Fahamu Pan-African Fellowship Programme

Tharaka Nithi Community Dialogue

3rd-5th December 2014
Baobab Marimanti Lodge
Tharaka Nithi

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Abbreviations

**CHWs**: Community Health Workers

**GROOTS**: Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood

**ICE**: Institute of Culture and Ecology

**ICCA**: Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas

**FPAP**: Fahamu Pan African Fellowship Programme

**KARI**: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

**MNCs**: Multi-National Corporations

**NDMA**: National Drought Management Authority

**NGOs**: Non-Governmental Organizations

**NEMA**: National Environmental Management Authority

**SICODA**: Sengwer Integrated Community Development Association

**SHGs**: Self Help Groups

**TGGCN**: The Green Gold Community Network
Acknowledgements
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We appreciate the contribution of Ford Foundation towards the Fellowship program.

Of special mention are the fellows and faculty members for sharing their experiences on environmental issues in their sites of struggle thus enriching the dialogue. We acknowledge the support of Cristina Sandu of Oxford Brookes University in editing this report.

We acknowledge the role played by the host community and the host movement – Nunduni Self Help Group including their selfless dedication towards making the dialogue a success.

Last but not least, we recognize the role played by Fahamu staff that either directly or indirectly made the dialogue a reality.
Background and Introduction

The Tharaka dialogue was the 5th in a series of monthly dialogues organized under Fahamu’s Pan-African Fellowship Programme (FPAP) whose objectives are to inspire grassroots organizers derive theories that explain their social justice activism and strengthen grassroots activists’ application of their locally generated knowledge, experience and theories in building continental collective action towards real social change. The fellowship is expected to result into transformative leadership among activists, renewed and stronger networks of solidarity by activists-scholars and growth in grassroots leadership within communities capable of mobilizing masses and inspiring action by communities to regain their power thus changing their social, economic and political contexts.

The dialogue brought together 21 participants (12 females; 9 males) for a 3-day learning session with a focus on tracing the resistance to environmental degradation towards achieving a broader vision of environmental justice, and it was held in Tharaka-Nithi County. Tharaka-Nithi is one of the 47 counties located in the Eastern part of Kenya, an area of 2409 km², a population of 365,330 (2009 Census) and is located 298 Kms from Nairobi city. The predominant economic activities in the region are coffee and tea farming, subsistence dairy farming and rearing of other livestock such as sheep and goats.
During the study dialogue, participatory learning methodologies adopted included: experience sharing, reflections, historiographies, buzz groups, case studies, brainstorming, time lines and systematic walk.

Day 1: Wednesday, 3rd December 2014

Discussion Stream 1: Understanding the Struggle to Secure Sacred Natural Sites and Territories in Kenya and across Africa
The dialogue sought to understand the contribution of the sacred sites for the community, explore the historiography of environmental conservation in Tharaka, understand the experiences of gender with regard to environmental justice, identify tactics and strategies employed in environmental justice, understand sustainable natural resource management practices adopted by the community and to what results, explore existing local ecological governance issues and how this relates to other struggles in Kenya and in Africa in general, explore theories that explain the environmental situation of the Tharaka community, understand the level of community participation in environmental justice, and identify the environmental claims of the Tharaka community.

Understanding the host community: Getting to know each other

The discourse on understanding the struggle to secure the sacred natural sites and territories in Kenya and across Africa entailed an analysis of the Tharaka community both prior to environmental degradation and after extensive environmental degradation, to then situate the root causes of ecological crisis in Tharaka as well as nationally. During the systematic walk
towards the Kathita River, the extent of environmental degradation was noted with huge tracts of soil swept away by water, land was desolate and rocky with sparse vegetation. The host community shared as part of the challenges faced in conserving the environment to be the lack of community participation in the process; violence by some community members towards environmental conservationists; also respect for the elderly population, majority of whom are custodians of the culture and environment, was noted to have diminished over the years.

Systematic Walk in Tharaka: Visualizing the extent of environmental degradation

Mzee Japheth Mwambi shared the history of the Kathita River stating that in the past (over 60 years ago), the Tharaka community respected the river as a source of life, cultivation was not allowed on the riverbanks and domestic animals were not allowed to drink water from the river, thus preserving its purity. It was believed that spirits resided at certain spots in the Kathita River and were capable of punishing any errant community member responsible for environmental degradation. In addition, the community believed that the river was their source of life and a residing place for ancestors, hence periodic sacrifices involving slaughter of sheep and goats were made along the river bank to appease the ancestral spirits and seek for answers during environmental calamities such (as protracted droughts).

However, it was shared that increased individualism and land titling resulted into arrogance towards environmental conservation resulting into some natural rivers drying up in 2013, something that had never before been witnessed by the Tharaka community. Fellows and faculty were shown areas along the Kathita riverbank where huge vegetation existed in the past but had been destroyed to pave way for farming; in addition, various spots had
Based on the discussions and observations made, the following were cited as the root causes of environmental degradation in the Tharaka community:

- Land titling and the subsequent individual ownership, hence individuals control their land and do not care to conserve
- Lack of alternative sources of livelihood, hence burning charcoal to earn a living
- The fact that effects of the environmental degradation are felt after a long time, hence lack of urgency to conserve the environment for future generations
- Lack of effective community participation in environmental conservation
- The presence of many NGOs in the area with development initiatives that are not environmentally friendly e.g. water projects as a development initiative leading to obstruction of water points from the Kathita River
- Initiatives by development actors such as Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) growing the Albino variety of sorghum which is not
environmental friendly and cannot be consumed by the locals but is grown on huge tracts of land; this has implication on local food security

- Poor ecological governance
- Ineffective transfer of cultural knowledge on environmental conservation especially to the youth; this hampers environmental protection and sustainability

Day 2: Thursday, 4th December 2014

Debriefing/Aha moment
Based on the previous day’s systematic walk and interaction with the host community, the fellows, faculty and host community shared the following as inspirational moments:

- Cultural diversity amongst communities and how they had been protecting their environment
- Has learnt that eco-cultural mapping is a vital strategy for environmental protection
- Community education is relevant in environmental issues
- The power of spirits and culture in environmental protection
- How patriarchy continues to destroy the environment
- Communities coming together to address their problems

Discussion Stream 2: Critical Analysis of the Social and Political Conditions Surrounding the Causes, experiences and management of Environmental Problems
The session entailed discussions on existing myths and facts about environmental degradation in Africa and power analysis on environmental issues. The fellows were further taken through a theory that explains the ecological crisis as experienced by the Tharaka community as well as the strategies used in addressing the contemporary environmental crisis amongst the Tharaka people.

On the historiography of Tharaka, the community lived amicably with the environment; they respected the spirits and ancestors who were believed to live in the forests and waters, animals were not allowed to graze in the rivers. The weather patterns were predictable and the harvest was bounty.

It was shared that the current situation in Tharaka had grown worse with high levels of soil erosion, loss of forest cover, death and / or migration of fish and wild animals, such as hippos, lowering levels of water in rivers, changing weather patterns and resulting into less crop yields. The high rates
It was deliberated that capitalism as a core factor is responsible for environmental destruction as it enhances individualism. In addition weak environmental governance was also cited to contribute to further environmental damage evidenced by the fact that in the past the communities had respect for culture, whereas now this respect has eroded.

Myths and Facts about Environmental Degradation in Africa
Existing myths touted as contributing to environmental degradation were explained as poverty and population exploitation, which were due to poverty; the poor were deemed to destroy the environment in their bid to earn sources of livelihood. It was pointed out that the real culprits were developed nations who dump their wastes in rivers and lakes in Africa while at the same time consume more than they need, hence subjecting the developing nations to man-made

Part 1: Power Analysis around Environmental Degradation
Globalization, prospecting and discovery of new resources such as oil and gas as the case of Turkana region and oil in Karamoja area by Tullow Oil, and the role played by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in extractive industries. These have long term effects on the environment, including loss of livelihoods, evictions to pave way for agri-business, replacement of natural seeds with Genetically Modified seeds, death and or/ migration of fish due to oil spills, as well as increased governments control on land and water through introducing new pieces of legislation.

Fellows, faculty and host community observing the effects of environmental degradation on the banks of Kathita River
Part 2: Theories that Underpin Ecological Crisis in Tharaka

In discussing theories that underpin the ecological crisis as experienced in Tharaka, the fellows and the host community were taken through an overview of cosmology and how this is related to environmental degradation. During the session, Cosmology was defined as all matters concerning the universe and ecology as the relation between living things and the environment. In analyzing the intersection between human beings, ecology and cosmology, it was explained that there is a distinction between a human being and a person, a human being thus defined as a biological being whereas the humanity element in human being is what makes them rational when handling the environment.

Capitalist Theory

The role of capitalism in environmental destruction was discussed as the contribution of industries mostly based in the global north being responsible for pollution and for dumping pollutants in rivers and oceans, and for using pesticides. Global warming through build up of carbon dioxide being intensified by industries in the west as a result of burning oil, coal, and other fuels; forest destruction was cited to be motivated by profit making largely by industrialized nations which do not pay attention to preventing pollution as they benefit enormously from the proceeds of pollution emitted by their industries during mass production of goods.

Discussion on theories that underpin ecological crisis
Structurally and politically, laws have been put in place, which support environmental destruction. These include concessions offered to foreign companies to carry out extraction, and the lack of implementation of laid down laws, such as laws made by the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA). The environmental crisis was cited as a class issue with emphasis on the role of power in environmental destruction, where people in power and their cronies own huge tracts of land in forests (such as was the case of Mau Forest) while the less powerful people, such as the communities that have been staying in these forests for years, end up being evicted from their natural habitat because they lack the political clout. This was further expounded using the concepts of census minority versus census majority where the census minority were defined as those without power who comprise the masses, whereas the census minority are a small group such as the political class whose decisions impact negatively on the majority e.g. in environmental exploitation thus destruction of water catchment areas. The faculty noted that there is a correlation between lack of roads and lack of water, poverty and environmental degradation.

To counteract this power imbalance, the faculty member pointed out that the solution lay in empowerment, organization and effective implementation of laws. Strategies of reducing excess power in environmental justice issues as reduction in the culture of impunity, and creation of frameworks for accountability are expected to result into more democracy, enhance human rights and increase accountability.

*Environmental theories of development*

Theories of development discussed were the Conquer theory associated with Bacon and Seduction theory associated with Plato. According to Bacon, there is a contestation between basic needs and development as was the case of Thika road where a hill was destroyed to pave way for construction of the superhighway. It was further mentioned that that the eco-cultural model of development is based on seduction more than conquering in that it’s impossible to conquer the environment.

*Deliberations on Environmental Theories*
In elaborating the futility of conquering nature, an example of Concorde plane was given. The plane was developed to fly at high speed in attempts to conquer gravitational pull. The initiative came to a halt because it took too long to take off and landed at very high speeds; the plane, due to its gigantic nature, also required massive amounts of fuel. The other example given in the discussion was the impossibility of taming a tsunami.

The faculty noted that human beings are not superior to nature but that in truth humans and nature are friendly and attempts to conquer the environment only led to destruction; the faculty called for the adoption of a new order that focuses on return to nativity i.e. sustainable coexistence with nature. In addition, sites in Kenya with pervasive environmental degradation were discussed as Aberdare before the fencing, Karura and Mau Forests, with the role of politics in environmental destruction being brought to the fore as was the case of former president Moi setting up tea companies in Mau Forest. The activism of Wangare Maathai in protecting Karura Forest and Uhuru Park was highlighted. Furthermore, the role of corruption in environmental degradation was further shared as the case of University of Nairobi in partnership with Kenya Railways bought land in Ngon’g forest a water catchment area, a land that was later sold off.

From the regional perspective, Congo was given as an example with Bukavu region as root to the dense Congo Forest with Belgian nationals carrying out massive logging of the forest but do not grow any new trees. Multinationals such as Monsato in Brazil and Argentina were cited as destroying huge forest cover to pave way for the production of soybeans, the same case of massive environmental destruction being replicated in destruction of the Amazon Forest.
In drawing linkages between democracy, good governance and conservation, Wangari Maathai’s activism on Uhuru Park was discussed: in 1989 Maathai almost single-handedly saved Nairobi’s Uhuru Park by stopping the construction of the 60-story Kenya Times Media Trust business complex now known as Times Towers. Other activism by the Nobel Laureate highlighted also included the 1992 leading a group of women to occupy “Freedom Corner” in Nairobi’s Uhuru park, demanding the release of political prisoners arrested and detained by the Moi regime. In addition, it was pointed out that during the struggle for Kenya’s independence, the Mau Mau used to hide in forests thus reinforcing the linkage between democracy, governance and environment as well as the case of Mexico where drugs are the centres of the economy and they are found in forests; the drug barons thus conserve the environment. It was thus emphasized that there is need for an engendered perspective beyond the world that is known, and need to avail to women more opportunity in decision making on environmental issues. In addition, it was pointed out that the question of environmental conservation was not a question of needs but a question of greed.

“Nature is so unforgiving that when you hit it too much, it hits back at you with a vengeance-Wangari Maathai.”

The above quote was used as explanation for environmental degradation through cutting trees and selling charcoal over a long period of time, with the nature not reacting immediately, but when drought becomes more severe and frequent, human beings no longer thrive.

Theories explaining ecological culture

On theories explaining ecological culture, it was shared that Mahatma Gandhi has given the best analysis of the imbalance situation, which highlights the wanton destruction of the environment informed largely by greed.

“Nature is generous enough, it has enough for the needs of each of us, but none for the greed of even one of us”- Mahatma Gandhi

The Role of Vital Force and intersectionality of culture in environmental protection

The session started with the question of why people pray, with the responses being: the belief in a higher being, to resurrect when they die and because of the existence of extra-human phenomenon, actions or scenarios.

Examples of circumstances where people have sought divine intervention were given as the famine in Kenya when people went to Uhuru Park to pray for rain. The fellows and Tharaka community members shared, based on
There are various cultural taboos related to the environment:

- The belief that there are spirits in River Kathita which are capable of punishing community members who destroy the environment around the river
- A woman who is menstruating should not fetch water in a river as she is considered impure
- Mountain sites such as Mukurwe wa Gathanga is the origin of Kikuyu ancestors and the existence of the Mugumo tree
- In the area around Mukurwe wa Gathanga is treated as holy grounds and the trees are not supposed to be cut
- The lake Victoria has a cultural and spiritual significance to the communities who live around it and is treated as a source of life

In drawing global perspectives on culture and environment, the case study of Koulong people of Australia was shared where women during menstruation are not allowed to draw water from wells, when pregnant are not supposed to venture in some designated forests; furthermore, after sexual intercourse, either a husband or his wife are not allowed to visit the animals’ kraal.

In summing the discourse, the faculty emphasized that three layers of relationship existed in ecological justice, namely personal, vital force and the environment.

**Part 3: Unpacking current Strategies to address the Environmental Crisis**

*Ecological and Cosmological notions used to Support Conservation and environmental justice by Elijah Kamau and Elosy Karithi*

In this session, the fellows were taken through the work done by the Institute of Culture and Ecology (ICE) in environmental conservation which included community mapping, where maps are drawn together alongside the community to designate water bodies and indicate the impact of environmental degradation on the community, as well as designating natural sacred sites.
Community mapping as a strategy of environmental protection

In correlating the past, present and future through community mapping, a participatory maps drawing exercise was conducted out by the community. It reflects on how the community was in the past, including the existence of flora and fauna, and the current situation exhibited by wanton cutting of trees, increased charcoal burning, absence of consultative development construction of water point by competing NGOs and erecting boosters near river banks.

Examples of environmental destruction were shared as Mutonga fall was having 3 sacred sites, resulting into forced eviction of community members. Despite the existence of 15 schools in the area, the fate of the community is bleak because a majority, instead of agitating against the eviction, is happy to have the dam in their locality.

Rehabilitation of the Kathita River was shared as:

- Restore the river bank
- Restore the trees on the hills
- Eco-cultural map - bringing together ecology and culture e.g. Igairone sacred site dispersal point

Fellows and faculty were further taken through the work done by community members in environmental protection, specifically on community mapping processes including reconstruction of the Tharaka community in the past, the present and the envisioned future, as well as the characterization of each era as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The past</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Envisioned future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Existence of a variety of flora and fauna</td>
<td>-Land has become desolate as a result of</td>
<td>-Increased community participation in</td>
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</table>
As part of unpacking current strategies to address the environmental crisis, the analogy of mosquitoes was discussed. It entailed sharing on incidences where mankind has attempted to conquer nature with negative results. References were made to Timothy Mitchel’s writing “Can Mosquitoes Speak” reflecting the futility of altering the course of nature where according to Mitchel the Anopheles Gambiae mosquitoes came to the Nile River from Sudan and resulted into the manipulation of the river through damming for purposes of development, hence disrupting the natural flow of the water. This resulted into new channels for the disease to spread resulting to the death of over 150,000 people. The analogy in relation to
environment sometimes results into unforeseen consequences, nature cannot be manipulated and this may result into more harm e.g. incidences of diseases, diseases can be brought about through environmental manipulation, and expertise (especially foreign) can also act as a form of control.

**Deliberations on strategies to address environmental crisis**

Fellows then shared incidences in their localities, where mankind has attempted to conquer nature and natural phenomena, and made the following statements:

- Building of dykes in Budalangi in attempt to control the flow of water, the result is the River Nzoia bursting its banks and year after year the locals have to migrate to higher grounds. The extensive deforestation along the Kathita River resulting to the drying up of some natural rivers in the area (Can rivers speak?)
- In Elgeyo Marakwet, the community erected a fence to block wild animals from crossing, these animals started killing goats belonging to local farmers (Can animals speak?)
- Mau forest degradation resulting to low yield in tea plantations within the forest (Can forests speak?)
- In Kakamega farmers have diverted water from the river to canals which are then used for farming purposes, the water levels in the river have gone down and animals suffer from water shortage (Can rivers speak?)
- Forest farming (shamba system) near the Aberdares has affected underground springs Oldolsat (Can underground waters speak?)
Gold mining in Kubasali hills in Malava, Kakamega county has caused landslides which has forced resident to migrate from the area to relocate to other areas leading to tribal clashes (Can landscape speak?)

- Destruction and degradation of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) in Meru and Tharaka (upper stream areas) has led to water crisis downstream (drying up of some permanent rivers) (Can indigenous sacred sites speak?)

Day 3: Friday, 5th December 2014

Discussion Stream 3: Rethinking Movement Building For Environmental Justice

Debriefing /Aha Moment
As part of recap of the previous day, the fellows, faculty and host community shared the following as their Aha (inspirational) moments:

- Contra-puntal you have to look at things in two perspectives, interrogating from diverse perspectives: why do people cut trees in Tharaka vis a vis effects on environment
- You cannot conquer the environment, you can only seduce it for it to be friendly
- The environment is just like a woman and can only be seduced for it to be sustainable
- Relationships between conservation, physical energy, production and reproduction
- The community mapping process
- Distinction between human beings and a person
- Linkages between good governance and accountability
- There is hope for a better future given that the community has recognized the danger of environmental destruction
- The two theories of development (Seduction and Conquer) and linking these theories with the struggle of the Sengwer community over land
- Look at positives as well as negatives (development can also have positive aspects to the community if used properly)

Part 1: The Role of ideology and Values in Social Movements
The discussion started with explanations on the ideology of development, the concept was split into two with Id defining identity and Ology defining scientific study. The id was referred to how people see themselves within a
Ideology is identifying that one is a son or a woman of a given locality and is driven by the history of blood and politics.

Three theories, namely functionalism, conflict theory and theory of the stomach were used to explain the role of ideology and values in social movements.

**Functionalism**
This theory was described as used to explain that everything works in harmony as long as each person performs their functions as expected and that all parts are interrelated, thus as long as every person does their part there is equilibrium in society.

**Conflict theory**
The conflict theory was explained to assume that there is always contestation and that to achieve the desired change, there must be conflict. The faculty emphasized that conflict should not be seen as a source of equilibrium but as a mechanism for sparking change.

**Analogy of the Stomach**
The stomach was used to explain the struggles that activists working on environmental issues undergo and the difficult experiences when working with the community to see a desired change including the various actors in the community who act as blockages in environmental sustainability.

**The Digestive system of a Ruminant**

Source:
https://courses.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/ans312/one/gi_species_trans.htm

Using an imagery of the digestive system of a ruminant to reflect environmental conservation, it was discussed that in the digestive system of a ruminant, if any part of the digestive system is blocked, the whole process becomes constrained, the digestive system was likened to society in that
people’s actions (such as cutting down trees and selling them to amass wealth, burning charcoal as a source of livelihood, the use of power, control and undue influence decisions that negatively affect the environment e.g. clearing forests to pave way for building hotels) make the environment suffer in the long run. This was also used to explain why the community at large does not see the change the activist wants them to see and was cited as one of the major reasons why people are resistant to change.

The analogy of the stomach was further used to explain the situation of deforestation in Congo where it was noted that various levels of support exist for deforestation of the Congo Forest, including the Belgian government, the rebels, the government of Congo and conspicuous consumption, which is used to explain the excess consumption (extensive illegal logging in the Congo Forest).

Part 2: The Interface between Organizations and Social Movements - by Esther Mwaura

In the session, the fellows and host community were taken through strategies on enhancing movement building with a focus on environmental justice and entailed deliberations on challenges facing the Tharaka community with regard to environment and what the community can do differently to address the various environmental challenges.

Discussions on environmental challenges of the Tharaka community

To the question on environmental challenges of Tharaka, the given responses were:

- Tharaka faces historical problems of possible extinction as a
- The actual boundary is still not very clear in terms of the county
- Tharaka as community has fought to maintain its identity
- Poor public participation in development efforts i.e. lack of local citizenry participation in development agenda
- Construction of dam in Tharaka in the name of addressing the water problem, this is likely to affect the traditional focus of governance.
- The community is never consulted during development related initiatives
- Laxity on the part of the state actors responsible for assisting the community
- Tharaka is well endowed ecologically, lack of effective coordination amongst government officials working in the area
- There is no control of sand harvesting in the area
- The natural resources is extracted without control, suffering from the tragedy of commons, some of these resources are nonrenewable
- Dam will supply water but will degrade the environment
- Tharaka lacks a consolidated voice when it comes to advocacy
- Politics has played a role in putting Tharaka where is it
- Tharaka people rely a lot on Meru for supplies, the road is very bad
- The attitude of the people locally as well as the attitude of policymakers is also a challenge
- Non-regulation of NGOs operating in Tharaka resulting into duplication of projects some of which have negative impacts on the environment

**Distinguishing Movements and Organizations**

In differentiating movements and organizations, the following were cited as the distinguishing features.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movements</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Has an element of resistance</td>
<td>-Are not anchored on elements of resistance to existing status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Are not registered</td>
<td>-Are registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Are driven by values and principles</td>
<td>-Leadership is vested on one individual or groups of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Interrogate power imbalances in society</td>
<td>-Are formally structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Are not structured formally</td>
<td>-Change is not their immediate concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Membership is open to everybody</td>
<td>-Sometimes membership is restricted by some laid down procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-All members are leaders</td>
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</tbody>
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**Rethinking Organizing**

It was pointed out that during movement building,
There are sets of questions that should be asked which include:

- What is the change the community wants to see?
- What are the actions the community needs to change?
- What are the differentiated actions that the community needs to do to facilitate the change they want to see?
- Who sets the objective?
- Who is going to be influenced
- Who are the collaborators?

In conclusion, the faculty member emphasized that the greatest power is vested in the local community and that the community has a responsibility of taking charge of investing in their own initiatives to enable realization of their desired change.

In environmental justice system it was mentioned that one must interrogate the political system, the governance, the culture, education system, investment (external investment), every individual in Tharaka is impacted or affected thus it is important for every individual in Tharaka to understand the implications of issues affecting the people of Tharaka.

**Emerging questions**

**Q. How many people within the Tharaka community are able to effectively articulate environmental issues?**  
*Less than 30%*

**Q. How many members does Ndunduni Self Help Group work with?**  
*320 community members*

**Q. Do movements have legal entity in communities?**  
*Movements are not necessarily registered but formed by a collective of people coming together to achieve a commonly visualized change*

**Case studies**

The fellows, alongside the host community were asked to respond to two scenarios below and share in plenary.

**Case Study 1**

Wild animals have been using a corridor as their migration path, farmers in the area have decided to block the path, and the animals have now started eating goats and sheep belonging to local farmers. What should the farmers do? The responses were given as follows:

- Use of technology, e.g. electric fence to ward off the animals
- Construction of an alternative route for the animals to pass
● Construction of fences in each village

Group work

Case Study 2
As a social activist advising the Ndunduni project, what should the movement do differently?
What the host community should do differently was given as:
● Mapping of existing movements in the area and their areas of focus
● Develop strategies to enhance community participation in environmental protection e.g. environmental clubs in schools and other learning institutions
● Community mobilization to enhance ownership of the project
● Inclusion of more youth in the Movement
● Ndunduni Self Help Group (SHG) to rethink their organizing
● Working with other stakeholders to address power imbalances
● Mobilization of more actors to be part of the struggle (critical mass)
● Information sharing on negative impacts of environmental degradation

**Strengthening Ndunduni Movement**

Discussions were held on how to strengthen the host movement; the following strategies were put forth:

● Identify who they are: this will tell us how many people are affected differently by the river at different times, we are people farming along the river, we are people who live away from the river
Deliberations on how to strengthen the host movement

- Need to ask themselves what is the change they want to see
- Need to identity what is the action and who will carry out the action
- Need to identify what regulations exist on the riparian
- Identify how many people want to be champions of the movement to move out of degrading the river
- Map and organize people to take action
- Persuade and help other people who are interested and identify other sustainable livelihoods

Comments on Movement Building

- In every community an outsider may see challenges a community is going through, and these challenges may have many contributory factors to it
- There is need to understand the many angles presented by a problem within the community setting to avoid handling symptoms and not the root causes of problems
- Ineffective prioritization negatively impacts the work of social movements
- The dominance of patriarchy in the development world has to a large extent contributed to environmental degradation as majority of decisions are made by men
- The Tharaka community is not organized enough to make demands. Need to have community protocols within Tharaka, relaying information and giving feedback to the larger community
- Communication plays an important role in movements and movements should invest in communication strategies
what needs to be done within a context, each member has to be aware of what their struggle is and clearly understand it
- Mobilizing is a one day event, whereas organizing should be a day to day event within movements

**Evaluation & Wrap Up**

The Tharaka dialogue provided an opportunity for deepened understanding of environmental justice; it provided a chance for gaining knowledge on various theories that explain environmental degradation. Fellows, faculty and host community gained better understanding of existing ecological governance issues among the Tharaka community, including environmental concerns within Tharaka. The fellows were also able to draw intersectionality of the Tharaka community struggle with environmental struggles in their areas of operation.

The host community appreciated being part of the learning and pointed out that they would include the knowledge learned as part of their future dialogue meetings and would share the same information with other Self Help Groups (SHGs) within Tharaka.

The mentor, Elijah Kamau, commented that for change to happen, there must be a critical mass i.e. a group of people who are ready to pay the price and that for any change to be realized on environmental issues, connecting with the community was crucial to enhance a sense of community ownership and the subsequent sustainability.

The view of Naftali Kiang’a, an elder and a custodian of sacred sites, was that they (the community) had destroyed the environment including vegetation and rivers and the level of rainfall was currently reducing. He further said it was better to revive the environment and appreciated Fahamu organizing the dialogue within Tharaka as an opportunity for continued learning. In addition the elder commented that previously he thought that their work in environmental conservation was of no benefit but now acknowledged that their initiatives would be adopted far and wide.

Key lessons learnt during the dialogue included: the need for enhanced partnerships to create a critical mass on environmental issues from the grassroots to a national and international level; environmental protection is a concern for everyone; intercommunity visits are important in organizing as they provide an opportunity for further learning; all struggles are similar; in order to succeed in struggles the elderly ought to be included as they have a lot of knowledge that can be transferred to younger generations.
References

- Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart
- Okot P’ Bitek: Song of Lawino
- Timothy Mitchel: The Rule of Experts (Chapter 4): “Can Mosquitoes Speak”
- Wangari Maathai: Unbound
- Ali Mazrui: Apartheid
- Sylvia Tamale: When Hens Dare to Crow
Annex 1: Programme

Pan African Fellowship Program
Tharaka Study Dialogue: December 3rd-5th 2014

Broad Theme: Tracing the Resistance of Environmental Degradation

Wednesday 3rd December 2014

Discussion Stream 1: Understanding the Struggle to Secure Sacred Natural Sites and Territories in Kenya and across Africa
  ● Before and Now analysis
  ● Locating the root causes of ecological crisis and Tharaka and Nationally

Thursday, 4th December 2014

Discussion Stream 2: Critical Analysis of the Social and the Political surrounding the causes, experiences and management of environmental problems

Part 1: 9.00 are -10.30am
    ● Myths and facts about environmental degradation in Africa
    ● Power analysis around environmental degradation

Part: 2 11.00 am -1.00pm
    ● What are the underpinning theory explaining this ecological crisis?

Part 3: 2.00pm-4.00pm
    ● Unpacking the current strategies to address the environmental crisis

Friday 5th December 2014

Discussion Stream 3: Rethinking Movement building for environmental justice
Part 1: 9.00am- 11.00am
Part 2: 11.00 am - 1.00 pm
- The interface between Organizations and Social Movements