From Herding to Business

A Sociology of Translation of Dairy Farming in Western Uganda

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Background

– Part of the Project ‘Ways of Knowing – When Rural and Scientific Epistemologies Meet in Agricultural Development’
– Funded by the Austrian Science Fund
– 2 PhD students covering case studies in animal breeding and forestry in Ethiopia and Uganda
– Institutions involved:
  – University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
  – Department for the Social Studies of Science, University of Vienna
  – Institute of Development Studies, Sussex
From Herding to Business

• ANT-based analysis of the modernisation of dairy farming in Western Uganda
• Entry point: farmer-scientist interactions in an animal breeding research project
• Structure:
  – Historical Background
  – Theoretical Framework
  – The farmers‘ enactment
  – The scientists‘ enactment
  – Moments of Interaction
  – Questions and Reflections
Historical Background
The Ankole Kingdom
A Pastoralist Livelihood
Settling down
Establishment of a dairy industry
Theoretical Framework
ANT in a nutshell

• ‘Disentangling the Social’ (Latour)
• Enacted, materially heterogeneous networks, stabilised through ‘translation’ (Callon, Latour)
• Implications of ‘enacting cows’ differently: Ontological Politics (Mol)
The Farmers' Enactment
Changes in Networks and Values
Translating Cross-breeds
People-based Information Storage and Sharing
Network Vulnerability
The Scientists' Enactment
Enacting Productivity and Control
Breed as technology
Trust in numbers
Technology Transfer

Research  Extension  Farmer
Interacting Enactments
Fact Creation and Maintenance
Workshops
Recording
Ontological Politics (Mol 2008)

Implications of ‘enacting cows’
The Question of Location
What is at stake?
Power and Control

• The issue of power. Not addressed, but highly relevant
• Use of findings: scientists as the farmers‘ spokespersons in spite of themselves
• Power-distribution in technological networks: the case of recording
Are There Options?

- Enacted networks as context-specific
- Not a matter of replacing one network with another
- Need for ‘fluid’ technologies (De Laet & Mol) to make translation easier
How to choose?

• ‘Styles of politics’: what roles should farmers and scientists take?
• Need for a more active role for farmers
• The researcher as ‘non-modern subject’ (De Laet & Mol)
Final Reflections

• Dairy farming/breeding as enactment of networks, addressing multiplicity of problems/solutions to keep them stable
• Tech-transfer not a transfer from lab to field, but a complex set of translations
• ANT/OP open these up to analysis, and lead to re-thinking of roles
Thank you!