Cocoa and Chocolate: Deconstructing the Development Paradigm in Cameroon

Chelsea VanHook
Advisor: Dr. Simanti Dasgupta

Research Questions
1. How is international development conceptualized at the local level compared to at the global level?
2. What are the underlying assumptions that can account for different conceptualizations?
3. How are these assumptions problematic and what are the impacts on the people?

International Development
Neo-liberal economic development claims economic growth will naturally alleviate poverty. Growth is achieved through efficient market competition.

Methodology
Interviews were conducted based on survey questions. Participants included Common Initiative Groups, farmers, and agricultural technicians. Field observations and agricultural techniques were recorded during the month-long stay.

Findings & Conclusions
The average Cameroonian is able to produce cocoa, but is unable to afford chocolate, indicating an extractive market relationship.

“They don’t allow buyers from Douala to come here because they know that they will come and disturb the market. So really they are exploiting us. They do their business in a monopoly type of way so that there will be no competition. . . You cannot sell well.”

“While you are working and you’ve increased you’re production. . . You will have more than before.”

“It’s quite some time now the government stop giving subsidies. . . In the past they used to empower the Community Development office. . . Those were recommendations, some of the recommendations from some foreign bodies. . . If you need that which should give you funds, you have to maybe reduce the size of your government, you have to reduce government expenditures, and subsidies. . .”