Institutional Translation Gone Wrong:
The Case of *Villages For Africa* in Rural Tanzania

Laura Claus
University College London
l.claus@ucl.ac.uk

Royston Greenwood
University of Alberta & University of Edinburgh
royston.greenwood@ualberta.ca

John Mgoo
Babati, Tanzania
john.mgoo@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Why do ideas that have been successfully moved across highly different contexts subsequently fail? To answer this question, we use longitudinal data on the Dutch organization *Villages for Africa* that introduced 'macro-credit' loans to rural Tanzanians that would enable them to establish their own village enterprises. Only two years after the seemingly successful implementation of the idea, it collapsed. Our findings allow us to make two key contributions. First, we provide a process model of high-distance translation that shows how proponents can strategically introduce an idea across highly different contexts by 'culturally detaching' it from its institutional origins, leading to the idea being 'culturally assimilated' into the recipient context. But, although cultural detachment and cultural assimilation indicate the successful translation of an idea, the means of doing so can later prompt its rejection. We call this the *reactance effect* of translations across highly different contexts. Second, we showcase the role of history for translation theory more generally. History – particularly the historical relationship between the socio-cultural categories of the *mzungu* (Swahili: "foreigner") and the villagers – influenced the way in which the macro-credit idea could be introduced to villagers *and* played a key role in its subsequent rejection.

I mean, we can't disappear. If we disappear anytime soon, then we're just like everybody else, right? And we leave behind capital and the benefits of the capital, but then they'll going to wait until the next group comes in and says: "we want to help you". It could be a church, it could be an NGO, it could be the government with some funding… Persistence and patience…if we stop trying, it's over, and we're gone.

– VFA Managing Director about Macro-credit Project in rural Tanzania, 2014, Interview no.5

In 2014 the United Nations gave a prestigious award to the Dutch organization *Villages for Africa* (*VFA*) for successfully introducing into Tanzania the concept of 'macro-credits', i.e. the provision of loans to groups of villagers which, combined with training, helped them establish and run locally owned enterprises. *VFA* had overcome deeply rooted suspicions of the *mzungu* (Swahili: "foreigner") and instilled a sense of pride in the villagers for being able to run the enterprises independently. This early success elated the members of *VFA* and prompted them to consider how to up-scale the idea and help eradicate poverty in East Africa in a dignified and sustainable way. Despite these indicators of success, two years later the macro-credit initiative collapsed, raising memories and accusations of colonial and post-colonial exploitation. The collision was so intense that, to this day, many villagers refuse to work with the *mzungu* ever again.

The failure of *VFA*'s macro-credit idea is a relatively common yet under theorized outcome of attempts to move ideas across highly different socio-cultural contexts, particularly between Western countries and the developing world (e.g., Bourguignon & Sundberg, 2007; Doucouliagos & Paldam, 2009). Through our study of *VFA*'s failure, we seek to generate insights beyond our case by situating it in the literature on 'institutional translation', which has provided important insights into the transposition of ideas between contexts (for a review, see Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017).

Existing studies of translation have examined the 'editing rules' (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996) by which recipients make sense of ideas moving across and within industries (e.g., Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996) and have examined how proponents can convey ideas so as to make them relevant to a wider number of firms (e.g., Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002). Recently, Lawrence

(2017) suggested that, for translation theory to move forward, it is important to distinguish types of translation contexts in order to identify their distinctive strategies and processes. Translation across high institutional distance, such as the macro-credit project, is an example of a distinctive and important translation context that has received only modest attention to date (Tracey, Dalpiaz, & Phillips, 2018). We know little about how institutional distance – the extent to which socio-cultural worlds differ – affects the proponent's ability to introduce an idea, and the recipient's ability to make sense of it (Kostova, 1999). A further blind spot of translation theory is the study of failure. Even though, as Mair, Wolf and Seelos (2016) emphasize, the 'stabilization' of ideas post-adoption cannot be taken for granted, we know very little about why ideas transported from one context to another subsequently collapse.

Our longitudinal analysis of *VFA*'s macro-credit idea addresses these blind spots in translation theory and provides two key contributions. Our primary contribution is a process model of high-distance translation failure that gives explicit attention to the pre- *and* post- adoption phases of translation. Paradoxically, we uncover that success in the pre-adoption phase can have a profoundly negative effect on the long-term retention of an idea post-adoption. Our core thesis is that the movement of an idea across high institutional distance requires strategies that 'cultural detach' the idea from its institutional origins. However, ideas cannot be interpreted in a vacuum – hence the transported idea will be interpreted in terms of the norms and understandings of the recipient context. Cultural detachment, in other words, is followed by 'cultural assimilation' – that is, the automatic application of local meanings. We identify the strategies by which cultural detachment occurs and the mechanisms by which cultural assimilation unfolds. While this dual nature of the pre- and post-adoption processes and their interplay are initially indicators of success for ideas moving across high institutional distance, they also heighten the risk that, under certain

conditions, the idea will later be rejected – resulting in subsequent failure. We call this risk of emotional arousal and rejection the *reactance effect* of high-distance translation.

A counter-intuitive implication of these findings is that in order to convey an idea across high institutional distance, proponents need to communicate *their own* cultural norms and values rather than focusing exclusively upon adapting the idea to the cultural language of the recipient context. However, this requires a rare sense of critical self-reflexivity, which is difficult to exercise as we tend to perceive our own norms as highly 'normal' or 'standard', and thus largely undisputed.

Our second contribution is to translation theory more broadly. Our study exposes an important and previously neglected influence upon the translation and sustained success or failure of adopted ideas – namely, the role of history. We show not only how history shapes the present-day relationship between a proponent and recipient, and how this in turn influences how ideas can be introduced to a recipient; but, also, how history may impede the sustainability of ideas over the long term by invoking intense emotions that can disrupt carefully prepared initiatives.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The movement of ideas and practices across and between organizations is a long-standing concern of institutional theory (Deephouse et al., 2017). As the study of diffusion developed, the early emphasis upon isomorphic convergence was nuanced by recognition that organizations vary in their responses to socio-cultural prescriptions, and that the movement of ideas typically involves at least some measure of institutional 'translation' (e.g., Ansari, Fiss, Zajac, 2010; Gondo & Amis, 2013; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Contrary to approaches that portray ideas as moving intact, studies of institutional translation pay attention to how recipients make sense of ideas and wittingly or otherwise align them with the socio-cultural norms of their context. Given our concern with the movement of ideas between two very different social contexts, we show below how the literature

on institutional translation framed our approach and highlight underdeveloped questions within this literature to which our empirical study provides insights.

Institutional Translation

The translation perspective starts from the premise that, for ideas to diffuse, they have to be understood by recipients – which turns attention to how recipients translate ideas in order to make sense of them both before, and as, they are adopted (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). As Boxenbaum and Battilana (2005: 356) put it: "translation occurs when actors adapt a foreign practice to their own institutional context, modifying it or combining it with local practices."

Translation processes can have important implications. They have been shown to affect and alter how organizations see themselves, the practices through which they perform their responsibilities, and outcomes such as innovation and regulatory compliance (e.g., Ansari, Reinecke & Spaan, 2014; Czarniawska & Sévon, 1996; Nicolini, 2010; Pallas, Fredriksson & Wedlin, 2016; Wright & Nyberg, 2017). Translation processes have also been shown to influence institutional change at the levels of the organizational field and community (e.g., Gond & Boxenbaum, 2013; Lawrence, 2017). In short, to understand the movement of ideas and their consequences for organizational and field-level change, translation matters.

Translation studies have taken two primary forms. The earliest and most fully developed looks at how organizations make sense of ideas and the 'editing rules' used during their adoption (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Early examples examined the translation of ideas across industry sectors (e.g., Boxenbaum, 2006; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Waldorff & Greenwood, 2011; Zbaracki, 1998). Later studies cover the movement of ideas between MNCs and their subsidiaries (e.g., Ansari et al., 2014; Saka, 2004). The second, more recent form of translation analysis examines how proponents – 'carriers' (Jepperson, 1991) – convey ideas in order to make them acceptable to wider

numbers of organizations. Various carriers have been explored, notably associations (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2002), consultants and clients (Morris & Lancaster, 2006), and the media (e.g., Lamin & Zaheer, 2013; Pallas et al., 2016). Greenwood et al. (2002), for example, looked at how professional associations make ideas appear relevant to wider numbers of firms by making the ideas more abstract, and by providing them with an underlying legitimating rationale.

Together, these lines of research confirm the central theme of institutional translation – that ideas undergo interpretation and reformulation as they move across contexts and that their consequences for organizational and institutional change can be significant. But an implicit assumption of much translation work is that each organization translates ideas idiosyncratically – i.e., "that every translation leads to the emergence of new and unique local versions" (Wæraas & Sataøen, 2014: 242; although see Røvik, 2007). Further, translation studies largely ignore the particular circumstances under which translations occur – even though those circumstances might be expected to affect the translation process. Lawrence (2017: 1787), for example, found that translation in high stakes contexts is characterized by "profound moral challenges" and is associated with particular patterns of translation behavior. The important point we take from Lawrence (2017) is the need to distinguish between different types of translation contexts in order to identify and understand their distinctive translation processes.

Translation across High Institutional Distance

Situations of high institutional distance, we contend, constitute a particular type of translation context – possibly the most complex – and one that, as Tracey et al. (2018) point out, has received modest attention to date. Institutional distance, as it is commonly defined, refers to the extent to which the worlds of the proponent and the recipient differ (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2005; Djelic,

1998; Gaur & Lu, 2007); or, more formally, the "extent of the similarity or dissimilarity between the regulatory, cognitive, and normative institutions of two countries" (Kostova, 1999: 153).

Kostova's definition has resonated with international business scholars seeking to uncover how ideas move between multinational corporations and their subsidiaries (e.g., Kostova, Roth, & Dacin, 2008; Li, Yang, & Yue, 2007; Roth & Kostova, 2003; Xu & Shenkar, 2002). These studies provide important insights into which overseas markets are receptive to products and/or services – and why. Ghemawat's (2001, 2007) CAGE framework, for example, identifies a range of factors for managers to consider prior to foreign market entry, including cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic obstacles. However, there is no concern for translation.

Organization theorists, in contrast, have focused upon processes of translation and, in doing so, raised questions about the completeness of Kostova's definition. Phillips, Tracey, and Karra (2009; see also Tracey et al., 2018), for example, note that countries vary in the relative 'entrenchment' of their norms and understandings because some institutional arrangements are embedded and reinforced by mature institutional infrastructures whereas others are less so and more open to change (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Entrenchment increases distance. The importance of entrenchment is shown by Tracey et. al., (2018), who report how H-Farm, an organizational form that first emerged in Silicon Valley, could be successfully introduced into the Italian context only by adapting – translating it – to meet deeply entrenched expectations of how such organizations should be managed. Similarly, Zilber (2006) shows how the narrative of the 'high tech' industry in Israel was constructed upon the taken for granted "building blocks of Israeli culture" (p. 294). Both studies show how recipients *pull* an idea into their local context.

Kostova's definition of distance is also incomplete because of its lack of consideration of the relationships between proponents and recipients. In existing studies, the portrayal of institutional

distance is of two worlds independent of the other. Yet, it seems reasonable to anticipate that previous interactions connecting those worlds may harden or ameliorate that distance. Distance, in this sense, is not defined simply by differences between the socio-cultural characteristics of two worlds, but also by the perceptions held of those from the other world. In suggesting that the history of relationships between proponents and recipients matters, we are not referring to the relationships between a particular proponent (in our case, *VFA*) and a particular recipient (the villages) but to the relationship between the socio-cultural categories to which they are perceived to belong. In our case, *VFA* was perceived as belonging to the category of the *mzungu* (Swahili: "foreigner"), which, in Phillips et al.'s (2009) language, further 'entrenched' the distance between them and the villagers because of negative previous experiences with that category.

A final concern with the translation perspective and one that has particular resonance given the nature of our case is the relative lack of attention that has been given to the later stages of the translation process, which remain largely unexplored. More typical is a focus upon the early presentation and adoption of ideas even though ideas "evolve during the implementation process, requiring custom adaptation, domestication, and reconfiguration in order to make them meaningful" (Ansari et al., 2010: 67). The continued acceptance of translated ideas, however, cannot be assumed (Mair et al., 2016; Wright & Nyberg, 2017). In other words, whether translated ideas deemed a success at the point of adoption will remain a success cannot be taken for granted.

Given the above, our interest is to understand: *Why might ideas that have been successfully moved across high institutional distance fail to persist over time?* As such, we seek to advance translation theory through an explicit analysis of a distinctive and understudied translation context – translation across high institutional distance – and by giving especial attention to the history of relationships between the proponent and recipient and to understanding delayed translation failure.

METHODS

Empirical Context

Villages For Africa (*VFA*) was conceived in Tanzania in 2008 by Willem Mark [pseudonym for a European impact investor]. Tanzania was chosen because it is one of the world's poorest countries, especially its rural areas – which host 70% of the population (*World Bank*, 2016).

"Tanganyika", as it was formerly called, was part of German East Africa (1880s-1919) until it became a British mandate (1920-1947). The country gained independence in 1961 and united with Zanzibar in 1964 to form "Tanzania". In an attempt to decrease lingering reliance on European powers, President Nyerere (in office: 1964-1985) introduced *Ujamaa* ('familyhood') as the basis of the country's socio-economic policies (Tsuruta, 2006). One of the *Ujamaa* campaigns, Operation *Vijiji*, compulsorily resettled people into designated villages in order to collectivize local economic activity (Lawi, 2007). As Tsuruta (2006:113) summarizes: "In an *ujamaa* village, individuals were expected to work together for the sake of village community as a whole, whereas the traditional allegiance of rural residents was basically confined within the limits of extended family." Nyerere's policies helped raise literacy rates and strengthened national identity (Legum & Mmari, 1995) but economic development did not follow.

Willem Mark developed *VFA* following a conversation with Muhammad Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for revolutionizing the micro-finance industry. Studies had found that micro-credits help the poor gain better access to capital, but may also create substantial risks for borrowers and make them vulnerable to theft and abuse by opportunistic lenders (e.g., see Duggan, 2016). Micro-credits have also been associated with "hundreds of suicides" (*Business Insider*, 2012) arising from the social shaming of borrowers who fail to repay their "deadly debt" (*The Guardian*, 2011) at annualized interest rates as high as 100% (Banerjee & Jackson, 2016).

In response, *VFA* was established to provide *macro-credit* loans not to individuals but to an entire village for them to start business enterprises that would reduce their dependence upon external aid. The overarching purpose was to "help villagers help themselves" by fostering "local ownership" (*VFA*, 2013: 2), a purpose consistent with the recent emphasis in development studies (e.g., Andrews, 2013; Evans, 2004). The aim, in other words, was to train recipients how to start and manage businesses and thereby foster regional socio-economic development. Macro-loans would be repaid at an average effective 2-3% rate of interest[1], which would then be reinvested in a new region, scaling up the macro-credit model. Willem Mark's aim resonated with the Tanzanian vision "that places communities at the core of national development in determining *their own* priorities and managing the local development process" (Kamei, 2016: 10, emphasis added).

VFA introduced the macro-credit model into four villages. The enterprises that the villages established included pig farms, bull herds, beehives, a fencing business, brick-making, vegetable farms, and sunflower fields. The early success of this first cluster attracted significant attention, including the winning of the UN award in 2014. A year later, Willem Mark initiated two additional clusters of village enterprises. However, because – from the perspective of *VFA* – the first cluster of villages failed to honor loan repayments, *VFA* abandoned its operation in 2016.

Research Design

We studied the macro-credit project from its inception in 2008 to its collapse in 2016 and followed the aftermath until the beginning of 2020. We focused on the first four villages that *VFA* established: Villages A, B, C, and D. Because we were sensitive to the cultural distance in our case, we invited the third author – who is from the Manyara region and deeply knowledgeable about the initiative, which he observed from the very beginning – to help us understand these cultural

---

[1] Officially, 12% rate of interest. But given an inflation rate of 9-10%, the average effective rate was 2-3%.

differences and to share authorship. The first and third author spent extended periods in the field, whilst the second author played the role of 'outsider' in the data analysis and the development of our findings (Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Langley, 2013).

Data Collection Process

Our research involved three rounds of data collection designed to 'follow events forward' and 'trace them backwards' (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010). The *first round* (late-2013 until mid-2014) involved familiarizing ourselves with the empirical context by consulting texts on the history of Tanzania (e.g., Cornelius, 2015; Iliffe, 1979; & Mwakikagile, 2016). We were attentive to the imperial history and to more recent development initiatives in Manyara. In addition, we accessed internal *VFA* documents and conducted five pilot interviews with Willem Mark and his European team in order to understand *VFA's* approach and vision.

The *second round* involved more formal data collection. The first author conducted 18 days of fieldwork in Manyara between July and September of 2014. The third author followed *VFA*'s developments initially as an early local employee of *VFA's Village Enterprise Incubator* (*VEI*), and from 2016 as a co-author. He interviewed villagers and *VEI* members and observed relationships between *VFA* and villagers. A *third round* of data collection, from January 2016 until January 2020, sought to understand the aftermath of the unanticipated collapse that occurred in 2016. Follow-up interviews were conducted with *VFA* and *VEI*, villagers, and regional politicians.

Data Sources

We accessed three sources of data: observations, interviews, and documentary material (summarized in Table 1). The range of data sources was crucial because of the cross-cultural

aspects of our case, and, more importantly, because it allowed us to observe and capture the perceptions and feelings of *VFA* and the rural communities.

----------Insert Table 1 about here----------

Observation. We had unrestricted access to on-site observation of the everyday activities of *VFA* and the rural communities. During fieldwork in 2014, the first author shared offices with *VFA* and *VEI* employees for approximately 10 hours per working day, attended and participated in discussions, listened in on calls, and joined social interactions during work breaks. Attending both work and informal social interactions allowed her to observe work practices and interactions *in situ* and to clarify their rationales soon after. She recorded her impressions in a personal diary and in a field diary. The third author interacted daily with villagers and members of *VEI* and participated in regular videoconferences with *VFA*. These digital meetings were recorded with *Zoom* and *QuickTime* (from as early as 2013) and made available to us via *Dropbox*.

Interviews and meetings. We conducted 109 interviews. The first author conducted 5 pilot interviews prior to fieldwork and 32 during fieldwork. The third author conducted 38 interviews after the first author had left the field in 2014. Later, in order to refine our analysis, he conducted an additional 34 follow-up interviews (mainly with former village enterprise members). Interviewees included 17 *VFA* members, 20 *VEI* members, 47 village enterprise members, 20 village residents, 3 investors in the macro-credit project, and 2 regional politicians. Interviews with villagers were conducted in Swahili and later translated into English. For interviews conducted via Skype, and where the Internet connection was poor, we used a written chat or email to ask questions. We recorded and transcribed 61 interviews. For the others, notes were taken in real time and typed within 24 hours. We asked informants to reflect on their daily business activities, cross-cultural differences, and their struggles and strategies to address them. Interviews lasted between 12

minutes and 3 hours and averaged 41 minutes. Formal interviews were complemented by daily informal conversations with villagers and *VFA* members – mainly conducted by the third author. We also participated in 10 meetings that involved *VFA* and members of the village enterprises where the first and third authors could raise follow-up questions that had emerged during fieldwork.

Books, documents, and video materials. We collected 1186 pages of written material. We began with books and articles on Tanzania's history and its legal and socio-political system in order to clarify our understanding of (a) differences between the institutions of Western society and those of Tanzania; and (b) the historical role of foreigners in our research context. This was particularly important in order for us to correctly interpret and give meaning to concepts such as '*mzungu'* (Swahili: "foreigner") and '*ujamaa'* (Swahili: "familyhood"). For example, reflecting upon his work as a *mzungu* in East Africa, Spitzer (2014: 1), writes:

> A common term for a European or "white" person in East Africa is "*mzungu*" (plural *wazungu*) [...] Historically, it became a synonym for light-skinned foreigners who seem to have the common feature of travelling a lot [...] it is certainly linked to both historical and contemporary relations between "North" and "South", between colonialists and those who were colonized, between Europeans and Africans.

An interview-excerpt by our informants (see p.17-18) adds texture to this understanding of the *mzungu*. The concept of *ujamaa* was another critical concept in our context. Consistent with our informants' understanding of the term, its meaning is described by Tsuruta (2006: 112):

> The original meaning of *ujamaa* (to be *jamaa*) is family ties/relationships, or it could also be translated as familyhood. Nationalist leaders of independent Tanzania intended to build socialism as the extension of traditional communal values inherent in rural extended families, which they found 'socialistic.' Therefore, the term *ujamaa* does not escape "the connotations and associations of bonds of kinship, tribal hospitality, and the welfare obligations of the extended family," (Reeves, 1979: 73) even when it is used simply to mean 'modern socialism'.

We had privileged access to an extensive volume of documents provided by *VFA* and the village enterprises (e.g., accounting books), and to the private diary and public blog of one of *VFA*'s directors in which he expressed very personal thoughts about his Tanzanian experience. We also collected five self-written "vignettes" (Reay et al., 2019: 8) that narrate in-depth personal

experiences of relevant events (e.g., village celebrations and meetings). Vignettes are typically re-constructed descriptive accounts written by the authors themselves (e.g., Abdallah, 2017; Anteby & Molnar, 2012), sometimes supplemented with short raw data excerpts to illustrate a particular concept or idea (e.g., Mantere & Vaara, 2008). Building on Jarzabowski and Lê (2017), however, we were keen to preserve the original voices, feelings, and modes of expression of our Tanzanian informants and thus asked *them* to write the vignettes.

We had access to agendas of meetings and video calls conducted prior to when we began data collection in 2013. Thereafter, the first author was cc'd in e-mail conversations between the *VFA* members, and the third author was part of e-mail exchanges between *VFA* and *VEI*. We accessed 67 minutes of video materials of *VFA* presenting its ideas to public audiences and investors, and of local TV stations reporting on the village enterprises. Visual data allowed us to compare how each side talked about the other without the other being present.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data was an iterative process, moving between data, our emerging analysis, and existing literature (Eisenhardt, 1989; Langley, 2007; Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008) through three analytical steps (cf. Lawrence, 2017).

Step 1: Developing a case description. We developed a rich case description, which allowed us to synthesize the various sources of data and construct an empirical narrative around key events (Langley, 1999). Two key insights emerged that guided our subsequent analysis.

First, our initial interviews revealed the importance of history in our case. Villagers frequently spoke about postcolonial encounters with the *mzungu* and made references to colonial times. Their imagery and beliefs about the *mzungu* thus were 'historically embedded' (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). Our subsequent engagement with the literature on history (e.g., Godfrey, 2016; Kipping & Üsdiken,

2014; Mills et al., 2016; Wadhwani et al., 2018) heightened our awareness that existing research typically adopts either a 'realist' or a 'constructionist' approach. The 'realist approach' is the "reconstruct[ion] of past events by using historical sources" (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016: 637). In contrast, the constructionist view portrays history as an "asset" (Rowlinson et al., 2014) or "strategic resource" (Godfrey et al., 2016) that can be manipulated "for a wide variety of creative uses" (Wadhwani et al., 2018: 1664). The constructionist view is closely connected to research on 'collective memory', i.e., the continuous reconstruction of shared historical narratives (Halbwachs, 1992; see also, Funkenstein, 1989; Kansteiner, 2002). These readings on history and memory helped our analysis of events and informed our Discussion section.

Second, our case description provided the opportunity to divide our empirical data into analytically relevant phases[2]. This analysis suggested contextual conditions and three subsequent phases. The *contextual conditions* describe the ambivalent perceptions of the *mzungu* prior to *VFA*'s entry into the region in 2008. The first phase, which we label *pre-adoption translation,* describes *VFA*'s introduction of the macro-credit idea to several village members and ends with the formal establishment of the first village enterprises, i.e., adoption of the idea. The activities observed in this phase were deliberate strategies, i.e., intentional steps taken by *VFA* to convince villagers to adopt the idea. The second phase, *post-adoption translation,* covers the ongoing implementing of the idea by the villagers and ends with a sense of local ownership. The activities observed in this phase were non-strategic and much more implicit than in the first phase. The third phase describes a *collision and its aftermath* beginning with an intense confrontation between *VFA* and the villagers, culminating with *VFA*'s abandonment of the macro-credit idea in 2016, and the reinforcement of the villagers' negative perceptions of the *mzungu.*

---

[2] The village enterprises progressed through the phases over different years. Thus, the phases overlap from an empirical/temporal standpoint but are distinct analytically – which is why we refrained from imposing timestamps.

Step 2: Deriving core constructs. We used NVivo to code the raw data and generate tentative constructs for the conditions in place before *VFA* entered Manyara (*contextual conditions*), the strategies by which *VFA* conveyed the macro-credit idea and that led to its adoption (*pre-adoption translation*), the processes that contributed to the stabilization *(post-adoption translation)* and the subsequent collapse of the idea and its consequences (*collision and its aftermath).*

For the *contextual conditions,* two constructs emerged: 'historical suspicions' and 'hope and admiration towards *wazungu*.' Four constructs were discerned in the *pre-adoption phase* ('using surrogates', 'political co-optation', 'localized customization', and 'ceremonial affirmation'), three in the *post-adoption phase* ('inclusive-exclusivity', 'emotive celebration', 'materialization of social norms') and two for the *collision* (in-group shaming', and 'historically anchored vilification'). In order to better understand the two forms of translation in our case (i.e., the strategic pre-adoption form versus the more non-reflective form in the post-adoption phase), we then aggregated these constructs into overarching theoretical dimensions.

In the pre-adoption phase, we aggregated 'using surrogates' and 'political co-optation' into 'concealing foreignness'; and 'localized customization' and 'ceremonial affirmation' into 'adaptive conveyance.' In the post-adoption phase, 'inclusive-exclusivity', 'materialization of social norms' and 'emotive celebration' were aggregated into 'cultural assimilation'. In the third phase, we aggregated 'in-group shaming' and 'historically anchored vilification' into 'collision'. Tables 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d provide illustrative data for each of the constructs that we identified.

---------Insert Tables 2a-d about here----------

Step 3: Developing a process model. Connecting the constructs and overarching dimensions generated a model of high-distance translation failure. In deriving the model, we moved between our data and the literatures on translation and organization theory in order to

16

determine differences and similarities between our case and existing studies (cf., Langley, 1999, 2007). Doing so helped us interpret the broader meanings of the pre- and post- adoption phases. In the pre-adoption phase, we noticed that 'concealing foreignness' and 'adaptive conveyance' were deliberate strategies that, taken together, really were acts of *cultural detachment*, whereby *VFA* disconnected the macro-credit idea from their own cultural world in order to motivate villagers to adopt it. The post-adoption phase is captured by our construct of *cultural assimilation,* whereby the villagers connected the idea to *their* local norms. As such, the pre-adoption phase and post-adoption phase describe dual forms of translations – one very strategically constructed and the other not so. We introduce the model at the beginning of the Findings section.

Ensuring Robustness

Langley (1999: 707) points out that there will "always be an uncodifiable step that relies on the insight and imagination of the researcher." The imaginative leap from data to constructs and then to theory is thus not easy to show. Hence, we took four steps to strengthen the robustness of our interpretation. Our first step concerned the composition of authorship. Two authors (one of whom is from the local context) were familiar with Tanzanian culture whereas the third had greater distance, thus providing the advantage of "intimacy with local settings and the potential for distancing" (Langley et al., 2013: 6, see also, Anteby, 2013; Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Langley & Royer, 2006). To reduce the initial wariness of villagers the first author was introduced by the third author as a researcher and someone who wanted to learn from them, thereby distancing her from *VFA* as much as possible. She also engaged in frequent informal interactions with the villagers, to the point where most villagers spoke relatively unprompted about their experiences.

Second, we used multiple sources of data that allowed for triangulation and interviewed a comprehensive set of actors in order to minimize the chance of bias that might arise from a single

perspective (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Third, 'following events forward' and 'tracing backwards' (Langley & Tsoukas, 2010) through use of a combination of real-time and secondary data reduced the risk of retrospective rationalization (Eisenhardt, 1989). Finally, we shared our findings with informants during the stages of data collection and analysis in order to fact-check our data and justify our interpretation. These conversations also helped refine our research design, including the selection of interviewees and additional documentary materials.

FINDINGS

Our findings reveal the strategies and processes involved in the failed longitudinal transposition of ideas across high institutional distance. The constructs presented in our model emerged inductively from our data. However, for clarity we briefly introduce the model "as a preview" for our theoretical analysis (Patvardhan, Gioia, & Hamilton, 2015: 411). The model is summarized in Figure 2.

----------Insert Figure 2 about here----------

Our model begins with the suspicions facing *VFA* as it entered rural Manyara. These suspicions were overcome by *VFA* in two ways: first, by *concealing the foreign origin* of the macro-credit idea by using local surrogates and village elites to introduce it; and, second, by using examples and expressions from the local context (*adaptive conveyance)* in order to advance how a village community could successfully run business enterprises. Emphasis on the local context resulted in the idea being *culturally assimilated* into the world of the villagers and their taking 'ownership' of it. Both *VFA* and the villagers soon believed that the goal of the macro-credit initiative – 'local ownership' – was being successfully achieved, but neither realized that the term meant different things to the other. For *VFA*, it meant that villagers could profitably and independently operate the village enterprises. For the villagers, it meant that there was a widely

shared acceptance of the enterprises throughout the village, and recognition of the contributions that the enterprises would make to the social purposes of the village. This difference came to the fore when *VFA* sought repayment of the loans – which prompted a violent *collision* that forced *VFA* to abandon the macro-credit idea in Tanzania.

Contextual Conditions: Historical Suspicions

Prior to *VFA*'s arrival in rural Manyara, *VFA* was aware that villagers perceived the *mzungu* as wealthy, well educated, and admirable but untrustworthy. This attitude of suspicious distrust is well illustrated by a long excerpt from one of our interviews:

> **Village member:** …we consider all white men are *wazunga* or *mzungu*, whether from Australia, America, or Europe. Chinese and Koreans are also white, but they are differentiated by their eyes. For them, we say: "small eyes" …

> **Interviewer:** Okay. So, if you use the term *mzungu* – what does that actually mean to you?

> **Village member:** When talking with *mzungu* for the first time, I think there is a hidden truth about the agenda… so we talk in the community first to decide whether they say the truth or not. So people ask: 'are you really aware and sure that the *wazungu* you are working with, are they doing what they are telling us here?' Colonialism was the same way – and it cannot happen again – that *wazungu* do something crucial for *their* country, and when it's done they will leave.

> Also, I think that most of the *wazungu* don't trust us…

> **Interviewer:** Why do you think that is? Where does this sentiment come from?

> **Village member:** I think this is because every party – *wazungu* and Africans – have lots of negative things to say and experiences from their past history. When these people meet for the first time, they tend to take time to verify the truth. It's only after they spend some time together that new beliefs about each other form which are different from the past.

> **Interviewer:** And how do you feel about *wazungu* now?

> **Village member**: …Personally, I still have to take precautions when we meet. First, I also think that *wazungu* are superior to me. Then I ask: Does he mean what he is saying? What did he want to know from me? What is his hidden agenda? Can we work together? Does he or she feel superior to me? All these questions will run through my mind. Then I have to decide if I can be with him or if I have to withdraw…. (Rural Villager, Interview no.41)

The same sentiment was reflected in stories told about past interventions by the *mzungu*, including one of a development organization that set up a water pump, ran out of money and

vanished without teaching the villagers how to service the pump. This story surfaced in at least five conversations between villagers and the first author. Another story was of an attempt by foreigners to build butcheries for the cows of the Maasai, even though, for the Maasai, cattle are equivalent to their children and the idea of killing them is absurd:

> To the Maasai, cows are everything – cows are their life. If you have a big number of cows, you are so proud of them. But the only thing the Westerners saw is: if there are so many cows, let us establish butcheries…So they started to build very modern butcheries here – but none of the Maasai sent their cows there. So they failed. *They should have consulted the community before they implemented their ideas.* (Village A, Interview no.27, emphasis added)

The appeal that outsiders should 'consult the community' was frequently made, and sometimes emotionally linked to Tanzania's colonial times – as in the story of armed protests against the allocation to foreign investors of 45 acres of land that had been under the traditional occupancy of over 40 families. Village elders, in particular, made such connections, reminding other villagers of the past and that many developing organizations come to 'repair' but then leave again without any signs of improvement – noting that history continues to repeat itself.

Phase 1 – Pre-adoption Translation *by the Proponent*
Concealing Foreignness

Willem Mark had learned over the previous decade of these deeply held suspicions. He believed that his health clinic initiative in rural Babati, the capital of Manyara, had been unsuccessful because of his own failure to overcome historical suspicions, dryly described by one *VFA* member as "reverse racism" (Field Diary I). Therefore, in order to get villagers to listen to the macro-credit idea and avoid the idea being associated with a "bunch of *wazungu*" (*VEI*, Interview no.11), he *used surrogates* and engaged in the *political co-optation* of villager elders. Doing so successfully concealed the foreignness of the idea being introduced.

Using surrogates. No members of *VFA* interacted personally with the villagers. Instead, a surrogate organization – the Village Enterprise Incubator (*VEI*) – composed of four university-educated Tanzanians, each from a different ethnic group, engaged with the villagers on *VFA*'s behalf thus concealing the *mzungu* involvement. The Managing Director, from the Iraqw[3], had an MBA from a Tanzanian university and several years of work experience in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. The Financial Accountant was from the Mdigo[4], and the female Community Coordinator from the Sukuma[5]. The Community Relations Officer, the son of an illiterate local farmer from the Nyaturu[6], was very aware of his role:

> I was born and grew up in the village with my extended family with no safe water, no electricity, poor infrastructure…so I found myself to be very familiar with the life of the villagers, it was easy for me to understand the culture, and social events… public markets, worships, local treatments of other villages…I was the very right person for the position as interactions with the villagers was a major concern. (*VEI*, Interview no.97)

It was clear from our observations that all four members of *VEI* were culturally accepted and respected and seen as locals, not foreigners. That each member of *VEI* came from a different ethnic group signaled that no group would be favored. Later, many villagers were puzzled as to who or what was '*VFA*'. While they knew that the macro-credit idea came from the *wazungu*, they interacted mainly with *VEI* members and it is they who became their point of reference.

Political co-optation. In order to further remove any signs of foreign involvement and cast the macro-credit idea in a local light, *VEI* members opened contact with villagers of local influence – especially the villager elders. As one *VEI* member explained:

> **VEI member:** The village elders play a very important role – they are the gatekeepers in the community, and we need to get them on our side… even for us [referring to *VEI*] this is important because we are often younger than the villagers.

> **VFA member**: Is this a problem?

---

[3] Cushitic-speaking ethnic group inhabiting the Asrusha and Manyara regions of north-central Tanzania.
[4] Chidigo-speaking group (also: Digo) based between Mombasa (southern Kenya) and Tanga (northern Tanzania).
[5] Bantu-ethnic group in north-western Tanzania (16% of Tanzanian population) who speak Sukuma.
[6] Bantu Kinyaturu-speaking ethnic group (part of the Turu) inhabiting north-central Tanzania. Historically farmers.

> **VEI member:** Yes. When you are younger, they would only listen to you when you are a priest or a pastor… the elders are the ones with the wisdom. (*VFA-VEI* Discussion)

VEI courted the elders and gently persuaded them to help "educate the community members about the opportunity that is at hand" (*VEI*, Strategy Document). The elders did so at village meetings where they explained how the macro-credit idea would serve the village community, thus reinforcing the 'local' fit of the idea.

The success of using surrogates and co-opting elders to overcome suspicions of the *mzungu* by concealing the institutional origins of the macro-credit idea was reflected in that 20 villages applied to be included in the *VFA* project. *VFA* next turned to carefully and adaptively conveying the macro-credit idea in a manner that would motivate villagers to implement it.

Adaptive Conveyance

Before accessing initial loans of between \$9,000 and \$15,000[7], each of the four villages – A, B, C and D – selected to participate in the project had to establish a management team and a board of directors that included at least one village elder and one woman, and the management teams had to attend training sessions. The training sessions explained how to establish and run a business, using terms understandable to the villagers, i.e., through *localized customization*. The awarding of plaques at the end of the training *ceremonially affirmed* the accomplishments of the participants, motivating them to apply what they had learned.

Localized customization. Meticulous attention was given to the preparation and delivery of the training sessions, which focused on the technical details of the macro-credit idea and continued even after the village enterprises had been formally established. We observed hour-long discussions between *VFA* and *VEI* over the specific wording and language that would be used in

---

[7] For the purpose of contextualization: 70% of the Tanzanian population lives with less than \$2/day. Tanzania's GDP per capita income in 2012 was \$1,654; the global average is \$13,599 (*Tanzania UNDP Report*, 2014).

teaching the principles of bookkeeping, or of how to market goods such as honey, pigs, or bulls. Training would be provided in Swahili and other native languages, and use local examples that would resonate with the villagers and build on *their* abilities and understandings:

> It's the combination of how we know how it works here and then how it works in Africa. And this constant tension between how we can use what we are used to and fit it into the local context… we may have to suggest some things and then they can come back and say 'No, that's not going to work here. It's Africa, you know.' And then we sit down, and we try to figure out an alternative game plan B… [trainings should be] all adjusted for the level that's appropriate. (*VEI-VFA*, Discussion)

Care was also taken to avoid any suggestion that ideas were being imposed: "We are injecting a lot of 'us'… [and] I'm sure they're also a bit frustrated… We really have to make sure that we are not being offensive or having unrealistic expectations…" (*VEI-VFA*, Discussion). *VEI* also carefully avoided raising memories of previous failures, including "the old, failed concepts and philosophies of Nyerere" (*VFA* Managing Director, Blog). One example of how they did so was by allowing the management teams and directors to select the name for their enterprise, which to the villagers was an important symbolic departure from the more imposed Nyerere approach.

Ceremonial affirmation. At the completion of the training sessions, participants publicly received plaques of achievement followed by the formal transfer of ownership shares. The shares had no economic value but were deliberate symbolic signals of *VEI's* confidence in the ability of the villagers to run – 'own' – the businesses that they were about to establish:

> We needed to instill *a sense of ownership*. The management teams and boards of directors needed to feel appreciated, looked up to in their communities. They should be proud of *their* company… so we needed to acknowledge them with certificates that they can hang on their walls. (*VFA* Meeting)

In the ceremonies, held outside the village government office, *VEI* proudly stressed the capabilities of those that had participated in the training program, and emphasized that they were ready to start businesses that would contribute to the wellbeing of their village communities and the future of their children. The can-do attitude and the pride of the trainees grew noticeably:

The first time I was elected to be the treasurer, I asked 'How can I be elected without me having any education? Any kind of knowledge about financials?' So [*VEI*] told me that I shouldn't be afraid: 'You will know along the way.' I was given training as a treasurer and now I am comfortable with the financial assessments. As a pastor, I now also train other pastors about what I learned from [VEI]. *This is a big thing for me.* (Village A, Interview no.27, emphasis reflects him proudly smiling)

In effect, the ceremonies were a culminating expression of the confidence felt by the villagers that they not only understood the practices of running a business, but that *they* could do it!

Outcome 1: Acritical Adoption

Each village quickly accepted the terms of the macro-credit loans. Formal contracts, crafted in Swahili, were signed – committing villages to invest one-third of profits in a chosen social need, another third for repayment of the loan, and the remainder into re-investment in the enterprise. *VFA* members were well aware of the difficulty of legally enforcing the contracts – "they (the contracts) were weak, so it was much more symbolic to have them sign these papers…" (*VFA*, Discussion) – and that they would have to rely on informal trust. There was thus no attempt to impose a regular repayment schedule. Instead, the villages were given up to 18 months to repay the macro-loans at no interest, after which an average effective interest rate of 2-3% would apply. Further, each village was given discretion to run its enterprises as *they* envisioned – reflecting Willem's overarching mission of fostering a sense of 'local ownership'.

At the end of *Phase 1, VFA* and the four management teams believed that they had a shared understanding of how the macro-credit project would proceed. There was neither conflict nor negotiations over the terms of the loan. On the contrary, the following was typical: "Our business is fattening bulls…we received a loan from the investor to buy 50 bulls for $10,000… Our contract is for the next 6 months, then we will sell the bulls and repay the investor" (Video archives, Village D). Hence, *VFA* thought the macro-credit project had been successfully introduced and proudly told *VEI* that: "Everything is moving…people from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Guatemala,

Ecuador…every time we explain to them what *you* guys are doing, people get excited and they want to know how they can take it into their area…I love this process" (*VEI-VFA*, Discussion).

Phase 2 - Post-Adoption Translation *by the Recipient*
Cultural Assimilation

To Willem's delight, once established the village enterprises quickly exhibited entrepreneurial initiative. Village B and D diversified into sesame seeds and vegetables; Village C expanded beyond pig farming to include honey production and cucumber farming. Three of the villages – B, C, and D – reported profits in their first year. The fourth, Village A, which did not, was the only village that chose not to go into agricultural farming, and, by setting up the enterprise *outside* the village, was finding it more difficult to garner community support.

Nevertheless, at the end of the first year the overall performance of the four villages was seen by *VFA* as a visible indicator that the vision of providing "the power and the means to take care of themselves" was being realized (*VEI*, Strategy Document). Therefore, the villagers were quietly allowed to operate without much outside help. For the villagers, on the other hand, local ownership had *not yet* been fully achieved: for them, local ownership meant widespread acceptance of the enterprise as serving social needs and thus of being an integral part of the village: "the social need is the primary goal and the reason for our activities…if there is no social need, there is no need for business" (Village A, Interview no.20). In other words, only by achieving social goals would local ownership be accomplished. Thus, what *VFA* did not grasp was that, as the macro-credit idea became culturally assimilated into the local context, the sense of local ownership would have implications that would adversely affect the macro-credit project. Three prominent mechanisms of cultural assimilation were a sense of *inclusive-exclusivity* by the village communities, *the*

materialization of social norms, and *emotive celebrations.* These mechanisms pulled villagers together and heightened the sense of 'ownership' as they understood the term.

Inclusive-exclusivity. Inclusive-exclusivity is a widely shared (in our case, throughout the village) pride in being part of something that is desired by others who are excluded from participating. To promote the sense of shared inclusion, three of the management teams located their offices in the centre of the village so that villagers could walk by them and express their curiosity. The idea and arrangements of having an office and a management team were novel and puzzling, but also intriguing. Villagers learned by wandering past the offices and observing what went on inside them. And, as they did so, they began to express interest in being more involved: "…people started asking 'Why are you buying materials from Babati, not from me?' 'Why are you not hiring my trucks to carry your materials?' Things like that – they want to be involved" (Village C, Interview no.25). Even members of Village A, whose office was located outside the village, recalled such encounters:

> Sometimes, villagers pass by and they see that we are working and producing goods. Then they will try to come inside and ask if they can work here…to see what we are doing. Then they say: 'You're gaining a lot here, so let me see and gain as much as you gain'… (Village A, Interview no.20)

The management teams responded by engaging more and more villagers – for example, by hiring 'pig men' who would watch after the pigs at night, and 'construction workers' who would cut the fences. In this way, the enterprises became increasingly part of the workings of the villages rather than something introduced from outside: acceptance of the macro-credit idea was growing.

Growing acceptance was also helped by the interest and jealousy shown by those excluded from the project. There was an increasing daily flow of admiring visitors from neighboring villages – to the extent that Villages A, B, C, and D felt as though they had become pilgrimage destinations, which was an impression that was reinforced when a local TV station showcased them as pioneers and highlighted how the enterprises were addressing community needs. This feeling of being

special was further fostered by the attention of regional politicians who demanded bribes, threatening defamation of those that refused to comply. Interestingly, while this posed financial challenges to the village enterprises, to several villagers these demands were also signs of success. Being 'in' was to be part of an exclusive group that was part of something special.

Materialization of social norms. All four villages experienced the growing fame, but it was noticeably pronounced in Villages B and C, which were able to materially display how the enterprises were reflecting communal norms. By materialization we mean a visual statement that expresses community norms. In Village C, for example, where a third of profits were used for renovation of the village school, villagers could literally see the benefits:

> …we [contributed to the community] a healthy profit which went into the social need… six classrooms in two primary school buildings…a big percentage of the community […] love the Village Company because they *see* the social need which has been implemented… (Village C, Interview no.26)

Village B, similarly, benefited as villagers came to see the renovated teacher's house:

> We spent almost 4 million on implementing the social needs of our community (we put doors, windows, fixed toilets, floor and wall painting). This was remarkable work. And we used it as a reference point for our community members: 'look what we can make and do with our Village Company.' (Village B, Interview no.57)

The importance of the visual showing was indicated by the noticeably lower interest in non-visual benefits. Village B, for example, not only funded the reconstruction of the teacher's accommodation but also paid the 'social tax' levied by the regional government. But far fewer references were made to this benefit – it was the visible benefits that excited attention. Village D, which used profits to provide health insurance for 490 households (ca. 1470 villagers), had a similar experience. Announcement of the benefit attracted some attention within the village itself but little from neighboring villages. In other words, while Villages B and C solved a clear social problem and had implemented a visible solution, the benefits of health insurance were less evident to the villagers. The visual tangibility of the benefits mattered.

Emotive celebrations. Each of the three profitable villages celebrated the social benefits as they were announced. The opening of the newly renovated school and of the newly constructed teacher house in Villages B and C prompted joyous festivities. These celebrations were organized by the management teams and were noisy, lengthy and highly public events. Villagers enthusiastically engaged in colorful singing, eating, and dancing (see Figure 1).

----------Insert Figure 1 about here----------

To capture the importance of the celebration as seen by those who participated, we asked a

VEI member to describe the celebration of the teacher's house in Village B:

> You have to imagine the celebration like this: village enterprise members worked really hard … and they were so proud to benefit their community. When they invested in the social need it was a great burden taken off their shoulders. They had met the expectations of their community.

> Now think about the celebration as a day where the management team could show their community that they did something good for their neighbors. In Village B, the head mistress of the school was living on the street and now she had a house to stay and live. That's amazing!

> The celebration was announced by the village enterprise one week before, and everybody in the community was aware about the meeting, as well as neighboring villages.

> The evening before the celebration, a villager had two pieces of iron and moved around the whole village hitting them together very hard and loudly – 'Announcement! Announcement! Announcement! The [Village B] is reminding you, the community, about our celebration tomorrow… - informing everyone about the day, time, venue, participants, and type of entertainment, and requesting all community members to attend…

> The celebration first started with a meeting at 10am. When everyone arrived, people clapped hands and stood up. The meeting took place under a big tree where the tables for the guests were decorated. The community members waited until the village enterprise members sat down, to sit down themselves. Some had to sit on the grass because the chairs couldn't accommodate everyone!

> …The village chairman opened the meeting with a call to religious leaders to pray. Everyone appreciated the great efforts done by the village enterprise leaders and promised to support it in the future. There was food and drinks (rice with beans, water, and few Coca-Cola sodas)…

> The meeting was about 2km away from the school where [Village B] had built the teacher house, which allowed classes to continue in the school. After the meeting, all community members were walking and dancing to the school… This is a deeply hearted appreciation and is done very rarely.

> Dancing groups around 12 men and women of different ages were welcomed, and they…blew whistles while they bent down and were dancing. They sang lyrics of a song which appreciated the village enterprise and their leaders for helping in education, for their help with the village social tax…

> Finally, the pupils were out from their classes and the village community could walk into the teacher house, and assess the work done by the village enterprise leaders, and give credit to them. The teacher was there too: 'I lived on the street, in a ghetto… in the raining season, security was not good, and I was too far from school. I am an old head mistress. Now I want to thank [Village B]! I only walk two minutes to the school, and I also have a toilet that is working. I am so joyful that I can be here for my pupils!' People were chanting and whistling with joy. (Vignette, written by a *VEI* member)

In other words, the celebrations displayed the rising optimism and communal acceptance of the enterprises. In Village D, in contrast, celebration of the primary social benefit – health insurance cards – was much more muted. Events were organized at which village members were to formally receive their insurance cards, but few villagers attended, and the celebrations resembled more the quieter ceremonies of the pre-adoption phase than the joyous celebrations occurring in Villages B and C. Moreover, the flow of visitors from outside was modest.

Outcome 2: Local Ownership

VFA was pleased with the independence displayed by the villagers and especially that three of the villages had generated sufficient profits to expand their businesses and invest in social needs. Even the fourth village was covering its operating costs. Though *VFA* started to feel somewhat left out as villagers took the enterprises into their own hands, nevertheless they were content:

> **VFA member 1:** Look, a couple of months ago, would you have thought they would themselves think of these new business activities, and actually make profits? I mean, I'd be even happier if they would tell us about it. So, we could see and follow their progress…But then, I think we should be grateful for that they are thinking for themselves now.
>
> Let us appreciate their independence. It's what we've been wanting the whole time. Right?
>
> **VFA member 2***:* It's amazing if you compare where we stood initially and where we are at now. It's never easy to step back. But let's allow ourselves to go ahead and re-focus. We *want* them to feel accountable. So, let's be happy with our progress and march on… (*VFA* Discussion, emphasis added)

VFA, in other words*,* saw the villagers as exemplifying Willem's mission of local ownership. For the villagers, too, local ownership had been accomplished. But for them, this meant something different. In the three profitable villages there was an open sense that the enterprises were recognized by their respective communities. Especially in Villages B and C, more and more

villagers were proudly referring to '*our* model'. As one management team member put it: "they are recognizing that what we are doing is good for them. So, they see it's not just about money for ourselves" (Village C, Interview no.25). Similarly, in Village B "the community will always remember our village company because of the social need that was implemented…we were very successful" (Interview no.57). Even Village D, albeit to a lesser extent, shared this sentiment: "the community was happy when we told them about the health insurance…I can conclude that our model was good – and successful" (Interview no.89).

'Ownership', in other words, for the villagers was communal *and* arose from their belief that it was *they* who had figured out how to make the village enterprises work for their communities. In their minds, it was not *VEI* but *themselves* who had successfully implemented and developed the macro-credit idea in a way that worked locally. Thus both *VFA* and the villagers felt that local ownership – as they understood it – had been achieved. Hence, what followed was unexpected.

Phase 3 – Collision and its Aftermath

For *VFA,* the moment seemed appropriate to scale up the macro-credit idea so that they could one day, "stand on Mt. Kilimanjaro and see hundreds of village enterprises functioning" (*VFA-VEI*, Discussion). Scaling up would mean advising the four villages how to further increase their profit margins; and, the repayment of the loans so that *VFA* could re-invest them in other regions. But when *VEI* and then *VFA* entered the villages, the response was contrary to what was expected. There was *in-group shaming* of *VEI,* and *historically anchored vilification* of *VFA.*

In-group shaming. Members of *VEI* were uncomfortable when asked by *VFA* to approach the villages and request repayment. They were well aware that the now highly developed sense of local ownership would make it difficult for villagers to accept advice on how to expand their businesses. They warned: "First you make them the 'owners' of their own destiny and they do it –

30

they run the enterprises... You can't just go back now and tell them that you have new ideas." (*VEI*, Interview no.43). They were particularly nervous about requesting repayment because such behavior would be seen as a cultural violation – especially by those *VEI* members who had to enter villages from the same ethnic group. But *VFA* insisted that *VEI* do so.

As *VEI* expected, when they entered the villages to offer advice, they were jokingly rebuffed: "the management team and the board told us that we *VEI* members were here because of them, not the other way around. They're right.... it's their thing now." (*VEI*, Interview no.43). The request for repayment was even more firmly dismissed because villagers expected *VEI* to respect the *ujamaa* norm that 'family' members do not ask for the return of something borrowed:

> In Tanzania, people are accepting of others 'borrowing' what they have in excess (food, clothing, shelter, money, etc.) without a necessary plan to repay. So having an abundance of anything… effectively invites 'family' – which is somewhat loosely defined and extends beyond Western concepts of family – to take what they need. So a brother may borrow another brother's excess savings to pay for a celebration, or a trip, or food, etc, ... and never repay it. (Managing Director, *VFA*, Personal Diary – written after the macro-credit project was abandoned)

Villagers were surprised when *VEI* members, whom they regarded as part of the community, asked for repayment and scolded them for doing so. The scolding intensified when villagers learned that *VEI* members were associated with the *mzungu*. As a *VEI* member recalled:

> I knew it was going to be a huge challenge when I had to ask for repayments…Community members were asking me questions like: '…Do you love the *mzungu* company more than us?' and they said things like 'we are all the same here. Look at our young children here at home…If you put me in trouble, how will they feel?' They expected me to know…serving that community was a priority.

> They also frequently mentioned that the *mzungu* company will go but that I would remain as their son. They asked me: 'Are you married? Maybe one day you will come to marry my daughter…but the *mzungu* will go.' Clearly reminding me of my own role in this community.

> Most borrowers were elder to me, and in Tanzania, a younger person cannot be angry with the elders, that is considered misbehavior in our culture. When I asked for repayment, they became very angry with me, they said things like 'you went to school here so that you can help *us*. But now, you are putting us in trouble because of the mzungu!!' Some of them accused me of wanting to take a bribe.

> I was disappointed, but I never stopped trying to get the repayments. I felt proud to be part of the macro-credit model. No repayment would put the model in a hard situation - I knew that. But people here cannot take a hard decision towards each other… because they will know that they will hurt their fellow family member (Vignette, written by a *VEI* member)

VEI, in other words, was expected to know and respect that serving social needs was a priority and that the interests of *VEI's* village community should surely be more important than those of the *mzungu*. Acknowledging their contractual agreements, the villagers reassured *VEI* that repayment would be made once local needs had been addressed. But from the perspective of *VFA*, the refusal of the villages to fully repay was evidence of "cheating" and they decided to enter the villages themselves (*VFA*, Discussion). Before doing so, they carefully thought through how best to word the request for repayment and rehearsed doing so. Given the earlier success when introducing the macro-credit idea, it was hoped that a similarly cautious approach would be successful. But this time, it was the *mzungu* who faced the villagers.

Historically anchored vilification. As *VFA* members entered the villages and requested repayment, they were angrily vilified, especially in Village B and C. Explicitly referencing colonial times, villagers were furious. In one meeting an outraged villager shouted (to applause): "There is *no colonialism* here anymore. Why are you harassing me? Why are you even here, *you mzungu*?... We are not here to write *your* story" (emphasis in the original). In Village C, where *VFA* put forward more efficient ways by which to obtain water for farming activities, *and,* at the same time, raised the timing of repayment, villagers furiously retorted: "So you are coming here to look for us…and you are trying to give the (water) business to [someone outside the village]. We don't want you here. We want you to leave!" A sense of the emotions is given in the following vignette, written by one of the villagers in Village B who witnessed a similar incident:

> The *mzungu* caused deep anger. Because when he came to the meeting, he felt superior to us and didn't really listen. Like, they were different or better somehow. I think many village members were angry because *they felt that the mzungu is oppressing them like a colonist.* That causes deep frustration. The villagers said that they didn't want the *mzungu* here.

> 'Because you have money, does that mean you can't listen to us? Yes we have no money, we have no education, we are villagers and we don't know a lot of things, but if we leave that aside we can work together, but you have to listen to us!', one of the villagers shouted standing up in the meeting.

After that happened, the *mzungu* then preferred to come with his lawyer. When the community saw that, they were becoming even more angry. They said: 'now you are coming to our village to jail us.' People were scared that if the lawyer is here, police will be here soon. So, they were not willing to talk anymore. 'Tell the *mzungu* to let the lawyer go outside,' they said. Like a boycott.

We said that we wouldn't talk to the *mzungu* until the lawyer leaves the meeting. 'This is not an amicable situation. Why is this a court matter? If he doesn't leave, there will be no more meeting.' Instead, we said we would only meet him in court then. So, the lawyer left. He stepped outside, and stayed in the car outside, and the meeting continued.

Then everybody started to explain why we didn't repay yet. We were upset and really angry. 'You are oppressing us and come here as you wish. *It's always the same with you!* We have to work together. Not you telling us to do something whenever you want.'… so these are bad emotions.

As far as the villagers were concerned, *VFA* had violated their agreement and the request for repayment confirmed that *wazungu* were disrespectful and exploitative (Interviews no.45-70). The worsening relations were reflected in discussions between *VFA* and *VEI* where the language was no longer of "we" but of "us versus them". It was also reflected in the tense exchanges *VFA* held with the village elders and management teams. Both sides were increasingly aggrieved – the villagers because they felt that they were being wrongly accused of cheating and were once again being exploited; and *VFA* because they felt themselves to be victims of cheating. The anger carried over to *VEI*. Once they were openly associated with the *mzungu* they, too, were subjected to expressions of anger – to the point of physical violence in one of the villages.

Outcome 3: Anger and Reluctance to Re-Engage

Overall, *VFA* recovered less than 50% of its loans. Village D repaid its $10,000 loan in full (but deeply resented being asked to do so). Villages B and C each repaid around 40%, and Village A less than 30%. The failure to repay and the open hostility towards doing so convinced *VFA* to abandon the macro-credit project. For Willem, this was a major disappointment. In an email addressed to *VFA* members, he wrote: "I have never been more disillusioned in my life." *VFA*'s managing director expressed a similar sentiment in his personal diary:

Failure. A failure to execute. A failure to learn. A failure to simply let be. I know no more humbling gesture a person can make than to put oneself out there for others to challenge. And I have put myself out there…

I have failed.

Failed my friends. Failed my family. Failed myself.

But mostly, failed to make the impact I promised my friend (referring to Willem Mark) I would make when I signed on to this particular part of my journey.

So here I sit. Frustrated. Angry. Disappointed.

For the villagers, the abandonment and the way that it was done was another bitter example of how the *mzungu* could not be trusted. The anger was such that three years later, in a follow-up interview, a former board member scathingly rebuked the third author:

Next time… do not come back with your ideas, then start implementing them, and then leave us. Just because we are villagers does not mean that we are not knowledgeable. And – *don't ever make us your laboratory test animals ever again*. (Village B, Interview no.67 – italics indicate sharply raised voice)

All four villages are still highly reluctant to re-engage with *wazungu*. In our follow-up interviews, villagers talk about a loss of trust and the painful realization and disappointment that the *mzungu*, again, had not listened to them properly. Even Village D, which repaid its loan in full, adamantly refuses any further connection with *VEI* and foreigners and their innovative ideas:

You left us as if we are the thieves… I'm not willing to talk to [*VEI* members] or [anyone related to *VEI*] about the village enterprises anymore. (Interview no.80)

For the four local members of *VEI,* the withdrawal was especially painful – to the point that they still feel ashamed to enter these villages to this day.

DISCUSSION

Despite their importance and prevalence, processes of translation across high institutional distance have received only modest attention and the study of failure has been virtually ignored. Hence, we set out to explore why ideas that are successfully moved across high institutional distance may subsequently fail. Our findings suggest a pre- and a post-adoption translation phase. While the pre-adoption phase is characterized by strategies that culturally detach the idea from its

institutional origins and thereby allow the proponent to successfully introduce it to another context, the post-adoption phase is characterized by the intuitive cultural assimilation of an idea into the recipient context. The pre- and post-adoption phases thus represent two different forms of translation. The explanation for the subsequent and disruptive failure lies in the combination of this dual translation. Together, the strategies of cultural detachment and the mechanisms of cultural assimilation enable the successful translation of an idea across high institutional distance. Paradoxically, however, the means of doing so can later prompt its emotional rejection. We call this this the *reactance effect* of high-distance translation. Our primary contribution is the abstraction of the above findings into a process model of high-distance translation failure.

Our second contribution speaks to the translation literature more generally. Our findings bring to the fore how previous relationships, which have been neglected in studies of translation, influence the ways by which an idea can be moved and translated. Specifically, our case shows the importance of relationships between the *socio-cultural categories* of proponents and recipients. Further, our findings suggest a more significant way by which historical relationships matter for translation processes – namely, by invoking emotions that may lead to violent disruptions.

High-Distance Translation Failure and the Reactance Effect

The process model derived from our case study is depictured in Figure 2. While the violent collision towards the end of the model is striking, we begin by detailing the pre-adoption phase because, as pointed out above, the unexpected failure arises from the combination of pre- and post-adoption processes that define high distance translation. In so doing, we specify the nature of high-distance translations as a particular type of translation context (cf., Lawrence, 2017) that requires strategies of translation different from those of other contexts.

Pre-adoption translation by cultural detachment. Moving ideas across high institutional distance is difficult for several reasons. The more obvious one is that it may be difficult for recipients to grasp the meaning of an idea because of its novelty – as, for example, in our case 'bookkeeping' and 'management teams' were little understood. Ideas may also be perceived as threatening social and political arrangements (e.g., Mair et al., 2016). Relatedly, receptivity may be compromised by previous experiences involving the proponents and recipients. To overcome these challenges, the idea has to be culturally detached from its institutional origins, which involves *concealing the foreignness* of the idea and its *adaptive conveyance.*

Concealing foreignness is the involvement of people whom recipients trust and the masking of those that they do not in order to downplay the foreign origins of an idea. In contexts of high institutional distance, this might be essential, simply to get recipients to listen to the idea (as implied by Claus & Tracey, in-press). *VFA* mastered this challenge by 'using surrogates' and 'political co-optation'. Political co-optation has been observed elsewhere (Selznick, 1949; see also, Mair et al., 2016; McKague, Zietsma, & Oliver, 2015; Venkataram, Vermeulen, Raaijmakers, & Mair, 2016) but may not, by itself, prompt the intended recipient to consider an idea, especially if relationships between the proponent and recipients are ones of suspicion. More is needed – such as using surrogates to avoid the rejection of an idea before it can even be communicated.

Adaptive conveyance is the presentation of an idea using the cultural language of the recipients. As our case shows, the presentation of an idea not only has to be comprehensible, which can be achieved through 'localized customization' of illustrations and materials; it also has to be motivating and persuasive – i.e., seen as doable. Put differently, presenting the 'nuts and bolts' of an idea (Tracey et al., 2018) may explain an idea – but understanding is distinct from the

motivation to act. Across high institutional distance where novelty can induce caution, something is needed to stimulate adoption, achieved in our case by 'ceremonial affirmation'.

An important implication of the above is that *culturally detaching* an idea from its institutional origins eases its adoption but strips the idea of its original context – in Geertz's terms (1973), translation and understanding of the idea is 'thin'. But, 'thin' translations mean that the idea will be understood in terms of the recipient's cultural context. That is, the idea is then culturally assimilated – which can have negative implications in the post-adoption phase.

Post-adoption translation: cultural assimilation. The cultural detachment of an idea makes its attachment to local norms inevitable. Ideas cannot be understood in a vacuum (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) – hence, recipients will apply local meanings to it. Cultural detachment, in other words, is followed by *culturally assimilation* – i.e., the acritical application of local meanings.

Our case displays three mutually reinforcing mechanisms by which cultural assimilation occurs: the 'materialization of social norms', the sense of 'inclusive-exclusivity', and 'emotive celebration'. Materialization is the presentation of "the local meaning of a concept in concrete terms" (Lawrence (2017: 1782; see also, Boxenbaum et al., 2018). In contexts of high institutional distance, where recipients have low familiarity with a new idea, material expressions of an idea enhance both understanding *and acceptance* of the idea by visibly connecting it to local norms. In our case, 'seeing' the schools showcased the implemented idea and clarified its cultural worth. Visual connection of an imported idea with the social norms of the recipient community, in other words, alleviates apprehensions that the idea is alien to that culture and thus allows its inclusion.

Materialization is given added momentum by a second mechanism – a sense of inclusive-exclusivity. 'Inclusive-exclusivity' is the fostering of a shared yet restricted 'ownership' of a 'valued' idea. It is *in*clusive in that it is shared by community insiders, and it is *ex*clusive in that it

is praised and desired by outsiders who are denied inclusion – noticeably observed in our case as villagers showed pride at receiving attention from local TV, and of being a 'pilgrimage destination' for neighboring villages. This sense of being part of something valuable heightens a sense of social identity and enhances pride in, and commitment to, the idea (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Glynn, 2017).

A third mechanism – 'emotive celebration' – amplifies further acceptance of an idea *but also* adds the important contribution of moral reinforcement. The role of rituals and ceremonies has been raised elsewhere (e.g., Anand & Watson, 2004; Rao & Dutta, 2012; Ruebottom & Auster, 2017), but the post-adoption celebrations in Villages B and C were distinctive in that they were held in public spaces, applauded 'communal' not individual benefits, and wittingly incited the emotions of collective pride. Moreover, the format of the celebrations was the same as used for other important events such as the welcoming of visiting dignitaries – thus enhancing the symbolic significance of the celebration. The format gave credence to the social object being celebrated and aroused emotional energy that bestowed a sense of collective *ownership.*

The three mechanisms reinforce each other. Inclusive-inclusivity generates pride, which is enhanced by materialization, which in turn prompts, and is amplified by, emotive celebrations; this cycle of reinforcement is then reciprocated as celebrations generate collective excitement, thus increasing the sense of inclusive-exclusivity. Through this cycling of reciprocal processes a newly introduced idea becomes stabilized and emotionally institutionalized within the local context – i.e., 'locally owned'. Hence, at the surface level, cultural assimilation appears to signal the successful translation of an idea across high institutional distance. But, as shown in Figure 2, it can be followed by implosive failure – which prompts our central question: *What causes a successfully transported idea to suddenly collapse into failure?*

From success to failure: the reactance effect. Our thesis is that failure arises because cultural detachment followed by cultural assimilation invokes a sense of local ownership and 'hubris' (Cappellaro, Tracey, & Greenwood, 2019). The success of cultural detachment combined with the success of cultural assimilation means that recipients see the adopted idea and its outcomes as 'theirs'. Attempts by outsiders to revoke or change the assimilated idea will thus be angrily resisted. Double success, in other words, paradoxically risks subsequent failure. We coin this risk of the emotional rejection of an adopted idea the *reactance effect* of high-distance translation.

'Reactance' describes the unpleasant emotional arousal to persons, rules, or regulations that threaten specific behavioral freedoms (Brehm, 1966). It was first termed by psychologist Jack Brehm to conceptualize the resistance that people display when they feel that someone is taking away their choices or limiting the range of alternatives that they had previously enjoyed (Miron & Brehm, 2006). Once the resistance is triggered, people tend to strengthen a view or attitude that is contrary to the view or attitude held by the person who is perceived to be 'taking away' their choices, which further increases people's resistance to opposition. Our case is an institutional variant of this effect: villagers, by means of cultural assimilation, entrenched the idea in the local context and in so doing invoked a nascent emotional resistance to perceived violations of their discretion – especially if those violations contradicted their social norms.

The paradox in our case is that Willem was very sensitive to prevailing cultural norms and *wanted* villagers to take ownership of his idea. His cultural sensitivity, however, also meant that the villagers never learned the more implicit norms, values, and meanings underpinning the Western understanding of terms such as 'local ownership', 'entrepreneurship', and 'contracts.' The same words used by the villagers and *VFA* embodied very different meanings but *neither side* became aware of the differences. In consequence, cultural assimilation developed unchecked –

heightening the sense of local ownership. This lack of understanding on both sides would be immaterial, unless, as in our case, the two sides had reason to re-connect.

The counter-intuitive implication that follows is that in order to avoid the reactance effect, proponents need to appropriately moderate the process of cultural assimilation by communicating *their own* socio-cultural assumptions and meanings whilst expressing (translating) them through the cultural language of the recipients. This requirement – a core challenge for achieving long-term stabilization in contexts of high distance translation – has been underappreciated in the existing literature, which has emphasized instead the need for a thorough cultural understanding *of the recipient's* context. The translation challenge is typically depicted as understanding "what is important to people from different nations" (Erdman, 2017: 13; see also, Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth, 2017). The same emphasis – of understanding the recipient's context – runs through the various cultural frameworks developed for business leaders (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; see also, Erez, 2011). However, as our case highlights, grasping the *others'* world distracts from understanding and conveying *one's own* world. But, conveying ideas across contexts requires understanding of one's own world, not simply that of the other, in order that a more informed translation can occur. Doing so, however, is difficult because recognizing one's own cultural assumptions requires a sophisticated capability of critical self-reflexivity – i.e., of 'immanent sensemaking' (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). The challenge is that our own norms, values, and beliefs tend to be unthinkingly accepted as 'normal' – hence they remain invisible and unquestioned *to us*.

Even if understanding of one's own culture is achieved, the potential of the reactance effect being triggered remains high because any reduction of the degree of cultural detachment increases the risk of resistance during the pre-adoption phase – especially if doing so undermines the ability of proponents to gain the right to be heard. Our case implies, in other words, that the greater the

institutional distance, the greater the need for cultural detachment – but with the consequence that the risk of reactance and failure is heightened.

The reactance effect, of course, remains latent until triggered. Something has to spike the emotional resistance of villagers. In the case of *VFA*, it was the physical re-appearance of the *mzungu*, which reminded villagers of past failures and elicited feelings of anger. Various other triggers are possible in situations of high distance. It could be treating actors within the recipient context in ways contrary to social norms – such as not appropriately displaying respect for the position of elders or the role of women (e.g., de la Chaux, Haugh & Greenwood, 2018); or the use of language that demeans or fails to respect social structures (e.g., Adut, 2008; Forster, 1924); or breaches of local customs – such as the wearing of certain clothes, inappropriate seating arrangements in public events (e.g., Dacin et al., 2010); or being associated with deviant social behaviors or social classes (e.g., Adut, 2008; Hampel & Tracey, 2017). The common theme is that triggers are violations of prevailing social arrangements.

History, Relationships and Emotions

The role of history surfaced throughout our findings in two ways. It shaped the relationship between the proponent and recipients involved in the translation process; and, more importantly, it was a decisive factor in precipitating the violent collision that concluded that process. From our case, therefore, we draw two key insights: the importance of including historical relationships in translation accounts – especially relationships between the socio-cultural categories involved; and the significance of emotions in constraining reflective applications of the past.

Socio-cultural categories and the process of translation. Previous work has underappreciated the effect of the historical relationships between those promoting an idea and those receiving it. This neglect might arise from the priority given to how recipients 'edit' an idea

into their context, but examining the 'pushing' of an idea into a foreign context foregrounds the relationship between the socio-cultural categories of the proponents and recipients involved (in our case, Tanzanian villagers and the *mzungu*). As our case shows, recollections and/or knowledge of previous interactions between the socio-cultural categories of proponents and recipients provide the context within which the translation process takes place. And, as such, those memories and knowledge define and limit how proponents might approach recipients, and how recipients might respond and translate a foreign idea. In our case, the suspicions of the Tanzanian villagers (suspicions that arose from previous interventions by Westerners that had been unsuccessful) forced *VFA* to conceal its presence in the villages and adapt the delivery of the macro-credit idea in a culturally sensitive way. If the previous relationships had been amicable or even neutral, these strategies might not have been necessary (and the subsequent failure less likely).

Giving attention to the socio-cultural categories involved in a translation relationship, however, goes deeper than simply comparing the backgrounds of proponents and recipients. It also requires giving attention to cultural associations *of the idea*. To draw on an example beyond our case, Cuba Emprende, a social enterprise in Havana, has long sought – unsuccessfully – to introduce into Cuba concepts such as 'entrepreneurship ecosystems' and 'capitalism'. Even though Cuba Emprende is a Cuban organization, these terms are associated with 'the U.S' and thus rejected (Claus & Ravasi, 2020). It follows, we suggest, that accounts of translation should give attention not only to the relationship between the socio-cultural categories of the proponents and the recipients, but also to the socio-cultural categories associated with the actual idea.

Emotions and historical relationships. Previous exchanges, in our case between the villagers and the *mzungu*, also mattered in a violent way and fundamentally interfered with the stabilization of the macro-credit idea. They disrupted the carefully presented initiative and invoked outbursts

of emotional anger. As such, our findings provide a depiction of history that contrasts with portrayals within organization theory of history as a resource that can be 'used' (for an exemplary review, see Wadhwani et al., 2018) and, in doing so, the findings connect to recent studies that seek to qualify the constructionist approach to history. We did not set out to build theory about this aspect but suggest that our findings are vital for a nuanced understanding of high-distance translations; and, further, that they have implications for studies on the role of history in organizational studies more generally.

Recently, scholars have started to qualify the constructionist view of history by highlighting limitations to the 'pliability' of history. Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi, and Vaara (2020: 619), for example, show that 'uses' of historical recollections by Japanese family firms have to be reconciled "with the legacy of an illustrious, revered past" that is not easily amenable to retrospective manipulation. Similarly, Sasaki, Ravasi, and Micelotta (2019: 803) show that the commitment of firms to maintain good relationships with local communities may "entrap" them in the constitution of historical trajectories, despite the changing ambition of their leaders. An even more demanding critique is offered by Ravasi, Rindova, and Stigliani (2019) who show that the 'uses' of history are embedded in mnemonic practices partly carried out *outside* an organization and which are thus an additional constraining factor upon a firm's ability to mold historical recollections.

Our observation from the macro-credit case is consistent with this position and takes it further by exemplifying how emotions may not just constrain but prohibit the 'use' of history. Towards the end of our case, there was *no* conscious reflection. Instead, there was an emotional triggering of historical recollections of the *mzungu* that came as a surprise to both *VFA* and the villagers.

In the language of Toubiana and Zietsma (2017), our case shows that recollections of past events contain 'emotional registers' – deeply held norms of the appropriate emotions associated

with particular remembrances. Emotional registers colour how past events are remembered and recalled. As our case shows, they may drown the reflective and calm reconstruction of the past by sparking sudden and intense behaviors that may impede and even destroy carefully fostered relationships within just moments (as between *VEI* and the villagers).

Our portrayal of history is analogous to studies that examine the conditions that can occur in people who have experienced a traumatic event and where the recollection evokes intense feelings long after the actual traumatic event (*APA*, 2020). These studies show that it is the emotional recollections attached to cognitive accounts of the past that are responsible for *automatically* activating associated feelings of despair (Boals, Rubin, Klein, 2008). As such, emotions prohibit careful reflection of the traumatic event and constrain the way in which a recollection of a past event can be therapeutically amended, forgotten, or otherwise formed into a more positive memory (Boals et al., 2008). Further, intense emotions are highly durable – even as the cognitive account of a past experience fades (Boals & Rubin, 2011; Brewin & Holmes, 2003; Stein, Trabasso, & Albro, 2001). In our case, the experience is not an individual one as in studies on post-traumatic stress, but a shared social consciousness of traumatic events in their history (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Villagers, in our case, could barely recall any detail about colonial times, but the emotions anchored in the historical narrative of those times strikingly persisted. The implication is that 'history' – if attached to strong emotions – is not a resource but a possible liability.

Studies of post-traumatic stress imply that even if *VFA* had anticipated the emotional nature of colonial and post-colonial history, it would have been extremely difficult to do something about it. This might be particularly true for past events associated with *negative* emotions, which are known to affect the availability and persistence of recollections of the past (e.g., Kensinger, 2007;

Miron-Shatz, Stone, & Kahneman, 2009). In our case, colonial and post-colonial times did not represent a 'revered past' but one of scorned disdain.

Boundary Conditions and Future Research

There are many empirical settings by which one could deepen our understanding of the connection between history and emotions. Organizations of the reconciliation movement in Canada, for example, have struggled for decades to reconcile the highly emotional, "tragic past [of Indigenous peoples]…with a desire and need to move forward with respect, strength and dignity" (*charityvillage*, 2016). Similar examples are the rise of fascist organizations in Spain (e.g., Schatz, 2001) and the interplay of migration flows and the rise of right-wing parties in Germany (*ifo*, 2017).

It is always difficult to generalize from a single case study, and particularly one of failure. Future research is needed to challenge and apply the insights offered here. Are the strategies and processes identified characteristic of all high-distance translation contexts? And, are they unique to those contexts? Comparisons with other translation contexts – including those across low institutional distance – might be necessary and revealing. Socio-cultural distance, moreover, is also found *within* countries, as indicated by internal wars, conflicts, and profound ideological differences (e.g., Sadeh & Zilber, 2019). For example, the term 'distance' is relevant to developed countries such as the U.S. and the U.K. where racial and social class differences can be acute. Countries that have serious religious divides might also have societal arrangements characterized by high institutional distance. Learning how ideas can be conveyed across such divides holds theoretical promise but may also have important policy implications.

A final nudge from our study is the importance of adopting a longer-term perspective. Translation studies are not alone in organization theory in the tendency to analyze snapshots (as pointed out by Hardy & Maguire, 2017). The need to respect the longer term is underlined by our

case study. In paying more attention to the longitudinal processes of translations, it would be particularly interesting to examine translation processes that might occur if ideas of the original proponent are reciprocally translated back into their context of origin (Battilana, Anteby, & Sengul, 2010). The re-importation of culturally adapted ideas could be a source of "reverse innovation" (e.g., Govindarajan & Trimble, 2012). Examining the early movement, cultural assimilation, and subsequent re-translation of an idea would help complete the cycle of institutional translation.

REFERENCES

Abdallah, C. 2017. Ethnography as Writing: How creative nonfiction can inspire organizational ethnographers. In R. Mir and S. Jain (Ed.). ***Routledge Companion to Qualitative Research***. London: Routledge.

Adut, A. 2008. ***On Scandal: Moral disturbances in society, politics and art.*** Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Aminzade, R. 2003. From race to citizenship: the indigenization debate in post-socialist Tanzania. ***Studies in Comparative International Development***, 38(1): 43-63.

Aminzade, R. 2013. ***Race, Nation, and Citizenship in Postcolonial Africa: The Case of Tanzania.*** Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Anand, N. & Watson, M.R. 2004. Tournament rituals in the evolution of fields: The case of the Grammy Awards. ***Academy of Management Journal,*** 47(1): 59-80.

Andrews, M. 2013. ***The limits of institutional reform in development: Changing rules for realistic solutions***. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ansari, S.M., Fiss, P.C., & Zajac, E.J. 2010. Made to fit: How practices vary as they diffuse. ***Academy of Management Review,*** 35(1): 67-92.

Ansari, S.M., Reinecke, J., Spaan, A. 2014. How are practices made to vary? Managing practice adaptation in a multinational corporation. ***Organization Studies***, 35(9): 1313-1341.

Anteby, M. 2013. Perspective – Relaxing the taboo on telling our own stories: Upholding professional distance and personal involvement. ***Organization Science***, 24(4): 965-1290.

Anteby, M., & Molnar, V. 2012. Collective memory meets organizational identity: Remembering to forget in a firm's rhetorical history. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 55(3): 515–540.

APA, 2020. American Psychological Association: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Available at: https://www.apa.org/topics/ptsd/ (last accessed 15 February 2020).

Banerjee, S.B. & Jackson, L. 2016. Microfinance and the business of poverty reduction: Critical perspectives from rural Bangladesh. ***Human relations***, 70(1): 63-91.

Bartunek, J. M., & Louis, M. R. 1996. ***Insider-Outsider Team Research.*** Newbury Park: Sage.

Battilana, J., Anteby, M., & Sengul, M. 2010. The circulation of ideas across academic communities: When locals re-import exported ideas. ***Organization Studies***, 23(6): 695-713.

Beugelsdijk, S., Kostova, T., & Roth, K. 2017. An overview of Hofstede-inspired country-level culture research in international business since 2006. ***Journal of International Business Studies,*** 48(1): 30-47.

Boals, A. & Rubin, D.C., 2011. The integration of emotions in memories: Cognitive-emotional distinctiveness and posttraumatic stress disorder. ***Applied Cognitive Psychology***, *25*(5): 811-816.

Boals, A., Rubin, D.C., & Klein., K. 2008. Memory and coping with stress: The relationship between cognitive–emotional distinctiveness, memory valence, and distress. ***Memory***, 16(6): 637-657.

Bourguignon, F. & Sundberg, M. 2007. Aid effectiveness: Opening the black box. ***The American Economic Review***, 97(2): 316-321.

Boxenbaum, E. 2006. Lost in Translation: The making of Danish diversity management. ***American Behavioral Scientist***, 49(7): 939-948.

Boxenbaum, E., & Battilana, J. 2005. Importation as innovation: Transposing managerial practices across fields. ***Strategic Organization,*** 3(4): 355-383.

Boxenbaum, E., Jones, C., Meyer, R. E., & Svejenova, S. 2018. Towards an Articulation of the Material and Visual Turn in Organization Studies. *Organization Studies*, 39(5): 597–616.

Brehm, J.W. 1966. *A theory of psychological reactance*. New York: Academic Press.

Brewin, C. R., & Holmes, E. A. 2003. Psychological theories of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review,* 23: 339–376.

Business Insider, 2012. Hundreds of suicides in India linked to microfinance organizations. Available at: http://www.businessinsider.com/hundreds-of-suicides-in-india-linked-tomicrofinance-organizations-2012-2?IR=T (last accessed 15 February 2016).

Cappellaro, G., Tracey, P. & Greenwood, R. 2019. From logic acceptance to logic rejection: The process of destabilization in hybrid organizations. *Organization Science,* published online before print: https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.39951

Charityvillage, 2016. Creating a new legacy: How Canadian nonprofit organizations can support reconciliation. Available at: https://charityvillage.com/creating_a_new_legacy_ how_canadian_nonprofit_organizations_can_support_reconciliation/ (last accessed: 29 February 2020)

Claus, L. & Ravasi, D. 2020. Entrepreneurship in Cuba. Working Paper.

Claus, L. & Tracey, P. in-press. Making change from behind a mask: How organizations challenge guarded institutions by sparking grassroots activism. *Academy of Management Journal,* published online before print 15 Aug 2019: https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.0507.

Cornelius, C. A. 2015. *History of the East African Coast.* Independent Publishing Platform.

Czarniawska, B. & Joerges, B. 1996. Travels of Ideas. In: Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón (eds.), *Translating Organizational Change.* Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, pp. 13–48.

Czarniawska, B. & Sévon, G. 1996. *Translating Organizational Change.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Dacin, M.T., Munir, K., & Tracey, P. 2010. Formal dining at Cambridge Colleges: Linking ritual performance and institutional maintenance. *Academy of Management Journal,* 53(6): 1393-1418.

Deephouse, D. L., Bundy, J., Tost, L. P., & Suchman, M. C. 2017. Organizational legitimacy: six key questions. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE, pp. 27-54.

De la Chaux, M., Haugh, H., & Greenwood, R. 2018. Organizing refugee camps: "Respected space" and "listening posts". *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *4*(2): 155-179.

Delmestri, G. & Greenwood, R. 2016. How Cinderella became a Queen: Theorizing radical status change. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 61(4): 507-550.

Djelic, M.-L. 1998. *Exporting the American Model.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Doucouliagos, H. & Paldam, M. 2009. The aid effectiveness literature: The sad results of 40 years of research. *Journal of Economic Surveys,* 23(3): 433-461.

Duggan, C.S.M. 2016. Doing bad by doing good? Theft and abuse by lenders in the microfinance markets of Uganda. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 51(2): 189-208.

Eisenhardt, K.M. 1989. Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 532-550.

Eisenhardt, K.M. & Graebner, M.E. 2007. Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1): 25-32.

Erdman, K.M. 2017. *An analysis of Geert Hofstede's Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutes and organizations across nations.* London; Routledge.

Erez, M. 2011. Cultural Frameworks. In M. Erez & P.C. Earley (eds.), *Culture, Self-Identity, and Work*, Oxford Scholarship Online, doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195075809.001.0001

Evans, P. 2004. Development as institutional change: The pitfalls of monocropping and the potentials of deliberation. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 38(4):30-52.

Forster, E.M. 1924. *A Passage to India.* Haskell House Publishers Ltd.

Gaur, A.S. & Lu, J.W. 2007. Ownership Strategies and Survival of Foreign Subsidiaries: Impacts of Institutional Distance and Experience. *Journal of Management*, 33: 84-110.

Geertz, C. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In: *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-30.

Ghemawat, P. 2001. Distance still matters: The hard reality of global expansion. *Harvard Business Review,* 79(8): 137-140, 142.

Ghemawat, P. 2007. Differences across countries: The CAGE distance framework. Excerpted from *Redefining Global Strategy: Crossing borders in a world where differences still matter*. Harvard Business School Press, pp. 1-35.

Glynn, M.A. 2017. Theorizing the identity-institution relationship: Considering identity as antecedent to, consequence of, and mechanism for, processes of institutional change. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE, pp. 243-258.

Godfrey, P.C., Hassard, J., O'Connor, E.S., Rowlinson, M., Ruef, M. 2016. What is organizational history? Toward a creative synthesis of history and organization studies. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(4): 590-608.

Gond, J-P., & Boxenbaum, E. 2013. The Glocalization of Responsible Investment: Contextualization Work in France and Québec. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 115(4), 707-721. doi: 10.1007/s10551-013-1828-6.

Gondo, M.B. & Amis, J.A. 2013. Variations in practice adoption: The roles of conscious reflection and discourse. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(2): 229-247.

Govindarajan, V. & Trimble, C. 2012. *Reverse Innovation: Create Far from Home, Win Everywhere.* Harvard Business Review Press.

Greenwood, R., Suddaby, R., & Hinings, C.R. 2002. Theorizing change: The role of professional associations in the transformation of institutionalized fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1): 58-80.

Hampel, C. & Tracey, P. 2017. How organizations move from stigma to legitimacy: The case of Cook's travel agency in Victorian Britain. *Academy of Management Journal,* 60(6): 2175-2207.

Hardy, C. & Maguire, S. 2017. Institutional entrepreneurship and change in fields. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE, pp. 261-280.

Hinings, C.R., Logue, D. & Zietsma, C. 2017. Fields, institutional infrastructure, and governance. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE, pp. 163-189.

Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hogg, M.A. & Terry, D.J. 2000. Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Academy of Management Review,* 25(1): 121-140.

ifo, 2017. The relationship between immigration and the success of far-right political parties in Germany. Available at: https://www.ifo.de/DocDL/dice-report-2017-4-otto-steinhardt-december.pdf (last accessed 15 February 2020).

Iliffe, J. 1979. *A Modern History of Tanganyika.* Cambridge University Press.

Jarzabkowski, P.A., & Lê, J.K. 2017. We have to do this and that? You must be joking: Constructing and responding to paradox through humor. *Organization Studies,* *38*(3) 433-62.

Jepperson, R.L. 1991. Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In: *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis,* ed. by Walter W. Powell and Paul J DiMaggio. University of Chicago Press, pp. 143-163

Jones, C., Meyer, R.E., Jancsary, D., & Höllerer, M.A. 2017. The material and visual basis of institutions. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2[nd]ed). London: SAGE, pp. 621-646.

Kamei, S. 2016. Ownership in the Development Discourse: A case study in education in Tanzania. *Doctoral Dissertations May 2014 – current*. University of Massachusetts.

Kensinger, E.A. 2007. Negative emotion enhances memory accuracy: Behavioral and neuroimaging evidence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 16(4): 213-218.

Kipping, M. & Üsdiken, B. 2014. History in Organization and Management Theory: More than meets the eye. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1): 535-588.

Kostova, T. 1999. Transnational transfer of strategic organizational practices: A contextual perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2): 308-324.

Kostova, T., Roth, K., & Dacin, M.T. 2008. Institutional theory in the study of multinational corporations: A critique and new directions. *Academy of Management Review*, 33: 994-1006.

Lal, P. 2010. Militants, mothers, and the national family: "Ujamaa", gender, and rural development in postcolonial Tanzania. *Journal of African History*, 51(1): 1-20.

Lal, P. 2012. Self-reliance and the state: the multiple meanings of development in early post-colonial Tanzania. *International African Institute: Africa*, 82(2): 212-234.

Lal, P. 2015. *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World*. Cambridge University Press.

Lamin, A. & Zaheer, S. 2012. Wall Street vs. Main Street: Firm strategies for defending legitimacy and their impact on different stakeholders. *Organization Science*, 23(1): 47-66.

Langley, A. 1999. Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review,* 24: 691-710.

Langley, A. 2007. Process thinking in strategic organization. *Strategic Organization*, 5: 271-282.

Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. 2010. Perspectives on Process Organization Studies. In T. Hernes & S. Maitlis (Eds.), *Process, Sensemaking and Organizing*: 1-27. Oxford University Press.

Langley, A. & Royer, I. 2006. Perspectives on doing case study research in organizations. *Management*, 9(3): 73-86.

Langley, A., Smallman, C., Tsoukas, H., & Van de Ven, A. 2013. Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity, and flow. *Academy of Management Journal,* 56(1): 1-13.

Lawi, Y.Q. 1999. Where physical and ideological landscapes meet: Landscape use and ecological knowledge in Iraqw, Northern Tanzania, 1920-1950s. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 32(2): 281-310.

Lawi, Y.Q. 2007. Tanzania's Operation Vijiji and local ecological consciousness: The case of Eastern Iraqwland, 1974-1976. *The Journal of African History*, 48(1): 69-93.

Lawrence, T. 2017. High-Stakes Institutional Translation: Establishing North America's first Government-sanctioned Supervised Injection Site. *Academy of Management Journal,* 60(5), published online: 20 Jan 2017, https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0714.

Legum, C. & Mmari, G.R.V. 1995. *Mwalimu: The influence of Nyerere*. African World Press.

Li, J., Yang, J. Y. & Yue, D. R. 2007. Identity, Community and Audience: How Wholly Owned Foreign Subsidiaries Gain Legitimacy in China. *Academy of Management Journal,* 50(1): 175-190.

Little, M. 1991. Imperialism, colonialism and the new science of nutrition: The Tanganyika experience, 1925-1945. *Social Science & Medicine*, 32(1): 11-14.

Locke, K., Golden-Biddle, K., & Feldman, M. 2008. Making Doubt Generative: Rethinking the Role of Doubt in the Research Process. Perspective: *Organization Science*, 19(6): 907-918.

Mair, J. Wolf, M. & Seelos, C. 2016. Scaffolding: A process of transforming patterns of inequality in small-scale societies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(6): 2021-2044.

Mantere, S. & Vaara, E. 2008. On the problem of participation in strategy: A critical discursive perspective. *Organization Science,* 19(2): 341-358.

Mbilinyi, M.J. 1972. The state of women in Tanzania. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 6(2): 371-377.

McKague, K., Zietsma, C., & Oliver, C. 2015. Building the Social Structure of a Market. *Organization Studies*, 36(8): 1063-1093.

Mills, A.J., Suddaby, R., Foster, W.M., & Durepos, G. 2016. Re-visiting the historic turn 10 years later: Current debates in management and organizational history – an introduction. *Management & Organizational History*, 11: 67-76.

Miron, A.M. & Brehm, J.W. 2006. Reactance theory: 40 years later. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie*, 37(1): 9-18.

Miron-Shatz, T., Stone, A., & Kahneman, D. 2009. Memories of yesterday's emotions: Does the valence of experience affect the memory-experience gap? *Emotion,* 9(6): 885–891.

Morris, T. & Lancaster, Z. 2006. Translating Management Ideas. *Organization Studies,* 27(2): 2017-233.

Mwakikagile, G. 2016. *The Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar: Formation of Tanzania and its Challenges.* New Africa Press.

Nicolini, D., 2010. Medical innovation as a process of translation: a case from the field of telemedicine. *British Journal of Management,* 21(4): 1011-1026.

Pallas, J., Fredriksson, M., & Wedlin, L. 2016. Translating institutional logics: When the media logic meets professions. *Organization Studies,* 37(11): 1661-1684.

Phillips, N., Tracey, P., & Karra, N. 2009. Rethinking institutional distance: Strengthening the tie between new institutional theory and international management. *Strategic Organization,* 7(3): 339-348.

Rao, H. & Dutta, S. 2012. Free spaces as organizational weapons of the weak. Religious festivals and regimental mutinies in the 1857 Bengal Native Army. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 57(4): 625-668.

Ravasi, D., Rindova, V.P., & Stigliani, I. 2019. The stuff of legend. History, memory, and the temporality of organizational identity construction. *Academy of Management Journal,* 62(5): 1523-1555.

Reay, R., Zafar, A., Monteiro, P., & Glaser, V. 2019. Presenting Findings from Qualitative Research: One Size Does Not Fit All. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations.* Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Roth, K. & Kostova, T. 2003. The use of the multinational corporation as a research context. *Journal of Management,* 9: 883-890.

Røvik, K. A. 2007. *Trends and Translations: Ideas that Influence the Organization of the 21st Century,* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Rowlinson, M., Hassard, J., & Decker, S. 2014. Strategies for organizational history: A dialogue between historical theory and organization theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 39(3): 250-274.

Ruebottom, T. & Auster, E.R. 2017. Reflexive dis/embedding: Personal narratives, empowerment and the emotional dynamics of interstitial events. *Organization Studies*, published online before print. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840617709308.

Sadeh, L.J. & Zilber, T.B. 2019. Bringing "together": emotions and power in organizational responses to institutional complexity. *Academy of Management Journal,* 62(5): 1413-1443.

Sahlin-Andersson, K. 1996. Imitating by editing success: The construction of organizational fields. In B. Czarniawska & G. Sévon (Eds.), *Translating organizational change*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 69-92.

Saka, A. 2004. The cross-national diffusion of work systems: the translation of Japanese operations in the UK. *Organization Studies,* 25(2): 217-236.

Sandberg, J. & Tsoukas, H. 2015. Making sense of the sensemaking perspective: Its constituents, limitations and opportunities for further development. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(S1): S6–S32.

Sasaki, I., Kotlar, J. Ravasi, D. & Vaara, E. 2020. Dealing with revered past: Historical identity statements and strategic change in Japanese family firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 41(3): 590-623, published online before print: https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3065.

Sasaki, I., Ravasi, D., & Micelotta, E. R. 2019. Family firms as institutions: Cultural reproduction and status maintenance among multi-centenary shinise in Kyoto. *Organization Studies*, 40(6): 793–831.

Saul, J.S. 1974. The state in post-colonial societies: Tanzania. In: *The Social Register 1974* by Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds), Vol. 11, pp. 349-372.

Schatz, S. 2001. Democracy's breakdown and the rise of fascism: The case of the Spanish Second Republic, 1931-6. *Social History*, 26(2): 145-165.

Selznick, P. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization.* University of California Press.

Spitzer, H. 2014. "Mzungu, how are you?" Reflections on the human element of North-South partnerships. In: *Appear* by Albrecht J. Obrecht, pp. 197-197. Available online at: https://doi.org/10.7767/9783205201731-050

Stein, N. L., Trabasso, T., & Albro, E. R. 2001. Understanding and organizing emotional experience: Autobiographical accounts of traumatic events. *Empirical Studies of the Arts,* 19: 111–130

Tanzania UNDP (Report). 2014. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/thdr2014-main.pdf.

The Guardian, 2011. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/31/india-microfinance-debt-struggle-suicide (last accessed 5 December, 2016).

Toubiana, M. & Zietsma, C. 2017. The message is on the wall: Emotions, institutional expectations, and the dynamics of emotive institutional work. *Academy of Management Journal,* 60(3): 922-953.

Tracey, P., Dalpiaz, E., & Phillips, N. 2018. Fish out of water: Translation, legitimation, and new venture creation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(5), published online: 24 Oct 2018, https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0264.

Tsuruta, T. 2006. African imaginations of moral economy: Notes on indigenous economic concepts and practices in Tanzania. *African Studies Quarterly*, 9(1-2): 103-121.

Turshen, M. 1977. The impact of colonialism on health and health services in Tanzania. *International Journal of Health Services*, 7(1): 7-35.

Vaara, E., & Lamberg, J.-A. 2016. Taking historical embeddedness seriously: Three historical approaches to advance strategy process and practice research. *Academy of Management Review*, 41: 633–657.

Venkataraman, H., Vermeulen, P., Raaijmakers, A., & Mair, J. 2016. Market meets family: The interplay between institutional logics in rural India. *Organization Studies*, 37(5): 709-733.

Wadhwani, R.D., Suddaby, R., Mordhorst, M., & Popp, A. 2018. History as organizing: Uses of the past in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 39(12): 1663-1683.

Wæraas, A. & Sataøen, H.L. 2014. Trapped in conformity? Translating reputation management into practice. *Scandinavian Journal of Management,* 30(2): 242-253.

Waldorff, S. B. & Greenwood, R. 2011.The Dynamics of Community Translation: Danish Health-Care Centres. In: Marquis, C., et al., (Eds.) Communities and Organizations, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations,* 33. Emerald Group Publishing, pp.113-142.

Wedlin, L., & Sahlin, K. 2017. The imitation and translation of management ideas. In: R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE, pp. 102-127.

World Bank. 2016. Sub-Saharan Africa: Poverty & Equity Data. Available at: http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/SSA (last accessed 31 December, 2016).

Wright, C. & Nyberg, D. 2017. An inconvenient truth: How organizations translate climate change into business as usual. *Academy of Management Journal,* 60(5): 1633-1661.

Xu, D. & Shenkar, O. 2002. Institutional Distance and the Multinational Enterprise. *Academy of Management Journal,* 27(4): 608-618.

Zbaracki, M.J. 1998. The rhetoric and reality of total quality management. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43(3): 602-636.

Zilber, T.B., 2006. The work of the symbolic in institutional processes: Translations of rational myths in Israeli high tech. *Academy of Management Journal,* 49(2): 281-303.

TABLE 1
Data Sources

Observation*		Interviews & Meetings		Books, Documents, & Videos	
Site	*Hrs.*	*Interviewee*	*No. #*	*Key Documents and Visuals*	*pp/min*
Villages For Africa (VFA) HQ France	3	*VFA* members	17	*VFA* Internal docs (incl. e-mails)	138*pp*
Village Enterprise Incubator (VEI)	100	*VEI* members[8]	20	*VFA* Personal diary & blog entries	87
				VEI Strategy documents	13
Village enterprises (*VE*)	18	*VE* members (MT & BOD)	47	*VEs* Internal docs (incl. vignettes)	39
Group meetings	20	Village residents	20	Books (2)[9], academic articles (15)[10] on Tanzania's (pre-) colonial history	234
incl. *Video conferences (remote)*	*3*	Regional politicians	2		
incl. *VFA/VEI/VE meetings*	*8*	Social impact investors	3		
incl. *VFA trainings of VEI*	*9*			Books (5)[11], academic articles (24)[12] on politics, legal system, & economy in post-colonial Tanzania	675
*Note: Only includes formal observation hours by first author; does not include hours spent in the context by third author [local resident].		Active participation in group meetings	10		
		incl. *Video conferences*	*2*		
		incl. *VFA/VEI/VE (on site)*	*8*	Videos produced by *VFA* & recorded TV reports (about *VEs*)	67*min*
TOTAL **Observation Hours**	**141+**	**Interviews** **Active Meetings**	**109** **10**	**Books & Documents** **Visuals/Video Footage**	**1186pp** **67min**

[8] Local representatives of *VFA* in Tanzania. Nine of these interviews were conducted with the third author in his role as a former *VEI* member.
[9] Iliffe (1979) and Cornelius (2015)
[10] For example, articles by Meredeth Turshen (1977), Marilyn Little (1991), Marjorie J. Mbilinyi (1972), and Tadasu Tsuruta (2006)
[11] Aminzade (2013), Kamei (2016), Lal (2015), Legum & Mmari (1995), Mwakikagile (2016)
[12] For example, articles by Yusufu Qwaray Lawi (1999, 2007), John S. Saul (1974), Priya Lal (2010, 2012), and Ronald Aminzade (2003)

TABLE 2.a
Contextual Conditions: Core Constructs and Illustrative Data

Core Constructs	Summary of Constructs	Illustrative Data
Historical Suspicions	Villagers (unprompted) remind of past disappointments with the *mzungu* and their social interventions	"We have this experience with most [foreign] organizations: they do trainings, but they leave. Or they give grants for water pumps and others to help farmers…" (Village resident, Video archives) „…and I heard this consistently from other folks that one of the problems with the big NGOs and even the churches…is oftentimes you have some sort of executives… fly in from the outside periodically to monitor things, get their data, get the photo ops….then fly back out… (*VFA*, Interview no. 95)
Hope and Admiration	Villagers express hope and admiration when they talk about the initial proposition of the *mzungu*	"This model is very different from all the NGOs. NGOs come here, implement something, and then move out; while then, the project no longer exists because it is not implemented by anybody anymore. But according to this model, you are given capital, and then through that capital, you have to create your own development. This is a much better model than that of NGOs." (Village A, Interview no. 27) Observational Data: Villagers are impressed and incredibly excited to meet a *mzungu*, often with the hope to be listened to and understood. [We] are often followed back to our place, accompanied by laughing children and talkative residents. (Field Diary)

TABLE 2.b
Phase 1 – Pre-adoption Translation: **Core Constructs and Illustrative Data**

Theoretical Dimension	Core Constructs	Summary of Constructs	Illustrative Data
Concealing Foreignness *by proponent*	**Using Surrogates**	*VFA* hires local representatives to become the 'local anchor points' for villagers and to minimize the presence of *wazungu* in the villages	*VEI* is established to minimize the presence of *wazungu* in the villages. *VEI* consists of "village members from the region that can connect to the members of the targeted villages with their cultural and local background." (*VEI*, Strategy Document) "You are the stable part… you've been around for a while; you guys know what you're doing… we want to establish a model based on *your* hard work... this is the role you're playing." (*VFA* member to *VEI* member, Discussion No.1)
	Political Co-Optation	*VFA* uses *VEI* members to connect to village elites that help convince villagers of the value of the macro-credit idea	"[Involving the village elders] is a perfect way of sharing new norms, and new traditions. More powerful certainly than policy statements, handbooks, and very likely laws – laws that may or may not apply, or at least effectively 'reach' these communities. When told by respected community members, and reinforced through ongoing assessment and dialog, then the new norms that align the interest of the investors with the desires of the Village Enterprises have a good chance of being embraced." (Personal Blog, *VFA* Managing Director (*MD*))

Adaptive Conveyance *by proponent*	**Localized Customization**	*VFA* pays particular attention to communicating the macro-credit idea in a culturally meaningful and locally accessible way	"We continued to march forward...launching a new training curriculum – heavily dependent on oral tradition (i.e. cases) and highly interactive… Again, I emphasize the need for the people in the villages to set the priorities for their communities and their future…their ideas (not ours)." (Personal Diary, *VFA MD*) "…I really want to understand… so that we're picking the right words and those words are being translated appropriately and that we're doing the things that will help *them*… (*VFA* member to *VEI* member, Discussion no.3)
	Ceremonial Affirmation	*VFA* uses ceremonies to recognize villagers' progress in trainings, downplay their perceived dependence on outside help, and affirm their independence and worth	Referring to a training certificate ceremony, the *VFA* managing director explains: "This is about us getting them energized… they need to feel privileged and excited. That's what we need to step away at some point." (*VFA* members, Discussion, Field Diary) "…probably the Number 1 thing, above all else, is the community. All the good things that are happening, the community says, 'that's *our* village company'. And [when] we have some kind of ceremony….we need to do that so that people are like 'Man, this is awesome, I love it'…they feel great about it because it's something that *has* impact and they can see the future too." (*VFA* member to *VEI* member, Discussion no.3)

TABLE 2.c
Phase 2 - Post-adoption Translation: Core Constructs and Illustrative Data

Theoretical Dimension	Core Constructs	Summary of Constructs	Illustrative Data
Cultural Assimilation *by recipient*	**Reinforcing a Sense of Inclusive-Exclusivity**	Villagers that are part of the macro-credit model begin to feel special for being part of it and acquire fame in the region	In a TV interview that was conducted by a local producer, a village resident proudly explains: "[*VEI* is going] to build capacity and is ethical when giving out money. They build individual abilities within our community [...] we are requesting other organizations in the Manyara region to follow this trend of [*VEI*]. It is a very new and nice system which never happened before – where we get money as a group to do our business, make profits, and reinvest in community development." (Village resident, Video archives)
	Materialization of Social Norms	Villages begin to materialize their social benefits by using their profits to meet social needs in their villages (e.g. a village school) – producing a visual statement of community norms.	Observational Data: Village B uses its profits to build a house for the main teacher of their village school who could often not attend classes in the rainy season as she had to travel from a different region every day. Village B also invests in alleviating village members' yearly 'social tax.' Village C uses its profits to renovate their classrooms in the village school. Village D invests in health care coverage for their community members. (Field Diary & Internal Documents by *VIA* and *VEI*)

			"Seeing is believing in these villages. If they don't see the direct link between the profit that has been made after six month and that it's put into the social need, they just don't believe it." (*VFA* member, Discussion no.2)
			"…if the village company could make a huge profit, we could implement a huge social need, and the community would start to understand and cooperate…villagers need to *see* the impact of the company." (Village A, Interview no. 27)
	Emotive Celebration	Villagers celebrate the materialization of social norms and their collective accomplishments with colorful festivities	"Celebration helped us share with the community our success of the Village Company, and it was like an opportunity to teach others about the model - how it works, and the benefit of it to them as the community. Also, celebrating was like a relief for us, after a long time of working with the Village Company…On this day we ate, drank…we had traditional dances and were being congratulated by the community. It gave us popularity in the community…" (*VEI* member re-citing a conversation with member of Village C, Interview no.97)
			Please see Figure 1 for a visualization and our Findings Section for a vignette of this construct.

TABLE 2.d
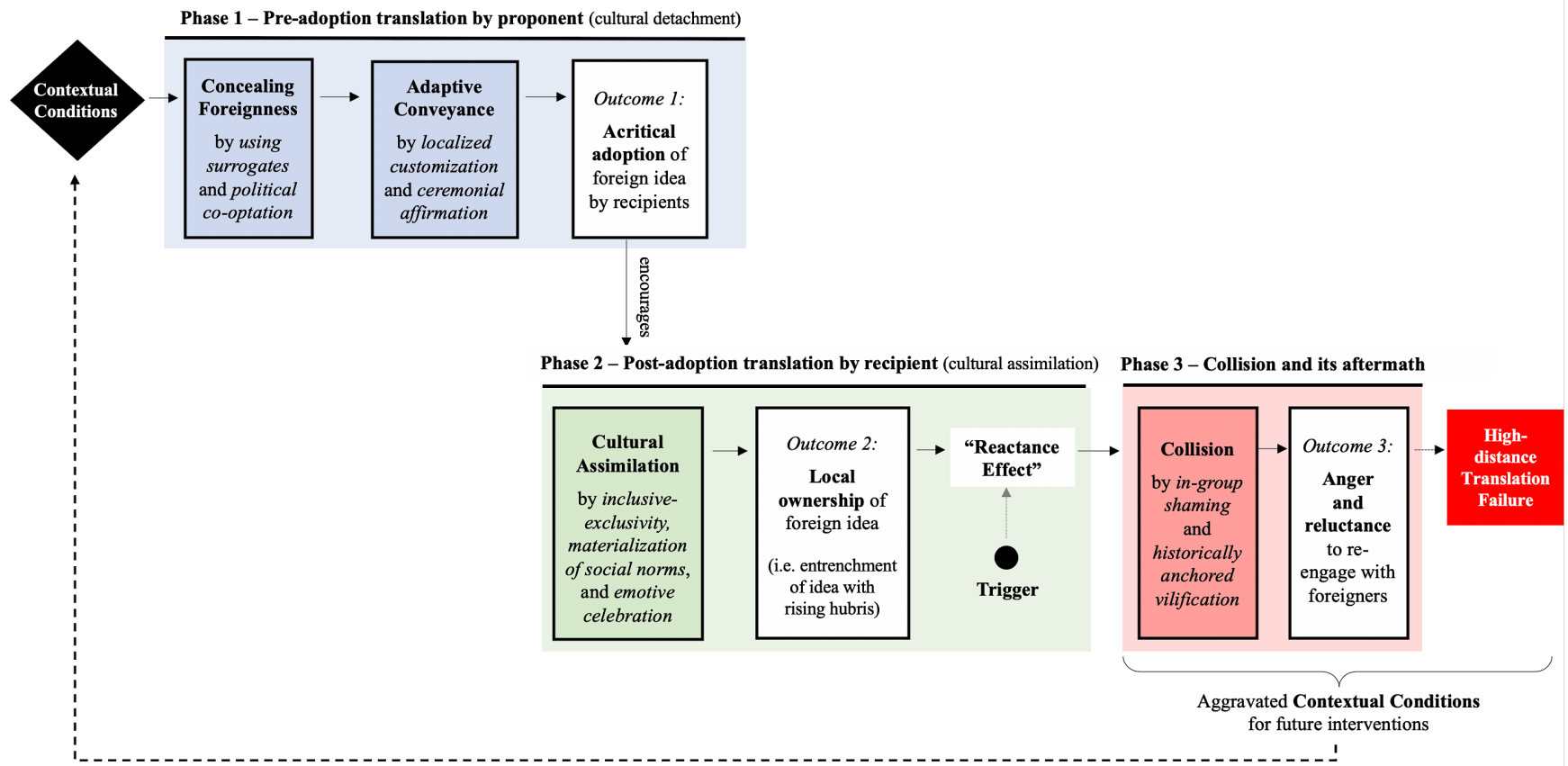***Phase 3 – Collision and its Aftermath*: Core Constructs and Illustrative Data**

Theoretical Dimension	Core Constructs	Summary of Constructs	Illustrative Data
Collision	**In-group Shaming**	*VEI* members who are from the region are shamed by other village members for being associated with *wazungu*	"Some people in the community, they're saying 'look, you are a Tanzanian... 'why are you running away suddenly like this?'... so, everybody is sad... some community members even accused me of what we call *takasa pesa* ('money laundering') in Swahili – so they thought I was asking a bribe or illegal cash.... everybody [is] frustrated…" (*VEI*, Interview no.73) In informal conversations, *VEI* members talk about feeling "ashamed" and not being able to return to some of the villages to this day. (Field Diary)
	Historically anchored Vilification	*VFA* members who appear in the villages are met with intense anger and feelings of betrayal and exploitation that are anchored in past experiences with *wazungu*	"There is *no colonialism* here anymore. Why are you harassing me? Why are you even here, you mzungu? We are not here to write *your* story." (*VEI* Interview about a meeting between *VEI* and *VFA*, emphasis in the original) "You come here to test your model with us, now you get it is not working, then you decide to close. *You made us laboratory animals*!" (Village B, Interview no. 67) Please also see our Findings Section for a vignette of this construct.

FIGURE 1
Village Celebrations of Material Social Benefits

Source: Third Author's archive [a village celebrates its accomplishments]

FIGURE 2
Process Model of High-Distance Translation Failure

Phase 1 – Pre-adoption translation by proponent (cultural detachment)

Contextual Conditions

Concealing Foreignness

by *using surrogates* and *political co-optation*

Adaptive Conveyance

by *localized customization* and *ceremonial affirmation*

Outcome 1:

Acritical adoption of foreign idea by recipients

encourages

Phase 2 – Post-adoption translation by recipient (cultural assimilation)   **Phase 3 – Collision and its aftermath**

Cultural Assimilation

by *inclusive-exclusivity, materialization of social norms*, and *emotive celebration*

Outcome 2:

Local ownership of foreign idea

(i.e. entrenchment of idea with rising hubris)

"Reactance Effect"

●

Trigger

Collision

by *in-group shaming* and *historically anchored vilification*

Outcome 3:

Anger and reluctance to re-engage with foreigners

High-distance Translation Failure

Aggravated **Contextual Conditions** for future interventions

62

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Laura Claus (l.claus@ucl.ac.uk) is Assistant Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at the UCL School of Management. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge Judge Business School in 2018. Her research examines different organizational forms and strategies for social innovation and social change.

Royston Greenwood (royston.greenwood@ualberta.ca) is Professor Emeritus at the University of Alberta, and Professorial Fellow at the University of Edinburgh Business School. He received his PhD from the University of Birmingham in the UK. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Management and an Honorary Member of the European Group for Organization Studies (EGOS). His current work focuses upon the application of institutional analysis to social issues – such as corruption and wrongdoing – in professional contexts.

John Mgoo (john.mgoo@yahoo.com) holds a bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Marketing from the St. Augustine University of Tanzania. He works for different non-governmental organizations, specialized in mining and microfinance. He has experience conducting trainings related to project management, marketing and sales, loan processing, and administrative work. He was born in the Singida region and currently resides in Babati.