where the organization was supposed to provide a common booth for its members to sell their wool. However, Alice could not even take her wool out since there was not enough space for all of them. She explained that “the idea of functioning as a co-op just doesn’t work (...) people use the organization and the grants for own their private purposes” (S06b 24.07.12).

In this part I have demonstrated the conditions and possibilities of two of my interlocutors – both Navajo sheep breeders – to establish a flock and be a sheep owner today on the reservation. I stated that for both of them a particular sheep breed played a

crucial role in the process of reestablishing their practices. I have to point out that while preparing my research, the information I could collect about Navajo sheep raising and herding culture was all about a particular breed. The Churro sheep became a central point before my research. One of the major connections I was planning to start my research with was the organization Sheep is Life on the reservation. The organization is clearly present on the Internet through a well-developed internet site. Although I have not received a positive answer to any of my emails, I found several educational events run by the organization and open to the public.

Through the websites I learned that the Churro Sheep is supposed to be the “old type of Navajo sheep” which nearly became extinct after the stock reduction. In the 1970s an Anglo-American veterinary scientist had started a project called the Navajo Sheep Project to breed back this nearly extinct variety as it still carried cultural significance for lots of families and individuals.

According to the veterinary scientist: “This project was created in order to rebreed a near extinct genotype (...) it was more than a genetic restoration project. It was also a drive to return the trust to a young white fellow who was upset about how they were treated, not only by US generals but also by the Indian commissioner, John Collier, during the stock reduction years. This sheep belongs to the Navajo people, their elders, and children, and future children” (S17 07.09.2012).

On the Navajo reservation the organization called Sheep is Life is aimed at reestablishing this sheep breed among the people and encouraging them to raise sheep. The organization is also aimed at improving the economic importance of the sheep on the reservation.

Churro: a global phenomenon

Throughout my research I looked at the Churro sheep on the Navajo reservation. As I described in the introduction and above, I assumed that the Sheep Project, initiated by an Anglo-American veterinary scientist, was aimed at rebreeding an old type of sheep for the Navajo people. I became aware that the process of rebreeding the sheep connected the

reservation to other parts of the USA in a particular way. However, my question appeared to be the inquiry into the development of the Churro with the related projects and connections on the Navajo reservation.

Only in the later phase of my research did I find out about a meeting of another association for Churro sheep. The meeting took place in northern New Mexico, 200 miles away from the Navajo reservation. This journey made me realize that in order to learn about Churro sheep I had to leave the reservation geographically. Moreover, I had to look at other events and organizations and encounter other people.

In order to attend the meeting I had to drive up to the town in northern New Mexico from the reservation. My Navajo host who I had been staying with also showed an interest in the meeting. She was also engaged in raising Churro sheep and she was looking for new rams to improve her small flock. Besides, she was very interested in participating in the meeting and learn more about the Navajo Churro sheep.

During our long journey she spoke about her future plans with sheep. Her current situation caused her worries and problems, but she also had ambitious ideas and views about raising sheep on the Navajo reservation. She explained that she faced challenges in improving her flock. She did not have a safe grazing area. If she opened the gate of the sheep pen, the sheep would run out into the open space. However, the information which was not directly related to this topic was new to me. She pointed out that she had found a great opportunity in the Churro sheep. Raising the sheep on the reservation is an organic process because the animals are not given any hormones. Moreover, the fact that the lambs are raised by a Navajo ought to raise the quality and value of the sheep.

The city we were heading to in northern New Mexico lay on a higher elevation than the reservation. The abrupt change of temperature, the air and the flora brought us into a totally different environment. It was refreshing to be there after the suffocating summer heat on the reservation. The meeting took place at a recreation site equipped with wooden cabins. Most of the gatherings were held in one of the larger wooden buildings. When we

arrived and entered the hall, I immediately recognized one of my interlocutors, a Navajo man. I had stayed at his sheep camp a couple of times. Then I recognized another Navajo man next to my interlocutor. I also saw an older Navajo couple. Several tables stood in the room. On one, fleece samples had been piled in great quantity for a wool competition. Other tables in the room were functioning as information desks. There were several brochures and books about the organization. On the next table a large piece of cardboard was spread out comparing diverse sheep types among the Navajo Churro. Another contained information exclusively about the Churro. It explained the characteristics of the Churro sheep, as well as breeding standards.

As I looked around, I saw an Anglo-American lady who was also familiar from a meeting on the reservation. Then I saw another Anglo-American lady with gray hair and another man. After a little while I realized that I could hardly see any more Navajos, apart from the ones I had already seen. I could count the number of the Navajo visitors to the conference on two hands. The other approximately 30 visitors were all Anglo-Americans. Their average age appeared to be over 60. During later conversations I learned that almost everybody was retired.

The first event at the meeting was the wool competition. The wooden hall provided the place for the competition. The amount of the wool was overwhelming. Most of the visitors had brought samples for the competition to be judged and commented on. The competition was followed by a thorough feedback on each sample. The judge explained the qualities that Churro wool should possess. After the competition and lecture I watched people approaching the tables covered by the wool samples. People passed from one sample to the next to touch and feel the different fleeces. Some discussed among themselves while others examined the fleeces alone. I saw some ladies making notes about each of the samples. This focused and serious examination of the wool reminded me of a wine tasting where professionals know which senses they had to use at which point of the tasting and which terminus might be appropriate to describe the quality of the wine.

Despite the competition, the wool played a minor role as far as the content of lectures and presentations went or as far as the topics during private conversations were concerned. I was interested to find out why these people across the country raised Churro sheep? Why was the Churro so special? Why did they prefer these sheep instead of others?

Peter raised Churro sheep in Oregon because the sheep were still very natural. He explained that humans greatly influence how breeds develop. “The Churro sheep still thinks (...) its brain has not been bred out” (S19 08.09.2012). I received a similar answer from another lady from California. She thought that the Churro is a more primitive breed and it is simply a better quality (field notes 07, 08.09.2012).

Early on I came to experience a difference between my conversations with Navajo or with Anglo-American breeders when discussing matters about sheep. The impression which I gained during this meeting from the Anglo-American breeders was simple. They looked happy and content. They seemed to represent the image that one of my Navajo interlocutors had pointed out – “You are supposed to be a happy sheep herder” (S06c 25.07.12).

Gathering around the Churro

I found out that the association gathers more than 150 breeders from across the United States (www.navajo-churrosheep.com). Several visitors at the meeting had been members of the organization or had worked for it for years. The association has existed since the 1980s and was founded at the very place the meeting was held, a little town with Spanish roots in northern New Mexico. The topic of several presentations was remembering the long time the organization had existed, from the beginning up to the present. The presenters also pointed out the strengths of the organization – the cooperation between its members. “One of the sticking points in this group is the communication among the members” (S17 07.09.2012). What is this cooperation all about? How could the Churro sheep gather so many people together and make them cooperate?

The presentations discussed further aspects of the rebreeding of the Churro. The achievement which the association aimed to support and what the initial Churro project was about was serving genetic diversity and biodiversity. As pointed out above, the first initiative was taken in the 1970s by a veterinary scientist. Although the professor was not present at the meeting, he had left a message about the Churro for the visitors. I have already referred to his original intention of rebreeding a near-extinct genotype. Moreover, besides the genetic restoration, his aim was to return trust to the Navajo people. The message referred to the sheep reduction period as a “holocaust of the sheep” and compared the actions of the Indian commissioner, John Collier, to those of Hitler (S17 07.09.2012). In the message he also emphasized his approach to the breed. He did not own it personally. In his opinion, this breed represented cultural significance for lots of families and individuals. “This sheep belongs to the Navajo people, their elders, and children, and future children” (S17 07.09.2012).

This message seemed to be entirely accepted by the visitors of the meeting. However, after that I never heard anything else about the sheep of the Navajo during the rest of the meeting. I heard people talking about biodiversity and about their goal of maintaining a pure breed. Several discussions touched on the notion of quality. My Anglo-American interlocutors said that the Churro is supposed to be a better quality. In one person’s view the breed itself was superior.

What could this quality be that they were referring to? While discussing the superior quality of the Churro, the question of the meat gained a central position. Some of the visitors explained that Churro meat has a distinct flavor. In someone’s view Churro meat was leaner and tasted better. However, during my conversations I could not discover what the traits of the special taste of Churro lambs were. People emphasized that the Churro itself is good quality. This distinct quality was, for example, emphasized by many of the visitors who sold the meat.

For Kate, the good quality of the sheep is what “others decided good quality is” (S20 08.09.2012). Kate, a sheep producer from New York, explained that she already knew her

customer's preferences. She worked with a slaughterhouse that made special cuts for her according to her request. They also packed them in small packages. The packed lamb parts were frozen and delivered to customers. Her customers only had to open the package and cook the meat. (S20 08.09.2012).

Putting the Churro on the meat market

Why does the Churro meat have a special flavor? A sheep producer from New Mexico told us about her experience with marketing Churro meat. She pointed out that it had taken several years to increase demand for Churro. For instance, establishing demand and negotiating with chefs in Santa Fe's most important restaurants was a long process. When she had visited the chefs to introduce them to Churro meat, most of them had been hesitant. The chefs were not sure that they really needed this particular meat. The lady then said that she later decided on another strategy with the chefs: "I have decided that I am not going to ask what you want, I will only ask whether you are good enough to take our Churro lambs" (S18 07.09.2012). Moreover, negotiations between producers and the market were also difficult. She pointed out that she had to teach producers that the Churro is not supposed to look like a big fat mutton. They are considerably smaller and are supposed to be slaughtered within 6 months after birth in order to get that distinctive taste. The chefs were expecting the same size lamb chops as before (S18. 07.09.2012).

Several presenters pointed out their efforts to put the Churro sheep on the map of the meat market. During this meeting I learned that a special effort of the organization was to find a market for Churro meat on the US organic food market. It had to be positioned as gourmet high-quality meat.

"Keep the breed clean" appeared to be crucial to the visitors of the meeting. Churro as a pure breed has a considerable importance for the meat market. In order to make the Churro an organic gourmet food, it needed to be registered. In order for it to be registered, it had to live up to breeding standards. The main goal of the association was to keep the genetic base pure. In order to do this, it was crucial that breeders knew the

characteristics of the Churro. Moreover, the sheep becomes attractive to this social field and for the market if it has a registered identity. I will argue that in this space a key value of the Churro is its registered identity. For a successful registration, the sheep should possess certain qualities. These qualities are well described in a booklet about breed standards.

Breed Standards

One of the sources to learn about the qualities of Churro sheep is provided in a booklet called “A Guide to the Selection of Navajo-Churro Sheep” (Navajo Churro Sheep Association 2010). The booklet is supposed to assist sheep producers on how to register their Churro sheep. The aim is to learn the acceptable characteristics of the sheep required for this procedure. The document opens with the notion that “breed standards” are central. The introduction states: “The intention of the document is to show sheep that meet the Breed Standard (Navajo Churro Sheep Association 2010:3)”. The booklet introduces the reader to these standards through a series of photographs. The photographs are aimed at identifying, besides their traits, the good and bad qualities of Churro sheep. Based on the photographs, one can develop a sense of how to determine these qualities, as well as distinguishing the “excellent,” “acceptable” or “not acceptable” qualities a sheep may have.

There are several entries with detailed photographs in the booklet to train one’s eye for these qualities. For example, the entry “breed traits” shows three different photographs which show three ideal and acceptable sheep. However, they do not look identical. Their size, fleece, and ears look different. Thus, one has to learn to detect the variety of sheep which all stand for the acceptable category. Photos of fleece, horns and ears are aimed at explaining this variety. However, the image of “the most desirable” sheep are a series of photographs about sheep in full size without any details. These pictures still ought to show greater variety. The most outstanding photo, however, is an archive photo from 1941 representing the historic Navajo Churro.

Other entries about “marginal quality” or “not acceptable quality” represent categories

with greater elaboration. The booklet provides numbered pictures whereby each image becomes the illustration of a particular problem – for example, correct fleece but with residual wool, wool on the legs, on the belly and facial woolliness are not acceptable for a Churro, just as too small ears and certain color patterns as well. These mundane details are further elaborated through case histories.

In this section I dealt with the qualities of the Churro sheep which are visible in this social field and carry one of its key aspects for being a successful candidate for the US organic food market. Although the most desirable quality of the Churro is based on the idea of a historical Navajo sheep, the qualities which the sheep ought to possess are based on the standards of this US American association. My question is how do Navajos view the Churro sheep? What is for my Navajo interlocutors a good quality sheep? In the next section I will draw on some of the responses I received on the reservation.

Navajo responses

At first, the attitude of my Navajo interlocutors towards the Churro surprised me. Referring back to the beginning of my journey with Sarah, she appeared to be very interested in coming to the meeting, not only to negotiate a new ram or to get to know new people, but also because she was eager to learn more about the Churro sheep. Several Navajo interlocutors appeared to be attentive students. They explained to me that they all had to learn what a Churro is.

This was the same impression I had while talking to a farmer at an old trading post on the reservation run by the Federal Park Service. “Churro is a big deal here,” she had said (S04 26.07.2012). As to my question of what a Churro might be, she started to talk about sheep characteristics. “We are looking for the characteristics here,” she said. “Moreover, all of the sheep are registered to help trace where they come from.” She described the further traits of the Churro which one has to examine. She pointed to their legs and hooves which are smaller, to their faces which are clean and their eyes which are smaller than those of other breeds. She had to be very careful what to feed them and not let the

hay get stuck in their fleece. Also, the Churro does not eat every kind of grass or flower. They are only fed on hay. The trading post raised the Churro for its fleece, which is long and the quality of the wool especially good. To learn the characteristics of the sheep was for her a priority. However, “there is no reason to raise it if you don’t know anything about it (...) because you are raising a special breed of sheep which almost became extinct” (S04 26.07.2012).

Disconnected

I kept remembering an article about skills where the author had referred to an anthropologist working among Navajo weavers. The anthropologist pointed out that her Navajo interlocutors all preferred a particular kind of sheep, for both its meat and for the texture of its fleece. The breed was not mentioned but the author referred to its social value. “A particular breed of sheep is most highly prized” (Keller 2001:36). This prize is not only due to the fleece but also as an activity of raising the sheep and consuming its meat.

During my travels on the reservation I kept reencountering stories of particular breed preferences among Navajos who had been working with wool. These stories tended to draw on some of the characteristics of the Churro’s fleece. Regina recalled that her mother had preferred one particular type of sheep because of its fleece. She elaborated on its qualities. This particular fleece was long and good to work with. “We could spin it right after sheering it” (S23 09.08.2012). I continued asking her how they had worked the fleece. She explained how they had carded and spun the wool. With carding, one has to pull the fleece apart with a large comb and then pull it back together again.

Because I was sitting front of her, her entire body was in view. As she explained this technique, I could easily imagine how this worked in real life. I could see the tools in her hands as she started to demonstrate the movements. One of her hands was pulling the fleece while the other supported the comb. She continued to talk. But as soon she was about to say something her hands moved simultaneously. It was the same as when we

talked about spinning. I could almost see the hand spindle in her arms as she pulled her hands apart. While she raised one hand above the other, she started twisting the air between her thumb and forefinger. I could see the hand spindle which she kept on the ground between her legs from where she continually pulled the fleece out to be twisted. As soon as she started talking again, her hands and legs followed the movements of her words. I was very interested to find out the name of the breed whose fleece was so excellent to work with. Which type of sheep was it actually? It was one that she only knew the Navajo name for, and I learned it a few weeks later: in English it is called the black face sheep. “Do you know about Churro sheep?” I asked. “No, I have never heard about that one,” she answered.

During my conversation with another Navajo lady about wool processing, I received similar kinds of gestures, as with Regina. Although she knew about the Churro, she answered with another gesture, this time a grimace. “Churro? No. We don’t have any. If you weave it, it is kind of rough and the wool has little holes and the warp gets into the holes. But my sheep are soft and the wool is wavy and curvy” (S12 30.08.12).

It was not actually easy talking about sheep with Regina. Her thoughts always returned to horses. She said that she had always preferred horses. She rather wanted to demonstrate her expertise about horses. She talked about their colors, for example. She said that not everybody could distinguish the colors. Not everybody could see the true colors of a horse. One had to spend lots of time with them.

Another interlocutor also remembered that what he liked most about sheep herding as a child was riding the horses (S13 28.08.2012). I had to ask some more closed questions in order to bring our conversation back to sheep. I asked her whether she remembered how they used to herd the sheep as children. I asked her to talk about one of those days. What happened in the morning, for example? I was particularly interested in this question since I had a recurring narrative in my mind. From my encounters in Ramah (the eastern part of reservation) I had been told a particular story quite often. They had explained that working with sheep was hard and it was more like a duty they had been forced to

perform. “My grandma woke me up early in the morning. She was not interested in whether I was still tired and wanted to sleep. She told me that if I didn’t get up, she would throw water on my face”. It did not matter whether it was snowing or raining, or whether it was hot, they had to get out with the sheep (S15 31.08.12; field notes).

I did not hear this particular story from Regina. But she told me that sometimes her parents had to go to town and sell some animals or take care of business. They were away for several days. Whenever she felt frightened at night, she would run out to the corral. She would lie down among the sheep. She felt secure in the corral. The most secure place she could have imagined as a child was the proximity of the sheep (S23 09.08.2012).

I started to understand my interlocutor’s more complex relation to sheep during a further encounter with older interlocutors. They showed me their customary grazing areas. As to my question to describe their place, they named their area through unit numbers (referring to the official description of allotted lands). But the practice itself still represented for them an excellent opportunity of just “being out there, in the silence.” She liked it for the open space and the silence. Moreover “you are kept active (...) you keep yourself busy. You keep your mind and body healthy. Actually, the gods gave the Navajo sheep in order to keep them busy” (S12 30.08.12).

Throughout my stay I also kept asking people about their meat preferences. As to my question about the difference in taste of the different varieties or about what kind of meat they prefer, the most common answers were:

“I cannot distinguish the different tastes of meat at all.”

“The one with fat in it.”

This quality became apparent during my conversation with a Navajo Nation official. We mainly talked about politics, but since I knew that his family still kept sheep, I asked him what they did with them. He explained that it was especially good that his father still had some sheep, so he could sell the meat to his colleagues at the office. But before selling them, they fattened them up a bit because everybody always asked for a nice fat one (S16

11.09.2012).

These encounters made the quality and the cultural importance of the Churro among Navajo individuals questionable. Some people were actually surprised when I asked them about breed varieties. They answered with a smile that “sheep are just sheep” (S01 06.08.12). However, there might be a discourse about the Churro on the reservation. People might know about this breed but the following statement may refer to it as a rather ambiguous phenomenon. People might realize that knowing about the Churro can be important knowledge. “Some farmers on the reservation have a hard time dealing with this sheep. If you ask somebody whether their sheep is Churro, they will say, yes, even though they don’t know what Churro is and most probably don’t have it in their flock” (S04 26.07.2012).

I started to understand the importance of the Churro as being conditioned by its presence in a particular social space when I talked to Felix, a Churro breeder on the reservation and former director of the Sheep is Life organization, which also operates on the reservation. He admitted that before he had entered the organization he did not have any idea what Churro was. However, he started his answer by recalling a story. He recalled a situation with his grandmother when he was a child. Once he had discovered new sheep in the flock that he could not identify, so he asked his grandmother. She answered that these are the old type of sheep which his grandfather had brought back from the Navajo mountains (one of the four holy mountains of the Navajo at the northern edge of the reservation). He believed now that those sheep must have been Churro (S05 30.07.2012).

Connected: Boundaries

There are voices outside the reservation that attribute great cultural and social significance to the Churro among the Navajo. In the above section, I questioned the importance of the Churro breed among diverse Navajo interlocutors. I argued that knowledge about this sheep is due to participation in a social space. Some of the institutions, actors and ideas have been described in this chapter. I pointed out that this

space is organized rather by Anglo-American actors. Knowledge about the breed is crucial for participation in this field. I described the attitudes of my Navajo interlocutors as eager to learn the special characteristics of the breed. But apart from these facts, an important question remains as to how boundaries are renegotiated within this field? How are differences produced through the prevailing discourse and politics of knowledge?

Let me return to the meeting in northern New Mexico. During the meetings and events I kept close to my Navajo interlocutors. They made interesting comments and expressed their opinions. They also made fun about how Anglo-Americans treat their sheep as real people. One pointed out that Anglo-Americans name their sheep. They also tended to talk to the animals as if they were little children. My Navajo interlocutor explained that they themselves never named the animals. He also pointed out that the animals' adaptation to a new environment is also a slow process. He recalled the misfortunate arrival of a Churro from another part of the country. The sheep was scared by its new environment and ran through the glass door of a local public building. He pointed out that Navajo used to do a ceremony for the animals to incorporate them into the new flock. They argued that for Navajos raising sheep is a sacred practice. Sheep are sacred animals.

From my inquiry into the Churro on the reservation, registration was clearly an uncomfortable subject. Although registration of the sheep is crucial for making one's sheep visible in this social field and for the meat market, many of the Navajo interlocutors rejected registration. A list in the brochure of another organization which helped Navajo breeders sell their meat only contained a couple of names. The organizer explained that they only put the names of those on the list who register their sheep.

Remembering Sarah's statement during our journey, she had said that her Churro were organic because she raised them herself. The fact that the sheep are raised by Navajo gives them a special quality. Another Navajo breeder talked about the notion of "added value" for the Churro sheep raised on the reservation (S07 05.09.12).

Besides boundaries drawn on the discourse level, I found that the renegotiation of

boundaries was a very dynamic process. For a better explanation I would rather use the notion of performances. I became aware of this performance quality in creating boundaries while observing the reactions of my Navajo interlocutor during our shared journey from the reservation to the meeting of the Anglo-American breeders. I perceived her as possessing multiple personalities. I felt she was a different person when in their company and again different when communicating with other breeders. Her openness to learn and participate and her closure and critique were like ever interchanging modes. The following section is aimed at providing a context for this argument.

Theoretical considerations

Spaces imagined

This meeting also made me aware of how differences between Navajo and Anglo-Americans were played out. These differences became partly visible in the diverse viewpoints and images the various actors expressed about one another's spheres of living. During the meeting I was not only confronted with the more "normative" voice of a discourse about the role of the Churro sheep among the Navajos, but I also learned how Anglo-American sheep producers as individuals imagine the Navajo reservation. I found out that many of the visitors had not spent much time on the reservation. Asking the Anglo-American visitors about their experiences, they often painted a picture of poverty. One pointed out that she did not like being there because of the poverty (S20 08.09.2012).

According to my observations, one thing which represented a major difference between Navajo and the Anglo-American visitors was the issue of money. In my view, the association provided an alliance for Navajo individuals. During the meeting I felt that this condition was well-performed by my Navajo interlocutor who played the role of a poor Navajo sheep herder. She continually made comments on how much money the Anglo-Americans have, while continually pointing out how little she had. My Navajo interlocutor received a special price for dinner and free information brochures. Moreover, during one meeting, my interlocutor stood up and explained that she was in need of

money for a trip abroad. She asked the present association members whether they could help her out.

For a conceptualization of the negotiation of both connections and boundaries, which might be constructed as partly realistic or partly fictional ideas based on scattered information about diverse spaces and people, I refer to Appadurai's notion of "imagined worlds" (Appadurai 1995:297). "Imagined worlds are the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (Appadurai 1995:297). Although this notion stands for contextualization of larger processes taking place in the globalized world, I would like to use this concept for the representation of the mutual dependence of local and global flows around my particular locality.

Despite their connections, the different actors live in "imagined worlds." While examining the social space of the Churro sheep as representing a global phenomenon and containing actors throughout the US, I would like to refer to how Anglo-American actors imagine Navajo as people and their Churro sheep. I would especially like to point out in relation to Anglo-Americans their view of Navajo's Churro sheep. What do they understand about the importance of Churro sheep for Navajo? What do they think about the idea of the breed belonging to the Navajo people?

There is a further aspect when considering imagined spaces. Appadurai's framework for the global cultural economy is to examine the relationship and the actual disjuncture between different cultural flows in terms of scapes (Appadurai 1995). In my case there is a social space representing certain ideas and practices. I gave the particular example of selling Churro meat as a high-quality organic food on the US food market. For this to happen, a sheep breeder is required to possess certain resources.

My question is how could my Navajo interlocutors actually participate in this social field? As I showed in the first chapter, building a fence on the Navajo reservation is a drawn-out legal process and often very troublesome. The Anglo-American breeders all

have electric fences and irrigation systems on their private farms. On the Navajo reservation there are many land disputes, there is no irrigation and livestock owners face enormous land erosion problems. The Anglo-American breeders cooperate with slaughterhouses. On the Navajo reservation there is no slaughterhouse that my interlocutors could rely on. These conditions represent the dysfunction between the diverse scapes around the social space of the Churro, like that of an ideoscape and a technoscape.

Production of value

The organization on the Navajo reservation aimed to reestablish the value of the Churro sheep, since it was once the traditional sheep. However, through the inquiry into the larger social site of the Churro, I have come to the conclusion that the value of the Churro is not created by the Navajo, but by other forces and institutions outside the reservation.

As in chapter 1, I referred to Appadurai's concept of the "social life of things." Here I would like to use his concept about the sociality of things for another argument, for the case of the Churro sheep. What is the social potential of the sheep? How can one detect the socially relevant features through facing the conjuncture of diverse perspectives, goals and imaginations and actual practices related to the breed?

In the previous pages I showed one concrete social feature of the Churro, its commodification. I showed that the meat market is the particular channel of exchange. What can be seen is that Churro lambs become products through exchange and are transferred to the meat market. However, according to Appadurai's concept, the key issue which makes a commodity out of a thing is the production of "social use values" (Appadurai 1986:8). Going further with the same argument, commodities are viewed as socialized things, possessing a particular social potential. However, Appadurai points out that this social potential which distinguishes commodities from other types of things should be considered from a particular point of view. This viewpoint examines the commodity potential of a thing. The issue is to detect a particular situation, a particular

phase in which it is to be considered a commodity. The method which Appadurai advocates is to look at “the total trajectory from production, through exchange, to consumption” (Appadurai 1986:13). It is looking at things at a particular phase in their lives. However, the context is for me a movement, a social space where different ideas, imaginations, discourses, and money circulate

Thus, the context is not simply a cultural or social framework, but “commoditization lies at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural, and social factors” (Appadurai 1986:15). This social context for the commodity phase of the Churro sheep is linked to a particular knowledge. “Politics of value is in many contexts politics of knowledge” (Appadurai 1986:6). In the social field which constitutes the Churro across the US, a major potential of the Churro is its potential in marketing it as a gourmet or organic food in a niche market. In this social field the commodification happens through the creation of use value. I have argued that today this is one of the socially relevant features of the Churro sheep. For this, the Churro sheep had to be distinguishable. Creating use value has been created by the politics of knowledge. I have shown how this special knowledge about the breed is crucial for breeders, which constitutes the quality, the value of the Churro. In this field there is a politics of knowledge. Politics of values and politics of knowledge are visible in this social field through the breed standards, through the quintessence of keeping the breed pure. A particular corpus of knowledge circulates about the Churro.

Training visions and meshwork

In order to explain some of the implications of the politics of value being present on the social field around the Churro sheep, I use Grasseni’s notion of training vision. I argued that this particular value-creating process in this field might change not only the way people gauge the value of the animal in order to exchange them. It is also a process of training one’s own view, how to actually look at the animal.

I used Grasseni’s argument about training visions to argue for an important outcome of

this social field. Actors have to be able to distinguish between good and not acceptable qualities of the sheep in order to have them registered. For example, the breed standards may provide the means of how one can develop an eye for an examination of the Churro sheep. I looked at the participation in the field as an engagement in a particular social setting which cradles cognitive skills, nurtures ways of seeing and looking at the animals (Grasseni 2011).

Conclusion

My approach to discussing present-day sheep raising on the Navajo reservation was the investigation of the social space of a particular sheep breed which was once the sheep of the Navajo and which had been newly rebred for the Navajo people. However, I called this space global due to its extent across the entire country. I showed how this social space might function as a potential alliance for my Navajo interlocutors seeking opportunities to raise sheep on the reservation.

By focusing on ideas, initiatives and actors within this space, I argued that a particular politics of knowledge exists in this field which may be responsible for the production of new qualities and values of the sheep. I argued that one of the sheep's particular social significances was as a high-quality organic gourmet food for the US market. Learning this important aspect, I asked whether my Navajo interlocutors could actually be potential players in this space, due to the lack of necessary resources on the reservation and social tensions in the field of animal husbandry. I further approached the participation in this space as not just allowing individuals to act but also potentially training visions and the perception regarding sheep. I argued that this space also created new ways of valuing, gauging and looking at the sheep. To show the difference, I outlined how some of these values stand in complete contrast to the way my Navajo interlocutors outside of this space look at and value the sheep.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated contemporary conditions of sheep raising on the Navajo reservation. For examining its present social, cultural and economic significance I located two particular sites. In the first part of the thesis I investigated the grazing regulations. In the second part I focused on the social space of a particular sheep breed, the Navajo Churro. I chose these fields in order to position my investigation in a context where connections, forces and movements play a significant role and to look at present phenomena as being shaped by localizing and globalizing forces.

Regarding the grazing regulations, I problematized its actual existence while drawing on the problems of its enforcement. I argued for its significance for questions of land use rather than for those of animal husbandry. As far as the sheep go, I argued for the role of an old Navajo type of sheep in the US organic food market. While looking at the grazing permits I focused on the role of the document as being tied to land use opportunities rather than its original intention of giving the possibility of maintaining the right size of flock. While learning about the rebreeding of the Churro sheep, a nearly extinct variety on the reservation, I found that its economic and social significance is the product of a new politics of value created by a social space which operates outside the reservation.

Locality

Based on Gupta and Ferguson's premise, locality is equally defined by physical spaces and forces, flows, and ideas. For the definition of the locality I firstly emphasized the processual character of my research. While focusing on the connections I established with my interlocutors and not just the physical place of my research, I was also able to bring my research topic to a new understanding. As far as the locality of the grazing regulations is concerned, although the physical space remained the reservation, I detected some aspects of how the simultaneity of localizing and globalizing forces was responsible for present-day policy struggles. I also referred to these aspects through the diverse ideas proposed for a solution to the regulations.

The expansion of the geographical location was especially the case in Chapter 3 through investigating the Churro sheep. Leaving the reservation and engaging in another event, getting to know new people and ideas, I was able to understand the relevance of the Navajo Churro for the US organic food market instead of only its cultural relevance for the Navajo people.

Locality is shaped by connections. I argued with Piot how supposedly traditional practices might be the products of larger connections and outside forces. Gupta and Ferguson emphasize how the local and the global mutually shape one another. Based on these thoughts, I considered two present-day phenomena which might be better understood as defined by localizing and globalizing forces. These might be the present-day significance of customary use area and the phenomenon of the Churro.

I see the phenomenon of the customary use area as a traditional principle which could be only understood in a larger context. A crucial aspect of its changing function lies in the demographic – in the increasing size of the population and its mobility. For the understanding of its present-day meaning, it is necessary to inquire into changing social relations. Moreover, this phenomenon may raise further questions about how the importance of traditional principles might grow in the context of globalization, as well as to show how the meaning of cultural principles change and suit contemporary situations. In my case, the claiming of traditional land use rights – customary land use area – happens in a rather complex way. These might be based on changing social relations leading to newly defined cultural rules and principles mixed with legal processes and the effectiveness of abstract law. As far as the Churro sheep are concerned, I would like to refer to how localizing forces influence global phenomena. This breed was reestablished by claiming cultural importance for the Navajo people. This phenomenon can be viewed through the movement of biodiversity, as well. However, I found that the special identity of this distinctive and nearly extinct sheep variety is significantly contributing to the sheep's success in a global niche market today. Comparing its significance on a global level, I pointed to the problem of how my Navajo interlocutors cannot even produce sheep for that market.

Power relations

I looked at how spaces are contested or produced by a complex functioning of power relations and through diverse strategies regarding the enactment of the grazing permits, land use claims, law enforcement and the production of a new politics of knowledge.

In Chapter 1 I showed the permit's role in restructuring social relations and for the production and maintenance of power relations among family member and individuals. I demonstrated the ad hoc enactment of such power relations through my connections to my interlocutors. For example, in Chapter 1 I showed how my interlocutor limited my contact to another person. Moreover, while investigating the questions of land use rights, I pointed out the power of the permit holders against the Navajo government. I considered the customary use areas as places where the present-day social significance of the permits and the functioning of power relations on multiple levels became visible.

The mutual functioning of power between the government and individuals became further apparent in Chapter 2 while discussing the necessity of changing the regulations. I pointed out the lack of cooperation and communication of the government. However, I also showed that the government is actually not able to enforce the law because enforcement officials are kept under control by livestock owners.

The first two chapters drew on social tensions, disputes, and communication problems through which I referred to an underlying condition of insecurity for people engaged in sheep raising. In Chapter 3 I looked at the creation of new social relations and alliances of Navajo individuals engaged in sheep raising. I introduced a social space around the traditional sheep of the Navajo which may be seen as a potential alliance for Navajo individuals. Later I examined the space further describing the politics of value created by Anglo-American actors. I showed aspects of the sheep's social features, value, and meaning and the way of gauging how the animal had been considerably shaped within this space operated by actors outside the reservation.

Refusing the commons

I showed several ideas about a “commons” shaping the field of animal husbandry on a normative or theoretical level, for example, the idea of a common trust land for the benefit of the entire nation, the present-day land tenure as protecting group property rights and the most beneficial way of keeping the land under use – the land use plan proposed by a Navajo official which was based on the idea of a cooperating community sharing a grazing area in the form of an association. I gave further thought to the “commons” while writing about the rebreeding of the Churro sheep, as giving back a nearly extinct sheep to the Navajo people and returning trust in Anglo-Americans. I also mentioned the new co-op business model introduced for sheep producers.

However, throughout the thesis I argued that today the locality of the grazing regulations constitutes a field of social tension characterized by disputes among individuals and lack of cooperation and communication. Navajo Nation officials stated that the understanding of the regulations, and thus the sense of the permit, is too much up to the individuals themselves. How people delineate their customary use area happens arbitrarily by the individual. How people use their voting rights for any type of building activities is an individual choice and often used as a strategy. I also learned about instances when people tended to build sheep corrals to claim a piece of land for themselves.

I discussed in Chapter 2 that in the case of land dispute, parties might come up with a solution, but this might only be a solution for the two parties. In other extreme but equally not rare situations, actors prevent one another from using a particular area. Learning about the renewed interest in changing the regulations, actors tend to see the major hurdle in arriving at a uniform solution. In contrast to the idea about a community, when it came to decision making my interlocutor referred to the necessity of a leader, someone similar to John Collier.

As far as sheep producers are concerned, I learned how individuals seek to establish new relations in the context of insecurity. My interlocutors actually trust their Anglo-American friends better than Navajo people. I also outlined the failures of new business

models – such as co-ops – introduced within a social space on the reservation. I also gave examples of how exchange models do not function among sheep producers because of a violation of obligations between the parties. As far as the cultural importance of the Churro is concerned, I argued that my interlocutors who do not participate in this social field did not even have a breed preference or they just preferred their own breeds.

Question of ownership

Even if one cannot talk about property in legal terms on the Navajo reservation, based on my inquiry into real life situations I argued that the question of property and land use may be a relevant present development that can be conceptualized and compared with the growing number of ethnographic studies on present property issues in other parts of the world, further problematizing common-sense property concepts based on a liberal model describing exclusive rights of access and land use. The first question might be how are the notions of property, ownership or possession to be distinguished?

Although the reservation is trust land and contemporary land tenure is based on the idea of group property, I showed several instances where people tended to claim their land use areas for their own purpose instead of sharing it. Moreover, they tended to keep it even if they did not use it or prevented others from using the land. My ethnographic examples suggest that the reality is more about exclusive patterns of land use rather than the function of common use rights.

On the other hand, one of my interlocutors pointed out the notion of emotional ownership. This term may reflect a rather alienable relationship to the land. This quality may be described by the term ‘possession’. Carrier pointed out that the quality of possession lays in the inalienability of objects (Carrier 2005:27). However, the prime aspect to be considered may be that property is rather a matter of relations between people (Carrier; Hann). “Property relations are to be approached not as relations between people and things but as social relations between persons with respect to things” (Hann 1995:111). Throughout my work I was concerned with changing social relations in the field of animal husbandry.

Property could thus be viewed as a relational concept (Hann 1995a). Moreover, its concept is also processual. According to Verdery, an anthropological inquiry into property is an inquiry into the formation of the concept. The anthropological investigation means to look beyond the legal framework of the concept and to inquire into principles and practices which formulate it. In my case I pointed out the complexity of present land use claims as based on cultural rules and abstract law. Verdery analyzed this complexity through her “fuzzy logic” and “overlapping rights” (Verdery 1999). Based on these concepts the task would be to inquire into the question of ownership on the Navajo reservation as a temporally constructed concept based on a changing social and cultural context, as well as changing power and social relations.

Tensions of landscapes

A further topic for which this text may provide input is the discussion of contemporary Navajo landscapes and the investigation into to how processes change social relations, power, and politics redefine people’s connections to land. A central feature of landscape is its temporality. Present question of property, emotional ownership, and land use rights, moreover, the way people tend to delineate their customary use areas are defining, but nonetheless temporally constructed elements of contemporary landscapes. Through my ethnographic material, I outlined how people use and transform landscapes. While showing the multiple voices how my interlocutors imagine a solution for the grazing problems, I showed how different landscapes have been kept in tension by actors. Barbara Bender refers to the notion of “tension” which refers not only to the multiplicity of landscapes but also to how a single person holds landscapes in tension (Bender 1993). For the investigation of the density of landscape one should further understand how people embody their experiences through their everyday activities, consciously but also mostly unconsciously (Ingold 2011). Landscapes that are embodied have affective qualities, acting back on one’s sensibility, emotions and the self. Imagination is part of reality.

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S03b – Interview with a Navajo permit holder. 04.09.12, Navajo Reservation

S04 – Interview with a Navajo farmer. 26.07.2012, Navajo Reservation

S05 – Interview with a Navajo breeder of the Churro sheep. 30.07.2012, Navajo Reservation

S06a – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 23.07.12, Navajo Reservation

S06b – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 24.07.12, Navajo Reservation

S06c – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 25.07.12, Navajo Reservation

S07 – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 05.09.12, Navajo Reservation

S08 – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 31.07.2012, Navajo Reservation

S12 – Interview with a Navajo sheep herder. 30.08.12, Navajo Reservation

S13 – Interview with a Navajo Nation official. 28.08.2012, Navajo Reservation

S14 – Interview with Navajo Nation officials. 18.07.12, Navajo Reservation

S15 – Interview with Navajo Nation officials. 31.08.12, Navajo Reservation

S16 – Interview with Navajo Nation officials. 11.09.2012, Navajo Reservation

S17 – Presentation of an Anglo-American sheep breeder. 07.09.2012, New Mexico

S18 – Presentation of an Anglo-American sheep breeder. 07.09.2012, New Mexico

S19 – Interview with an Anglo-American sheep breeder from Oregon. 08.09.2012, New Mexico

S20 – Interview with an Anglo-American sheep breeder from New York. 08.09.2012, New Mexico

S21 – Interview with a Navajo Nation official with Mexican roots, Navajo Reservation. 25.08.2012, Navajo Reservation

S23 – Interview with a Navajo permit holder who does not have livestock anymore. 09.08.2012, Farmington, New Mexico

Appendix

Abstract

This thesis investigates the socio-political and cultural practices of raising sheep in the Navajo Nation, by examining the function of a 1940s regulation and the near extinction of a breed of sheep and how this has impacted normative processes of animal husbandry and grazing practices. As a dynamic field constructed by the changing social relations this has led to a lack of collaboration and social tensions amongst family members over grazing permits and grazing areas; as well as changing values; the great diversity of social practices; and constant symbolic reproduction.

Chapter 1 addresses the idea of grazing regulations as a contested space by drawing upon recent anthropological concepts of policy making. While focusing on the social life of the permits, I will reveal the power relations between individuals and how these documents play a significant role for how land is used and occupied on the reservation. A central issue to be examined is the culturally constructed world behind contemporary land use claims.

In Chapter 2 I investigate the renewed interest for Navajo to change grazing regulations. Why is it important to change the regulations now and how difficult is it to accomplish? I will be concerned with problems of arriving at a solution such as the power relations between the Navajo government and livestock owners and how different institutions and individuals imagine a new policy.

In Chapter 3 I examine an Anglo-American initiative of reintroducing an old type of Navajo sheep – the Churro. I further draw on social spaces containing and connecting people, ideas, and practices across the USA by asking: what kinds of relations, practices, and discourses constitute this space and how do Navajos connect? And finally, I draw on the politics of knowledge within this space that ascribes new values and social importance of the animal while also engendering new ways of looking at, assessing, and

valuing sheep.

Zusammenfassung

Die Arbeit erforscht ausgehend von ethnographischer Feldarbeit die zeitgenössischen Verhältnisse von Schafzucht und Landnutzung der Navajos. Welche Rolle spielen Verordnungen aus den 1940er Jahren und die fast ausgestorbene Schafzucht in heutigen sozialen Beziehungen, in Politik, Ökonomie und in kulturellen Praktiken? Für die Bestimmung des Forschungskontextes wird das Konzept “locality”, dass globalisierende wie auch lokalisierende Faktoren einschließt, verwendet. Es werden Tierzucht und Weidepraktiken als ein dynamisches Feld betrachtet, dass von normativen Prozessen, von veränderten sozialen Beziehungen, von sozialen Spannungen – wie etwa der Mangel an Kooperation und Kommunikation, Familienstreitigkeiten über Weidegenehmigungen und -landflächen, bzw. von veränderten Werten gestaltet wird. Das Feld ist auch durch die verschiedensten Vorstellungen und Praktiken charakterisiert.

Im ersten Teil der Arbeit wird das Thema der Weideregulierungen erforscht. Die angewandte Methode dazu ist das anthropologische Konzept des “policy making”. Der Fokus auf die soziale Umsetzung der Genehmigungen in der Gesellschaft erlaubt nicht nur die Entdeckung von Machtverhältnissen sondern auch die Betrachtung, welche Rolle diese Dokumente bei heutigen Fragen der Landnutzung im Reservat spielen. Wie werden die Ansprüche an Land und Landnutzung kulturell konstruiert?

Im zweiten Teil wird das neuerlich entflammte Interesse der Navajo an den Veränderungen der Weideregulierungen untersucht. Warum ist es wichtig, die Verordnungen zu ändern? Warum ist es schwierig, eine Veränderung durchzuführen? Die Arbeit befasst sich nicht nur mit dem Problem einer einheitlichen Lösungsfindung, sondern wird auch weitere Machtverhältnisse zwischen dem Government der Navajo und den Tierzüchtern näher beleuchten, sowie die verschiedenen Vorstellungen von Institutionen und Privatpersonen über die möglichen Lösungen aufzeigen.

Der dritte Teil der Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit einer Initiative der erneuten Zucht einer

alten Schafrasse, nämlich der Churro. Es wird ein sozialer Raum gezeigt, der Menschen und Ideen aus verschiedenen Regionen der Vereinigten Staaten verbindet. Welche Beziehungen, Praktiken und Diskurse machen diesen Raum aus? Wie sind die Navajo damit verbunden? Im Zentrum der vorliegenden Forschung steht eine Politik des Wissens in diesem sozialen Raum. Sie ist nicht nur für neue Werte und die soziale Bedeutung der Schafe verantwortlich, sondern auch für das Entstehen einer neuen Art und Weise, wie das Schaf bewertet und betrachtet werden kann.

Biography

2008	BA degree at Budapest Business School
2008-2010	Internship and working experiences among others at the International Folk Art Museum and at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, NM-USA
2010-2013	MA program of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna

Ethnographic Fieldwork:

2012	Austria – Salzburg County
2012	Navajo Nation – New Mexico and Arizona (USA)