



THE **SANDBOX** BLOG

Building bridges in Guatemala; Bloomberg and Chomsky on the importance of forests

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While the Pilot Projects team finishes up week two of work on the [Brooklyn Bridge Forest](#) project in Guatemala ([read all about it here](#)), we're pleased to share a quick update about the trip and a couple of forest-related tidbits from elsewhere on planet Earth.

A few days ago, Scott led a suspension bridge-building lesson at local school in Uaxactún! We'll give you the full scoop later; in the meantime, here are a few super-fun photos.



Speaking of forests, we came across this *BloombergBusiness* item last month that confirmed what we've been suspecting for a long time. Titled "[Scientists Seeking to Save World Find Best Technology Is Trees](#)," the article states:

"Oxford University scientists, after a year of research, have determined the best technology to suck carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and try to reverse global warming.

It's trees."

Since we've been such big fans of trees for so long, it was nice corroboration to read: "[Scientists] considered methods ranging from capturing emissions from factories and power stations to extracting carbon dioxide directly from the air, and adding lime to oceans to increase their absorption of the gas... None were more promising than planting trees... Relative to other so-called Negative Emissions Technologies, afforestation has fewer uncertainties and offers other benefits to the environment..."

We're very pleased that, as a part of the Brooklyn Bridge Forest project, a 200,000-acre tropical forest reserve in Central America could continue to provide its long list of benefits to human health and the environment for decades to come.

Lastly, a few years ago, Scott spent some one-on-one time with the luminary linguist, philosopher, political commentator, and social justice activist [Noam Chomsky](#). The two discussed trends in architecture, culture as a language, and deforestation in Central America. Regarding the latter, Chomsky seemed to share one of Pilot Projects' central philosophies: participation from a variety of stakeholders in any effort is crucial to success.



The Uaxactún forest, seen from Tikal's Temple IV



Image by Philip Jones Griffiths/Magnum, via NewYorker.com



Scott discusses the project with forest residents.

In this excerpt, Mr. Chomsky describes some of the intricacies and challenges of cross-cultural information gathering and disseminating practices:

"There's a lot of cultural wealth which is not studied directly. Up until pretty recently, an anthropologist would go to some simple primitive tribe in a non-technological society and do standard field work: find some 'usual suspect' informants, ask them some questions, come home, write a doctoral dissertation. But it's recently been discovered that, no matter what the society, that's the wrong way to go about it. The people who really transmit the culture are often not the people you expect. For example, in agriculture. There's often thousands of years of knowledge behind the extremely rich agriculture in these societies, but nobody's conscious of it; the farmers just know it. And often, it's the women who know the most, not the men, but nobody asks them. So there's all kinds of cultural wealth just beginning to be discovered."

In Guatemala right now, Pilot Projects is seeking input and perspectives to inform the Brooklyn Bridge Forest project and related efforts from a diverse array of locals, including students, elected officials, sawmill employees, and community leaders. In the days ahead, we're looking forward to sharing more insights about participatory research and community-led development from Scott's conversation with Mr. Chomsky.

Your turn: Share a forest story in the comments!

Tags: [brooklyn bridge forest](#), [collaborative design](#), [guatemala](#), [sustainability](#)

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