Nehemias Jimenez

ANTH100

Dr. Vedwan

Summer 2021

“Anthropological Studies on Various Subjects”

Garrett Hardin’s conclusions about communal ownership of natural resources is that it always leads to exploitation from individuals, and causes the collapse of the resources and consequently the community. He believed that the only two remedies to this are if the resources of a community are either controlled by the state or by individuals. I believe that the underlying theory of human nature that Hardin has is that of Thomas Hobbes who believed that humans are intrinsically evil and morally crooked. In other words, without restraint, humans will always abuse resources and others in a highly individualistic way. Anthropology has not supported the claims of Hardin because there are studied factors that determine the success or failure of common pool resources, even if it becomes difficult in bigger settings. Some ways that smaller CPR’s prevent degradation of their environment is by implementing distinct tactics from their industrial counterparts. One example is having a tributary economic production. What this does is allow families to work for themselves but have a set cap of production that is enforced by authorities. In specific tribal communities this may be the chief which makes it distinct from entire branches and organizations of government designed to enforce regulations. The chief is an overseer and not the primary distributor of goods. This is very critically tied to the incentive for labor in these CPRs. The incentive that is imposed by means of conservation. This means that these people understand that more now means less later for everyone including themselves. The chief or authority who helps appropriate the productivity of each member has this in mind as the standard. So, when one person goes over the limit, the chief would stop them, give the extra food to another and stop that family from hunting the normal portion. By doing so, the community has what they need and conserves the natural commodities they need later.

Commercialization is the force that has led to the deforestation of Brazilian rainforests. In other words, using forests for the greatest amount of sales instead of conservative consumption leads to the process of industrialization. However, the example of the Guarani people reveals many methods that are available to indigenous people on how to live sustainably and self-sufficiently in the forests. The Guarani had a particular mindset that helped frame the rest of the division of labor and incentive. They were tied as a social people through kinship meaning that everyone in the community was each led by a family’s grandfather. What this did was distribute work amongst wives, brothers, cousins that generated an incentive for the general well-being of the community. This type of mindset would help indigenous people in Brazil because it puts guardrails against the possibility of one member overtaking the resources. And since the leader is family and well respected, it would be a harsher punishment from the community to lose family over private gain. A more practical method that the Guarani people used was accompanied by the previously stated, was a mixture of slash and burn agriculture with foraging. More specifically, the Guarani people would rotate between using small portions of land around three times and let the land rest once it’s utility was low. The needs that were not met by the crops would be met by foraging berries, nuts, game, and insects. This kind of mixture allowed the land to heal over time and is more sustainable than the alternative of getting the most profit through industrialization. If indigenous people of the Brazilian rainforest implemented these things, it would help keep a sustainable development of the environment.

The Mundurucú became commercialized through trading because of the Capitoes who began to have more power in trading than the chief. What resulted was a group of people who no longer prescribed the way of living that the Mundurucú were accustomed to. Because each Capitoe was able to make his own decisions in how much would be traded there was a shift from cooperative labor to individuals who worked for personal gain. This socioeconomic change for the Mundurucú people eventually led the people to leave the places they inhabited and move inland to the villages. Another example of a small group being forever changed by their inclusion to the open market are the Miskito Indians. For them, the market that demanded so much turtle meat for them left them without any meat for them. Because the turtle meat was their means of eating and there was scarcity, they needed money to buy things in the open market, however the money could only be given to them if they had meat. The Miskito Indians lost the only commodity of value that they had to offer. Some similarities between these two groups are that both groups were previously self-sufficient before the inclusion into the market. And so they similarly felt the negative effects of mass consumption. What differs is that the Mundurucú people held their leverage and could continue in the market. The negative effect of mass consumption was the breaking of their socio economic structure. However, the Miskito Indians did not ever recover and remain vulnerable because of the effects.

Some of the social and psychological functions of reciprocal gifting in modern societies include starting and fostering relationships. Friendships that have reciprocal gifting keep both parties feeling dear to the other and in some ways negotiates a place of importance. When one friend gives more meaningful, useful gifts to you, that person may be more likely to receive the better from you. The other use mentioned is to have power over someone, almost like a blackmail. This is resulted from the dichotomy that if one does not participate in the gift giving, that person is sending a message that the gifting group or person is not important. Sometimes this even happens in romantic relationships where although on the surface of wanting to give gifts out of genuine love, there is an underlying score being kept that can be brought up later as leverage in the relationship. Nations do this all the time. When there is help being given in the financial sphere and military field, there are always costs and a long receipt that is pulled up at the end. For countries such as America, this helps to establish nations that are oppressed, and going out to teach other democracies always has strings attached. Usually governments owe each other favors and help when the time is indicated. Gifts then is the mask we use for favors in social contexts, especially when others are watching.