# South-South knowledge intermediation: approaches to triangular cooperation in knowledge for development

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by

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# Abstract

This multi-disciplinary study explores a field of enquiry at the boundaries of information science and development studies. It is concerned with the facilitation of knowledge processes - processes of knowledge exchange and co-creation - in the international development sector. Additionally, this study considers the importance of human relationships and social networks (and power), and studies these in knowledge intermediation projects.

The main gaps that are addressed regard the understanding of intermediating knowledge process concerned with learners situated (partly) across cultural, language, and political boundaries in developing countries. Such projects/programmes/approaches, coined South-South knowledge exchanges by the World Bank, have only seen very limited amount of research; the foci of this research are human relationships and initiation acts, which add further novelty.

By mirroring ideas of triangular and South-South collaboration the thesis explores knowledge intermediation projects and three roles played by actors participating in such projects: the intermediary and facilitator of knowledge processes (usually backed by a funding body), someone sharing knowledge (knowledge holders), and someone learning from others (knowledge seeker). This study not only shows how these roles apply to knowledge intermediation projects but also addresses their influence on relational elements at the interpersonal level.

Two case studies are used to show how knowledge intermediation projects in the international development sector are shaped by their approach (demand initiated, facilitator/funder initiated), especially in terms of the relationships they foster. The sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD) is used in the study of the case studies, which is supplemented by social network analysis. After linking the discovered relationship patterns to the initiation acts in the respective case studies a picture emerges that offers two broad insights. Firstly, facilitator/funder initiation of South-South knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to many potential relationships, most of them irrelevant to an individual and, therefore, unestablished. Secondly, demand initiation of South-South

knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to very few, yet highly relevant, relationships.

*Keywords/tags:* knowledge for development, triangular collaboration, knowledge intermediation, facilitation, knowledge sharing, relationships, information behaviour, development paradigms, discourse analysis, social network analysis.

## Acknowledgements

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This multi-disciplinary study explores a field of enquiry at the boundaries of information science and development studies. It is concerned with the facilitation of knowledge processes - processes of knowledge exchange and co-creation - in the international development sector; a subject sometimes called *knowledge for development*. Additionally, this enquiry considers the importance of human relationships and social networks (and power) and studies these in knowledge intermediation projects. Thus, this research project explores a new set of questions in development cooperation and shows how different approaches to the facilitation of knowledge processes can impact the relational outcomes of knowledge intermediation projects.

Those questions originate in an understanding of development that is concerned with the self-led improvement of holistic well-being, rather than focusing on narrow economic measures and indicators of progress. It is the realisation that human beings' perceived situation depends to a large extent on the complex and dynamic social, cultural and political environment in which they are embedded. Relationships and processes of self-actualisation and learning are core processes when development is approached from a holistic well-being angle. Whilst knowledge for development has not explicitly taken up this link it is clearly connected to these processes.

Knowledge for development has an already rich history. Most recently Akude (2014) looked back at the origins and meanings of the concept that is a core concern in this research project. He argues that precursors to the concept emerged in the management sciences in and around the 1950s and entered the development sector in the 1990s; most notably, through its use as the title for the World Bank's 1998 *World Development Report* (World Bank 1998b).

Akude (2014) continues with a three tier understanding of knowledge for development: entailing the micro-, meso-, and macro-level. The micro broadly represents the personal sphere of knowledge for development, meso the institutional, and macro the sectorial.

However, the main points put forward in his review are that modes of "global" knowledge production in the development industry are dominated by the "West".[1]

This understanding is reinforced when reading the recent work of Hornidge (2014; 2013) in which the argument is put forward that the construction of knowledge for development (as well as the construction of 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge') has been led by "Northern" actors. She demonstrates that ideas of the knowledge society (and with it conceptions of knowledge) have come to be accepted in policy debate first in 'developed' countries and then got exported, mainly through the work of individuals (e.g. scientists) and institutions (e.g. international governmental organizations), to emergent economies and 'developing countries'.

Hornidge concludes that both, 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge for development', are discourses that are normative, factual, and hegemonic. They are normative since knowledge society and knowledge for development are portrayed as leading standards by the above mentioned actors through authoritative global discourses. They are factual since these concepts left the realm of the normative discourse and were picked up by governments and other institutions as guides for action (e.g. policy making, investment, etc.). They are hegemonic since the discourse of 'knowledge society' originated in industrial nations and was from there introduced into the realms of development and poverty reduction via international governmental organisations. Hornidge (2014) argues that developing nations have been led to (and voluntarily adopted) ideas portrayed in these discourses that have arisen in very different contexts and reinforced competitive disadvantages through entering established and highly competitive sectors, and sidelining investment in competitive advantages. In Hornidge's eyes, knowledge society and knowledge for development are the latest in a variety of discourses that claim to have found the 'golden bullet' for economic growth and development.

This situates this study in an established discourse about knowledge for development that at the macro-level shows signs of hegemonic and "Western" dominated knowledge processes.

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[1] Whenever double quotation marks are present without a reference they are used as 'scare quotes'. Single quotation marks are used for concepts. Italics are used for word emphasis and publication titles.

However, what is taken up in this argument is the idea of knowledge intermediation, which is defined as:

> Any processes and practices concerned with informing, linking, matchmaking, engaging, collaborating and building of adaptive capacity,(Jones et al. 2012) of two or more external knowledge producers/holders and users/seekers, whether these are explicitly labelled as knowledge intermediation or not (Mansfield & Grunewald 2013, p.11).

A plethora of terms exist that are employed to describe processes and practices that are similar to what is termed, for the purpose of this thesis, knowledge intermediation. Knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, knowledge sharing, knowledge mobilisation, Knowledge*, knowledge brokering, etc. are just some examples. As further detailed in the literature review, knowledge intermediation is understood to have a distinct focus on processes and functions; whilst most other concepts have a tendency to objectify knowledge and to separate out different states in which that "knowledge" is contained.

Knowledge intermediation is explored in this thesis with regards to South-South knowledge exchange; another concept coined under the influence of the World Bank. South-South knowledge exchange has its own context which is influenced by discourses around partnerships and modes of development cooperation. Eyben (2013) introduces us to these discourses by first outlining how the creation of development knowledge is a contentious issue, how it is seen that a Northern perspective is generally prioritized; and how the expectation is that what comes from the North is superior to what everyone else has to offer.

Eyben continues arguing that at the 2011 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, the recognition by traditional donor countries, that global power balances are shifting led to an understanding that "a new, multi-stakeholder Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in which different modalities and responsibilities would apply to South–South Cooperation" (2013, p.2) was needed. Eyben also explores the meaning of South-South cooperation and outlines:

> 'South–South Cooperation' contains a number of meanings associated with horizontal power relations, mutual self-interest and absence of conditionalities in which countries with recent development experience share this with the rest of the

South. It is about learning from other countries' domestic, post-colonial experiences when facing specifically southern development challenges – as opposed to the northern, imperial experience. (Eyben 2013, p.3).

South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, where institutions like the UNDP, Worldbank or ILO get engaged in facilitating south-south engagements, shall serve as a backdrop for the studied intermediation processes in the realm of 'South-South knowledge exchange'.

It becomes apparent how the dynamics of cooperation and collaboration are central in understanding development, its strengths and its weaknesses. However, these discourses are situated at Akude's (2014) macro-level; the policy level at which country representatives engage in broad discussions. This study has identified this as a gap in the literature.

Because of that, this study set out to uncover how some of these processes, that scholars and other individual's discuss at the macro-level, play out at the programme/project level. This question directs the attention on knowledge intermediation processes and knowledge intermediation projects where South-South and triangular relationships are developed and maintained. It is with this in mind that this study looks at the roles various actors play in intermediation projects. Mirroring the above stated about triangular and South-South collaboration one can see how in knowledge intermediation projects there are three main roles: the intermediary and facilitator of knowledge processes (usually backed by a funding body), someone with knowledge to share (knowledge holders), and someone who can learn from that (knowledge seeker); these roles are illustrated in Figure 1. This study not only shows how these roles apply to knowledge intermediation projects but also addresses the relational elements at the interpersonal level. This is a combination of questions and linking of ideas that has not seen academic attention before and, thus, a clear indicator for the originality of this study.

The literature on south-south knowledge exchange is non-existent when it comes to the interpersonal level and the ways that broad ideas of empowerment and mutual self-interest play out micro (and meso) level. Another indicator for the originality of this study is the fact that it brings together a diverse set of insights from multiple fields; this resulted in a rich multi-faceted discussion of the phenomena under study. The argument developed in this

thesis is based on the existing literature in the information sciences and development studies,[2] as well as the empirical data gathered in two case studies.

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[2] It is worth noting that the thesis is a demonstration and example for how the information sciences and development studies can be brought together. Every reference used from different fields is evidence that this study is occupying a transdisciplinary space. Where there are overlaps or differences in the literature becomes apparent through the fact that different literature is used to support different aspects of this work. A general discussion about what the overlaps and differences between information science and development studies are is beyond the scope of this project and, thus, not discussed in an explicit manner (de-contextualised from the research questions pursued in this research project).
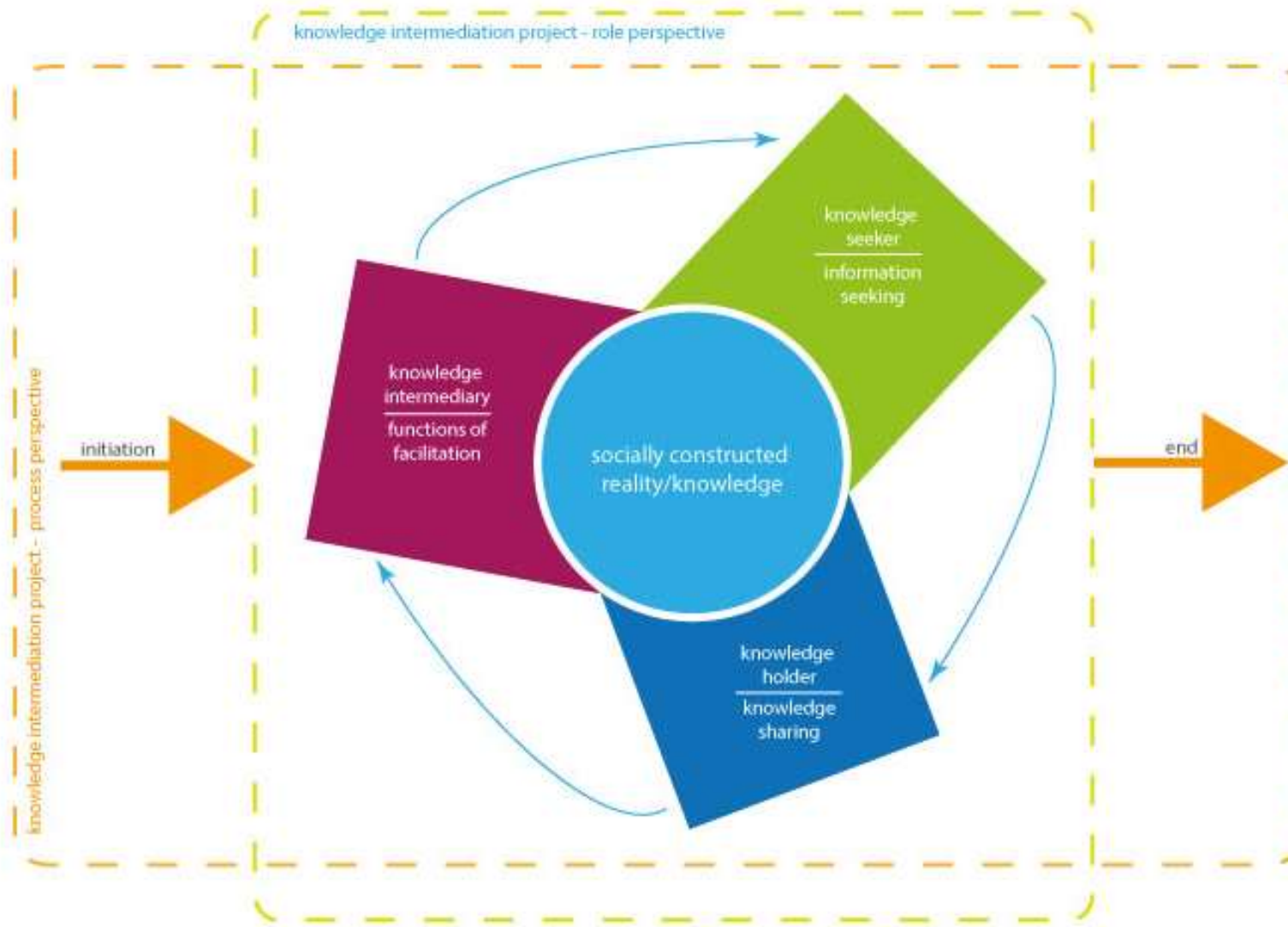
**FIGURE 1: ROLES AND PROCESSES IN KNOWLEDGE INTERMEDIATION PROJECTS AND RELEVANT CONCEPTS**

However, whilst in international development knowledge intermediation has never benefited from such attention there are other fields of study that are relevant and useful in this regard. For example, much is written about social structures (and their coming into being) (Foucault 1970; Giddens 1984; Keller 2012) and human relationships (Edwards & Sen 2000; Fritz 2014; Duck 2007; Wood & Duck 2006) this study explores both areas and uses some of their insights.

Especially in international development, as can be seen above already, there is no way of discussing relationships without also mentioning power (Chambers & Pettit 2004). Power has seen a lot of attention in development studies (Jones et al. 2012; Gaventa 2006; Borda-Rodriguez & Johnson 2013; Girvan 2007; Groves & Hinton 2004; Gaventa 2011) and elsewhere (Vink et al. 2013; Lukes 2005; Kedar 1987; Bourdieu 1989). Of particular relevance to this research project are ideas of knowledge-power, which points at the fact that individuals (or institutions) in positions of power decide what is considered valid and legitimate knowledge and what is not, and, thus, also determine what is valid and legitimate action (Flood 1999).

In line with this and the general object of this study, an understanding of knowledge and the manifold meanings that this concept entails are inevitable. The literature on indigenous knowledge (Mundy & Compton 1991; Smylie et al. 2003; World Bank 2004; World Bank 1998a; Gorjestani 1998; Briggs 2013; Breidlid 2009), local knowledge, as well as scientific, generic, and abstract knowledge, (Pant & Hambly Odame 2009; Cheng 2004; McDowell et al. 2005; Briggs 2008; Ekblom 2002) are outlined and critically reviewed. In this the often perceived dualism between contextual knowledge and generic knowledge is first appreciation and then transcended.

This is achieved by drawing on concepts like situated learning (Lave & Wenger 1991) and social learning (Reed et al. 2010) that strongly focus on the individual learner, yet see the person as inherently embedded in its (social) environment. They apply a rather holistic view of the individual and the embedded understanding that comes with it is ideally suited to understanding the learner in the context of development cooperation.

Social learning and the closely aligned concept of communities of practice open up the enquiry for the consideration of networks and communities (Hildreth & Kimble 2004); which links with the already mentioned ideas about social structure and relationships. Network

theory, and in particular exchange networks (Marsden 1982; Cook 1982; Cook et al. 1992) and learning networks (Pant 2009) have been considered in development literature and practice as much as communities (Barab et al. 2004; Ferreira 2009; Shaxson 2010a); often these have been considered as tools or interventions that foster knowledge sharing and bridge the oft perceived knowledge divides that is made responsible for some of the perpetual inequalities that international development intends to address.

Communities and networks are, in this study, understood as spaces in which situated learners are embedded. Knowledge intermediation projects attempt to facilitate knowledge processes by creating spaces in which knowledge sharing and co-creation can occur. However, the literature on how to create such spaces in the context of the particular challenges of international development (e.g. hegemonic, post-colonial power imbalances, etc.) is very limited and looking at the human relationships that are facilitated in such processes has never been attempted before.

Additionally, this study has also identified a further gap and that can be outlined with the help of Cornwall (2002) and Gaventa (2006) who argue that participation and relationships differ depending on the type of spaces that they are embedded in; this is also supported by the relationship literature (Duck 2007). Spaces, according to Gaventa, can be closed, invited, and/or claimed/created; closed spaces are provided spaces where decisions are made behind closed doors (by elites). Invited spaces attempt to broaden participation and to open the space up to invited institutions and individuals. Claimed/created spaces are spaces which come about due to the action of a less powerful actor. The latter come about organically and are usually self-organised.

This study picks up this lens and applies it as a further focus to this study. As a result this study looks at how knowledge processes and processes of intermediation are initiated. It enquires how the spaces for change, the spaces in which knowledge sharing and co-creation are meant to occur, come about, are institutionalised, and ultimately influence the building and maintenance of human relationships.

## Purpose and aim

Out of the above indicated state of the literature and the identified gaps, as well as the consultation of stakeholders of the research (mainly practitioners), a purpose, aim and various research questions were developed. These are briefly outlined in the following:

*Purpose*     The purpose of this study was to provide practitioners in the development sector with academically grounded and developed insights and ideas that could potentially improve their practice. The focus was in particular on practitioners facilitating knowledge exchange(s) between development workers in developing countries (South-South knowledge exchange).

*Aim*     To be able to deliver valuable insights and ideas for intepractitioners and academics this research project aimed to investigate how knowledge intermediation projects in the international development sector are shaped by their approach (demand initiated, facilitator/funder initiated), especially in terms of the relationships they foster. In addition, it discusses what implications the findings have for the intermediation of knowledge processes.

## Research questions and methodology

Based on the above purpose and aims, as well as the reviewed literature, the following research questions and research objectives have been developed:

a) How can knowledge intermediation projects be monitored and evaluated with regard to the relationships they entail and facilitate?

    i.    Build a methodology that uncovers the relationships in a knowledge intermediation project.

    ii.    Use, modify and develop categories that can be used to analyse interaction, conversation and discourse between actors in knowledge intermediation projects.

    iii.    Test categories that can be used to analyse interaction, conversation and discourse in knowledge intermediation projects.

    iv.    Reflect upon categories and methodology.

b) How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in a knowledge intermediation project?

     i.     Describe a facilitator/funder initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role-perspective.

     ii.     Describe a seeker initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role-perspective.

     iii.     Map the relationships between knowledge holder(s), knowledge user(s) and facilitator(s).

     iv.     Determine if roles (stated at initiation stage) are maintained over the course of the intervention.

     v.     Analyse both approaches in terms of relationship patterns.

     vi.     Link patterns to initiation act.

c) What implications might this (answers to research question b.) have for the intermediation of knowledge processes?

     i.     Contrast information gathered on both approaches.

     ii.     Analyse similarities and differences and derive implications/conclusions.

     iii.     Relate relationship patterns discovered to the information science literature and derive implications/conclusion.

     iv.     Connect findings of research question a) – c)iii with international development literature.

     v.     Outline recommendations for the sector.

The enquiry into such questions has to be, due to the new area of enquiry, exploratory and inductive in kind. Different methods and approaches were necessary at different levels to answer the research questions because of the complexity of the settings and processes to be studied; thus, a pragmatic worldview was adapted. This resulted in the execution of a mixed methods approach that has two case studies at its core; one case study representing the scenario in which demand initiates processes of knowledge co-creation and exchange, and the other case study representing a scenario in which facilitator/funder initiates processes of knowledge co-creation and exchange.

The two case studies represent efforts to facilitate south-south knowledge exchange by two different offices of a single institution. Whilst that institution, in the context of the British development sector, is not the typical provider of knowledge services (like for example the Institute of Development Studies, the Overseas Development Institute, and others) they have attracted significant funds for knowledge intermediation projects and are valued by funders for their "fresh" approach and, in the funder's eyes, successful project design and implementation.

To enable the researcher to study relationship building and maintenance, knowledge processes and the facilitation and intermediation of these, an approach to studying the case studies had to be found that would allow for a holistic consideration. Both case studies were treated as discourses and a particular approach to discourse analysis, the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse analysis (SKAD) proposed by Keller (2011; 2012; 2013) and used by, for example Hornidge (2013; 2014), was chosen. The data gathering methods applied within the case studies included, amongst others, a (field) diary, recordings of conversations (text and speech), and interviews. This data was then coded and made subject to a social network analysis.

### Significance of study

The international development sector finds itself in the midst of a 'legitimacy crisis'. Especially the few large international institutions that lead the discourses in the development domain (e.g. International Monetary Fund, World Bank) are under increasing pressure to be deeply reformed or to disappear (Moyo 2009; Mahubani 2008). Much in development policy and practice is seen as entrenched patterns and structures of a post-colonial era that is more hegemonic than it claims to be. Hornidge's (2014) analysis of important development discourses, outlined above, is merely one of many cases being put forward as criticism of the *modus operandi* prevalent in the development sector.

Development anthropologists have long pointed out how (some) working models in development are misguided and in conflict with claimed objectives (Lewis & Mosse 2006). Eyben's (2013) account of the proceedings at the High Level Forum in Bhusan in 2011 points to similar issues; changing power balances enable emerging actors to speak out about the appalling status quo. However, fundamental changes require the rethinking of some underlying assumptions of how development works.

Where does critical reflection originate in international development? Some would argue in the monitoring and evaluation efforts that the sector makes itself subject to. However, when writing about evaluation with regards to technical assistance, a field of development work closely linked with this research topic because of its integral knowledge sharing elements, Grammig outlines that "evaluations have evolved into an element of the reproduction of TA encounters, and the weakness of evaluations reinforces the underlying causes for TA success/failure. This is vehemently denied by evaluators, but those who are critical of their own evaluation experience point to the key role of the institutional response, determined by political needs" (Grammig 2012, p.114). Due to accounts such as these, it is difficult to see how fundamental change is going to originate within the sector.

Despite being mostly disregarded, there are voices that call for fundamental changes. In 2014 a group of academics, practitioners and policy makers published a manifesto called "Doing Development Differently" in which they argue for development initiatives having to increase their impact to be worthwhile. The status quo they summarise in a striking manner:

> Too many development initiatives have limited impact. Schools are built but children do not learn. Clinics are built but sickness persists. Governments adopt reforms but too little changes for their citizens. This is because genuine development progress is complex: solutions are not simple or obvious, those who would benefit most lack power, those who can make a difference are disengaged and political barriers are too often overlooked. Many development initiatives fail to address this complexity, promoting irrelevant interventions that will have little impact. ... Many development initiatives fail to address ... complexity, promoting irrelevant interventions that will have little impact (Center for International Development at Harvard University 2014).

The signatories to the manifesto call for more genuine progress in development and underline that that is only possible with an awareness of the complexities of such progress and cherish an approach of small steps, with iterative learning cycles that is owned by the people it is concerned with (Center for International Development at Harvard University 2014). An appreciation of complexity is increasingly called for in development literature (Ramalingam 2013; Ramalingam et al. 2008; Woodhill 2004; Guijt et al. 2011; Mowles et al.

2008) and systems thinking, as well as complex adaptive systems, cybernetics, and other systems theories are used in an attempt to improve our understanding of development.

One thing that systems thinking and all those theories have in common is an emphasis on 'interdependencies' and the metabolic (autopoietic) processes that that are responsible for self-(re)production of living systems (such as social systems). Interdependencies in social systems are relationships and at the most basic level are human relationships.

Eyben makes the link when arguing that we have to see "the need for development cooperation to centre on building relationships to ensure the sustainability of cooperation, rather than focusing on short-term goals. Traditional donors must consciously change their behaviour, including through a commitment to mutual learning" (Eyben 2013, p.1).

This study addresses exactly this. It discusses the interpersonal processes of communication and relationship building, and the facilitation of the spaces in which such mutual learning shall occur. To this it adds a focus, as it is often found in systems theories (especially chaos theory) on the (sensitivity to) initial conditions of systemic processes/states by focusing on initiation of knowledge intermediation processes. Such an enquiry has never been attempted before and offers insights on how knowledge processes can actually be facilitated in the light of an appreciation for interdependencies.

Based on the foundation of secondary and empirical research the argument is put forward that, depending on the approach taken, there are significant challenges in implementing south-south knowledge exchanges that actually lead to the development and maintenance of relationships that are characterised by horizontal power and mutual self-interest. In practice these ideals are always difficult to attain and in the case of facilitator/funder initiation might even be impossible to realise.

## *Scope of study*

The scope of the study is mainly determined by the purpose and aim of this research project and the research questions, and the associated research objectives, that have been developed and briefly outlined above. However, at this point it shall be made explicit what this study is not attempting to cover.

First and foremost, due to this study's exploratory and rather inductive nature whatever findings are presented and whatever recommendations are made it needs to be noted that

these are based on the two case studies analysed in this study and, thus, are not universally applicable. This study develops insights and questions that are proposed to be studied further and verified by methodologies that are more generally accepted to lead to generalisability.

What this study puts forward are interdependencies and relationships as found in the case studies; these interdependencies are not strict causal relationships. Using the terminology frequently employed in monitoring and evaluation, this study looks at contributing factors (interdependencies) rather than attribution (causal relationships) and presents these as such.

That being said, the depth of understanding that mixed methods case study analysis allows and the external validity of the study (reached through firmly embedding it into wider academic discourses on the development sector) allows the reader to reach her/his own conclusions about which aspects of this argument apply in their particular contexts.

## *Structure of the study*

Immediately following on from this outline of the structure of the study is the literature review which continues the above initiated outline and covers the most relevant discussions from the information sciences and development studies. An outline of a more detailed account of the methodology follows on from the literature review. The reader is presented with the general 'purpose', 'aim', 'philosophical approach' and 'strategy of enquiry' before defining the 'research questions' and research 'objectives'. This is then followed by a detailed account of the methods used in the study of the various elements of the enquiry.

The data gathered, and the findings generated, through the application of the research methods are then analysed in the 'analysis' chapter. The analysis is broken down into two major parts; firstly, the 'facilitator/funder initiated case study' is analysed and then the 'demand initiated case study' is analysed. Within both case studies the analysis is structured with regards to the various spaces in which knowledge processes unfolded; this means that for each space the findings generated by all relevant methods are considered and presented in a holistic picture of the respective space (e.g. online forum, study visit, etc.). This is followed, within each case study, by a consideration of the 'emergent social structure' as well as the 'institutional setting' that is seen as both a result of the interactions occurring in the facilitated spaces as well as an influencing factor on the interactions.

The 'comparative analysis and discussion' chapter not only brings both case studies together and offers insights based on some comparisons but also situates the findings in wider scholarly debates, reflects on the findings, and discusses key findings in the light of the critical literature. This discussion then leads to the 'conclusions and recommendations' chapter which restate the answers that have been found to the research questions, outline areas for further study and give recommendations that, in the judgement of the author, can be safely made on the basis of the evidence.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following the discussion will first turn towards reviewing the relevant literature and a discussion of related scholarly concepts. This includes a continuation of the above outlined general discussion 'international development' and 'knowledge for development'. In general, this literature review has been set out to flow from the general to the more specific (starting at the macro level and gradually moving towards the micro level) and from the well-established to the connections between ideas and concepts that are new to this field of enquiry. This strategy is applied to situate the study on firm ground before moving into new territory.

The section on 'knowledge for development' offers a (brief) account of the history of the concept and then outlines major concepts that fall within its general domain and have relevance to those studied here; including 'knowledge management for development', 'knowledge intermediation', 'local knowledge', and 'contextual knowledge and generic knowledge'.

Once a general understanding of the field of enquiry is established the study turns towards other related concepts and areas of research activity. This includes a presentation of literature on 'relationships and social structure', as well as a particular focus on 'human relationships'. Following this a presentation of insights from the Information Sciences is provided that covers 'social networks and social learning', and 'spaces and information behaviour'. What these sections have in common is that they show various approaches to understanding the individual learner in the context of (social) spaces in which learning occurs. The consideration of relevant literature finishes with a review of relevant insights regarding 'power and development'.

## 2.1 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN IDEOLOGY

> Development is a founding belief of the modern world. Progress has long since replaced God as the icon of our age. In development, all the modern advances in science, technology, democracy, values, ethics, and social organization fuse into the single humanitarian project of producing a far better world. (Peet & Hartwick 1999, p.1).

Statements like this are trying to underline how embedded the idea of development is in modern thinking. Scholars have termed the second half of the 20th century the 'era of development' that supposedly followed the era of imperialism. As the number of countries grew, so did the thinking around development as a concept and practice (Thomas 2000b). Development is often understood as positive social change, change that affects individuals' lives but is systemic at the same time. However, a multitude of definitions and theoretical approaches exist and some even argue that development, by definition, must not always mean *positive* change (Thomas 2000a).

Nederveen Pieterse (2000) discusses development theory and by doing so goes into further detail regarding the meaning of development and how it changed over time. In his version, "colonial economics" is followed by "modernization theory", which now, has long been replaced. Figure 2 illustrates his account of the gradual change in meaning that the concept of development has undergone.

However, besides different meanings over time development also enjoys different definitions and understandings at any single point in time. A discussion of the development literature and attempts to address the question, 'what is development?', is connected to south-south knowledge exchange and knowledge intermediation because these are not only ideas of their time but also, depending on one's understanding of development,, are approached and implemented in different ways. This is part of the argument put forward in this study and the following literature review is part of that exploration.

Different understandings of development are often promoted by different actors that are situated in different contexts, have different aims and underlying epistemologies. All of this happens in what is described as, the field (or sector) of development, that itself is part of the wider (international) economic, social, and political environment (Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

| Period | Perspectives | Meanings of development |
|--------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1850 > | Development economics | Resource management, trusteeship |
| 1870 > | Latecomers | Industrialisation, catching-up |
| 1940 > | Development economics | Economic (growth) - industrialisation |
| 1950 > | Modernisation theory | Growth, political & social modernisation |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1960 >** | Dependency theory | Accumulation – national, autocentric |
| **1970 >** | Alternative development | Human flourishing |
| **1980 >** | Human development | Capacitation, enlargement of people's choices |
| **1980 >** | Neoliberalism | Economic growth –structural reform, deregulation |
| **1990 >** | Post-development | Authoritarian engineering, disaster |

**FIGURE 2: MEANINGS OF DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME** (NEDERVEEN PIETERSE 2000, P.7)

Different scholars interpret the history of development in different ways. Thomas (2000a), for example, outlines structuralism, neoliberalism and interventionism and labels these as mainstream understandings of development. He contrasts them with other concepts like 'alternative development' and 'people-centred development'. Peet and Hartwick (1999) understand the roots of development in yet another way; they outline explicitly the influences of Marxist theories and feminist theories and assign to them other theoretical developments, which other commentators would see as independent and theories in their own right.[3]

However, even though there are different views on how the concept of development came about and how it is defined, some issues have been of importance throughout the life of the concept. One of these is the idea of poverty. Poverty, for the most part, has been understood as an economic issue underlining the lack of resources experienced by individuals and families that affects other aspects of their life (Allen & Thomas 2000; Cameron 2005). This focus on poverty has been matched by (or caused by) the importance of economics in the development field. Development economics is well established as a discipline and publications that consider countries as entities, compare them on a macro-economic level and consider how their performance could be improved are widely circulated  (Power 1971;

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[3] For the purpose of this study, even though these issues need to be acknowledged, it is not necessary to take a particular stance on theoretical discussions at this stage. The research conducted is, mostly, inductive in nature. Thus, theoretical concepts will be discussed again, in relation to the data and analysis, at a later stage.

Meier & Stiglitz 2001; Ghosh 2001; Ghatak 1978; Ghatak 2003; Behrman & Srinivasan 1995).

Alacevich argues that even though the study of economic development has been around for centuries it was not until after the Second World War that it acquired its particular identity; which coincides with the rise of the "era of development". He outlines that development economics is a "discipline dedicated to the study of the causes and solutions for economic backwardness" (Alacevich 2011, p.146).

In comparison with (development) economics, development studies cannot be identified as an academic discipline in itself. Instead, it represents a multifaceted (multidisciplinary) field of enquiries that are usually linked by shared ideas about progress and change, and their aim to deliberately affect progress by being *about* development and *for* development. Its strength is its reaching across disciplines to find solutions to problems identified within its perimeter. However, because the concept of development studies is inherently linked to the concept of development it suffers from the same theoretical disagreements (Kothari 2005).

The influence of economics on development thinking had its impacts but there are other streams of thought. Ackoff & Rovin's argue that growth and development are not the same thing. They offer a definition of development:

> Development is an increase in one's ability to satisfy one's own needs and 'legitimate desires, as well as those of others. ... A need is something required for health or survival, like oxygen or food. ... A legitimate desire is one that when satisfied does not reduce anyone else's chances of satisfying their legitimate needs or desires (Ackoff & Rovin 2003, p.151).

This definition shall be applied for the purpose of this research project because it points towards "development [being] a matter of learning, not earning" and the consequences this has. "Since one person or group cannot learn for another, no person, group or society can develop another. The only kind of development that is possible is self-development. This does not mean that development cannot be affected by other individuals or society; others and society can facilitate and encourage self-development" (Ackoff & Rovin 2003, p.151).

As becomes clear in the above outlined quotes the understanding of development employed in this thesis focusses on self-led development and holistic well-being. Understandings of this kind have become increasingly popular over the last 30 years under the banner of

sustainable development. Probably the most influential scholar in this domain is Sen (1999). In *Development as Freedom* Sen outlined a view of development that centres on individual freedom and capabilities; he also distanced the idea of development from economic wealth.

> The ends and means of development require examination and scrutiny for a fuller understanding of the development process; it is simply not adequate to take as our basic objective just the maximisation of wealth, which is, as Aristolte noted, 'merely useful and for the sake of something else'. For the same reason, economic grown cannot sensibly be treated as an end in itself. Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with – and influencing – the world in which we live. (Sen 1999, pp.14–15)

Sen's arguments have found broad appreciation and have in various places led to calls for it being incorporated into the 'sustainable development'-paradigm (McDonald 2006). As a matter of fact, Sen himself gives birth to those connections in *The idea of justice* (2009) where he coins the concept 'sustainable freedom. However, sustainable development and Sen's (capability) approach have been criticised on various grounds. Demals and Hyard (2014), for example, outline that Sen's faith in human agents being able of self-determination based on reason is a rather questionable premise. Giri (2000) goes to the core of the matter when stating:

> Sen's agenda of human well-being suffers from a fundamental problem of dualism between self and other, egotism and altruism. Overcoming this dualism is crucial for realizing human well-being but calls for the work of a creative and reflective self, a matter which has received little attention from Sen. The lack of an ontological striving and of a quest for self-development in his picture of persons limits Sen's conceptualization of human well-being and his sociology of multicultural toleration and epistemology of positional objectivity as well. As we further explore with Sen the meanings and dimensions of our 'momentous engagement with freedom's possibilities' [Sen, 1999, p.298], probably the most important task lying in front of us is to become more aware of the need for such an ontological commitment in our

quest for well-being: cultivating a reflective and creative self which learns to be critical of the arbitrariness of free will, to struggle for denied freedom and suppressed dignity, to be responsible for the other, and to build appropriate social institutions where such a dialogical relationship between self and other is nurtured and sustained (Giri 2000, pp.1015–1016).

Giri outlines eloquently the limitations of Sen's capability approach and sets out the task ahead. There have been attempts to overcome these limitations; most recently, Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) try to overcome the me-other separation by taking a relational approach to human wellbeing. They criticise prior attempts to define sustainable development by outlining that these were, on the whole, "unwilling to question the value of economic growth", were "sticking to business as usual", were ambiguous about the goals of sustainable development, did not think of social, ecological and economic issues as interrelated and, finally, were confused about the meaning of wellbeing (Helne & Hirvilammi 2015, pp.168–169). They attempt to situate the human being in its wider bio-physical environment (ecosystems) and outline that a pursuit of wellbeing is multidimensional, in that we strive to satisfy interdependent categories of needs.

The chosen definition emphasises those interconnections by defining needs and legitimate desires in a contextual and embedded way. Whilst this definition might be criticised for being anthropocentric, its contextualised nature recognises (besides the individual level) the wider environment and, with that, the systems level. To complement that definition of development a definition of sustainability (for the wider environment/bio-physical and social systems) is provided below.

For the purpose of this thesis sustainability is defined through the lens of resilience. Rather than a state it is seen as a 'system's ability to sustaining its fundamental functional characteristics'. The resilience lens puts a focus on a system's varying ability to absorb and/or buffer "disturbances". Sustainability is, thus, connected with the adaptive capacity of a system, which goes to the core of the question about "how to maintain stability in the face of change" (Berkes et al. 2008). Whilst human beings strive for their individual wellbeing, this endeavour is intrinsically related and embedded in wider processes and structures; the relationships between individual and environment are reciprocal, dynamic and complex.

The employed understanding of development and sustainability needs to be put into context

of contemporary development conceptualisations. Nederveen Pieterse (2000) outlines that contemporary development theory in general becomes increasingly actor-oriented and interpretative, follows a more constructivist and pluralistic epistemology, as well as becoming more polycentric (rather than being Eurocentric). These broad changes that have happened over the last fifty years have tangible implications, as for example, the increased importance of discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis has led to arguments stating that "the power of development is the power of storytelling - development is a narrative, a myth" (Nederveen Pieterse 2000, p.13). Nederveen Pieterse states that such arguments increase the awareness that development *is discourse.* Paying attention to texts and utterances allow to step beyond development as ideology into a domain that understands development as epistemology. Understanding development as discourse means questioning the 'common sense' ideas surrounding the concept and is thus deeply critical (Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

## 2.2 KNOWLEDGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The reference to the sociology of knowledge already hints at another trend that has left its imprint on the development sector over the last two decades. The trend referred to is the focus on knowledge as a "resource" that enables development. Knowledge for development has been defined in the 1990s and encompasses all knowledge that helps the sector to achieve its goals. It is understood as "a field that is concerned with the role of knowledge in systemic and macro-economic development" (Hearn et al. 2011, p.8). Knowledge for development emerged as a stream in development that emphasises that knowledge is a crucial factor for the sector and development processes (Ferreira 2009; King & McGrath 2004).

This raises the question about, what knowledge is. There is no agreed upon definition of knowledge in any discipline and discussions about the concepts meaning and character go back (in the western tradition) to the ancient Greek philosophers. In the following the landscape of 'knowledge for development' is mapped and different understandings of knowledge surface and are discussed. Thus, an understanding of knowledge is developed as

relevant to the context of this enquiry.[4]

Knowledge has always been relevant to development; however, when the World Bank announced in 1998 that it would become the "Knowledge Bank" the sector turned towards the concept with the funding (and conditions) that the knowledge focus of the World Bank brought. In these early days World Bank thinkers led the way arguing that knowledge asymmetries/knowledge gaps need to be addressed systematically. It was argued that for economically less affluent countries to perform more like industrialised countries they would have to acquire, absorb, and communicate knowledge (World Bank 1998b; Ramalingam 2005; King & McGrath 2004).

In 1998 it was argued that one way of overcoming the existing knowledge asymmetries was to include 'knowledge management' in 'development strategies'. It was envisioned that effective decisions in development can only be taken if local knowledge is considered together with cross-country experience provided by international organisations like, for example, the World Bank (Stiglitz 1998).

King and McGrath offer a detailed discussion of 'knowledge based aid' and knowledge for development. They analyse the general emergence of the concept, put it into context with previous and differing understandings of the sector, and compare four important governmental development agencies. Their way of analysing knowledge for development is very much underpinned by a sociological understanding of knowledge, which takes into consideration the importance of power and relationships (King & McGrath 2004). However, this is just one of many understandings of the concept of knowledge and some further exploration seems appropriate.

As outlined above, according to Nederveen Pieterse, a general shift in development studies from a structuralist to a constructivist epistemology can be observed. This is relevant to the present discussion because 'epistemology' is concerned with the nature and origins of

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[4] An explicit discussion of the history of the concept and different understandings would take us into the metaphysical domain and is beyond the scope of this thesis. A brief outline of the history can be found in Jashapara (2011) who writes about the 'nature of knowledge' in the context of knowledge management.

knowledge as well as to what extent something can be known or be called 'truth' (6 & Bellamy 2012). Shifts in epistemological understandings are so fundamental that they reach into the most remote corners of any sector. Development is embedded in the wider social environment and development studies embedded in the wider social sciences/humanities; therefore, development does not remain unmoved whilst the wider environment changes (Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

Closely related to the concept of epistemology is the concept of ontology. Ontology is a field of philosophy that addresses questions about what exists. It discusses to what extent observable and sensible, and unobservable and insensible things are real. The questions about what is truth and what is real are, of course, inherently connected since one could argue that it is impossible to know truth of things that are unreal. However, one could take the opposite stance and find equal justification for it, which illustrates their interconnectedness just as well (Crotty 1998). The interconnectedness of ontology and epistemology is an important issue with regards to this study; since this study is concerned with knowledge not just from a methodological (how is this study conducted?) but also from a thematic point of view (what is the object of this study?).

When looking at these issues with regards to development studies Nederveen Pieterse argues that "classical and modern development thinking were fundamentally structuralist: the emphasis was on the large-scale patterning of social realities by structural changes in the economy, the state and the social system" (2000, p.11). He adds that, in line with the rest of the social sciences, the field of development studies was affected by "the growing influence of phenomenology … and a variety of orientations such as existentialism …, hermeneutics …, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology …, new institutional economics and rational choice …, public choice and capability …, and feminism…" (2000, p.11).

These influences led to a more constructivist, poststructuralist, and postmodern outlook in development studies. This changed the focus from macro-structures' determinism of social structures to an institutionalist and agency oriented one. This outlook allows for a plurality of views to be accommodated. The construction of knowledge, in this view, is seen as a social process, and Nederveen Pieterse refers to how development underwent a 'linguistic turn' by focussing on discourses and the increased interest in utterances and texts (Nederveen Pieterse 2000).

As outlined in the methodology chapter, this study very much relies on pragmatism and a 'sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis' for its theoretical (methodological) underpinnings. Set in the context of the identified trends in development studies, this approach seems in line with current thinking. However, returning to epistemological and ontological considerations, pragmatism is sometimes criticised for not distinguishing between truth and reality. Nevertheless, this study follows Durkheim's argument that this criticism can be overcome by the social construction of knowledge in which action and morality can be based on social norms and processes (Durkheim & Allcock 1983).[5]

When considering some of those epistemological shifts it is not surprising that the discussion of knowledge for development has moved on since the end of the last century. King and McGrath report that at the beginning of this century agencies' language changed in that macro-level policy discussions focus less on conditionalities, and more on relationships and partnerships, and their importance to successful development (King & McGrath 2004).[6] This goes in line with Nederveen Pieterse's observations and suggests that there is some element of reliability in these analyses.

Jones et al. (2012), writing even more recently, support this further by arguing that it has been recognised that knowledge cannot be seen as a 'magic bullet'. They outline that the understanding of knowledge, its character and relevance to international development, has increased in complexity. They state that scholars and practitioners alike see knowledge in its political context, recognising the interplay of actors' interests, credibility, values and beliefs, the different types of knowledge in existence, and the processes that are at work in knowledge interactions.

However, there is also evidence that this is an overly optimistic interpretation of development practice and research. Narayanaswamy (2013) outlines that improving access to and availability of knowledge to facilitate development has become an end in itself. Knowledge interventions are seen as isolated projects that ultimately fail to impact

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[5] Additionally, as outlined above, this study is interested in their interconnectedness.

[6] However, King and McGrath also recognise that "conditionality seems to be alive and well, even though it is ultimately contradictory to autonomous development" (2004, p.28). The issue of conditionality is addressed at various stages in this study.

development outcomes in the way they are assumed to do. This is partly due to such interventions not challenging the dominant knowledge infrastructure in international development.

Hornidge (2013), taking a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis in her research, argues that 'knowledge societies', 'knowledge' and 'knowledge for development' are products of Western dominated hegemonic discourses.

> 'Knowledge', as mobilized in the academic discourse on the construction of 'knowledge societies' as well as the donor driven discourse on 'knowledge for development' takes on a normative, yet in the actual implementation of these discourses a factual and a hegemonic character. Normative, as 'knowledge' as crucial ingredient for a 'knowledge society', as well as for global development, is lifted through an international, largely scientific discourse to the level of forming a new standard, a norm for 'the next step' of development. Factual as the idea of 'knowledge' increasingly replacing land, labor and capital as production factor has entered national and international science and development policy-making. Hegemonic as this adoption of the idea of investing into 'knowledge infrastructures', i.e. ICTs, R&D clusters and high technology knowledge production, is in itself and in the ways it is communicated powerful enough to lead nations, far off from entering the development phase after the one of the industrial society, to heavily invest into the construction of the same 'knowledge infrastructures' and knowledge-intensive economic sectors as many countries with better starting positions (Hornidge 2013).

Similarly, Akude (2014) outlines that he sees the dominant knowledge actors and infrastructures situated in the global North and criticises this strongly. This is also in line with Borda-Rodriguez's and Johnson's (2013) exploration of development knowledge when seen through the eyes of development consultants. Whilst there are instances where "Southern" consultants are engaged by "Northern" development agencies the sector is dominated by consultants based in/coming from "developed" countries.

This provides a general understanding of the concept of knowledge for development and/or knowledge-based aid. Ramalingam (2005) helps to go further into its depth by distinguishing three strategically separate strands of work within knowledge-based aid. The first one focuses on increasing organisational efficiency and effectiveness of development

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actors, the second on sharing knowledge with institutions in economically less affluent countries, and the third in building the knowledge capacities necessary to work with the shared knowledge.[7]

### 2.2.1 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

The first strand is captured mainly by work that has been undertaken on the concept of knowledge management within the development sector. Knowledge management, which is one of (at least) four organisational knowledge strategies (including: organisational knowledge, organisational learning and the learning organisation) (Krohwinkel-Karlsson 2007), originated in the corporate sector where it is applied to increase organisational efficiency in the pursuit of organisational goals (Hovland 2003).

Knowledge management within the corporate sector is a well-established concept that has undergone major transitions since its emergence. Depending on which commentator one looks at the concept underwent either one or two major transitions since its emergence. In general it has moved from a technocratic worldview that understood knowledge mostly as a 'thing' to a more social and holistic understanding, which focuses on processes and relationships (Martin 2009). Wiig argues that knowledge management is focussing and should focus on a supply and demand approach that takes, on the demand side, human and intellectual capital and, on the supply side, new developments in science and technology, into account (Wiig 2004).

The corporate sector literature on knowledge management draws upon a useful distinction: the separation of knowledge processing and knowledge management. It has been outlined that the social processes by which knowledge is exchanged and produced are distinguishable from the managerial attempts to enhance this process (Martin 2009). This underlying difference has been used in one of the knowledge management definitions employed in the development sector. It states that knowledge management refers to

> "any processes and practices concerned with the creation, acquisition, capture, sharing and use of knowledge, skills and expertise [within an organisation] (Quintas

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[7] As outlined above, Akude (2014) offers his own threefold distinction of levels; 1. micro (individual), 2. meso (institutional), 3. macro (sector/systemic).

et al. 1996) [sic] whether these are explicitly labelled as KM or not (Swan et al. 1999)".
(Ferguson et al. 2008, p.8)

The above definition of knowledge management shall be applied for the purpose of this study. The addition of *within an organisation* is important since knowledge management has already been identified as an organisational knowledge strategy, which treats knowledge (processes) as part of the organisational (intellectual) capital that is being "managed" for the benefit of the organisation. Even though the concept of knowledge management needs to be appropriated for the development sector it is still seen as an inherently *organisational* exercise in this study.

Some commentators have subtracted this inherent characteristic when applying it to the development sector, e.g. Ferguson, Mchombu, and Cummings (2008) and Ferreira (2009). They attempt to apply the concept on a sectorial level rather than an organisational. On first sight *managing* knowledge for the benefit of the sector seems, in the development context, to be a desirable idea. However, some scholars construct strong arguments claiming that *managing* knowledge, even in an organisational context, is impossible (e.g. Wilson 2002). Thus, speaking of knowledge management across the sector, where there is no single actor who could define the necessary strategic approach and manage the processes and practices that could enhance 'knowledge processing', stretches the concept beyond usability.

Nevertheless, within the development context it is important to recognise that something like common aims (and even values) shared across the sector exist (at least to some extent) (Hilhorst 2003). For example, the 'Millennium Development Goals' managed to unite the efforts of an uncountable number of actors that sometimes even compete for the same funding opportunities. This 'cooperative approach' within the sector enables considerations regarding what knowledge the sector lacks to be able to enact shared values and to reach its goals. As discussed above, in this study knowledge for development covers this area of enquiry and, accordingly, knowledge management for development covers processes and actions that enhance knowledge processing within organisations.

The second and third strand of strategies within knowledge-based aid, as identified by Ramalingam and outlined above, are concerned with knowledge for development rather than knowledge management for development. They refer to the necessity to share knowledge with actors in economically less affluent countries, and foster their capacity to

process and produce knowledge.

## 2.2.2 KNOWLEDGE INTERMEDIATION

As outlined above, what has been identified by Ramalingam generally refers to the potential of improving the sector's performance by enhancing actors' knowledge processing. He picks up on two ways of addressing this; one is by improving access to information and the other by enhancing capacity. Since Ramalingam's study, there have been a variety of other studies and a surge in attention with regards to knowledge processes that reach beyond institutions and actors, and across the sector, continents, cultures, and languages.

Some of this attention has converted in actors dedicating time and resources to enhancing knowledge processes within the development community. Over the last five years more and more actors started to define their work with regard to this background.[8] Knowledge brokers, knowledge mobilisers, knowledge intermediaries, knowledge translators, research communicators, boundary workers, innovation brokers, etc. have started to explicitly address knowledge processes within the sector (Jones et al. 2012).

The variety of terms used to describe actors that engage in this enhancement process has caused much confusion and discussion amongst the stakeholders. In 2012 the term 'K*' emerged, which effectively serves as a placeholder for all of the actors/activities stated above (and more) because interested parties found it impossible to agree upon terminology (Bielak & Shaxson 2012). The term was employed because key stakeholders decided to forward the discussion on other matters, even though definitions were still up for grabs (Bielak 2012).

Rather than using a placeholder, this study employs the terminology of knowledge intermediary and knowledge intermediation.[9] Knowledge intermediaries are organisations and individuals that aim at levelling out perceived knowledge asymmetries. They are boundary spanners that attempt to connect knowledge users (in policy and practice) with knowledge holders/producers (in practice, policy and research) to improve decision making

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[8] Even though the timeframe stated is five years it has to be mentioned that the need for these sorts of activities had been identified in the World Bank report in 1998 already (World Bank 1998b).

[9] The study uses the concepts of 'intermediator' and 'facilitator' interchangeably at various points throughout the thesis.

(Jones et al. 2012). They are engaged in the process of knowledge intermediation which, for the purpose of this study is defined as:

> Any processes and practices concerned with informing, linking, matchmaking, engaging, collaborating and building of adaptive capacity,(Jones et al. 2012) of two or more external knowledge producers/holders and users/seekers, whether these are explicitly labelled as knowledge intermediation or not. (Mansfield & Grunewald 2013)

Even though the role of a knowledge intermediary is widely recognised (Fisher 2010; Fisher 2011; Shaxson 2010b; Bielak & Shaxson 2012), the process of knowledge intermediation is not. However, intermediation has been used by Leeuwis and Aarts (2011), in the context of innovation processes and communications, and found its way into Jones et al.'s (2012) work on knowledge, policy, and power in international development. Leeuwis and Aarts look at intermediation and how this process can be employed to facilitate change and the emergence/implementation of innovations.

Thus, it is closely related to the undertaking discussed in this argument. Leeuwis and Aarts (2011) outline that communications can fulfil three functions in interventions that aim at facilitating change processes; they are network building, supporting social learning and dealing with dynamics of power and conflict.

The definition of knowledge intermediation refers to the set of functions, as defined by Jones et al. (see Figure 3), since they have emerged out of discussions in the environmental, health, agriculture and development sectors and are therefore seen as the most relevant to this study. These functions essentially outline the different strategies a knowledge intermediary can pursue in improving knowledge processes in the development sector.

| Function | Description |
|---|---|
| Informing | Disseminating content, targeting decision makers with information, making information easily accessible and digestible, Examples include factsheets, research synopses, web portals, databases, end-of-project seminars |
| Linking | Linking expertise need for a particular policy area of within a particular discipline, helping policymakers address a specific policy issue by seeking |

| | out the necessary experts. Examples include project or programme advisory committees, focus groups, LinkedIn |
|---|---|
| **Matchmaking** | Actively networking to match expertise to need across issues and disciplines, helping policymakers think more broadly about a topic, and finding experts with relevant knowledge from other disciplines, helping them take a strategic overview to address the fullness of the issue, Examples include departmental advisory committees, general conferences, university internships in government, mapping the evidence base for an issue |
| **Engaging** | Framing issues inclusively to bring a common understanding to the decision-making process, contracting people or organisations to provide knowledge as needed. Examples include contracted research programmes, electronic knowledge networks, working groups, wikis, citizen juries, focus groups |
| **Collaborating** | Lengthening and deepening the collaborative process, strengthening relationships and formalising the process of ensuring that all sides jointly negotiate the questions to be asked around an issue. Examples include joint agreements where the emphasis is on equality in the relationships between actors, such as memoranda of understanding, joint agreements, communities of practice |
| **Building adaptive capacity** | Deepening the collaborative relationship to the extent that all parties jointly frame the issue; broadening institutional capacity of institutions to adapt to multiple issues simultaneously. The focus is on coproduction of knowledge and joint learning from doing; the arrangements are self-sustaining in terms of both funding and functions, with all sides contributing resources. Examples include co-management arrangements, local enterprise partnerships, self-sustaining consortia |

**FIGURE 3: SIX FUNCTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE INTERMEDIARIES** (JONES ET AL. 2012, P.132)

These functions can be fulfilled by a knowledge intermediary via a knowledge intervention. From an organisational perspective the initiative/programme/project/intervention has a

beginning and end. Usually funding is attached to certain activities that are to be carried out and reporting on spending needs to be completed by a certain date. Youker (2003) offers a general introduction into the nature of development projects. He defines them as projects that are situated in developing countries but financed by one or more of these institutions: bilateral, regional and multilateral development banks, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral government agencies, and government agencies in developing countries. Thus, these projects are always situated in economically less affluent countries and at least partially financed by external actors. They are further characterised by a complex set of stakeholders (with different interests), can be funded by a grant or loan, and usually aim at enhancing social and/or economic development within the given environment/context. Youker explicitly outlines various issues with regards to the financing institutions; he underlines that these actors have interests of their own and lead the identification stage of the project life cycle in accordance with those objectives. Projects need to fit in with longer term programmes that donors define in sector and/or country specific strategies and, according to Youker, this leads to projects often being selected against or without taking into account the particular developing country's own priorities.

In these general terms, knowledge intermediation projects (KIPs) are not different from any other development projects; they share the same characteristics and are influenced by the same external factors. King and McGrath categorise such projects as 'external knowledge based aid' and outline a few examples. They explicitly refer to the United Kingdom government Department for International Development (DFID) since their analysis shows that this government agency has been particularly active and successful at setting up KIPs (King & McGrath 2004). Examples for such projects, mentioned by King and McGrath, include id21 (Eldis) and the Development Gateway and they suggest that part of the reason why these have been reasonably successful is that they have not been DFID managed and owned. It is perceived that the strength of some of these projects is the apparent lack in (organisational) structures and strategy. Moreover, this networked approach to knowledge sharing seems to have replaced a rather linear idea of academic project design, followed by project delivery and dissemination (King & McGrath 2004).

According to these commentators, this trend has been accompanied by a trend to focus more on Southern knowledge sharing. Even though the importance of local knowledge

(context specific knowledge) had been recognised (formally) at the end of the previous century much of the knowledge sharing activities still focussed on developing countries' knowledge deficits and developed countries' competence and supply of relevant knowledge (King & McGrath 2004).

### 2.2.3 LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

This might have been the dominant approach at that time but different actors and researchers increased their attention with regards to contextualised knowledge. This is not surprising since what has been discussed above with regards to epistemology suggests that interpretivist and constructivist accounts of development knowledge would have been seen in a more favourable light in comparison to previously dominant epistemologies.

The concept that found most recognition was indigenous knowledge. One could argue that indigenous knowledge found increased attention before the mainstream development discourse shifted towards "knowledge". Some commentators argue that interest in indigenous knowledge was gathering pace in the 1980s as a response to the disappointment with modernisation and past development efforts (Briggs 2008). An Institute of Development Studies (IDS) bulletin from 1979 seems to be the first dedicated publication to discuss the concept (Howes & Chambers 1979; O'Keefe & Howes 1979).

> Indigenous knowledge (IK) is today a popular word through out [sic] the world. It has been interpreted in different ways at different places but generally it is understood as local or traditional knowledge that indigenous people have brought down with them from earlier times via the oral tradition … It is the basis for local decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management and other activities. IK is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. It is essentially tacit knowledge that is not easily codifiable. (Sen 2005, pp.375–376)

The above described embeddedness of (or origin of) indigenous knowledge in local culture and history was initially perceived to be its great strength. This was due to evidence that suggested that, if taken seriously, indigenous knowledge could lead to increased local capacity, ownership of development, self-reliance, and empowerment. Development projects that were informed by indigenous knowledge could thus better adapt "global knowledge" to the local context, which enhances a project's sustainability. This was emphasised in particular

by the World Bank; coincidentally, at the same time that the organisation started emphasising knowledge for development (World Bank 1998a).

However, from the very beginning commentators recognised some of the problematic issues, with regards to IK. In 1998 the World Bank stated that IK cannot be recorded and codified, an attempt to transfer IK could have detrimental effects to communities, and that Western conceptions of (scientific) knowledge are inherently incapable of appreciating traditional knowledge (World Bank 1998a). However, the World Bank initiated an IK for development program and in 2004 (five years into the program) published another report underlining some of the successes that engagement with IK had brought about. It outlined some of the ways in which the problematic issues, outlined in 1998, had been addressed (World Bank 2004).

Strongly present in the 2004 report is the perceived inability of "the West" to appreciate indigenous knowledge. The World Bank report generally argues for the concurrence of Western scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge; thus, rejecting ideas of there being a conflict or contradiction (Sibisi 2004; Steiner & Oviedo 2004; Gorjestani 2004). The report is much quieter regarding the other two problematic issues (highlighted in 1998); however, in the conclusion both are addressed. Gorjestani (2004) acknowledges that better processes and mechanisms for the validation and protection of IK are needed but outlines that this does not prevent the scaling up and transfer of indigenous practices (even on a supra-national scale). What Gorjestani points to is the potential to transfer and share knowledge within a developing country context; either within particular countries or across countries' borders amongst developing nations. This is generally referred to as South-South or Southern knowledge sharing/exchange, and the World Bank and other development actors (e.g. Japanese and British government agencies) have recognised this approach to be of value to the development endeavour. King and McGrath (2004) argue that debates of South-South knowledge exchange emerged with intensified discussions of indigenous knowledge in some of the sectors' leading institutions. However, they also emphasise that discussions focussed on "Southern deficits and Northern (particularly World Bank) transmission" and that "Knowledge that is culturally, socially and spiritually viable was not part of the vision" (King & McGrath 2004, p.41) of knowledge for development. However, this generally suggests that there is an inherent cultural, social and spiritual value in indigenous knowledge and that

Southern knowledge sharing is, in principle, a desirable process.

This is not explicitly expressed but inherent in many discussions regarding indigenous knowledge. One author who offers a more explicit discussion of some of the critical issues, and is generally widely recognised for his contributions to the understanding of indigenous knowledge, is Briggs (2005). He discusses decontextualisation, which is closely related to what others debate when talking about codification, validation, etc., and argues that there is reason for concern. The fact that indigenous knowledge creation processes are highly contextualised inherently brings difficulties with regards to the transferability of its information/knowledge. He argues that taking knowledge out of its (procedural) context might just render it "useless" for others. In theory, but also in practice, it has been shown that this is a persistent phenomenon (Briggs 2008; Briggs 2005).Briggs (2008) also acknowledges some of the more threatening aspects of development actors' engagement with IK. He refers to this process as the institutionalisation of IK through its appropriation for development. Issues with regard to this process have been discussed earlier by, for example, Agrawal (2002). Agrawal points out that in the processes through which IK is converted into a tool for scientific progress and international development there is an inherent risk that the institutions and actors that control this process take over ownership of the knowledge it encapsulates, which then is put to use towards maintaining a status quo in terms of power relationships (Agrawal 2002).

Briggs (2005) underlines similar concerns and perceives processes of institutionalisation as a natural response of the community of development professionals to the threat that IK potentially poses. This threat arises if/when IK is accepted as a legitimate concept of thought that development efforts could be based on. The community of development experts, predominantly holding Western-scientific worldviews and controlling the major institutions in international development could, according to Briggs, see in IK a competing worldview that threatens their current position.

This is supported by Enns (2014) who reviews the World Bank's engagement with IK. She argues that during the time the World Bank called itself a knowledge bank there was considerable research and evidence produced (within the institution) that underlined the importance of IK. However, IK did not find equal representation in the World Bank's policy and practice areas. She continues outlining that this is an example for how the World Bank

uses "paradigm maintenance in order to maintain command and control over the 'right' type of knowledge for development" (Enns 2014, p.1).

This debate is deeply linked to other discussions. Briggs (2005) acknowledges the many commentators who have disregarded IK as capturing a "backward" way of life and even others who claimed that scientific knowledge is not context specific; by proxy, understanding "Western" knowledge to be superior to IK. Nevertheless, he discusses past attempts to move beyond the binary divide of IK and scientific knowledge in theory and practice, and concludes that in the theoretical domain little has been achieved. Apparently, different epistemological and ontological viewpoints are persistent barriers to the integration of both approaches. However, on a practical level, things look distinctly different. "Because of the demands of daily existence, [farmers and others from rural areas] develop a hybrid, a mediated knowledge, which is developed and continually re-worked" (Briggs 2005).

In a more recent review of what the concept of indigenous knowledge achieved in the wider development discourse Briggs (2013) outlines that so far IK has been unable to overcome its inherent weaknesses (with regards to its use in international development; e.g. contextual dependency being inconvenient for scaling up) and the binary divide (with science) outlined above. Briggs calls for IK research that focusses on processes of knowledge creation/indigenous ways of knowing (rather than content) and the complex power relationships that are inherent to (indigenous) knowledge structures.

However, Briggs' rather pragmatist view of indigenous knowledge outlined above sounds very similar to some of the approaches to knowledge that have been applied in the wider development discourse. The most recent and prominent one is 'multiple knowledges' used by the IKM Emergent programme (Powell & Cummings 2010). According to the concept

> "there is no universal understanding of what knowledge is exactly, and whose knowledge 'matters'. This means that knowledge is subjective, as the meaning of any objective knowledge will always remain a product of the person in whose mind it is constituted. We all 'know' the world through a combination of our education, language, culture, and belief and, just as importantly, our actual physical realities – gender, location, socio-economic environment ... These differences in perspectives, cultures, norms and values lead to different 'knowledges'" (Zirschky 2009, p.8).

What Zirschky, and the entire IKM Emergent research programme, explore through this concept is knowledge seen in its context and the consequences that these considerations have for theory and practice. Different scholars undertake this exploratory effort with different concepts, all capturing/constructing reality in their own way. These other concepts include 'knowledge cultures' (Brown 2008), practice-informed knowledge (Scott 1998), knowledge in practice (Gabbay & May 2004), citizen knowledge (Jones et al. 2012), local knowledge (de Vasconcelos et al. 2006).

This study follows Briggs' (2008) argument that the concept of indigenous knowledge, even though useful, has its limits and some of the discussions that were undertaken under its banner are better placed elsewhere. He suggests using 'local knowledge' due to it not implying that the knowledge held by people is always and primarily connected to oral traditions and ancestry. Local knowledge includes knowledge found in a locality (physical, digital, or other) that has various origins and is appropriated to its context.

The concept of local knowledge has been used in a variety of settings and one important contribution to the concept has come with *Negotiation local knowledge* (Pottier et al. 2003)[10] In this volume it is argued that "'local knowledge' needs to be understood in the broadest of terms to encompass not only people's understandings of the social universes they inhabit, but also of their rights" (Pottier 2003, p.4). By doing this the authors of this volume move 'local knowledge(s)' from a purely technical concern into the political domain. They also engage with the conversation of Western knowledge versus local knowledge and reach similar conclusions to Briggs in that they argue that this dualism needs deconstructing since it vastly oversimplifies the situation. This, as has been mentioned above, goes back to older arguments around counter posing indigenous knowledge and global scientific

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[10] Other contributions include Dempsey (2009) and Bondi & Laurie (2005), Power (2005), and Nightingale (2005). However, whilst all of these are related to local knowing and offer valuable critical perspectives they focus on wider criticisms of some common assumptions in the development sector. Taking on these wider discussion is beyond the scope of this PhD and, thus, the discussion of indigenous and local knowledge focus on the here immediately relevant.

knowledge that Sillitoe (1998) was a prominent voice in.

### 2.2.4 CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND GENERIC KNOWLEDGE

In the following this dualism is therefore further explored. Ekblom's (2002) contrasting of local knowledge and generic knowledge offers valuable insights. Ekblom discusses some problems that are commonly associated with knowledge transfer and uptake. He discusses what others might call knowledge translation, validation, decontextualisation and codification with regards to crime prevention and criminological research. He states that some of the experienced barriers exist due to some of the inherent characteristics of knowledge. Ekblom (2002) situates local knowledge (highly contextualised knowledge) at one end of a scale and generic knowledge at the other end. Furthermore, he argues that in specific situations one will always be confronted by a balancing act in terms of their utility. Generic knowledge, in his eyes, is a term that refers to principles that can be applied across time and context.

When relating this to the previous discussion of indigenous knowledge, it becomes clear that what is predominantly meant by scientific knowledge is generic knowledge and what is meant by indigenous knowledge is contextual knowledge. Briggs identifies this in some discussions when stating that the clash between Western knowledge and indigenous knowledge is frequently *perceived* to be based on the idea that the "former searches for knowledge of the universal significance which is not context-related, whilst the latter is a social product closely linked to a cultural and environmental context" (Briggs 2005, p.11).

Ekblom's (2002) argument, however, demonstrates that rather than this being a problem of the 'West against the rest', it is a problem inherent to the concept of knowledge and the attempt to share it. Framed in this way it is apparent that the discussion of IK and scientific knowledge is not the only debate tackling some of these issues. Another dualism that underlines some related characteristics of knowledge is the distinction of tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is the contextualised and highly individual part of the knowledge a person holds and explicit knowledge is the part of a person's knowledge that can be easily externalised and expressed (Polanyi 1967). This is a very simplistic description

of the tacit-explicit distinction;[11] however, it shows a parallel in that explicit knowledge entails something transferable of individual-independent usefulness.

Another distinction that points towards the fact that some of the barriers are inherent to dealing with knowledge is the difference between knowledge and information (and data and wisdom).[12] There is little agreement with regards to those two terms; Zins (2007) alone identifies 130 definitions of data, information, and knowledge expressed by 45 scholars. Knowledge is sometimes understood as information enriched with a person's experience, thus, given a higher degree of purpose and context-dependency and, reciprocally, information is understood as 'recorded knowledge'.

Going back to the discussion of local and generic knowledge; information is often seen as more "generic knowledge" because it has been externalised (codified) by an individual. Thus, information has been taken out of the context of that particular individual's perception and knowledge. From knowledge to information a degree of abstraction has been introduced. This, of course, relates to the tacit and explicit knowledge distinction and the work of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) on knowledge creation processes, which will be discussed at a later stage.

All these issues are widely discussed and many commentators have added their views to this discussion (Wallace 2007). However, what reaches across is that, once tacit knowledge has been externalised it has entered the social realm and is, thus, subject to praise and criticism. An individual's knowledge products (information in whatever format) are contrasted with other individuals' perception and construction of reality. This process is fundamental to science in that "all knowledge has to prove itself through the sense certainty of systematic observation that secures intersubjectivity" (Habermas & Shapiro 1972, p.74).

With those discussions one enters the realm of epistemological debates and the importance of some of the challenges that scepticism poses (Can we trust our senses/perception? Are we

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[11] E.g. one might argue that what an individual can externalise includes, besides explicit knowledge, also intrinsic knowledge.

[12] It is not the purpose of this study to enter this debate; however, a general distinction shall underline the point made in this argument.

able to perceive reality, which is situated outside of us?) (Hamlyn 1970). However, most of those discussions are concerned with the knower and the known as separate entities (as constructed by scepticism) (Popkin 1964). This study, which is concerned with the inherently social processes of knowledge exchanges, questions that distinction on the basis of Dewey and Bentley's (1975) study of the nature of knowledge and the chosen pragmatic worldview.

This pragmatist view ties in with Briggs understanding of local knowledge outlined above. His conception of the term puts it in the context of daily existence and, in particular, decision making. Other conceptions of contextual knowledge share this tendency to connect knowledge to its purpose, as seen from an individual's practical considerations, e.g. knowledge in practice. Thus, a pragmatist approach to knowledge enables exercises that attempt to bring generic knowledge and contextual knowledge together.

For example, De Vasconcelos et al. (2006) propose the concept of 'glocal knowledge' to overcome the dualism under the banner of necessity. It is based on the appreciation of the strength and weaknesses of both approaches and they envision a democratic process of engagement and appropriation of, what is called, generic (global) and contextualised (local) knowledge.

With their discussion of using different knowledges in a more democratic way De Vasconcelos et al. point towards another important aspect of contemporary considerations within development studies. This is the renewed interest in relationships and an appreciation of their importance for development that has been observed by, for example, Nederveen Pieterse and described above (p.19).

## 2.3 RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

One of the reasons why the concept of contextual (and indigenous) knowledge has been discussed intensely above is that it points towards the importance of relationships and the role they play in our understanding of the world. It also shows a shift in international development theory and practice that values discourse, and has been stated as an example for the linguistic turn in the social sciences.

This study is not the first to explore relationships in international development and to, generally, emphasise their importance. A body of literature has been developed by a variety of authors representing a variety of viewpoints. It has been established that relationships matter (Eyben 2011b). However, this is not surprising considering the transaction based nature of development projects.

Diallo and Thuillier recognise this and ask: "one might wonder whether the quality of interpersonal relationships and of communication between key players are not critical success factors, independently of the specific knowledge, skills and competencies required" (Diallo & Thuillier 2005, p.238). These commentators talk in particular about the actors involved in delivering development projects. Ferguson, Mchombu and Cummings (2008) support this view with regard to knowledge management in international development. They stress, at a rather implicit level, that the interactions between partners in knowledge processes need to be taken into account when analysing knowledge management for development. Both of these studies argue that relationships play a significant role in development projects. They mainly see these in the context of organisational processes but within development studies the importance of relationships has also been stressed at a sector level. Commentators, such as Eyben (2011b), make the case for relationships and explore their meaning for development. Eyben recognises that discussing relationships is becoming more accepted and attributes this to changes in thinking that the (social) sciences were and are subject to. By doing this she underlines some of Nederveen Pieterse's (2000) observations regarding shifts in thought in this field of enquiry. Eyben describes her account as "relationalism" and one could think that with the outlined trends in development studies it would be readily perceived and adopted. However, she stresses that accounts that underline the importance of relationships in international development have not found the recognition that they deserve (yet).

According to Eyben (2011b), the main reason for this is the underlying philosophy that is dominant in international development theory and practice, namely substantialism. "A substantialist perspective sees the world primarily in terms of pre-formed entities in which relations among the entities are only of secondary importance. Substantialism allows us to observe, classify and ascribe essential properties to concepts, such as 'international aid'. Asking how an institution thinks is a substantialist question. Most of us raised in the Western intellectual tradition 'naturally' think this way" (Eyben 2010, p.385). She further argues that this substantialism drives, in particular, efforts in development (project) planning and results-based management and questions their linear understanding of change by arguing that complexity theory shows that things are more complicated than that.

Eyben is not alone, when arguing that there might be something wrong with relationships in international development. Anthropologists, feminists, postcolonial thinkers, dependency theorists, Marxists, etc. have all had their share in this discussion, criticising international development and the aid sector/endeavour (Groves & Hinton 2004). For example, Borda-Rodriguez and Johnson (2013) outline how knowledge engagements (entered by consultants based in "developing" countries) led by Western funders have a clear relational dimension. They outline that financial aid and discoursive spaces are used to institute unequal power relationships. Whilst consultants are aware of these processes and the underlying different "lifeworlds and backgrounds" (2013, p.343) between actors, they are in a difficult position to contest the (power-) relationships.

However, the distinctness of Eyben's (2010) account lies in the fact that she offers an insightful discussion (outlined above) on why such critique has not led to major changes in practice and theory. Eyben also connects her discussions of relationships with social theory. She mentions Spinoza's relationalist ideas and Bourdieu's work on social space and social power. Bourdieu (1989), in his own way, discusses the now widely recognised concept of social structure. This discussion is connected to some of the debates, outlined above, regarding contextual knowledge and generic knowledge. Bourdieu hints at this connection when discussing that social science constantly struggles with the two apparently incompatible concepts of objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism, according to Durkheim (Durkheim & Catlin 1938), as perceived and stated by Bourdieu, considers social facts to be things and, thus, ignores that they a part of an individual's socially constructed knowledge.

On the other hand, Bourdieu takes Schutz's (1967) point of view to be a supreme example of the subjectivist viewpoint, which states that scientific knowledge can be nothing else but a social concept of social concepts.

In sociology these debates are being fought out mainly around the concept of social structure. López and Scott (2000) outline how little agreement there is on the concept and underline that one of the major disputes in sociology, the dualism of structure and action, is being tackled in this realm. Agreement, as they argue, exists that "*social* structure is a pattern or arrangement of elements of society". They go on to divide the debates of social structure into two traditional and one emergent camps, which are institutional structure, relational structure and embodied structure; the latter being the emergent camp driven by linguists and post-modern (post-structuralist) thinkers. Important to López and Scott's argument is the attempt to present these three schools of thought as complementary rather than competing and they put forward a strong argument for this being the case.

This is of course a very theoretical discussion and many commentators have added their views to the existing body of knowledge since Durkheim (1938) picked up some of the underlying (and debated) ideas. This study has situated itself, by following Berger and Luckmann (1967) and the recent work of Reiner Keller (2011), towards a more procedural and less objectified account of social reality. "Our knowledge of the world cannot be traced back to an innate cognitive system of categories but to socially created symbolic systems that are produced in and through discourses" (Keller 2013, p.61). However, this does not mean that structuration is independent of social structure. Berger and Luckmann argue that "socialisation always takes place in the context of a specific social structure" (1967, p.183) but emphasise that specific attention shall be directed at "the social distribution of knowledge (with its consequences for the social objectivation of reality)" (1967, p.193). However, a more detailed discussion of this can be found when the discussion turns to power and discourse and in the methodology.

It is important to note at this stage is that there is fundamental agreement between this account and Eyben's (2010), which emphasises (by drawing on different theorists) the importance of processes relative to structures (and their legacy character). Another account of this is Baaz's (2005) discussion of identity in the context of international development and how identities have been historically, and in their distinctive context, developed. Her book

focuses on a particular kind of relationships, which is labelled partnership.

Partnerships are a frequently discussed concept in development theory and practice. Its popularity has been attributed to the fact that the challenges faced in international development are simply too big to be addressed by a single actor. Partnerships allow actors to draw on each other's resources in the process of addressing development challenges. It also helps at drawing on each other's' strengths, which can lead to an increased effectiveness of the sector. Generally, it is thought that a partnership approach to international development increases its sustainability, partly by mitigating conflict and differing opinions (Baaz 2005). However, besides outlining why partnership(s) is/are such a popular concept in international development Brinkerhoff (2002) also makes us aware that these positive ideas associated with the concept are often mere rhetoric.

At this stage it might be noteworthy to mention that there seems to be a general tendency in the literature regarding relationships in international development to be very critical of the current practice and theoretical underpinnings of international development. The literature generally suggests that changes in practice and policy are needed to match rhetoric (and intentions). It is not just Brinkerhoff that uses this analogy; Chambers and Pettit (2004) use a similar way of illustrating what is wrong with relationships in international development (Figure 4).

**The gap between words and actions**

*Partnership* implies collegial equality and mutual reciprocity; in reality, most lender-borrower and donor-recipient relationships are highly unequal and those who control the funding often call the shots.

*Empowerment* implies power to those who are subordinate or weak; but the usual practice between levels of hierarchy is control from above. Aid agencies impose conditionalities at the same time as they preach empowerment.

*Ownership* implies national and local autonomy; but this is limited by aid agencies' influence on policy, human rights and governance, whether this influence is exerted directly on governments or indirectly through citizens and civil society.

*Participation* is considered a means by some and end by others, and is used to describe a wide range of practices, stretching from compulsory labour to public consultation to social empowerment and spontaneous self-organisation.

*Accountability* between partners is described as mutual, and two-way up and down the aid chain; in practice, accountability downwards is rare and weak.

*Transparency* implies information shared between partners and accessible in the public domain; but aid agencies and governments often keep budget details and other information about decision making confidential.

*Primary stakeholder* refers to the poor and marginalised; but though 'primary' they usually participate least and have least voice.

**FIGURE 4: THE GAP BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTIONS** (CHAMBERS & PETTIT 2004, P.144)

As can be seen above, Chambers and Pettit put partnership in relation with empowerment, participation, and accountability. They are not the only ones to consider those issues as connected. King and McGrath (2004) observe, in a similar way, a trend in the international development discourse to move away from talking about conditionalities in favour of partnerships and ownership (and autonomous development); thus, seeing those as related issues. However, these commentators *also* underline that this is mere rhetoric and conditionality is still a (if not the) dominating force. This is perceived to be the case even though it is mostly counterproductive with respect to what the objectives of international

development are, as stated by, for example, Sen (2001).

This being said, this line of thought is related to the argument that Eyben puts forward (described above). Talking of the persistent relevance of conditionalities is merely another way of stating that substantialism and its imprint on (and understanding of) social structure is reluctant to change, which is what Eyben argues.

2.3.1 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Whilst these arguments relate to general debates about relationships in the development sector this research is concerned in particular with social processes of relationship development and maintenance. The literature on human relationships describes that relationships are built through routine interactions. Identities and roles are (re-)created through ordinary and predictable communication that orders social life. Familiar spaces and the continuity of repeated actions are based on a shared history and an envisioned future. This past is either embedded in the relationship or made explicit in talking about the past, which has been described as one of the strongest glues for relationship maintenance (Wood & Duck 2006).

Stafford and Canary (1993) outline various kinds of communication that foster relationship maintenance. These are openness (self-disclosure and direct discussion of the relationship), positivity (behaving in a cheerful and optimistic manner), social networks (relying upon common friends and affiliations), assurances (messages stressing commitment to the partner and relationship), and sharing tasks (equal responsibility for accomplished tasks).

In general, "communication embodies relationships. By that I mean that in the process of communicating, we represent, or symbolize, what a relationship is, what it stands for, what is important in it. Communication is a primary way of embodying relationships" (Wood & Duck 2006, p.33). Communication, including talk, writing, paralanguage (e.g. sarcastic tones), and nonverbal communication, composes relationships and represents its foundation. In communication there are distinct levels of meaning that impact relationships. "The first level, the content level of meaning, express[es] the literal meaning of communications. ... The relationship level of meaning, establishes and expresses affection, respect and power between people" (Wood & Duck 2006, p.31). Every bit of communication contains those levels and there is no way to convey content without also making a statement about the

relationship between listener and speaker.

Duck outlines, in his seminal work on *Human relationships,* that it is often overlooked "that language is the medium through which many relationship activities are conducted. ...Language, however, is not a neutral medium but provides a formative context for discussion of relationships. ... We should reflect on ways in which language structures our thinking about relationships along culturally normative lines. ... Communication, language, and all that is culturally encoded within it are thus crucial bases for establishing conduct for human relationships and their quality" (Duck 2007, p.10).

This shows how language, cultural context, normativity, and power impact upon the development and maintenance of relationships. 'Proxemics' (space and its management) highly influences social encounters and interactions, and situate people in relationships to one another. Space has an impact on how we relate to each other because it carries messages of liking, power and attitudes towards each other (Duck 2007).

There are different spaces that, in a relational setting, convey different messages. Primary territories, like our home, are central to our lives and always ours; secondary territories, like common rooms, are not exclusive to our use and are not central to our lives; public territories, like park benches, can be occupied by everyone on a temporary basis; and personal space demarks a space temporarily and legitimately occupied or claimed by a person. The claiming of spaces is a claiming of power and these processes send messages about ownership, status, and relationships between people (Duck 2007).

Within those spaces social rules govern social interaction; these can be detected even in subtle behaviour like eye movement and other non-verbal communication. Duck outlines that such behaviour offers great insights into relationships and goes as far as stating that "nonverbal communication is a prerequisite to relating to other people" (Duck 2007, p.15).

For us to develop and maintain relationships we have to learn the norms that apply in certain spaces. We have to develop and learn the language of relationships which is space/context dependent. Only then will we be able to decode people's relational messages and get to their meaning. In this decoding process one always draws on a system of cues; e.g. proximity-plus-words or eye-contact-plus-context (Duck 2007).

Such systems of cues are highly complex and the important role of paralanguage (speed,

accent, volume, tone of voice, error rate, etc.) is often overlooked. Power is frequently conveyed through a communication's tone, which is an important aspect of nonverbal communication; a relational state is indicated by nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal behaviour is a regulator of interpersonal interaction (Duck 2007).

Whilst many of the theories and insights from the literature on relationships apply to computer-mediated communication (and the spaces created therein) as much as to face-to-face encounters it is clear that there are some issues with the above discussed if digital communication channels are employed in the building and maintenance of relationships. In computer-mediated communication the number of channels available to convey not only content but also relationship cues is limited (Keeble & Loader 2001); recognising that it differs among digital channels going from video-conferencing to emails. Duck argues that information technologies serve human relational needs and always need to be put into the context of other means of developing and maintaining human relationships (Duck 2007).

Research on online social capital has been conducted, which suggests that internet usage lessens bonding but allows for bridging networks (Choi et al. 2011). It is suggested that the relatively low entry and exist costs accompanying computer-mediated-communications are a reason for this phenomenon. "In other words, as relations are effortlessly formed and terminated without substantial investments or losses online, they are likely to be shallow and distant and thereby offer less bonding but more bridging social capital" (Choi et al. 2011, p.121).

Computer-mediated communications is one of many factors influencing human relationship building and maintenance. Besides the ones outlined above, the literature has also explored relating as part of professional lives. With regards to professional environments, theorists have distinguished between two kinds of relationships.

In 'complementary relationships' people work together by doing balancing or different tasks. This mode of cooperation is often based on differences in power; e.g. the planner is more powerful than the implementer. On the other hand, 'symmetrical relationships' are characterised by the participants performing equivalent or the same tasks; this is usually a reflection of an equal distribution of power (Wood & Duck 2006).

Furthermore, the switching of roles in terms of who guides who, who helps who, and who

mentors who is an indicator for symmetry in relationships. Establishing and maintaining symmetrical relationships require the careful balancing of not entering into competition; whenever symmetrical relationships develop this can be interpreted as being influenced by the importance that parties attribute to equality. Symmetry in relationships is thus constantly negotiated (Wood & Duck 2006).

A crucial aspect of this process is termed role negotiation. When a conflict between various roles in one's life, or between how we want to be perceived (in a given situation), and how we are actually encountered, arises, role negotiation occurs. This includes the roles of the speaker and listener and, thus, can be observed in the way turn-taking is organised (Wood & Duck 2006).

Turn-taking, in the relationship literature called 'interaction order', is part of the social order our relationships are subjected to and encompass the mechanisms and principles that direct everyday interaction. "Regularities in the conduct of social activities are products of a system of obligations and expectations that regulate how we conduct ourselves in the presence of others. These obligations and expectations are not stated directly. They are apparent in the ordering of interaction, such as [the] widely observed tendency for one person to speak at a time and for speakers to exchange speaking and listening roles smoothly in everyday conversation" (Wood & Duck 2006, p.180).

As outlined above, negotiation of the ordering of interaction and personal roles, is further complicated when having to rely on the 'limited bandwidth' of digital communication channels. Ollier-Malaterre et al. (2013) add that engaging in online networking activities is a challenging experience since it increases the potential for collision between the personal and the professional domains of one's life. This is due to the fact that online interaction is characterised by "open disclosure to broad audiences" whilst feedback and disclosure in personal interactions are adopted depending on the situation and influenced by "clear" physical clues. In the management of these processes individuals define boundaries/mental fences that demarcate temporal, emotional, physical, cognitive and/or relational limits (Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013, p.645).

## 2.4 Networks and social learning

The above illustrates how people are part of networks (online and offline), and due to the

increasing "employment" of social networks in knowledge intermediation projects the concept of network deserves explicit attention. Powell (1990) describes networks as a form of social (-economic) organisation, which is based on the preferential, reciprocal, mutually supportive activity of agents. This is the case because parties are dependent on resources held by another and agree that by pooling these resources gains are to be realised for all the involved parties. Thus, parties open up for compromise, which sustains interaction and enables the achievement of common goals. As discussed above, these are important elements in human relationship building and maintenance.

Networks, which is used as a short form for social networks in this study, are usually described as and typified by consisting of nodes (or actors) with specific ties between them (relationships). Ties are connected by sharing endpoints in certain nodes. Nodes that do not share a tie might be connected via other nodes and ties; this then makes up the network and its structure, in which individual nodes are situated. Ties are usually categorised into states or events; states have an open-ended existence (e.g. believes, kinship, friendship, knowledge, etc.) and events are connected to specific points in time (e.g. meetings, specific economic transaction, projects, etc.) (Borgatti & Halgin 2011; Batchelor 2011).

Networks have been discussed widely in the development sector (Perkin 2004; Pant 2009; White 2010a; White 2010b; Graham 2012). They found particular recognition since information and communications technology (ICT) entered the development stage (Madikiza 2012). Networks have been of particular interest to theorists and practitioners working within knowledge for development. There has been discussion of the possibility to bridge the perceived knowledge divides/gaps/asymmetries via learning networks (Pant 2009).

Learning networks have been increasingly considered as a way of bridging divides. However, it has been argued that the idea of learning networks moves beyond the idea of 'bridging'. The focus on learning networks emerged as a response to an increasing focus on complexity; replacing linear (bridge building) systems of thought. In this view learning is understood to be a social exercise in which "groups learn and innovate through negotiation over actor structures, resources, processes and values" (Pant 2009, p.18). The idea of learning networks is said to include knowledge networks, which remain a relevant concept (Hussain et al. 2010). However, some of the differences are mere terminology rather than deep conceptual divisions.

Knowledge networks can be said to "provide a mean for consultative dialogue, open discussion and information sharing, professional development, lobbying, advocacy and communication"(Hussain et al. 2010, p.22). They facilitate coordination between different stakeholders, usually drawing out their respective strengths, promoting informed decision making, and enhancing capacity. The same counts for learning networks; however, Pant (2009) argues that 'learning networks' is a more useful concept since knowledge can become obsolete and learning cannot. Understood in this way the distinction pays tribute to the shift from structure (knowledge understood as an object that is situated in a specific point in time) to processes.[13]

In any case, learning networks are supposed to support knowledge sharing and exchange (Widén-Wulff 2007; Pant 2009). These are aspects that Faminow et al. (2009) also attribute to learning *alliances*. However, learning alliances are set up more broadly than that because they are more generally concerned with social entrepreneurship and innovation. Nevertheless, Faminow et al. describe that entrepreneurial learning includes adaptive learning (exploitation) and generative learning (exploration). The former is closely related to ideas of knowledge sharing and exchange. Seen from an individual's perspective this type of learning is about accumulating experiences and knowledge.

This acquisition is part of a social process that has also been identified in some of the exchange networks' literature. "An *exchange network* is a set of two or more connected exchange relations. Exchange relations are defined as *connected* if exchange in one relation is contingent on exchange or nonexchange in the other relation" (Cook 1982, p.180). Exchange networks are a particular kind of network that focuses on the exchange of resources. Cooke (1982) outlines that this makes them different from other network theories that are usually less explicit about what brings and holds them together; thus, they are less explicit about what constitutes a tie then the idea of exchange networks.

This is outlined above (p.50), where the ties in a network are described in many different ways, e.g. friendship, kinship, values, etc; in exchange networks type of tie is clearly defined. Since actors' ties are based on flows of resources and an individual's expectations about

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[13] However, one could also attribute this different character of 'learning' and 'knowledge' (networks) to the fact that one is a verb and the other a noun.

these flows exchange networks are characterised by "purposive action" (Cook 1982). This is another distinct feature of exchange networks because other forms of social networks are a lot less 'expectation driven'. Batchelor outlines this by distinguishing between intentional and unintentional networks. The former have a certain purpose and form, require (purpose motivated) time investment from its stakeholders and (the usually existing) coordinating body during set up and maintenance. Batchelor contrasts this with unintentional networks, which are sometimes based on friendship and common interest, and where synergies are created without stakeholders intentionally investing in the endeavour (Batchelor 2011).

Accordingly, the exchange networks described by Cook seem rather intentional and (explicit) purpose driven. However, even the purpose of exchange networks can be of a manifold kind. Cook outlines a distinction of elementary and productive exchange networks. The former is based on the exchange of existing resources and the latter on the joint production of value (Cook 1982). The former is closely linked to Faminow et al.'s (2009) adaptive learning and the latter to generative learning. For example, when looking at productive exchange and generative learning it becomes clear that both are social processes in which something new is created.

These theorists, standing behind productive exchange and generative learning, all outline the importance of collective action and social learning. This, of course, links back to the social construction of knowledge (and reality) that frames the discussion in this study (and to pragmatism). However, it also directs us towards some of the theoretical underpinnings of the concept 'communities of practice'. Underlying this concept is a social theory of learning. It is argued that learning shall be "placed in the world"; in other words, people's participation in the world and the context that their lived experience provides shall be embraced as part of a social theory of learning (Wenger 1998).
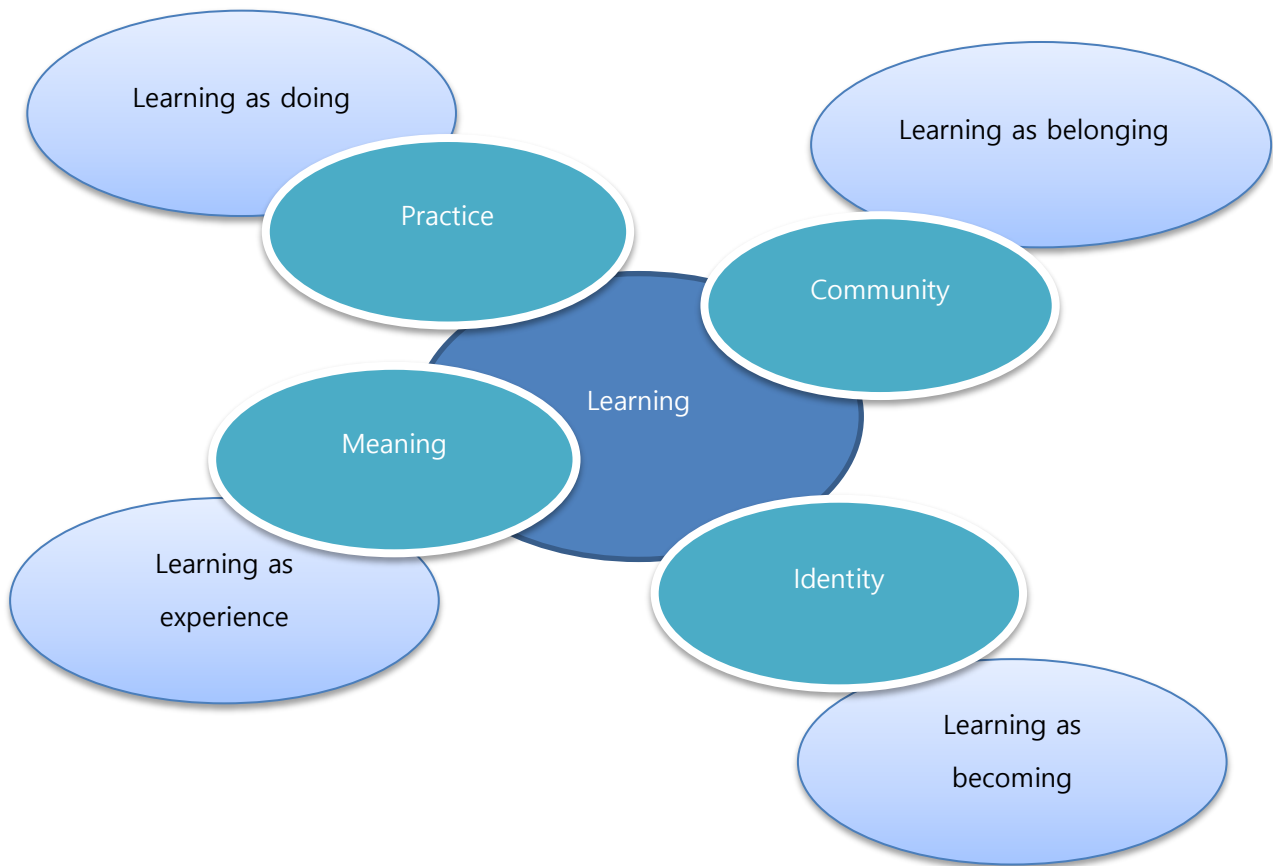
**FIGURE 5: COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNING** (WENGER 1998, P.5)

The social theory of learning proposed by Wenger (1998) understands learning as social participation (and vice versa). Thus, issues of identity, community, (socially constructed) meaning and practice are inherently connected to learning. Collective and social action are also encompassed by this understanding of learning because they are an inherent part of the process. This is closely related to Wenger and Lave's (1991) earlier work on situated learning. It is in this publication that they argue for the 'wholeness' of a person with regards to learning and outline that the social character of learning has been neglected in earlier learning theory. According to situated learning, the world, the agents and their activities must be understood as mutually constitutive rather than separated. This conception of learning resonates with the discussions on (generic and) contextualised knowledge outlined above.

Situated learning in communities of practice emphasises the importance of contextual knowledge and criticises it at the same time. It criticises it by arguing that a distinction between generic and contextualised knowledge is non-existent since they are one and the

same thing. However, from the point of view of individuals that insist on the separation Wenger's (and Lave's) argument underlines the importance of recognising the social nature of human beings and their embeddedness in social structures that impact upon their knowledge internalisation processes.

In any case, the idea of communities of practice (and the social theory of learning that underpins it; together with situated learning) is of significant relevance to this study. This has been recognised by various commentators that relate this to the concept to knowledge management in international development (Leborgne & Cummings 2009; de Vasconcelos et al. 2006). This might be due to the fact that knowledge management and organisational learning have readily adopted the concept of communities of practice for their purpose. This has led to studies on how communities of practice can be managed for the purpose of innovation (Hildreth & Kimble 2004); and especially how they can be fostered and assessed (Wenger et al. 2002; Wenger et al. 2011).

One other important contribution of the concepts of social learning and communities of practice is that, even though they are *social* concepts, they are based on certain premises about the individual human being/learner. Situated learning draws heavily on this.

> Our claim, that focusing on the structure of social practice and on participation therein implies an explicit focus on the person, may appear paradoxical at first. ... to insist on starting with social practice, on taking participation to be the crucial process, and on including the social world at the core of the analysis only seems [on first sight] to eclipse the person. In reality, however, participation in social practice – subjective as well as objective – suggests a very explicit focus on the person, but as person-in-the-world, as member of a sociocultural community. This focus in turn promotes a view of knowing as activity by specific people in specific circumstances (Lave & Wenger 1991, p.52).

This understanding of "knowing" and knowledge is very similar to concept of tacit knowledge as understood in knowledge management (outlined above). Polanyi (1967), similarly to Wenger and Lave, has been using 'knowing' where others often use the word knowledge. Polanyi frequently speaks of tacit knowing and does this, to underline its *active* meaning (Wallace 2007).

Besides Polanyi, the concept of tacit knowledge has also been used by Nonaka and Takeuchi (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). It has been argued that their understanding of tacit knowledge differs from Polanyi's but it is still rooted in personal action and experience (Wallace 2007). This is anchored in Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) discussion of Western epistemology (mainly the Cartesian split) and their own underlying worldview, which is based on a Japanese version of 'oneness'. Whilst Wallace (2007) could be right in stating that their discussion of Western epistemology is overly simplistic, there might still be something important to learn in looking at the differences drawn between their own worldview and what they perceive to be the dominant understanding of knowledge in "Western" KM literature. Some of those issues have already been discussed above in relation to contextual and generic knowledge.

However, the importance of in particular Nonaka's work justifies having a specific look at what this system of thought has to offer. It has been most recognised for the concepts of knowledge conversion, knowledge creation and the SECI model. All three concepts are inherently connected and generally deal with the interaction of tacit and explicit knowledge from a (mainly) procedural perspective. The SECI model describes four modes of knowledge conversion: **s**ocialisation (from tacit to tacit), **e**xternalisation (from tacit to explicit), **c**ombination (from explicit to explicit) and **i**nternalisation (from explicit to tacit) (Figure 6) (Nonaka 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995).

|  | **Tacit knowledge _TO_ Explicit knowledge** | |
|---|---|---|
| **Tacit knowledge** _FROM_ **Explicit knowledge** | Socialisation | Externalisation |
|  | Internalisation | Combination |
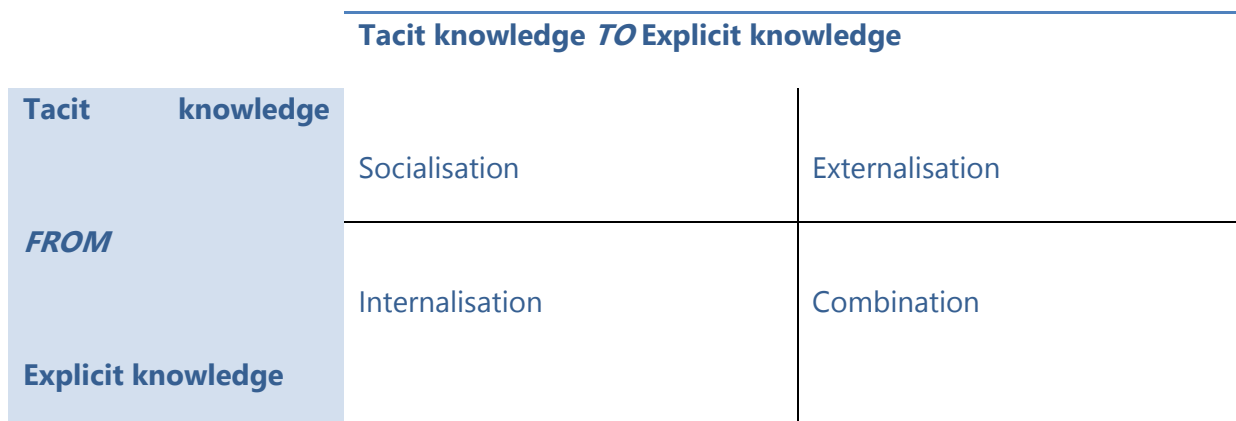
**FIGURE 6: FOUR MODES OF KNOWLEDGE CONVERSION** (NONAKA 1994)

In a) socialisation individuals share experiences (e.g. mental models, technical skills) and create tacit knowledge, which Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) call 'sympathized knowledge'.

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According to their theory, in b) externalisation, what is held as tacit knowledge is converted into explicit concepts (conceptual knowledge). The process of c) combination systemises different concepts/bodies of explicit knowledge into one knowledge system (systemic knowledge) and the act of d) internalisation embeds and converts explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi generally portray these four conversions as a spiral in which field building (closely related to a), dialogue (closely related to b), linking explicit knowledge (closely related to c) and learning by doing (closely related to d) happen on a continuous basis. This spiral is described as the process of organisational knowledge creation, and much has been written about how those processes can be enhanced, facilitated and managed (within and organisational context) (von Krogh, Ichijo, et al. 2000; von Krogh, Nonaka, et al. 2000; Nonaka & Teece 2001; Ichijo & Nonaka 2006).

This body of literature is distinct from that of other KM theorists who have focussed on codification of knowledge (often via the use of information technology). The concepts of tacit knowledge and contextual knowledge point out what is problematic with this. Even though this has been partially discussed already it is important to underline the implications of this again. Swan elegantly outlines some of the key challenges and contradictions in this domain.

> There are a number of reasons why the most valuable tacit knowledge in a firm may not lend itself to capture … It may be too difficult to explain, too uncertain, considered unimportant to anyone else, too changeable, too contextually specific, too politically sensitive or too valuable to the individual or group concerned … Therefore attempts to codify tacit knowledge may only produce knowledge which is: useless (if it is too difficult to explain); difficult to verify (if it is too uncertain); trivial (if it is too unimportant); redundant (if it is subject to continuous change); irrelevant to a wider audience (if it is too context dependent); politically naive (if it is too politically sensitive); inaccurate (if it is too valuable and therefore secreted to the 'knower') (Swan et al. 1999, p.270).

It has been outlined above that because of these issues it might be crucial to focus on the process of social learning rather than on knowledge itself. This is somewhat in line with Nonaka's, Toyama's and Konno's (2000) theory since they also underline the highly embedded nature of tacit knowledge. They address this by arguing that important to the

facilitation of knowledge sharing and knowledge creation is the concept of 'Ba'. By 'Ba' they mean the space in which knowledge is created. Their concept of space encompasses more than a mere physical/geographical space; Ba is a nexus of time and space. In a way it is the context in which knowledge creation happens; however, this context is itself continuously changing through interaction. It is related to what, in social network theory, is described as the 'state of ties' in particular networks, and Wenger would relate it to the identity of a community. It is what is shared in a network/group/community/etc.

Nonaka, Ichoijo, and Van Krogh (2000) argue that the enabling context which Ba represents is different from a community of practice. They describe the difference to be in a community of practice being rather rigid in terms of its practices and boundaries. Ba, in contrast, is much more process oriented by being under continuous redefinition and redevelopment and being without "formal" (or any) boundaries. However, Wenger (and others who worked on the concept; like Nonaka (1994) or van Krogh (2000)) would probably object to this reading of their work and it can be argued that both concepts are closer to each other than either theorist would admit.

Another concept, which attempts to describe a space in which information flows, is the information space model introduced by Boisot and Cox (1999). This model, developed from a computing perspective, situates information flows in a three dimensional space that is described by three dualisms on the three existing axes. In this model knowledge is diffused-undiffused, codified-uncodified, and abstract-concrete. Whilst knowledge/information (the object) moves through a social learning cycle it changes its location on the three axes. A particular strength of this model is that it manages to accommodate the exchange (diffusion) of information with the creation/production of information (codification, abstraction). The model suggests that exchange and production are inherently related, which shows remarkable resemblance with participatory processes in international development, and also with Wenger's (and Lave's) social theory of learning/situated learning.

## 2.5 SPACE AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR

What all these approaches have in common is that they emphasise the importance of (the) space of/for social processes of learning. It has been discussed how knowledge exchange, transfer, creation, learning, etc. are social processes. Another aspect that has been outlined in

relation to knowledge is the importance of action/practice. Knowledge, it has been argued, exists in a context and this context is mostly personal. Thus, what needs to be looked at besides (and with) social processes is individual learning. Brown and Duguid (2001) offer a discussion of both in an organisational context.

Part of their discussion is the question of what communities are bound by. They outline that the organisational structure is just one aspect and that practice can play an important role in expanding a network beyond an organisational boundary (or beyond boundaries existing amongst different communities within organisations) (Brown & Duguid 2001). Vasconcelos and Zijlstra (2010) connect this to the role knowledge brokers can play in an organisational context. Knowledge brokers can help shaping boundary objects (e.g. common knowledge) which enable boundary interactions. In other words, they can shape the space for social knowledge processes to happen. This of course is inherently connected to the discussions of social structure, structuration, social processes of learning, etc.

Leeuwis and Aarts explore this with the help of Giddens and Foucault.

> Latent opportunities for change always exist (even if unacknowledged), and … societal contexts and structural conditions are not only constraining, but also enabling … In a general sense, 'space' here refers to the room for manoeuvre that exists and/or emerges in a network of interactions at multiple social interfaces. Such space arises from the interaction between actors, who define (or negotiate) the space for manoeuvre while communicating with each other. Giddens (1984) speaks of the emergence of meaningful change in terms of a gradual process of 'structuration' that takes place in everyday interaction. (Leeuwis & Aarts 2011, pp.26–27)

They continue by connecting this to Foucault's theory of discourse (Foucault 1970; Foucault & Gordon 1980; Rabinow 1984) and argue that discourses are essential to understanding the processes of structuration that are at work in and around spaces of change. "The emergence of 'space for change' … can be interpreted as being associated with an altering of what we call 'Discursive Space' at different interfaces in a network" (Leeuwis & Aarts 2011, p.27). This is illustrated in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 7: DIFFERENT TYPES OF SPACE AND THEIR INTERRELATIONS (LEEUWIS & AARTS 2011, P.27)**

The concept of space brings together the social theory of learning, discourse, social network theory, etc. Communities of Practice, Ba, and the discursive space. All try to underline the importance of what could be considered the environment of interactions (even though in practice all those conceptual borders are unrecognisable due to the complexity of the lived experience). Structuration always takes place in the context of existing social structure; change always takes place in the context of the status quo. This has been explored earlier with regards to generic-contextual knowledge, the structuralist paradigm in international development, and at various other points in the thesis.

However, Figure 7 shows also the other side of the equation. The mental space interacts with the discursive space. In interactions people bring their own worldviews, beliefs, values, etc. into the discussion. In their theories, Polanyi and Nonaka et al. use the 'tacit dimension' to capture this and connect it to the social by processes of conversion from tacit to explicit and explicit to tacit. The distinct contribution of Leeuwis and Aarts lies in considering this inherent reality and looking at it from a process facilitation perspective. They argue that facilitators have to engage in a range of strategies ranging from supporting network building, to social learning and conflict management. However, by approaching the individual with their theoretical background they come to state that "such intermediary processes ... centre on a range of human aspects and attributes (e.g. interests, fears, visions, uncertainties, relationships etc.) that bear relevance to the building of networks and reaching agreement, coherence and congruence ... within and between them" (Leeuwis & Aarts 2011, p.33).

In the context of knowledge intermediation, where facilitation of knowledge interaction of sometimes very diverse actors is sought after, this other side of human aspects and

attributes is crucial to understand. Leeuwis and Aarts (as do others; like, for example, Gaventa (2006) or Cornwall (2006)) point out the importance of spaces for change and the potential for facilitation of these; the next step needs to be understanding how such a space looks like. They suggest that one answer lies in the aspects and attributes of the individuals that are meant to take up the opportunities that such a space creates. Within the library and information sciences much has been written about such aspects (Wilson 1984; Foster 2005; Boisot & Cox 1999; Schneider et al. 2009). One of the most crucial concepts, within the context of this study, is knowledge/information (seeking) behaviour.

Information behaviour describes the various ways in which people engage and interact with information. Whilst it has a particular focus on the way in which human beings seek and use information, the concept is understood to cover any engagement of a person with its environment that changes them; change is understood to come about via changes in people's knowledge. Such changes can be based on complex relationships between new information and existing knowledge; such processes can be the basis for inducing and deducing new thoughts, ideas and understandings. (Bates 2010).

Information behaviour, as the currently preferred term, has a long history in the library and information sciences. Wilson, one of the most important scholars in information behaviour, outlined this in 1999 and referred to the many models of information seeking that exist and argued that most of them do not address the various different aspects of information behaviour. He suggested taking research forward by attempting to develop a meta-model that accurately describes information behaviour. He suggests that such a model shall be based on the underlying assumption that problem solving offers the motivation to every information searching endeavour (Wilson 1999). The model he suggests can do this is shown in Figure 8.
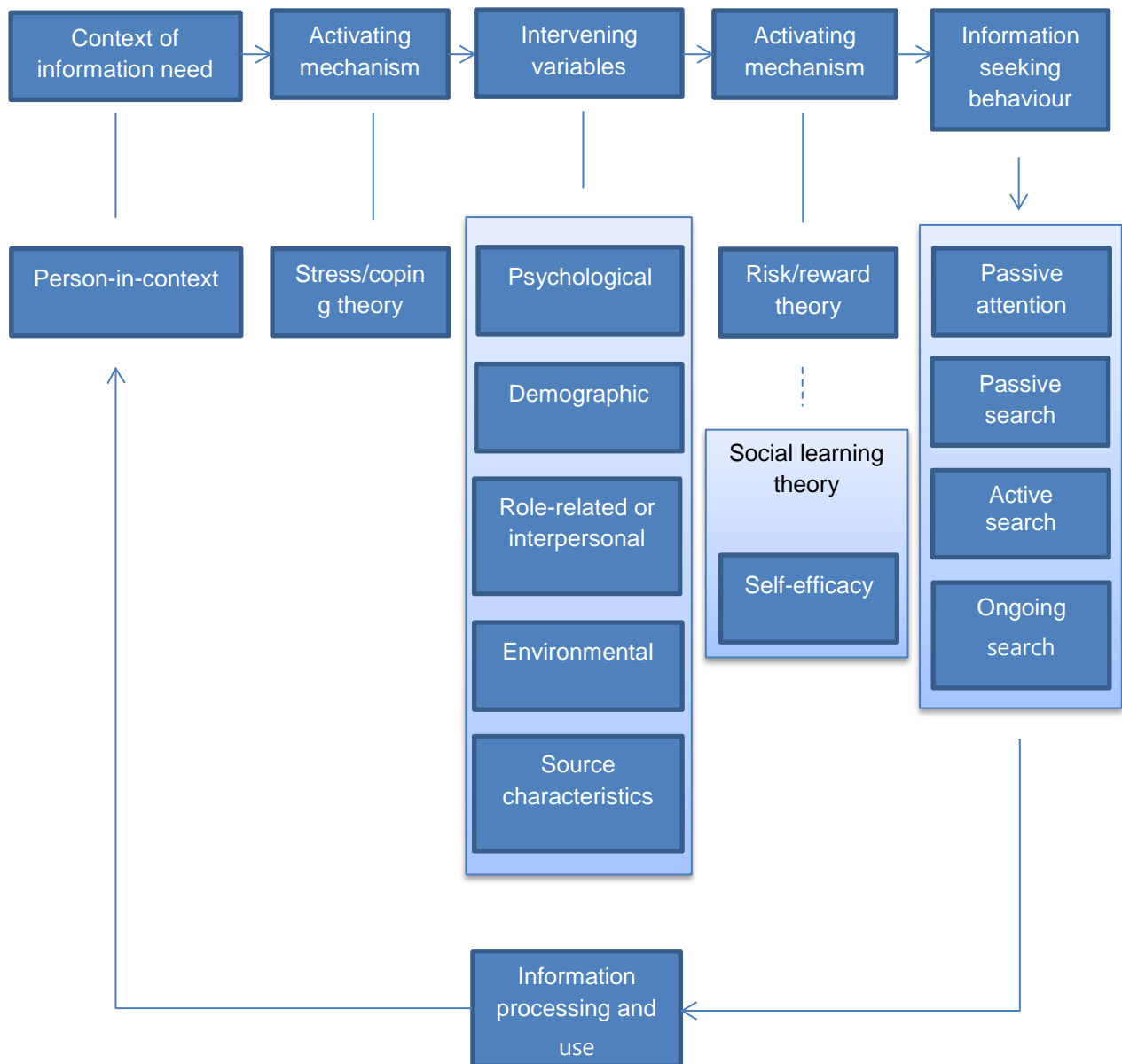
**FIGURE 8: WILSON'S 1996 MODEL OF INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR** (WILSON 1999, P.257)

In 2005 Fisher, Erdeley and McKechnie published the *Theories of Information Behavior* in which seventy-two theories are outlined; it is impossible to address all of these (Figure 8 is merely an example of one very influential model) (Fisher et al. 2005). Wilson (2005) provides an introductory chapter to the book outlining the evolution of his own work, which shows the significance of his contributions. Bates (2010), and Wang (2011), offer more recent reviews of the field of information behaviour and outline the diversity of topics discussed under the heading; e.g. information searching, information needs, information sharing and transfer, relevance judgement, information generation, information use, personal information management, etc. All of these aspects are relevant to the understanding of information-

related human behaviour; thus, models and processes that start with the human individual and embed it in its information environment are a core concern of theorists studying this subject (Wang 2011).

In this study it has been argued that relationships, social learning and, therefore, context are crucial in processes of knowledge exchange and their facilitation. Context is also a primary concern of information behaviour studies (Courtright 2007). The context and the individual are inherently connected and Dervin has attempted to capture this by stating that a context is something one is in and something that is within one (Wang 2011).

Dervin developed the concept of sense-making to convey her ideas. "In essence, then the term sense-making refers to a coherent set of theoretically derived methods for studying human sense-making. ... the core assumption on which sense-making rests [is] the assumption of discontinuity. ... Sense-making assumes that the discontinuity assumption is an important one to invoke in the study of human information use for those occasions" (Dervin 1992, p.62) where human actors are considered in the investigation of information related matters.

In line with the taken epistemological views Dervin outlines that "information is conceptualized as that sense created at a specific moment in time-space by one or more humans. Information is not seen as something that exists apart from human behavioural activity. Because there is no direct observation of reality, all observations result from an application of energy by humans in one or more forms" (Dervin 1992, p.63).

The focus on time-space formulation hints at what information behaviour researchers consider to be the difference between situation and context. "Situation is a sense of context that can impact the individual as a set of external or environmental factors. ... Situation is understood as both an external construct and an internal construct while context is mostly an external construct. As an external construct, situations somewhat overlap with but are also different from contextual factors, in that situations are much more dynamic and personal than context" (Wang 2011, pp.25–26).

This illustrates how information behaviour research addresses a level of complexity (related to the facilitation of knowledge exchange processes) that current research in the area of this study has paid hardly any attention to. Even though this is the case, some strings of thought

seem to be going (roughly) along similar lines. Fisher's (2005) theory of information grounds shows some resemblance with the ideas of Ba, communities of practice and information space. An information ground is the space/s or environment/s of social interaction in which humans gather for a purpose. Within this context the sharing of information is fostered due to the social atmosphere created by the purpose of the gathering (Fisher 2005). Important to note is that information grounds are not the same as social environments; information grounds are that aspect of social interaction that is concerned with information sharing.
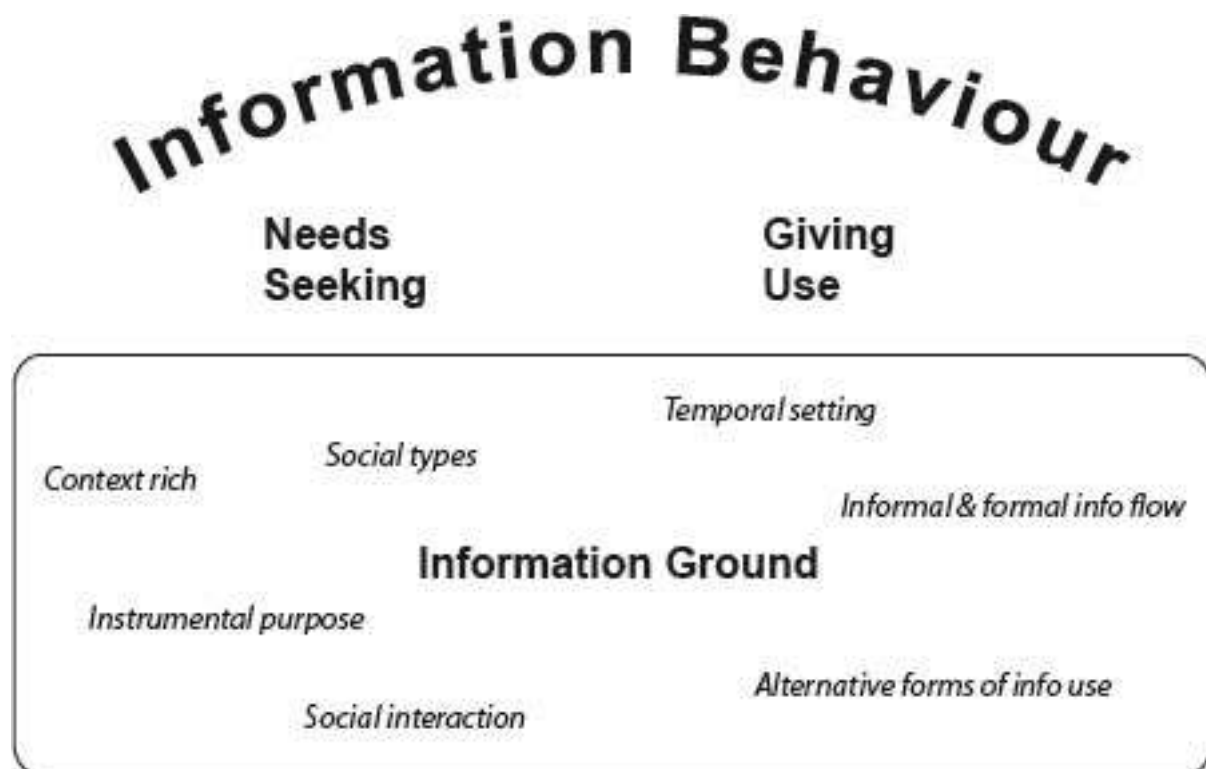


**FIGURE 9: INFORMATION GROUNDS AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR** (FISHER 2005, P.187)

Figure 9 illustrates that processes of information needs, seeking, giving and use all happen on the foundation of information grounds. This creates awareness that knowledge exchange and transfer is merely a small aspect of an incredibly complex (situation and) context. Even though information behaviour research is under continuous development (or evolution as information behaviour theorists like to call it) the research has brought forward some firmly established insights:

Generally, in line with information grounds theory, information behaviour scholars (e.g. Nahl and Bilal (2007)) argue that the social and personal purposes which information serves need

to be looked at in an integrated manner. The individual and its information needs are inherently seen in its information environment. This is a similar consideration to the connection of mental space and discursive space outlined above. Also, as outlined by Wilson (2005), problem solving is the pivotal motivation behind information seeking and retrieval. Moreover, human information seeking behaviour is dominated by the principle of least effort. People will base decisions on information that they conveniently find and seemingly suffices the purpose of their endeavour (Bates 2010).

In 1976, information seeking research (the then dominant term) conducted by Dervin had already identified common assumptions and myths that prevail in people's views on human information seeking. These are: "1. Only 'objective' information is valuable … 2. More information is always better … 3. Objective information can be transmitted out of context … 4. Information can only be acquired through formal sources … 5. There is relevant information for every need … 6. Every need situation has a solution. … 7. It is always possible to make information available or accessible … 8. Functional units of information, such as books or television programs, always fit the needs of individuals … 9. Time and space – individual situations – can be ignored in addressing information seeking and use … 10. People make easy, conflict-free connections between external information and their internal reality" (Case 2006, pp.8–9).

Since these false assumptions have been outlined information behaviour research underwent a significant shift from being system-centred to being user-centred. User centred research starts with the information actor (seeker) and the complexity of her/his situation. It acknowledges that actors' information behaviour is barely predictable (due to varying overlapping situations and contexts) but at the same time attempts to theorise/model information behaviour (some of it from a cognitive stands) (Wilson 1984). The solution to the seeming clash between system (standing for context) and individual (information actor) is to recognise the actor's embeddedness in multiple, dynamic, complex, and overlapping situations and contexts (e.g. cultural, social and institutional settings) (Courtright 2007). As outlined above, following Dervin, context is within the individual and vice versa.

Courtright (2007) argues that rather than seeing the context of an individual as systemic it shall be seen as dynamic and relational. The focus then moves away from structures and embraces processes and can benefit further from discussions in other fields like sociology

(e.g. structuration and/or autopoiesis of social systems) and contribute to those its established knowledge of individuals(-in-context) information behaviour. Courtright further argues that one of the aspects that are relevant to a discussion of the dynamic and relational understanding of information behaviour is the factor of power relations.

This is not surprising, considering the related (procedural and relational) discussions in other fields that have been outlined above and their attention to power. For example, one of the important aspects of the concept of exchange networks is the prominent discussion of power imbalances and how processes of power redistribution look in networks (Cook et al. 1992). As part of the exchange network literature theorists discuss how some of those processes are/can be brokered and mediated (Marsden 1982). All of these issues and aspects (power imbalances, power redistribution, and mediation) will be picked up again in the following section.

## 2.6 POWER AND DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Before going into discussing 'power' in relation to development interventions the concept shall be briefly explored at a more general level. Much has been written on power and Figure 10 illustrates some of the conceptual discussions nicely (even though very simplistic).
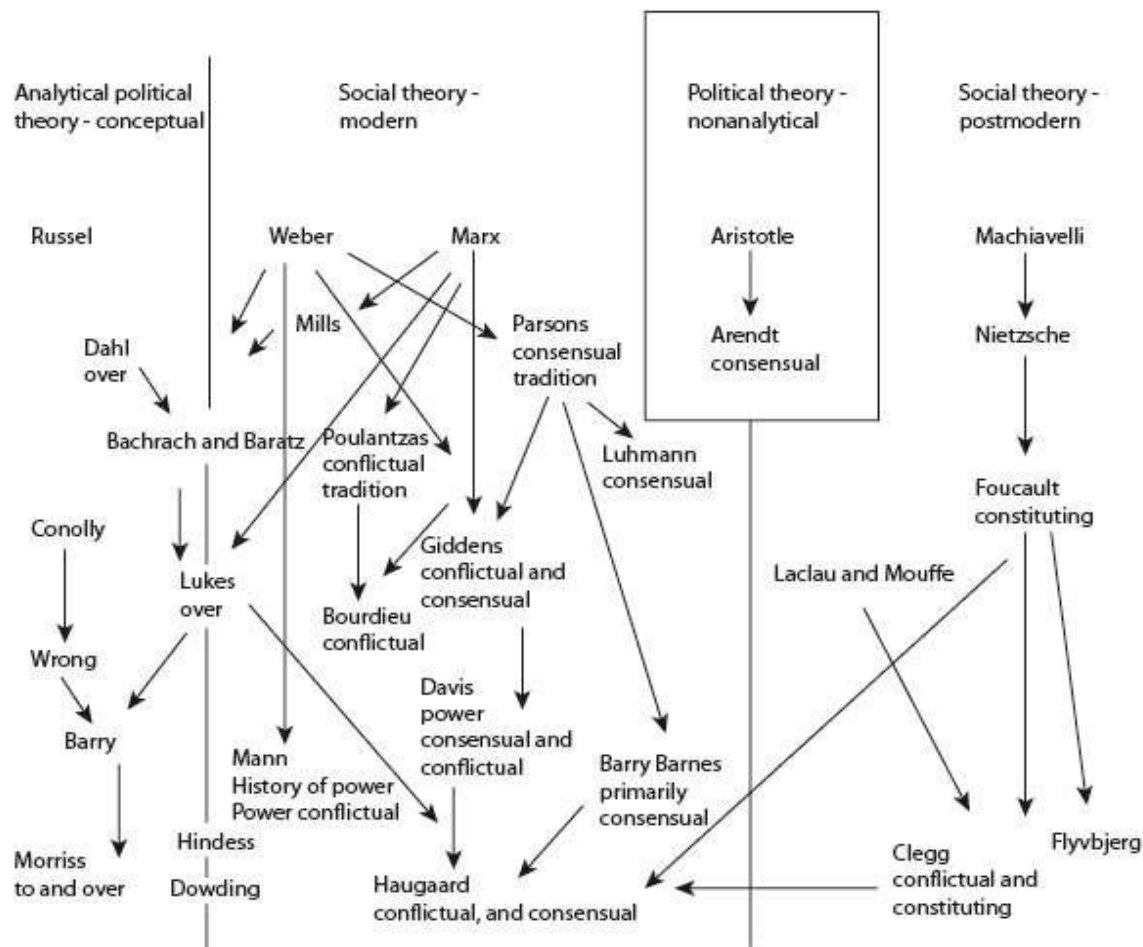
**FIGURE 10: POWER - A CONCEPTUAL MAP** (HAUGAARD 2002, P.VII)

Haugaard discusses some of the most influential conceptions of power as outlined in the diagram. As can be seen, one particularly strong influence comes from Lukes (2005). Lukes reviews some of the most important discussions that the concept of power saw. Lukes outlines the three different views of power, which he summarises in Figure 11, that acknowledge that power is both overt and covert but also hidden. Lukes argues that power's hidden character is of crucial importance and that "power is at its most effective when least observable" (Lukes 2005, p.1). On first sight this hidden character of power makes it impossible to detect and analyse. However, Lukes also states that "a deeper analysis of power relations is possible – an analysis that is at once value-laden, theoretical and empirical" (Lukes 2005, p.59).

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*One-Dimensional View of Power*

Focus on (a) behaviour
(b) decision-making
(c) (key) issues
(d) observable (overt) conflict
(e) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences or revealed by political participation


*Two-Dimensional View of Power*

(Qualified) critique of behavioural focus

Focus on (a) decision-making and nondecision-making
(b) issues and potential issues
(c) observable (overt or covert) conflict
(d) (subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences or grievances


*Three-Dimensional View of Power*

Critique of behavioural focus

Focus on (a) decision-making and control over political agenda (not necessarily through decisions)
(b) issues and potential issues
(c) observable (overt and covert), and latent conflict
(d) subjective and real interests

</div>

**FIGURE 11: SUMMARY OF THREE VIEWS OF POWER.** (LUKES 2005, P.29)

Jones et al. (2012) follow Lukes' conception of power but also take into account Foucault's (1980) work on power and knowledge. This study also follows Foucault in that it holds knowledge to be constructed through discourses which are influenced by power relationships. The importance of discourses and relationships has been outlined above and Foucault connects them with power. This connection is inherent; where there is truth and knowledge there is always also power because how truth and knowledge come to be is a process inherently conditioned by (power) relationships. Since knowledge and conceptions of the truth are inherently connected to power they cannot be "emancipated" from systems of power. When analysing power one can thus not observe knowledge and power as separate entities but must look at them via processes of social learning/discourse (Foucault & Gordon 1980; Rabinow 1984).

Flood outlines that "Knowledge-power is the idea that people in positions of power determine what is considered to be valid knowledge and consequently action. … When looking at systems of processes and of structure we question the fairness of designs. That is, we spotlight who in fact benefits from efficiency of processes and effectiveness of structure? If a design is not investigated in this way, it is possible, or more likely probable, that the design will be built without question on ideas of privileged people. This may disadvantage and/or alienated other people. It will carry through entrenched patterns of organisational and social behaviour" (Flood 1999, p.117).

Some of these insights have found recognition in development literature. Scholars that consider power to be an important concept to study frequently consider relationships to be important as well. Some examples can be found in Groves and Hinton's (2004) work on inclusive aid. Chambers and Pettit, for instance, reflect on power and relationships and offer this view on international development and power.

> During recent years, the wind of development rhetoric has changed. The new words – partnership, empowerment, ownership, participation, accountability, and transparency – imply changes in power and relationships, but have not been matched in practice. Viewing aid as a complex system, power and relationships can be identified as governing dynamics that prevent the inclusion of weaker actors and voices in decision-making. Organisational norms and procedures, combined with personal behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, serve to reinforce these existing power relationships. (Chambers & Pettit 2004, p.137)

This of course is connected to what has been outlined above as the gap between rhetoric and action. Chambers and Pettit think that such a situation can be addressed by paying more attention to processes and procedures. In 1994, Davies already argued along similar lines when "introducing" the concepts of information, knowledge and power to the development context. Davies argued that when "Northerners" work with "Southerners" the relationships are arranged mostly hierarchically. This hierarchy is mirrored within local communities and causes concerns with regard to the information and knowledge that is used by Northern actors in the initiation of programmes and projects (Davies 1994). This has also been outlined by Schumacher in 1973 who argued that the supply of knowledge is being thought off (at the time) in a similar fashion as material interventions were. Knowledge related

activities were underpinned by the assumption that "what is good for the rich must obviously be good for the poor" (Schumacher 1973, p.185).

More recently Powell (2006) argued along similar lines stating that there are structural weaknesses in international development with regards to the knowledge generation, retention and use channels that agencies draw on when informing their decisions. He outlines that it is important to recognise that there is no universal understanding of what knowledge is. Every individual has a biased view based on one's social, as well as, physical realities. This links back to the idea of multiple knowledges but also to other aspects of the social realm like, for example, language.

Language, knowledge, discourse and power have long been found to be connected (Fairclough 2001; Mayr 2008; Kedar 1987). In line with the concept of multiple knowledges the issue with language is that it "is not simply one of translating speech but of appreciating the intellectual, ideological, and social understandings upon which speech is based. The use of language encompasses a structure of thought and shared understanding that may not be simply translatable" (Powell 2006, p.6).

In line with the broader discourse/knowledge/language literature Powell (2006) sees this as being inherently connected to power. He argues that the knowledge flows required to affect change in the way it is intended in the international development sector are undermined by actual practice of researchers and practitioners; this is due to discourses/relationships being characterised by domination and control rather than two-way communication, equity and participation. Drew (2002) would agree to this, arguing that learning in development partnerships is commonly understood to mean the "global South" learns from the "global North". Both authors argue instead for facilitating processes that are characterised by mutual learning.

This is not only true for North-South "partnerships" but also for learning networks. Pant states that "The major sources of tension in inter-organizational learning networks, as is increasingly common in international development, are power, value, predisposition and trust" (Pant 2009, p.27). In this study it is argued that to understand those relationships one has to understand discourse(s). Discourses are spaces in which learning happens and knowledge changes.

Discourses are (potentially) what Gaventa (2006) calls spaces for change. He argues that the three dimensions of power outlined by Lukes are linked to spaces of engagement. His concept, which has been used in the introduction to outline the research gap already, is illustrated in Figure 12. Of particular interest to this study is the difference between closed, invited, and claimed/created spaces. This distinction originated in Cornwall and Coelho's work on spaces for change (Cornwall 2004; Cornwall 2002; Cornwall & Coelho 2006).
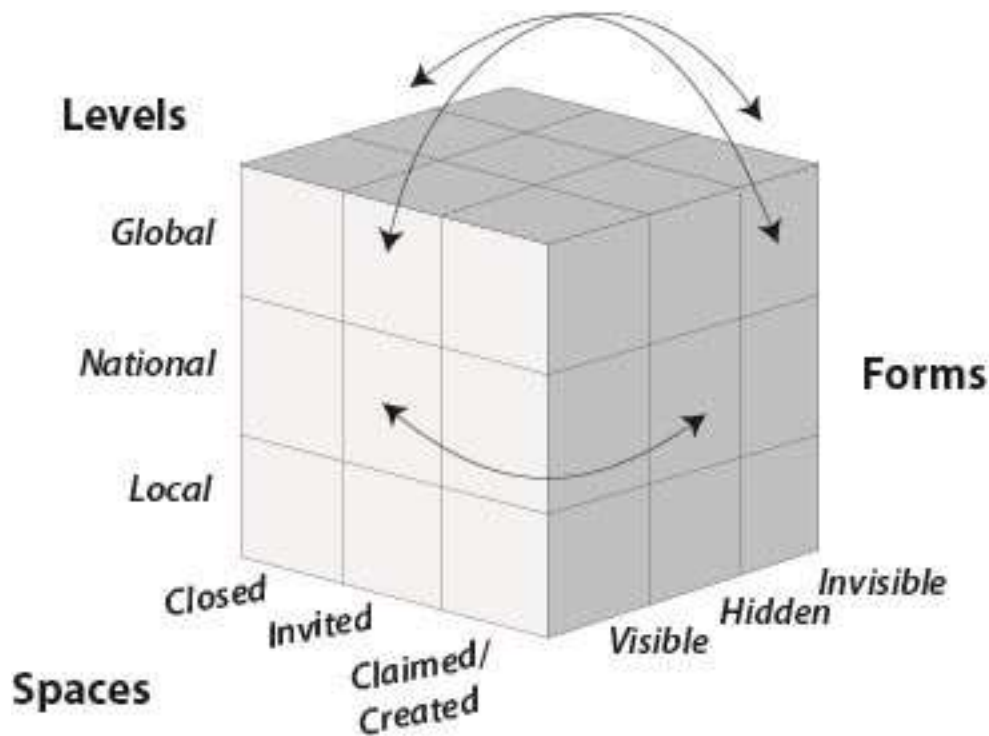


**FIGURE 12: THE 'POWER CUBE'** (GAVENTA 2006, P.25)

Closed spaces are "provided" spaces where decisions are made behind closed doors (by elites). Invited spaces attempt to broaden participation and to open the space up to invited institutions and individuals. Claimed/created spaces are spaces which come about due to the action of a less powerful actor. The latter come about organically and are usually self-organised. Gaventa (2006) and Cornwell (2002) argue that participation and relationships are different in these types of spaces and that they have a distinct character in relation to the different dimensions of power.

As Cornwall, this study considers the concept of spaces to be closely linked to discourses. Thus, this study incorporates that knowledge and, therefore, the cases studied are viewed through the lens of the 'sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis'. This is

where many of the so far outlined theoretical considerations are brought together and are translated into a framework for the analysis of the two case studies drawn on in this study.

The introduction and literature review have mapped the territory in which this research project is situated. Key definitions have been outlined (e.g. development, intermediation, knowledge for development, sustainability, etc.) and many related concepts have been put into context and been appropriated for the research aim and objectives pursued in this research project. Whilst all of these remain relevant throughout this thesis one needs to keep hold of the complex and interconnected nature of factors that influence human's learning journeys and the facilitation of south-south knowledge exchanges. In this dynamic and complex endeavour the methodology chapter following is setting out a necessarily complex approach to studying these processes and supporting structures.

# 3. METHODOLOGY

In the following a methodology is developed that allows for an empirical investigation that is in line with the purpose and delivers on the aim of the research project. What is presented is a mixed methods methodology based on pragmatism that studies two case studies. Participatory techniques were used to align the research questions with practitioners' needs and to identify the two case studies. These case studies were treated as discourse and, thus, a discourse analysis was conducted on the communications occurring as part of those two knowledge intermediation projects. The case studies both intended to connect practitioners and policy makers within and across southern nations via online fora, Email communications, study visits, web conferencing, and face-to-face meetings with facilitators; through this they are intermediating south-south knowledge exchange..

## 3.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to provide practitioners in the development sector with academically grounded and developed insights and ideas that could potentially improve their practice. The focus was in particular on practitioners facilitating knowledge exchange(s) between development workers in developing countries (South-South knowledge exchange).

## 3.2 AIM

To be able to deliver valuable insights and ideas for practitioners and academics this research project aimed to investigate how knowledge intermediation projects in the international development sector are shaped by their approach (demand initiated, facilitator/funder initiated), especially in terms of the relationships they foster. In addition, it discusses what implications the findings have for the intermediation of knowledge processes.

## 3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH: META-THEORY

Whatever purpose and aim a study has, it is always a product of a certain philosophical approach. It is well established that the philosophical approach to a study sits at its core and reaches from there out to every decision that is taken in the conduct of the study (Slife & Williams 1995).

Researchers use different terminology to describe their philosophical approach to research design; e.g Creswell (2003) chooses the term 'worldview' and argues that it is made up of

beliefs that give guidance for action. What is meant by philosophical approach is essentially the same as his term 'worldview'. Creswell distinguishes four essential philosophical approaches; positivist, social constructivist, advocacy and participatory, and pragmatic. He discusses each briefly and outlines their main elements (see Table 1). The following discussion shall use these categories to illustrate the chosen philosophical approach.[14]

| Positivism | Constructivism |
|---|---|
| Determination | Understanding |
| Reductionism | Multiple participant meanings |
| Empirical observation and | Social and historical construction |
| measurement | Theory generation |
| Theory verification | |
| Advocacy/Participatory | Pragmatism |
| Political | Consequences of actions |
| Empowerment Issue-oriented | Problem-centered |
| Collaborative | Pluralistic |
| Change-oriented | Real-world practice oriented |

**TABLE 1: FOUR WORLDVIEWS.**(CRESWELL 2003, P.6)

Aspects from all of these philosophical positions are relevant to this study. Alongside post positivism, this study rejects the positivist idea that an absolute truth can be found. In positivism "reality is singular, a priori, and objective (i.e., independent of the knower) ... True knowledge arises from observation of empirical phenomena that form the tangible, material traces of essential reality" (Lindlof 1995, p.8). Post positivism shares positivism's believe that

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[14] The advocacy/participatory approach is not discussed at this stage [I disagree with Creswell on the matter that this can be described as a philosophical approach in the first place]. It is seen as a strategy of enquiry because rather than differing from other positions on meta-philosophical (metaphysical) issues about truth and reality, this approach is distinct in that it argues that research needs to be put in the context of politics and political agendas. It underlines the importance of ethical considerations in research and, in particular, emphasises that every study takes a stand on issues and can be seen through a political lens. Thus, it is not a it is not a meta-physical position as the others are. At a meta-physical level it does not differ from (social) constructivism.

reality exists independently of human perception but adds that human beliefs about this reality are always imperfect (Lindlof 1995).

Another characteristic of post positivism is the importance of objectivity. It is perceived that every valuable enquiry is characterised by it and that one has to address questions of validity and reliability in a respectable enquiry (Lindlof 1995; Creswell 2003). Even though some aspects of post positivism are considered, post positivism cannot be followed in its entirety. Since the aim of this study is to explore processes and to observe relationships, the approach of theory verification (promoted in post positivism) and the associated reductionism are inappropriate.

In opposition to (post) positivism, social constructivism (and interpretivism) takes the stance that no singular reality exists. According to this philosophy, researchers shall focus on people's interpretations (of ideas, objects, events, etc.) instead of the (non-existent) singular reality. In this philosophical approach the researcher makes sense of the world through the eyes of others and from there develops models and theories (Creswell 2003). This is one of the theoretical conflicts between (post-)positivism and interpretivism. As outlined in the last paragraph, due to the exploratory nature of the pursued research aims, this study is situated on the interpretivist end of the spectrum.

An additional aspect of *social* constructivism is that meaning is always constructed in social processes; human beings are seen as inherently social and embedded in culture. Thus, meaning cannot be generated without social/cultural influences and/or human interaction (Creswell 2003). Since this research aims at understanding knowledge exchanges, which involve communication between human beings, this aspect is an important part of the employed philosophical approach.

As already outlined, (post-) positivism and interpretivism (and their respective philosophically related concepts) make claims about reality and knowledge that seem to stand in stark contrast to each other (Baert 2005). Scheffler describes that, "these conceptions have interpreted knowing as the work of the individual mind either eliciting eternal truths from within, or passively registering ideas sent to it from without and reflecting an alien form of substance" (Scheffler 1974, p.6). He goes on describing the "need, as pragmatists construed it, was to overcome inherent dualisms – between knower and known, fact and value, mind and matter, acting and feeling, abstract and concrete" (Scheffler 1974, p.6).

In Creswell's eyes pragmatism is a philosophical approach that suggests that some of the classical discussions around positivism (and/or objectivist, empiricist, rationalist) and social constructivism (and/or interpretivist, naturalistic, hermeneutic empricism) are less crucial than they are perceived to be. In his opinion, pragmatists believe that both, a reality external to the mind and one within the mind, exist (Creswell 2003).

From a non-pragmatist perspective this is sometimes portrayed as avoiding important questions about the nature of truth and reality by focussing on verification (process) rather than veracity (object) (Durkheim & Allcock 1983). However, even though this is a strong critique of pragmatism there is no need to address it in this study. This study focuses, due to its purpose, on delivering insights and ideas that potentially improve practice. Pragmatism's focus on action is therefore a welcome aspect rather than a weakness. Additionally, since this study aims at improving the understanding of knowledge interventions by analysing them (mainly) from a procedural perspective, pragmatism's focus on processes can also be seen as a strength rather than a weakness.

Thus, even though pragmatism has its criticisms it seems to be a valuable philosophical underpinning for what is attempted.

## 3.4 STRATEGY OF ENQUIRY

Pragmatism is pragmatic in that it suggests that the researcher shall be able to use whatever methods necessary to get the most thorough understanding of the research problem possible. Positivism suggests a strategy of enquiry that is based on hypothesis testing (reviewing the literature, developing hypotheses, testing with mainly "scientific"/quantitative methods); interpretivism suggests a strategy of enquiry that starts with individuals perceptions (considering literature at a later stage, theory building, on basis of mostly qualitative methods) (Creswell 2003). However, both strategies carry the inherent weaknesses of their philosophical underpinnings.

Pragmatism emphasises that the purpose of the research needs to be considered in the choice of a strategy of enquiry. One important aspect of the pursued is that the research project shall be valuable to practitioners. One way of ensuring that this is the case, and frequently employed in international development (studies), is 'participation'.

Participatory research goes under different names but the "core process is to enable participants to share their perceptions of a problem, to find common ground and then to engage a variety of people in identifying and testing out some possible solutions" (Laws et al. 2002, p.49). In international development it is sometimes seen as a way to affect change. This is due to the idea that a participatory approach to research (as well as other projects) increases ownership of solutions. The on-going involvement of potential beneficiaries is thought to create a level of ownership that then leads to increased likelihoods in terms of change implementation. Additionally, involving the people that best understand the context in which potential solutions might be applied is supposed to increase the quality of the solutions suggested (Laws et al. 2002).

Seen from this perspective, it is a way of ensuring the relevance of the research for its stakeholders, improving the quality of the outputs by including context specific knowledge, increasing the potential impact of a project through applicability of findings and enhanced ownership. However, critiques of participatory research argue that research might be overtly influenced by powerful or very outspoken stakeholders, might be too time consuming and/or raise unrealistic expectations (Mayoux 2006).

These criticisms are reasonable and need to be considered; and have led to the decisions not to pursue a pure participatory (action) research methodology. The chosen methods need to consider issues of relevance, reliability and ethics, and, furthermore, need to strike a balance between the input through participation and the inherent requirements of an academic research project.

One way of ensuring that all of these issues are addressed is to draw on the strengths of different strategies and methods. Mixed methods research design is seen as a strategy that can do exactly this. Using both, qualitative and quantitative data, is perceived to lessen the impact of the limitations inherent to both strategies (Creswell 2003).

One concept in the social sciences that is supposed to deal with these issues of validity through using multiple methods is triangulation. Multiple methods are used to ensure that variance encountered in a study is due to the object of study rather than the method used. "The effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of another. That is, it is assumed that multiple and independent measures do not share the same weaknesses or

potential for bias" (Jick 2012, p.604). Triangulation can be applied at various levels in the research design. At the strategic level the usage of participatory, quantitative, and qualitative approaches can be an effective use of triangulation that ensures (in line with a pragmatist philosophical underpinning) that a thorough understanding of the research problem is achieved and any bias counteracted by the other strategies applied.

Before we turn to the particular methods used for data gathering it is necessary to develop a procedural account of the different strategies that shall be applied in this research, following the ideas of triangulation. Mayoux (2006) offers a discussion of participatory, quantitative, and qualitative methods and how they can be integrated in a way that makes most use of their respective strengths. In her integrated research process (Figure 13) participatory methods are considered at every stage in the process, and quantitative measures build upon the exploratory findings of qualitative methods and the initial inputs obtained through participation.

Key outputs at each stage

Key outputs at each stage

**Stage 1: scoping**
Main questions/issues
key stakeholders: beneficiaries, participants, informants, audience

Literature review and gathering of different information and hypotheses

Brainstorming exploratory modelling initial contacts with respondents institutional links

Participant observation exploratory interviews with possible key informants

Exploratory participatory focus groups and workshops

**Stage 2: refinement and piloting**
Focusing questions or hypotheses sampling frame process and tools

Focused use of qualitative methods: purposive observation, more interviews with key informants and

Contextual information identification of differing views and perspectives
who may know or say what?
how do different people respond to different questions and tools?
How do initial observed processes relate to original models and hypothesis

Participatory stakeholder analysis participatory modelling piloting participatory tools

Revisiting literature critical examination of existing statistics

**Stage 3: 'research proper'**
Main investigation and analysis

Carefully designed and targeted participatory tools to get quantitative and qualitative information

Cross-checking triangulation interim reports and analysis anticipated or unexpected findings new questions and

Quantitative survey for specific measurable indicators with random or stratified sample statistical

**Stage 4: dissemination and links**
Final write-ups and dissemination for different audiences consolidating links between respondents and relevant development agencies steps for the future

Ongoing qualitative observation and interviews qualitative follow-up of interesting case studies, outliers and/or typical

Discussion of findings with key informants/purposive sample gauging initial reactions to findings and presentation of findings further participatory questioning of hypotheses further participatory identification of ways forward clarification of gaps and limitations

participatory    qualitative    quantitative

**FIGURE 13: AN INTEGRATED RESEARCH PROCESS.** (MAYOUX 2006, PP.124–125)

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The process described by Mayoux is, of course, merely an example that illustrates how mixed methods research, including quantitative, qualitative, and participatory approaches, can be undertaken. The methods chosen for this research project were the result of an inductive thought process that had at its beginning the research questions outlined below (6 & Bellamy 2012). This process led, with consideration of Mayoux's proposal, to a procedural perspective on a mixed method integrated research process that is outlined in Figure 14 (p.80).

Figure 14 shows how the research process was accompanied and entwined with a process of stakeholder involvement. As outlined below, amongst other elements, participation in relevant Communities of Practices and exploratory interviews enabled engagement with relevant individuals and institutions. Insights generated in this influenced research purpose and aim, research objectives, and the case study choices. Besides employing triangulation between participatory, quantitative and qualitative elements, triangulation was also employed within the two case studies. This was implemented by coding and analysing conversations, employing a network analysis and by conducting interviews. These research methods enabled the researcher to then conduct a comparative case study analysis.

**FIGURE 14: METHODOLOGY - FROM A PROCEDURAL VIEWPOINT**

## 3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following broad research questions are derived from the study's aims and were addressed by the methods employed. These research questions have emerged from the study of the literature, the participatory engagement with stakeholders (as described below) and work experience of the researcher gained prior to this research project.[15]

a)  How can knowledge intermediation projects be monitored and evaluated with regard to the relationships they entail and facilitate?

b)  How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in a knowledge intermediation project?

c)  What implications might this (answers to research question b) have for the intermediation of knowledge processes?

The first research question was addressed by the development of a set of methods that were used to that purpose (and the reflections on their use after the study had been conducted); see below in this chapter. Research question b. is exploratory in nature (mainly addressed in analysis chapter) and shall inform discussions on how knowledge interventions are shaped by their approach (research question c. (mainly addressed in discussion chapter and conclusions).

## 3.6 OBJECTIVES

As can be seen above, especially with regards to research question b) and c), the research questions build upon each other. The same counts for the research objectives which were outlined in the introduction.

Due to the chosen philosophical approach, research questions and objectives were of paramount importance to the research project. All efforts in the conduct of the study were (once these were established) directed at these questions and objectives. Mixed methods research allows the researcher to choose the approach and methods most appropriate to gather insights into the various aspects of the phenomenon under study.

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[15] The researcher worked as a communications officer supporting a knowledge intermediation programme run by the Building and Social Housing Foundation based in Coalville, UK.

In practice, this meant that the methods (outlined in the next section) were employed in the way and depth necessary in light of these questions and objectives. Methods were mixed to shine a light on the phenomenon from different angles. Because of this no method, on its own, was used to the fullest extent possible. Due to this research topic sitting on the fringes of highly qualitative processes (relationship building and maintenance) and generalised structures (institutions) a variety of methods were necessary to shed light on these boundaries from various angles. As a result, this study does not attempt to have the depth, in terms of qualitative analysis, of an ethnographic study, neither does it attempt to have the breadth, in terms of broad database and resulting generalizability of findings, of a purely institutional-accountability approach. This study uses a mixed methods methodology to shine a light on the very processes that sit at the boundary.

The above research questions focus (in line with the purpose and aim of this research project) on different layers of social reality. At a micro-level there are the relationships between different individuals that participate in the knowledge interventions, at the meso-level there are social structures and dispositif, and at the macro-level there are institutional structures. This research attempts to uncover connections between micro, meso and macro-levels and, thus, the focus of the investigation is on the linkages between these different layers.[16]

The methods applied at each level/layer needed only to provide *sufficient* data for discussions of their interconnectedness to be warranted. Each method offered insights on the aspect that it is applied to but the focus of this study lay on unearthing and discussing connections between the different layers. This means that in this research project it was explicitly not attempted to explore single aspects and layers in the greatest possible depth through applying individual methods in all their potential richness; e.g. the social network analysis is "merely" looking at binary relationships rather than a fully-fledged application of all statistically available tools that come with that method.

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[16] The analysis will be based upon this structure.

## 3.7 METHODS

*Guiding research question of this section: a) How can knowledge intermediation projects be monitored and evaluated with regard to the relationships they entail and facilitate?*

The following discussion of research methods is divided into two sections; this division stems from the research purpose, aims and objectives. The first section outlines the participatory aspects of the research design and is derived from the study's purpose. The second section addresses the research questions. The presentation aligns with the fact that the project is planned as a sequential mixed methods procedure; which means that initial results of the investigation will be used, elaborated upon, and expanded as the investigation progresses (Creswell 2003).

### 3.7.1 METHODS USED TO SUPPORT RESEARCH PROCESS

As supported by Mayoux (2006), participatory methods were used throughout the process. As described above, this was due to the perceived benefits this approach has in relation to the purpose of this study. It ensured the relevance of the study for practitioners, improved the researcher's understanding of the problem, and increased validity by benefiting from their knowledge of the problem's context. However, as described above, participatory methods needed to be appropriate for the addressed questions and needed to be balanced with the inherent requirements of an academic research process (Laws et al. 2002).

It needs to be noted that the participatory methods were used to support the research process rather than to gather data for the analysis of the two case studies. Whilst this is an artificial separation it helps to understand that whilst the participatory methods are mentioned first they are actually seen as secondary to the approaches and methods that are primarily responsible for gathering data in the case study analysis. The latter data constitutes the core of the research project and delivers the findings essential for responding to the research questions and objectives. Pragmatism led in the establishment of the participatory methods. Mostly communications methods and media were employed that people already used (e.g. Email) and/or were convenient for the researcher to establish (e.g. blog, online survey tool).

The first tool employed to engage practitioners was a blog where practitioners (and academics alike) interacted with some of the ideas related to the research process. Regular

blog posts addressed research related issues. However, due to the project requirements a certain degree of caution needed to be exercised; the usage of some of the academic's own contributions by others for the purpose of publication, etc. could have had a detrimental effect on the researcher's ambition to complete a doctorate. Nevertheless, in the researcher's judgement the benefits a participatory approach entails with regard to the purpose of this research project outweighed some of the risks.[17]

The blog, on the one hand, provided a platform for interaction accessible to external stakeholders. However, to attract interest networking was crucial. The researcher identified two online communities of practice to whom the theme of the research is of particular relevance; the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community and the Knowledge Broker Forum (KBF) community. The Eldis community was situated on the periphery as well, but due to its more general coverage of development related issues (rather than knowledge related issues within the sector) the decision was made to focus on the two immediately relevant communities of practice.

In practice, this resulted in many conversations and interviews with a variety of stakeholders that influenced the course of the project and thematic foci. The degree of engagement with people interested in the project varied over the course of implementation. Over the three year period interactions were most intense within the first year and picked up again in the third year. As outlined below, this included mainly Email conversations, exploratory interviews, the Blog, online communities of practice, and other social media engagements.

A medium used to engage stakeholders directly was Email. Over the course of the project the researcher was engaged in personal Email conversations about the research topic (e.g. on traditional knowledge, attribution, indicators, etc.) with a minimum of 23 practitioners, consultants and people in other implementation related roles. Additionally, the researcher

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[17] This perception is partly due to the fact that without contributions from practitioners this research would not have been undertaken in the first place. The researcher, at the time of the proposal himself a practitioner, was engaged in discussions with other individuals in his own organisation, and with Catherine Fisher (Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex) and John Young (Director of Impact Assessment, Partnerships and RAPID, Overseas Development Institute). Additionally, further discussions in the KBF and KM4D influenced the purpose and aims of the research project at this early stage.

has engaged in Email conversations with a minimum of 17 academics that were either researching on similar themes and/or whose work was considered a building block of the conducted research (e.g. in terms of methodology).

Another way in which Email was employed was through the participation in the two online communities of practice mentioned above. This, the most useful aspect of the participatory efforts, enabled the researcher to get to know practitioners (to some extent also fellow academics) that work on or are interested in the areas relevant to the research topics pursued in the project (e.g. knowledge management, information management, monitoring and evaluation, etc.). In itself, the consumption of nearly daily Emails about problems, questions, issues, sources, projects, etc. that occupied people in those communities was invaluable. However, engagement was not only passive but the researcher used those communities increasingly to test resonance of ideas.

This was done in conjunction with the blog mentioned above. From September 2012 till November 2013 24 blog posts were written (and publicised through the communities of practice) on topics such as knowledge management, dialogical communications, etc. They resulted in 21 comments (on the blogposts) that led to short interactions with their authors. As a participatory element the blog was mainly useful in two respects:

1. Comments on blogposts were usually very valuable and some of those triggered further conversations via Email; either directly or on the mailing lists of the communities of practice.

2. The blog served as a platform for the publication of small surveys (one question) that were circulated through the communities of practice. E.g. Who mostly initiates knowledge exchange processes in international development? Do current considerations of the complexity (theory/science) of international development projects render log frames and indicators useless? How large a role do personal relationships play in knowledge exchanges?

In the timeframe outlined above 13 questions were asked on the blog that generated 184 (quantitative) responses and 85 (essay) comments. Thus, the "one question survey" method can be considered very successful in engaging people on diverse issues related to a research project whilst gathering insights that can help with the definition of the topic and research questions.

Besides that, the intention was to use a blog (considered a *social* medium) for dialogical communication on the basis of position statements (blogposts). However, the amount of conversations the blogposts triggered can be considered as limited and at some point the two communities were asked if the blog should remain open; no responses where submitted to that question. The researcher closed the blog because the fact that there were no responses was considered a more important indicator than the usage of the blog (3,200 sessions and 1,900 unique visitors in the timeframe outlined above).

The blog was replaced with a 'mission statement' (hosted on [www.medium.com](www.medium.com))[18] that outlined the general position of the researcher and encouraged people to get in touch via twitter or email (two media that appeared more suitable to dialogical communication). Since this approach took up less time the researcher could focus on the existing online communities and participation in those (especially the very lively KM4Dev community of practice).[19]

Another benefit of regular blogging activity, especially in the beginning of the research project, was that it acted as an online repository of information related to the topic of the research project that was accessible to all stakeholders, including the researcher. This enabled reflection upon the researcher's own position in the process. However, this was a secondary function of the blog and other methods are more generally applied within the academic field to reflect upon the researcher's own position with regards to the study.

In ethnographic type studies this sort of reflection is of crucial importance because it is recognised that the researcher is part of the social environment that is being studied. This is commonly called reflexivity. A lack in reflexivity is also a frequently stated criticism directed against positivism (and naturalism) and its claims regarding objectivity. The inclusion of the participatory approach as part of the mixed methods strategy employed in this thesis not just recognises the importance of reflexivity but makes it subject to management (as far as

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[18] See appendix: p.218

[19] This led to co-organising a workshop for the community and guest-editing an issue of the (community's) open access journal 'Knowledge Management for Development Journal' (previously with Elsevier).

that is possible) and tries to use this fact to the benefit of the enquiry (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).[20]

Common practice amongst ethnographers is the usage of fieldnotes to record their observations and interview data. They are also used to reflect upon the researcher's own thinking and as a method that generates information on how that thinking changes over the course of the research project. This is one way of how ethnographers address issues of reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Since stakeholder participation is stretching from the beginning of the research project till the end the researcher is, in a way, in the 'field' for the entire process. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to use a research diary as a method to ensure reflexivity. That a research journal (or diary) can serve the purpose outlined is recognised by various authors; it might serve to record insights, thoughts, feelings, and decisions (Blaxter et al. 2006). Due to the purpose of the method, the research diary covered exclusively the reflections on interactions with stakeholders and everything related.

These social interactions were undertaken through the methods and tools described above but also by another method that Mayoux (2006) suggests as part of her integrated research process, which is the exploratory interview. In her model exploratory interviews are undertaken at the scoping stage in the process and, as the word exploratory already suggests, are used to explore the general theme the research intends to address. As part of the participatory methods it also helps to identify the interests and needs of practitioners, and supports the identification of key stakeholders and informants. In the broader context of this methodology it also helped identifying potential case studies for the analysis of knowledge intermediation projects.

Interviews can be undertaken in a variety of formats. Since the purpose of these interviews is of an exploratory nature they are unstructured and conversational. At this stage the interviews were also not recorded since this could take away from the conversational (naturalistic) character of the exploratory interview (Willis 2006). However, the information,

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[20] A discussion of the criticisms of reflexivity based on the political "nature" of research and subjectivity is not necessary at this stage since issues of advocacy have been discussed as part of the research philosophy and the necessity to balance stakeholders' interests and the inherent features of an *academic* enquiry has been recognised.

perspectives, and opinions obtained in the interview and the influence these had on the thinking of the researcher are captured in the research journal. In the following some key stages and decisions shall be outlined with the help of data taken from the research diary that illustrate how the main focus/topic of the PhD was defined and refined.

Initially the research project was expected to focus on an **"online and an offline knowledge intervention and I thought that M&E could address issues/ask questions about effectiveness and efficiency. This idea came originally from my [work] experience in BSHF where that was a question. This would have helped decision makers to choose which intervention to use in a certain situation. Due to the input I got from different people I shifted towards the idea of power relations and how these play out if the facilitator approaches the actors that are supposed to exchange knowledge or vice versa. This, on the other hand, can help decision makers/knowledge brokers to choose the approach to their work that they follow. It is, thus, situated at a different level".**

During October 2012 there were two main directions under consideration; one focussing on power and another one on intervention efficiency. The prior had emerged out of engaging people in discussions about the research and from reading online interactions in the communities of practice. The diary gives insight into why one topic was gradually favoured.

> **"Part of the reason why I seem to pursue the power topic rather than the intervention efficiency topic is that I heard back from [case study manager] and they are happy to work with me on [project]. Thus, I kind of have the two case studies with [case study 1] and [case study 2]. Now I can theoretically focus on how relationship dynamics are subject to power relationships. It is definitely an interesting topic and there are many things to explore".**

However, this did not lead to a decision yet. Over the next couple of months more discussions were observed (in the communities of practice), more exploratory interviews conducted and the blog (and especially the one question surveys) were used to gage stakeholders' interest in certain aspects. This led to the gradual reshaping of the two topics. From the above outlined they changed into: **"One is about the approach (supply-, demand-, facilitator-led) to facilitating knowledge exchange and the other about how to facilitate knowledge exchange (types of intervention) and M&E".**

The diary shows that further deliberation (taking into account further discussions with the managers that had indicated an interest in providing access to case studies, information science and development literature and suggestions by the researcher's academic supervisors) led to the realisation that there are overlaps in the two topics that could be used to bring them together.

By the beginning of 2013 (more than six months into the project) the diary entries get clear on what the exact topic ended up being. In one of the exploratory interviews a case study manager explicitly outlined an interest in the initiation act and how that influences a programme, which **"reaffirmed my decision to go down this path (topic)"**. It was decided that a focus on initiation, power and relationships was of relevance to interested parties whilst the attempt was made **"to give the topic more of an M&E spin"** whilst still being able to address the topic academically within the timeframes of the project.

It can be seen that the focus of the study and the methodology were influenced by many people through various communication channels. Whilst the topic was influenced greatly by the two managers of the two case studies it came about in an exploratory iterative process. This happened within the first seven months of the research process whilst the literature review was being conducted. The participation in the organisation of a KM4Dev community conference and workshop was of great help in this regard as well, even though that came at a later stage.

In the second year it was difficult to keep investing time into the participatory element since case studies were chosen and most time was occupied gathering data and analysing data. The third year was then characterised by increased engagement again with the parties responsible for the case studies. Drafts of the case study analyses were distributed to various involved individuals who had declared their interest.

In a phone conversation (and via Emails), the manager of the facilitator/funder initiated case study pointed out that in the analysis chapter it only becomes clear at the very end why things were managed and implemented in the way they were. By doing this s/he confirmed that what had been observed of the case study and has been described in the analysis chapter can indeed be linked to the initiation act(s). Her/his perception was that the things described naturally (due to initiation) had to turn out this way.

Staff members, working on the demand imitated case study, were not able to read the analysis chapter that had been shared with them. However, they gave feedback after having been presented with insights from the entire study by the researcher. They gave critical feedback on some of the recommendations outlined in the conclusions chapter, which was than incorporated.

Overall, the feedback from staff members working on the two case studies indicated that the findings presented in the analysis were fair representations of their work. Also, the generated insights were perceived to be interesting and useful for improving their understanding of their own knowledge intermediation activities. Since the relationship dimension is something that had not received particular attention to that point (especially to such a depth) and, thus, many new areas of relevance were identified.

Besides the conversations with case study owners, one meeting with an interested stakeholder (an institution implementing knowledge intermediation projects) was carried out and the insights generated by the study were presented. They found the recommendations very useful and suggested further knowledge intermediation projects that they thought had interesting approaches to knowledge intermediation that could lead to further insights if studied.

At the time of writing further meetings are planned with, for example, the funding body of the facilitator/funder initiated case study and other institutions implementing knowledge intermediation projects.

As a concluding remark on the participatory elements of the research design it can be said that the various repositories of interaction and participation (online forums, blog, emails, and interview notes), together with the reflections on the researchers thinking in the diary, give a coherent and interesting picture about the results and impact of the participatory elements at the end of the research.

### 3.7.2 METHODS USED ON OBJECTS OF STUDY

*Guiding research objective for this section: a)i. Build a methodology that uncovers the relationships in a knowledge intermediation project.*

As outlined above the methods employed within the case studies are connected to research questions a., b. and c. The research questions have already been translated into more explicit objectives and questions, so that they can be addressed by particular methods. In the following the usage of case studies is justified. Following that, it is argued that treating these case studies as discourses is a valid approach when attempting to understand relationship creation and maintenance, human interactions and their connection to intuitional settings. Finally, the methods that will enable the researcher to address the specified objectives are outlined. The development of the following set of methods directly addresses research question a) and, thus, serves as a framework that can be applied in the monitoring and evaluation of knowledge intermediation projects.

### 3.7.2.1 CASE STUDIES

To address objectives b)i. and ).ii. the study of at least two knowledge intermediation projects is needed; one facilitator/funder initiated and one demand initiated. This naturally suggests the application of case study analysis. However, there are many different approaches to case study analysis, e.g. between-case analysis, within-case analysis, case-based and case-oriented research (6 & Bellamy 2012).

The research undertaken attempts to compare a modest number of cases on basis of one independent variable; this variable is the initiation act. Additionally, it attempts to develop the dependent variables through an inductive process. This sort of research is described as case-oriented research or comparative case research. "This design aims to make comparisons *between* a relatively small number of cases (small-N-research). It compares the behaviour of theoretically important variables *across* cases, but also uses within-case analysis to explore how these similarities and differences relate to the specific context and dynamics of each case" (6 & Bellamy 2012, p.80).

Looking at patterns and correlations in the proposed way is sometimes described as explanatory case study research. Explanatory case studies are used to establish an understanding of causal relationships. This kind of research usually includes the testing of predefined propositions. However, this is not the case in this study since no hypotheses about relationships are established before data gathering begins. Additionally, as outlined above, this research does not attempt to determine causal relationships. 'Causal relationships', as well as 'dependent' and 'independent variables', go in the direction of

attribution; however, this research enquires about contribution.[21] Thus, even though the case studies conducted for the purpose of this research share some aspects of explanatory case studies, they are closer to what is described as exploratory case studies (Berg 2006).

Research designs of case study research are judged on various scales: a. construct validity, b. internal validity, c. external validity and d. reliability. All of these are important to this study. A. construct validity shall be addressed by triangulation within the case studies. Internal validity (b.) is important since the study attempts to explore dependent variables that are in relation to the independent variable. Triangulation is also supposed to ensure that the connections that are discovered in the course of the case study are genuine. Additionally, the participatory approach to the research project enabled the constant testing of whether potential findings of the case study overlap with practitioners' (within case study stakeholders) experiences. The participatory approach also supported c. external validity because it allows the researcher to compare and contrast the potential findings of the project with practitioners' (stakeholders external to case studies) experiences. Meeting of the final criteria, d. reliability, was ensured through constant reflection (research journal, blog) and through a transparent approach to documenting the processes; this very transparency adds a layer of detail and documentation that might enable another researcher to approach such a project in similar ways. This reduced the bias in the study and can enable a later investigator to replicate the process and to develop similar findings (Yin 2009).

One of the crucial issues with case studies arises when noting that this study attempts to use some of the findings from the case study for generalisation (research question c.). Case studies are often seen as a way to study the particular and any findings are therefore highly context dependent (Stake 2003). Thus, some scholars argue that generalisation is impossible when using case studies. However, there are others who underline that when case study analysis is used for theory building it might lend itself to be followed up by other methods that build upon those findings (6 & Bellamy 2012).

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[21] This research, overall, is exploratory in nature due to the novelty of the attempted. Further research might be able to draw on the explored and claims about attribution might be made at that stage. However, in the current state of development that the attempted finds itself in, such claims would be impossible to defend in the light of the scope and limitations of a PhD research project.

This is supported by what Stake calls naturalistic generalisation. According to this influential concept, the researcher is able to generate an understanding of the mechanisms that are at work in a case study because s/he applies the natural skill of perceiving (ir)regularities in the world. These can be stated with some confidence since this ability is nurtured in the process developing an experiential understanding of the case studies (Stake 1978). From these understandings generalisations are possible because the case studies used are seen as illustrations of something that is found typically within the wider field of enquiry. Nevertheless, caution needs to be exercised since secondary evidence/sources has been used to gain insights into the typicality of the chosen case studies. Thus, because of these concerns generalisations only form a minor part of the overall analysis and discussion. The focus is mainly only on exploring the observable in the case studies, deriving insights from those and pointing in directions that need further research.

A second issue with case-study analysis is case selection. This is of particular importance with small-N-(social science) research that attempts comparison. It must be ensured that the case studies chosen are as comparable as possible. This type of sampling is called 'discriminate sampling' and was undertaken, in this study, by choosing cases that differ on the independent variable but are similar in as many environmental aspects as possible (6 & Bellamy 2012). [22] Consequently, two knowledge intermediation projects (South-South knowledge exchanges) that were undertaken by the same organisation, in a similar cultural context, confronting similar language barriers, etc. were chosen. The knowledge interventions in question are both undertaken by the same non-governmental organisation headquartered in the United Kingdom with various offices around the world.

In the following both case studies are *briefly* introduced; briefly because the study itself is outlining the inner workings and important factors that make them what they are. The presentation is kept to a minimum for the reader not to form a detailed picture of the case studies based on conventionally applied categorisations and descriptors. In this way the reader able to understand the case studies based on the actual social processes and

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[22] For the chosen case studies these variables include, organisational context, cultural context, geographical context and political context.

emergent structures rather than normative and descriptive terminology used by the institutions themselves to situate their work in the development sector.

Case study 1 was a programme that attempted to connect individuals concerned with development issues across Latin America, Asia and Africa. Thus, it is aiming to reach a very broad audience. It comprised a learning platform (online) that facilitates knowledge sharing between those individuals and that provides knowledge objects for the study of six thematic areas. It was funded by a governmental aid agency and is, essentially, a facilitator/funder initiated knowledge intermediation project. The programme was split in its delivery into the six thematic areas and for the purpose of this study the focus was on one of these thematic areas and the institutional context that came with it. Further detail about this case study will be presented in the analysis

Case study 2 is a technical information service that provides answers to all technical questions raised in relation to a "developing country" context. Thus, this service has a very broad audience. They accept enquiries from around the world but also focus on Latin America, South Asia and Africa. Part of their service is fulfilling a knowledge intermediary role. This knowledge intervention is essentially demand side (knowledge seeker) initiated due to all efforts being based on responding to enquiries. The current financial arrangement is, part of the money that comes into the organisation through a partnership agreement with a major government donor is allocated to the programme. The management in the head office then shares that budget with the country and regional offices.

3.7.2.2 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND A SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE APPROACH TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As outlined in Figure 14 (p.80), each case study was considered to be a discourse in its own right. This was due to the fact that this study looks at interventions that have a determined beginning (initiation event) and end,[23] and the fact that this research attempts to look at communicative (inter-)action and how social structures emerge from such processes. In the literature review it has been explored how relationships are built through routine interaction. Thus, the necessary focus on communications and the actual conversations between

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[23] See also discussion of 'development projects' in literature review (2.2.2 Knowledge intermediation, p.20).

individuals led to the exploration of conversation and discourse analysis. After reviewing various approaches to discourse analysis and conversation analysis the most appropriate approach to the attempted was identified in the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD) (Keller 2011).[24]

Whilst each case study is treated as a discourse the overall approach and philosophical underpinning of the study remains pragmatism. Pragmatism is a response to the study's purpose and aim and, thus, situated at a broader level than the treatment of the case studies as discourses. The research questions and objectives (with their focus on relationships and emergent social structures – power structures in the light of the initiation act) suggest looking at each case study through a discursive lens. It was conceived to be beneficial to the quality of the study to base the case study analysis on a sound theoretical basis; in the following, this basis is outlined.

The basis builds on Berger and Luckmann's (1967) work on the social construction of reality, as well as the discourse studies presented by Foucault (Foucault & Gordon 1980; Foucault 1970). However, SKAD can be seen as an approach in its own right by offering a sociology of knowledge approach to analysing the circulation and production of knowledge in connection with institutional structures. Structure is perceived to be continuously formed and re-formed and, thus, itself based on past structure formation. It allows looking at the individual discourse event and connecting it to the institutional environment (Keller 2013). SKAD pays explicit attention to relationships and different aspects of those (including power), which are crucial to the study.

> SKAD ... examine[s] the discursive construction of symbolic orders which occurs in the form of conflicting social knowledge relationships and competing politics of knowledge. ... SKAD follows Foucault and examines discourses as performative statement practices which constitute reality orders and also produce power effects in a conflict-ridden network of social actors, institutional dispositifs, and knowledge systems. It is ... concerned with reconstructing the processes which occur in social constructions, objectivization, communication, and the legitimization of meaning

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[24] This process was also influenced by discussions with two academics using and developing discourse and conversation analysis methods.

structures or, in other words, of interpretation and acting structures on the institutional, organizational or social actors' level. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social effects of these processes. This includes various dimensions of reconstruction: sense making as well as subject formation, ways of acting, institutional/structural contexts, and social consequences; how, for example, they become apparent in the form of a dispositif (that means: an installed infrastructure designed to 'solve a problem') (Keller 2011, pp.48–49).

As can be seen in the above quote, SKAD enables the reconstruction and interpretation of discourse structures that are essentially power structures and can facilitate an understanding of discursive conflicts (power struggles). Discourse can be open public discourse but also special and closed discourse: the latter being the case for the two case studies. This shows one link between SKAD and case study analysis.

However, Keller outlines that the concept of 'dispositif' allows for a thorough consideration of the "infrastructure of discourse production and problem solving" (Keller 2011, p.56). Seen in this way dispositifs are means of external power realisation and connect and mediate discourse and wider fields of action. "SKAD is therefore not just textual analysis of signs in use, communication, text or image research. It is simultaneously case study, observation, and even a dense ethnographic description, which considers the link between statement events, practices, actors, organizational arrangements, and objects as more or less historical and far-reaching socio-spatial processes" (Keller 2011, p.56). As such it is ideal for what is intended in this study.

This perception is reinforced by Hornidge's (2013) application of SKAD to the study of meta-discourses around 'knowledge for development', 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge'. Her research tries "to 'bring to life' two discourses of knowledge by studying their socio-historical as well as cultural embedding, their role in influencing social actors in shaping 'reality' through their discursive and non-discursive practices and dispositifs, with consequences for the institutional, organizational and social orderings of everyday life" (Hornidge 2013, p.405).

This is also in line with the study of human relationships through interpretative approaches. "Relationships are constituted through interaction … In other words, a focus on the *relationship in the interaction* is just as valid as a focus on the *interaction in the relationship*" (highlight in original) (Manning & Kunkel 2014). This justifies the attempt of understanding

relationships via a focus on interactions through discourse analysis; however, Manning and Kunkel also connect relationships to what is hear studied via dispositifs. "A relationship is always embedded in its culture and, as such, is embedded in that culture's assumptions, values, histories, and artifacts. Those elements of culture can be explored in conjunction with qualitative data to look for connections that might not otherwise be intelligible without a rich, open-ended data source" (Manning & Kunkel 2014, p.436).

It can be seen that the usage of case studies (and the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis) enabled the researcher to answer the research questions outlined above. However, SKAD is not actually a method. It does not include particular data gathering methods. Thus, it was merely the chosen approach to how the case studies were seen and analysed. In the following the particular methods that addressed the individual objectives (relating to each research question) need to be addressed.

There is a wealth of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, that a researcher can use to address these objectives. In the following section the chosen methods are outlined and the choice is justified by comparing different methods and connecting them with the particular case studies whilst having the objectives and purpose of the research project in mind.

### 3.7.2.3 CODING TEXTUAL (NATURAL) DATA
*Guiding research objectives for this section: a)ii. Use, modify and develop categories that can be used to analyse interaction, conversation and discourse between actors in knowledge intermediation projects; a)iii. Test categories that can be used to analyse interaction, conversation and discourse in knowledge intermediation projects.*


The first method elaborated is closely linked with the SKAD approach outlined above.

> "SKAD … favours sequential analysis of textual data directed towards its own research questions, to give an account of discursive claims and statements beyond the single utterance or discursive event: line by line, step by step development, debate and choice of interpretations, in order to build up a socially accountable analysis of frames (Deutungsmuster), phenomenal structure, classifications and so on. The open coding procedure elaborated by Grounded Theory indicates this way of 'methods'" (Keller 2011, pp.61–62).

As outlined above, the data to be analysed are communications between people (in different media). This makes a method necessary that allows the analysis of qualitative data. The most frequently employed method to this effect is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a process in which the researcher goes through various phases with the aim of identifying and defining the main themes in the data (Guest et al. 2012; Boyatzis 1998).

However, SKAD suggests that the actual utterances in a limited sequence of discourse are a reproduction and a transformative exercise of discourse structures.[25] Coding (along Grounded theory lines), it is explicitly stated in the above quote, can give access to those dynamics and reveal structures in place and shed light on the processes of production and modification (Keller 2011; Keller 2013).

Coding is a way of making sense of qualitative data through categorisation. Utterances are analysed by searching for generic properties that enable categorisation. In grounded theory, open-coding is the first step in this process and undertaken by going through texts, line by line, and underlining utterances that might serve as categories. At this stage every word is open to interpretation because meanings are not attributed yet. Through the coding process patterns gradually emerge and categories become more defined. This procedure of categorisation leads, in grounded theory, to theory building. It is a bottom up approach exemplar for inductive research because it does not base categories for data analysis on existing theories (Lindlof 1995).

When considering thematic analysis and (grounded theory type) coding the latter appears to be more appropriate to the attempted. The lack of focus on language in thematic analysis (when compared to coding along grounded theory lines in conjunction with a SKAD approach) is a major drawback since the relationship literature outlines the importance of language. Judging by the literature on those methods the latter allows for a greater emphasis on *how* things are said rather than merely *what* is being said. Thus, the applied approach to analysing utterances is the coding procedure as described in the grounded theory literature.

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[25] In this study 'utterance' is understood to mean: Uninterrupted chain of written or spoken language (e.g. statement, word)

However, to reiterate, this does not mean that the chosen *methodology* is grounded theory. As outlined above, the methodology is a mixed methods approach of analysing two case studies that are treated as discourses as described in SKAD. To analyse the available qualitative data (utterances) the coding *method* is used as it is described in the literature on grounded theory.

Charmaz, one of the influential thinkers on grounded theory, discusses coding in great depth. She outlines that in the process of coding segments of data are labelled so that comparison, with other sets of data, becomes possible. The labels' definitions are gradually formed in memos (notes) that the researcher takes in the process. These memos also contain initial ideas about other aspects of the data, e.g. comparisons. The invented labels are analytic categories that are directed at answering the research questions and fulfilling the study's objectives. Thus, abstraction is build straight from the data, aimed at the research questions, and what evolves is a 'grounded' theory (Charmaz 2006).

In her account on coding Charmaz distinguishes two stages; initial (open) coding and focussed coding. In the initial coding phase the analytic categories are drawn and emerge from the data. The researcher is required to approach the data with an 'open mind' and stay as close to it as possible. Preconceived concepts shall be kept out of the process to the greatest extent possible to 'see' the data as undisturbed as possible. The initial codes are provisional and remain in that state since the researcher wants to keep a flexible approach to categorisation for further data to be organized in as representative a manner as the initial data (Charmaz 2006).

With initial coding there are different sizes of units of data. Grounded theorists conduct word-by-word coding (categorising every word), line-by-line coding (categorising every line of text), and incident-to-incident coding. The analysis conducted draws on a mix of line-by-line coding and incident-to-incident coding. This approach is chosen because, even though SKAD underlines the importance of "every line" in the social construction of meaning,[26] the

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[26] Not every 'word' is important for the attempted. The analysis is more macro in that it tries to draw out reoccurring statements (out of the totality of utterances) and then connect those with the social structure (dispositifs). This is part of the reason why SKAD and open coding have been preferred to conversation analysis, which is much more micro by only looking at words, speech delivery and intonation.

initial coding procedure (in both case studies) showed that this is not the most valuable unit of analysis in the light of the research questions. Thus, to follow the necessities determined by the research questions leads at this point to a diversion from what is suggested in the SKAD literature in that what is coded can be described as statement-by-statement (further discussed below where examples are given).

Also, the research questions make the application of some predetermined codes, roles (facilitator, knowledge holder, knowledge seeker) necessary. Again, on the basis of the research questions a diversion from, in this case, coding literature in "purist" grounded theory needed to be implemented. These predetermined categories contributed to the decision of coding statements; using a smaller unit of analysis (words, line) was unnecessary and any larger (utterances/instances) would not have sufficed to answer the research questions and to address the research objectives.

The second phase in the process outlined by Charmaz (2006) is focussed coding. In this phase the analytic labels that have been established in initial coding are used to analyse larger segments of data. However, even at this stage the researcher still tries to establish the adequacy of the categories. If data does not fit with the theoretical constructs re-coding previous data could become necessary.

However, not all coding processes start with open-coding and/or follow the process outlined by Charmaz; e.g. deductive coding uses already established categories that might have been identified in literature or by other methods used in a study (Lindlof 1995). In grounded theory deductive coding is a highly debated issue because it is somewhat counterproductive to the bottom up approach it promotes. Nevertheless, there are concepts, like theoretical coding, that underline the necessity to connect initial and focussed coding with pre-existent categories and theories (Glaser 2005).

This, however, is only possible when such categories exist. As argued above, applying a discourse analysis to knowledge intermediation projects has not been attempted yet and, thus, categories for analysis need to emerge from the data through the coding process (besides the roles of facilitator, knowledge holder, and knowledge seeker).

Coding was applied to written (extant) texts and audio recordings in both case studies; in the facilitator/funder initiated case study it was used to conduct the analysis of conversations

occurring in an online forum and meetings and in the demand initiated case study it was used to conduct the analysis of conversations held via Email and in face-to-face encounters. For both case studies initial coding was undertaken; meaning, codes emerged from the respective data. The data, in the facilitator/funder initiated case study, was mainly textual. All of the participants' contributions to the online forum have been textual in nature; only the facilitator and some knowledge holders contributed in audio and video formats (e.g. interviews, presentations)[27]. In the, demand initiated case study, the same is the case; most data was textual in kind because the interactions between people (especially at the international level) were conducted via Email.

All of these interactions can be described as natural data. What makes the data sources of this study natural is the fact that the interactions and utterances under study would have occurred without the involvement of the researcher (McCreaddie & Payne 2010). The researcher assumed the role of a participant-observer, with an emphasis on observation rather than participation. This, in practice, meant that besides informing participants of the fact that this research is going on (for ethical considerations) the researcher has not been participating in the discussions. From a coding perspective this resulted, for example, in one coded statement (in the facilitator/funder initiated case study) under the researcher's name and three coded responses. These response outline that the research addresses an interesting topic and that authors of those statements wished the researcher luck in his pursuits, e.g. **"Dear Philip, Really a good interesting topic, Go ahead, get PhD degree soon".**

In the following the practical implementation of coding is described and the emerged coding schemes outlined. Firstly, the facilitator/funder initiated case study is discussed and then the demand initiated case study is elaborated upon.

In the analysis of communication (seen as behaviour) that occurred in the online forum (of the facilitator/funder initiated case study) a variety of themes emerged (see Table 2). During open coding an attempt was made to code every piece of information that might be relevant to the research questions and objectives. These codes were then re-fined and grouped until

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[27] These were not analysed because knowledge objects of this kind promised little insights regarding the research questions and objectives, besides the fact of their existence.

a coding scheme emerged that was fit for purpose. The overarching themes that emerged were:

1. **People:** *Who made this contribution?* Utterances were attributed to the person that made them. Entire contributions to the online forum were coded under a person's code. Thus, giving an indication on how often people contributed to the discussion.

2. **Purpose of statement:** *What seems to be the purpose of a statement?* For the coding of the purpose of a statement entire contributions were broken down into statements. The beginning and the end of a statement was determined by a perceived change in the purpose of what is being said. Due to its inductive nature, data gathered is diverse and forms a crucial part of the qualitative analysis.

3. **Role:** *What role does the person fulfil with this statement?* These roles were taken directly (deduced) from the research questions and, thus, included: knowledge holder, knowledge seeker, and facilitator. The role taken was attributed to individual statements (rather than contributions) and correlated strongly with the perceived purpose of a statement. This is another theme in the data that plays a strong role in the analysis.

4. **SNA:** *Who talks to/with whom?* As discussed elsewhere in this chapter (and the analysis chapter), the social network analysis was conducted manually. Very early on it became clear that using automatised (computerised) approaches to social network analysis would not deliver as accurate insights since in many cases participants did not use threading appropriately or consistently and many references to each other were made in a way that a software dependent analysis would have overlooked. As a result, people's incoming and outgoing statements were coded manually.

5. **Tone of statement:** *What is the tone of this statement?* With this code it was attempted to capture the tone of a statement; e.g. friendly, excited, eager, etc.

These five coding themes emerged as the main themes for the analysis of the utterances occurred in the online forum. The entirety of the textual data was coded in the themes one, two and three outlined above. Theme one resulted in 1375 coded utterances; these are separate contributions. Theme two resulted in 1812 coded utterances; these are the contributions broken down into different statements that are defined by their purpose.

Theme three resulted in 1413 coded utterances; these often overlap with theme one and/or two but sometimes span various statements and not the entire contribution.

| Top level codes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. People | 2. Purpose of Statement | 3. Role | 4. SNA | 5. Tone of statements |
| **Second level codes** | | | | |
| Facilitators | expectations and hopes | Facilitator | Incoming | agreement |
| Other staff members | facilitation, admin statement | Knowledge Holder | Outgoing | apologetic |
| Participant | help with technology | Knowledge Seeker | | appreciative |
| | inviting people to comment or ask questions | | | authorative |
| | learning content and intervention structure | | | critical |
| | more to come | | | curious |
| | personal introduction | | | eager |
| | politeness | | | excited |
| | praising thanking programme or project | | | friendly |
| | promotion | | | impressed |
| | reference to course structure | | | joking |
| | reflection | | | longing |
| | responding | | | mediating |
| | seeking | | | selling oneself |
| | sharing (external) source (only) | | | sucking up to somebody |
| | sharing knowledge, opinion, view, experience | | | |
| | technical enquiry and complications | | | |
| | thanks for knowledge and source sharing | | | |

**TABLE 2: CODING SCHEME FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY**

The following statements serve as an illustration of how contributions were coded and split into statements. Three archetypal contributions have been chosen as examples to illustrate common coding procedures.

*Example 1:* **"In Bangladesh there are 64 districts and 21 agro-ecological areas. As we know each area soil is suitable for some specific products. At first we can make a list of important products based on necessity, exporting demand and values. After selecting the product list, making discussion with experts we can choose the specific region for growing specific products. We have to ensure the logistic supports for the farmers. In this way farmers will be more expertise for growing products and also easily connect with dynamic market."**

This contribution has been coded under the person's name, has the purpose (code) of 'sharing knowledge, opinion, view, experience' and, thus, the person is taking the role of a 'knowledge holder'. Since the entire contribution can be coded under a single purpose (and role) the entire contribution is a single statement.

**FIGURE 15: SCREENSHOT OF CODING EXAMPLE 2**

*Example 2:* **"Hi [*person's name*]. Thanks for your post. Would be happy if you respond to my queries below: 1. From your experience, who should be responsible to form cooperatives and how as development initiate that? 2. Are all the cooperatives you mention sustainable and gaining from the mechanism? What are the failure factors?"**

This contribution has been coded under the person's name and is broken down into various statements. The first statement ends with 'post.'; the purpose of that statement is first and foremost to thank someone else for their contribution (purpose code: 'thanks for knowledge or source sharing'); also, the tone of that statement is 'appreciative'. However, that statement allows deriving more insights. In the same statement the author indicates that s/he has engaged with someone else's material and (one can safely assume that that person) has reflected upon it. The second coded purpose of the first statement is thus 'reflecting upon informal contribution' (informal contribution is a contribution made in the forum's discussion threads [rather than a formal contribution by the facilitator or other expert invited by the facilitator]). Reflection on someone else's contribution leads to the understanding that this person has taken the role of a 'knowledge seeker' in this instance. The second statement encompasses the remainder of the contribution which has been coded under the purpose of 'asking someone for information, opinion'; however, this code has two sub-codes ('addressed' and 'not-addressed') and since this instance of knowledge seeking was 'addressed' (answered by someone else) it was coded as such. Quite naturally, this second statement is also coded under the role of 'knowledge seeker'; the tone of the second statement has been coded as 'curious'. Additionally, since this is a contribution that engages with someone else and, actually addresses them by their name (which makes it easily observable), this entire contribution has been coded as part of the social network analysis. It has been coded with the author's name within the coding header 'outgoing' and with the addressed person's name within the coding header 'incoming'.

*Example 3 is the response to the knowledge seeking contribution outlined in example 2 above:* **"hello [*person's name*], thank you for your queries, In Nepal, Governmental agencies, Non governmental Orgnization and development partners can formed cooperatives. After forming cooperatives, they have to register into the goverment system. So if you are working in development project, form cooperatives keeping in mind that they need to have common interest and objectives, regarding question 2,**

**definately all are not successful. But some are successful which is natural in my opinion. The main failure factors we found are their capacity to run business. Their motive is appreciable. We need to provide intensive training how to run cooperative after we form them. My experience tells that we need to follow up regularly unless they can run their business independently. Thus, in Nepal one government agency is responsible to regulate them whether they maintain quality and standard and another goverment ageny and development project support them to qualify as the cooperative".**

This contribution has been coded in a similar way to example two. The entire contribution is first coded with the author's name. It is broken down into two statements: first the appreciative statement of thanking for someone else's contribution and the observable engagement with someone else's informal contribution that leads the observer to believe that this person has engaged in a seeking endeavour and, thus, in this instance takes that role. With **"In Nepal, …"** the second statement starts and this person is effectively 'sharing knowledge, opinion, view, experience' (as in Example 1); however, since this sharing is in response to someone else's seeking behaviour the code for this section is 'responding to asking for info'; this statement is coded with the role of 'knowledge holder'. The final codes applied to this contribution relate to the social network analysis; author's name in 'outgoing' and addressed person's name in 'incoming'.

These three examples briefly illustrate how the various themes worked when applied to some data. However, contributions were not always straight forward to code. For example, theme four and five were applied to statements whenever appropriate. In the case of the 'SNA' this meant that statements that showed signs of addressing a particular person were coded. Whenever these were entirely absent or when it was impossible (by observation) to determine who was being addressed statements were not coded. In the case of 'tone of statement' this meant that whenever the tone of a statement was clearly identifiable it was coded. In most cases this meant that when utterances included literal indicators about what the attitude of the speaker (tone) was than this was taken as sufficiently clear to justify coding. However, tones were also derived from statements without literal reference to someone's attitude; e.g. *"Greetings from Zambia !!! This is really a good way to start New Year!!! I am very much looking forward to be part of this learning alliance."* and *"this is great [person's name] & i can see that each one of us will never be the same*

***again after this training and our communities will change for the better"*** were coded as 'excited'. Overall, there were 406 instances where the attitude of a speaker was clearly detectable to the researcher.[28]

Additionally, when coding statements, particular attention needs to be paid to the following: In one contribution there could be two instances of the same sort (e.g. roles) separated by something else (e.g. holder-seeker-holder). This could be counted as two instances even though it is only one. The only thing that can be done to code these consistently is to have them overlap (holder running through seeker into holder). This will then turn up in the analysis as a contribution in which the author takes the position of a knowledge holder and a knowledge seeker.

Additionally, the distinction holder-seeker is sometimes difficult to maintain when looking at individual statements. Asking someone a question (knowledge seeker) might be (and is sometimes clearly) informed by previous statements (also knowledge seeker) and based on one's own knowledge (new information might be contextualised with existing knowledge). When this is communicated (observable/language as action) then this needs to be coded as knowledge holder. However, this is not always straight forward and sometimes the decisions are difficult due to the limits of observable intentions and cognitive processes.

Within the same case study (facilitator/funder initiated) the coding method was also applied to video and audio recordings. The analysis of the audio recordings followed the analysis of the online discussions. Themes for coding had already emerged and they were applied to the audio recordings as appropriate. Due to the meetings being of physical nature (some with a network moderator being connected via WebEx [a software for online meetings]) the impression was that the interactions were overall fairly unstructured. This led to the realisation that coding of the audio files was not possible in the way that the analysis of the

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[28] The researcher was intentionally careful with this particular theme as basing judgements about people's attitude on mere observation of written contributions is difficult (if not impossible) because it takes into account nuances in people's speech and, sometimes, attempts to 'read between the lines'. In a forum with a culturally highly diverse group of people for whom English is usually a second language this theme only offers limited usability.

online forum was conducted.[29] Thus, drawing on the mixed methods approach of this study, the researcher used the codes as guidance for qualitative analysis rather than a way of quantifying aspects of the phenomenon.

The data that this was applied to totals 22 hours of recorded conversations that were captured in various facilitated spaces. The data represents a convenience sample of facilitated sessions and meetings. The convenience sample covers a variety of sessions from the weeklong study visit and the learning group meetings. Convenience sample, in this context, means that no other recordings were made available by the hosting institution.

With regards to the second case study coding was primarily applied to 13 email conversations. The way these were sampled can be described as follows: It was determined that a minimum of ten enquiries was needed for there to be sufficient conversations for a meaningful analysis, a time frame of four weeks was set in which a random sample of enquires (that engaged the triad of knowledge seeker, facilitator and knowledge holder) was taken. At 13 coded enquiries, no new codes had emerged for a while, which led to the conclusion that saturation point was reached.[30]

In the analysis of communication (seen as behaviour) that occurred in email conversations the themes that had emerged in the coding of the online forum in the other case study were applied. This is in line with research objective a) iii. and the fact that this research takes a *sequential* mixed methods approach. The intention was to test whether or not the scheme would be applicable in this context and lead to similarly rich insights (in the light of the research questions) as with the online forum's analysis in the other case study.

After initial trials of coding and analysis it was concluded that the top level codes were applicable as before (1. People, 2. Purpose of statement, 3. Role, 4. SNA, 5. Tone). However at

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[29] Due to people speaking at the same time, it not being clear who they are addressing, etc.

[30] Caution needs to be expressed. This does not mean that the continuation of data gathering (more enquiries) would not have led to more codes emerging. On the contrary, this would most certainly have been the case. However, as can be seen below, especially regarding the 'purpose of a statement' one could see very unique codes coming through. Due to dealing with individual enquiries this appears to be natural and could be expected. However, at the "saturation" point it was possible to distinguish recurring codes (patterns of communication) and particular highly situation dependent statements. This sufficed for the answering of the addressed research questions.

the second level a new coding scheme, emerging inductively from the data through reflection upon the research questions, that was more appropriate for the analysis of the Email conversations appeared necessary. Thus, the open coding procedure was applied for the codes at the second level to emerge. In the following the application of the five top level codes and the emerging new codes are outlined.

| **Top level codes** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. People | 2. Purpose of Statement | 3. Role | 4. SNA | 5. Tone of statements |
| **Second level codes** | | | | |
| Facilitators | context of query | Facilitator | Incoming | apologetic |
| Knowledge holders | facilitation | Knowledge Holder | Outgoing | appreciative |
| Knowledge seekers | happy to answer further questions | Knowledge Seeker | | curious |
| | hopefully I or information was helpful | | | hopeful |
| | more to come | | | to the point |
| | please help | | | |
| | preferred mode of communication | | | |
| | questioning | | | |
| | reflection | | | |
| | response | | | |
| | sharing contacts | | | |
| | sorry about late reply | | | |
| | suggesting collaboration for implementation | | | |
| | thanks | | | |
| | thinking across contexts & linking | | | |
| | unable to provide what asked for | | | |
| | use provided contacts and mention us | | | |

**TABLE 3: CODING SCHEME DEMAND INITIATED CASE STUDY**

The top level code 'tone' was used 55 times when the attitude of authors was observable. People showed signs of being apologetic, **"Sorry for being so rude and not replying"**; appreciative, **"Wonderful and thank you!"**; curious, **"I have now come into another issue that you might be able to help me with"**; and hopeful**, "I hope it adequately address your queries"**. However, most conversations were short and to the point and it was often impossible to identify anything besides the technical character of the queries and their responses. This and the limited amount of other observable attitudes led to the perception that the conversations were mainly formal and technical.

The above outlines the coding processes and the coding scheme that emerged with regards to the demand initiated case study, based on the email conversations. However, as with the other case study, the codes were loosely applied to some audio recordings of knowledge exchange processes and interviews. These recordings were made in a face-to-face setting where the researcher (and an interpreter) observed facilitated knowledge exchanges. Two facilitated knowledge exchanges were observed at the community level, recorded and the analysis was led by the research questions and objectives, as well as the coding frameworks.

In this context the work done with the interpreter was important to the successful implementation of this method. The individual that was employed, after a lengthy selection process, had himself a background in the social sciences. This was important since the job of the interpreter did not just consist of translating *what* was being said but, more importantly, to convey to the researcher *how it is meant*; taking into account the cultural, social and political particularities of the context in which observations took place. In line with this, the interpreter was introduced thoroughly to the whole research project, the research questions and the methodology. Preparatory discussions took place, between researcher and interpreter, concerning to what we were trying to pay particular attention.

When observing groups (facilitated knowledge exchanges in a face-to-face context) the interpreter was observing communications and social processes; in those situations the researcher stepped back (did not ask for translations) and took notes on non-verbal cues and group dynamics that were observable without understanding what was being said. Immediately following the meeting the research then made the interpreter subject to a semi-structured interview; the interpreter responded to these based on notes that had been taken during the meeting and fleshed these out by additions from his short term memory. In this

way, a rich picture emerged that not only illustrated what was said but also put this into the communicative and cultural context relevant to the situation that was being observed.

### 3.7.2.4 SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

The second method that explicitly enquired about the relationships between actors in the knowledge intermediation projects under study is social network analysis. It is well established that social network analysis is a valuable tool in the analysis of social structures. The employed understanding of social structures, as already discussed above, "focuses attention on relationships between actors rather than on attributes of actors or their group membership" (Marsden & Lin 1982, p.9). Social network analysis, like the above, can focus on the relationships themselves and is, thus, a valuable tool for the assessment of the relationships found in the case studies under enquiry. Social network analysis will also be of particular use with respect to objective b.iii., which asks for the mapping of relationships between knowledge holder(s), knowledge user(s) and facilitator(s).

Social network analysis attempts to expose the social relationships that bound human beings and groups together and how these relationships are structured. Additionally, it is argued that they enable enquiry into these structures and how the relations they describe impact on the individuals knowledge, behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes. Relationships, in social network analysis as in network theory, are described as ties (or edges) and individuals as nodes (or vertices); node and tie are connected in the way individuals and relationships are (Prell 2012).

In this project a specific kind of social network analysis seemed appropriate. Since the case studies were approached without a hypothesis about which social structure might be encountered exploratory social network analysis was employed. As with open coding, the research process was of inductive nature; meaningful patterns emerged in the course of the analysis of the social network. Because of the absence of hypotheses (which would allow the researcher to focus on certain parts of a network) exploratory social network analysis underlines the need to study entire networks. However, this inherently leads to the question about where a network ends (Nooy et al. 2005).

In the cases studied, the boundaries are marked by the knowledge intermediation projects and their "membership". The data necessary to conduct the analysis was gathered through observation and participant lists provided by staff members of the case study institutions. As can be seen above in the coding schemes, every interaction amongst actors in the

knowledge intervention was accounted for (in matrix spread sheets). Richer (qualitative) data on the character of the ties existent in the case studies was already gathered by the other methods employed (Prell 2012).

One issue that needs explicit consideration is the comparison of networks. The mapping of the social networks analysed (knowledge interventions) shall lead to a comparison of them (objective c.i.). However, they are of different size and this can have a great impact on the value of the comparison; for example, measurements on density and degree can be biased due to these differences. Therefore, the social networks were not compared in terms of such quantitative indicators but the social networks were compared through their graphical representations/maps (and even these were interpreted with caution) (Prell 2012).[31]

When considering another aspect of the networks analysed it became clear that in terms of their roles the actors fell, at the initiation stage, into three categories; knowledge holder, knowledge seeker, and facilitator (intermediary). In social network analysis this is described as a triad and specific modes for analysis and illustration of the relationships between them are available. One mode that is relevant to this study is the transitivity in triads. This measure can give insights into how dependent a network is on individual actors (nodes) for the maintenance of relationships (tie/arcs) (Prell 2012).

Even though there is benefit in analysing the triad pertinent in the case studies this would be an oversimplification of the situation. The role of knowledge seeker is not just attributed to one actor but to a variety of actors in both case studies; the same counts for knowledge holders. One further aspect, yet related to transitivity, that is analysed through network analysis is if actors with the same roles can be considered sub-groups. Generally, "a subgroup in a network refers to an area of a network larger than a dyad or triad yet smaller than an entire network" (Prell 2012, p.151). Additionally, it was also interesting to see if the subgroups in the case studies are *cohesive* subgroups, something else that SNA emphasises.

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[31] Additionally, after having looked at the quantitative indicators for both case studies it became clear that they would not add (even if one were to argue for their validity in a comparative analysis) additional insights relevant to the research questions that were not already covered by the visual graphs provided in the analysis chapter.

As outlined above the data for the social network analysis was gathered manually in parallel with the coding procedure. The attempt was made to gather further data through surveys regarding the social ties developed in facilitated spaces that were not based on textual communication. However, response rates were very low (e.g. 2 out of 9 in one of the learning groups) which made an analysis impossible.

As outlined above, utterances that showed indications of being part of a conversation between at least two individuals were coded with the "sender's" name and the "recipient's" name. Once completed a matrix query was run in Nvivo10 that resulted in what is called an adjacency matrix. This adjacency matrix was then imported into UCINET6 for analysis and Gephi for graphical illustration.

### 3.7.2.5 INTERVIEWS

The analysis of the case studies follows the ideas of SKAD and, therefore, the focus is on the interactions between individuals. However, what has not been addressed so far is the role people's thoughts play in knowledge intermediation projects and how those are related to the social structures involved in the case studies. Pragmatism and mixed methods research both aim at understanding the object of study as well as possible.

In that context, interviews were employed to get an understanding of people's thoughts and perceptions, as well as their feelings, and attitudes towards each other and their relationships. This increased the researcher's understanding of the case studies, especially with regard to the roles people play (objectives b.i., b.ii., b.iv.). In a procedural perspective, the interviews were conducted towards the end of the case studies and, thus, also gave the researcher the opportunity to test the reliability of some of the preliminary findings that had emerged in the coding and social network analysis exercises. It was possible to see if participant's perceptions and priorities overlap with some of the researcher's results and reasons for similarities and differences were followed up.

Since the focus of the interviews was on people's own perspective the interviews were qualitative in nature. The importance of this is often highlighted in research on human relationships and the strengths of qualitative methods (like interviews) is underlined in this context. "The meanings people often hold about relationships are often paradoxical and contradictory ... as well as value laden. ... Qualitative relationship research allows researchers an opportunity to see those seemingly contradictory elements at play, assess how different

ideas or actions come to the forefront depending on situation and context, and consider how they might change or evolve across time" (Manning & Kunkel 2014).

Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to find out about what it is that interviewees find important (e.g. respondent driven understanding of their own social world) and to follow up on those issues. These objectives can most easily be reached through unstructured interviews (Bryman 2004). However, since another objective of conducting interviews was to follow up some of the issues that arose in coding and social network analysis an entirely unstructured approach was not appropriate. Semi-structured (or semi-standardised according to Berg (2006)) interviews still follow a qualitative style but allow the researcher to ensure coverage of certain questions and areas of interest (Bryman 2004).

For this purpose an interview guide is designed and followed to some extent. "In the **semistructured interview**, the researcher has a specific topic to learn about, prepares a limited number of questions in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions" (bold in original) (Rubin & Rubin 2012, p.31). The choice of semi-structured interviews also helped to ensure some consistency between interviews, within a case study, which enables comparing and contrasting. The area of interest of the interview was constrained by its relation to thematic aspects of the research. Thus, the interviews were topical in nature. This kind of interview allows the researcher to create a narrative around the topic under investigation, made up of the information gathered in various interviews (Rubin & Rubin 2012).

Even though the interviews were structured to a certain extent the interviews were conducted in a responsive style. The study attempts to find out about people's thoughts and perceptions and a gentle and friendly atmosphere is needed to extract this sort of information. Relationship building is crucial to this kind of interview and a friendly and supportive tone should be preponderant. Since the interviews were responsive in style the questions were not asked in the same order in every interview; thus, this study follows Bryman (2004), and Rubin & Rubin (2012), rather than others, e.g. Morse (2012), who argue that semi-structured interview questions maintain their order in different interviews.

One crucial issue with interviews in social research is sampling. More than one interview was necessary within both case studies to elaborate issues that arose through the other methods employed in the process and to create a narrative around the topics covered. Two aspects of sampling are addressed explicitly: how interviewees were selected and how decisions about

quantity were taken. The interviewees chosen in this study were the result of purposive sampling and random sampling.

Purposive sampling is essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling" (Bryman 2004, p.458). This approach is suitable for this research because it embraces the underlying philosophy of pragmatism, which encourages deriving of methods and procedures from the research questions. Since the interviews shall address specific issues identified by other research methods the interviewees were chosen in relation to those methods and the insights they generated. Some interviewees were chosen because coding showed that they were exemplary for the roles that had been attributed to them (knowledge holder, knowledge seeker, facilitator/knowledge intermediary) prior to them entering the facilitated spaces (e.g. people from certain geographical areas were assumed to be knowledge seekers whilst people from other geographical areas were assumed to be knowledge holders). Other interviewees were identified in the same process as actors that do not conform to their attributed role (e.g. people from the region of knowledge seekers acting mainly as knowledge holders).

| Facilitator/Funder initiated case study | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Groups/Roles** | **How many contacted?** | **How many people interviewed?** | **Interview setting** | **Rationale for sample** |
| | | | | |
| **Manager** | 1 | 1 | Individual in person | Situated at link from institutional framework and funding |
| **Moderator** | 1 | 1 | Individual via Skype | At centre of SNA and key influencer in discursive space |
| **Local Expert (Learning Group)** | 1 | 1 | Individual via Skype | Example of a participant that was equipped with responsibilities and payed for services |
| **Local Facilitator (Learning Group)** | 1 | 0 | NA | Example of person facilitating knowledge exchanges in spaces where the moderator has less of a presence |
| **Admin staff** | 1 | 0 | NA | Behind the scenes insights |
| **Funder** | 3 | 2 | Individual via Skype | Unveiling rationale and views behind funding |
| **Engaged Participants** | 12 | 3 | Individual via Skype | Perspectives from participants that were actively involved in online discussions (all the ones that actually agreed to be interviewed were part of the study tour as well) |
| **Lurkers** | 11 | 1 | Individual via Skype | Perspectives from participants that were not actively involved. |
| *Overall #* | *31* | *9* | | |

**TABLE 4: INTERVIEW SAMPLE FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY**

With regards to the facilitator/funder initiated case study the researcher first identified key individuals and perspectives that were necessary in light of the research questions and objectives (see Table 4). Thus, the manager and the moderator of the intervention were key individuals to be interviewed. Additionally, two accounts of the funder's perspective were sought; one by the person currently responsible for overseeing the project and another from a previous employee who was responsible at the initial stages of the project. Additionally, one of the local experts (a participant paid for knowledge sharing and facilitation activities) was interviewed due to the unique positioning in the institutional arrangement. Four additional interviews were attempted but repeated enquiries were left unanswered (or responded to with a negative outcome) and, thus, not conducted.

Questions that were asked included (but are not limited to), for example: What do you think were the main goals of [the initiative]? Who did you work with in the facilitation of [the initiative]? How would you describe your role [in the various facilitated spaces]? What sort of relationships do you think [the initiative] fostered between people? How do you think this was achieved? What are the most important lessons you are taking away from this programme?[32]

Social network analysis delivered its own insights and further interviewees were chosen on this basis, e.g. a knowledge seeker that has a relatively high centrality rather than sitting on the periphery. This was attempted; yet, a less nuanced approach had to be taken to find people willing to be interviewed. Twelve individuals that had contributed to online discussions were identified for potential interviews; some of these were characterised by regular engagement in conversations and others that had barely contributed at all. Three individuals that had regularly engaged with others were prepared to speak to a researcher and, thus, these interviews were carried out in this group.

Questions that were asked included (but are not limited to), for example: What do you think you got out of [this initiative]? Are you in contact with any of the other participants?[33] If yes,

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[32] Full guide can be found in appendix: p.222

[33] The word "participant" was meant in its inclusive sense and also included facilitators and other staff members of the institutions acting as intermediaries.

who is it? If yes, how did this come about? When did you last speak to one of the other participants? How would you describe the way in which people talked to each other in the [initiative]?[34]

The second group in which interviewees were sought was the periphery of the social network. Eleven, so called, 'lurkers' were randomly picked (random function in Microsoft Excel) for interviews. In this group the response rate was especially low and despite various follow ups only one interview was conducted. This was not surprising when looked at in parallel with the findings of this study. Many people found it extremely hard to justify investing their working hours into engaging with the initiative; some also stated connectivity issues in their workplace or travelling in rural areas that prevented them from participating. The lurkers are the group that these arguments could apply to most; thus, very low response rates from this group were to be expected.

Questions that were asked included (but are not limited to), for example: What do you remember of the online discussions? How did you engage with the online content? Are you in contact with any of the other participants? Last time you engaged with [the initiative] what did you do? [If they mentioned something,] How did you go about it? How do you think [name of facilitator] treated you [personally or the group you are with]? [35]

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[34] Full guide can be found in appendix. p.222

[35] Full guide can be found in appendix. p.222

| Demand initiated case study | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Groups/Roles** | **How many contacted?** | **How many people interviewed?** | **Interview setting** | **Discursive space (international enquiries/local enquiries)** | **Rationale for sampling** |
| | | | | | |
| **Manager** | 2 | 2 | Individual in person | 1 responsible for overall programme/both and 1 responsible for local enquiries in country office | Link between institutional framework and funding |
| **Knowledge holders** | 4 | 3 | Individual via Skype | International Enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships and setting |
| **Managers and associates knowledge hubs** | 2 | 4 | Group in person | Local enquiries | Link between institutional framework and local facilitation |
| **Knowledge Seekers/Participants** | ~18 | ~6 | Group in person | Local enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships and setting |
| **Knowledge seekers/Non-users** | ~30 | ~9 | Group in person | Local enquiries | Perspectives "coverage" of community |
| **Knowledge Seekers** | 8 | 3 | Individual via Skype | International Enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships and setting |
| **Facilitators head office** | 2 | 2 | Individual via Skype | International Enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships, processes and structures |
| **Main facilitators** | 2 | 2 | Individual in person | Local enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships, processes and structures |
| **Main facilitator** | 1 | 1 | Individual in person | International Enquiries | Perspectives regarding relationships, processes and structures |
| **Overall #** | 69 | 32 | | | |

**TABLE 5: INTERVIEW SAMPLE DEMAND INITIATED CASE STUDY**

With regards to the demand initiated case study the researcher first identified key individuals and perspectives that were necessary in light of the research questions and objectives. Within the demand initiated case study data gathering methods had to be adapted for the international enquiries knowledge exchange space and the local enquiries exchange space. For the international enquiries five people from the management and facilitation team were interviewed. For the local enquiries five people from the management and facilitation team were interviewed.

Questions asked in these interviews included (but are not limited to), for example: How would you describe [the initiative]? What do you think about the way local/international enquiries are handled? What sort of relationships do you think [the initiative] fosters between people?[36]

The interviews regarding the international enquiries were mostly conducted via audio communications media (Skype, telephone). The interviews were recorded and later on analysed in line with the above discussed "loose" coding approach used for audio files. At the local level, the interviews with staff members were face-to-face communications and partly conducted in a group setting where three members of staff were present.

As can be seen in Table 5, interviews were conducted with knowledge seekers, and in the case of the international enquiries also with knowledge holders. Out of four identified individuals three knowledge holders were interviewed with regards to the international enquiries. On the side of the knowledge seekers response rates were not as high; one out of eight knowledge seekers was willing and able to be interviewed.[37]

Questions asked in these interviews included (but are not limited to), for example: What triggered your enquiry? Are you in contact with any of the people you got to know when using [the initiative's services]? If yes, how did it come about? When did you last speak to one of those people? How do you get in touch with them? How would you describe your

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[36] Full guide can be found in appendix: p.227

[37] Similarly to what was outlined above with regards to the other case study, some individuals showed willingness to be interviewed yet the contexts in which they worked did not provide bandwidth sufficient or phone equipment necessary for audio interviews.

relationship with the people you got to know through [the initiative]? How would you describe the people that send enquiries? How do you communicate with the people that send enquiries? How do you relate to the people that ask questions? [38]

Sampling was different at the local enquiry level. Firstly, key individuals were identified and interviewed; this included managers of the local knowledge hubs that hosted the local facilitators. Some of these interviews were conducted in group settings were managers, their assistants and other "interested" staff members were in the same room. Naturally, the facilitators themselves where interviewed; these interviews were conducted with only the researcher, interpreter and interviewee present.

With regards to community members two sampling approaches were taken at the local level. On the one hand, knowledge seekers that were observed whilst working with the facilitators were interviewed. These individuals, service recipients, were chosen because they could help triangulate the observational/coded data gathered prior to that when listening to people in facilitated spaces in the two communities visited. These interviews were conducted in a group setting where various participants of the facilitated knowledge exchanges were present.

On the other hand, further interviews were conducted at random (sampling) in the communities where services were offered. This was intended to provide some perspectives of non-users. As outlined in the analysis, it appeared as if service users, facilitators, and managers were informed about the visit from a foreign researcher and in some of the observed conversations it was apparent that the researchers presence had an impact on the ongoing social processes (this is mentioned in the analysis whenever this was perceived). As a result, additional insights from non-users were an additional attempt to get as many viewpoints on the phenomenon as possible.

Questions asked in these interviews included (but are not limited to), for example: Do you know [the initiative]? Do you know someone who works at [the knowledge hub]? Do you know [name of local facilitator]? Do you know what [name of local facilitator] works as? How

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[38] Full guide can be found in appendix: p.227

have you come to know him/her? Has [name of local facilitator] ever helped you with something? When did you last ask [name of local facilitator] a question? How would you describe your relationship to [local faciliator]? [39]

The above outlined details conclude the discussion of the here applied methodology. As discussed a mixed methods methodology is applied that, whilst it has participatory elements, focusses on the analysis of two case studies (facilitator/funder initiated and demand initiated) and treats these as discourse. Those discourse are analysed with a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis and the data is mainly gathered through observation, interviews, and the recording of textual data. In the following the analysis of the data gathered is presented.

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[39] Full guide can be found in appendix: p.227

# 4. ANALYSIS

*Guiding research question of this section: b) How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in knowledge intermediation projects?*

In this chapter the data gathered in the two case studies will be analysed. Initially, both case studies will be discussed in their own right. This chapter enables the reader to get a sense of what the researcher found in the empirical stages of this project. Once this has been covered the argument (in the following chapter called 'comparative analysis and discussion') moves towards the researcher's attempts at making sense of the two case studies when considered together (in the comparative analysis) and in light of the existing academic literature (discussion). Thus, what is presented in the analysis are the findings only.

The case studies share many commonalities. The processes are both managed by the same organisation (yet by various offices) and try to address poverty and inequality through the intermediation of knowledge processes. The projects analysed in the two case studies are South-South knowledge exchanges (often spanning across geographical, cultural and language barriers). Both case studies involve people with residency in countries of Latin America, East and Southern Asia, and the Africas.

The two case studies have been chosen on the basis of which actor initiated the knowledge processes; in the first case the facilitator and funder have initiated the process and in the second case demand initiates processes of knowledge exchange and creation. Initiation, in this context, means the act of beginning something; and in this particular study, beginning processes of South-South knowledge exchange. In line with the roles described above (knowledge seeker, facilitator and knowledge holder[40]) demand initiated means that a knowledge seeker initiates knowledge processes that lead to social interactions with a facilitator and/or knowledge holder. In the second scenario, facilitator or funder initiated means that a third party identifies a "knowledge gap" and intends to support knowledge processes as a result; the initiation is then undertaken by that party.

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[40] 'Knowledge holder' is being used synonymous to the more frequently used term 'knowledge sharer'. Knowledge holder is preferred due to emphasising the idea that knowledge is something that certain people "have".

In the following the findings from the two case studies are discussed. The analysis addresses mainly research question **b) How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in knowledge intermediation projects?** To that end various objectives are addressed in this analysis. Objective **b)i. Describe a facilitator/funder initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role perspective** is accomplished with the analysis of the facilitator/funder initiated case study. In the same way objective **b)ii**. is addressed by the other case study analysis. Additionally, both case study analyses address objective **b)iv. Determine if roles (stated at initiation stage) are maintained over the course of the intervention**.

Each case study addresses the various spaces in which knowledge processes were being facilitated; different spaces were subject to the application of different methods (as discussed in the methodology chapter), this was a leading consideration in the development of the research project. However, the appropriation of methods had to be balanced with consistency in the research project; striking a balance will also be attempted in the following analysis of the findings.

Thus, what is applied to the discussion of both case studies is a bottom-up exploration of human interaction, relationships, emergent social structure, institutional and organisational structure, and funding. Bottom-up means that the analysis starts by looking at what is actually happening at the personal level, between people. The analysis then continues to elaborate what patterns and social structures can be identified at that level before taking into consideration the institutional structures that are maintained to support the human level. The analysis goes from what is actually happening between people to the abstract structures that have been put in place for service delivery. Those are, in turn linked to the funding mechanisms (which are even more abstract and distant institutional structures from actual human interaction) that they employ and are subject to.

All this is presented taking into consideration that later chapters are to review these findings critically. As a result, findings are presented in synthesised form (rather than presented by data gathering methods). This can be seen above in the order of bottom-up exploration but shall be further emphasised. At every point in the analysis more than one method of data collection is being drawn on and this is indicated in the appropriate places.

## 4.1 FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY

*Guiding objective of this section: b)i. Describe a facilitator/funder initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role-perspective.*

In the light of this study, this case's fundamental characteristic is that processes of knowledge exchange have been initiated by a facilitator (together with and in response to a funding body). The following will illustrate how the initiation act has influenced the relationships between actors in the knowledge intermediation project. Due to this being an exploratory research project, exploring novel questions, what will be outlined cannot be equalised with a strict causal relationship; thus, what in principle might seem like a detailed description of a theory of change is a description of potential contributions (rather than attribution as in causal relationships).

The following discussion is organised in an order that reflects the inductive nature of the study. First, the analysis will focus on the actual interactions that occurred in the knowledge intervention and describe what can be seen with regards to the relationships that were established in the course of the intervention. This section, called 'facilitated knowledge processes', draws on all methods and techniques of data collection that were applied to the case study. All three facilitated spaces are discussed in chronological order in which they entered use; the online learning portal was used first, followed by the learning groups and the study visit.

Secondly, the analysis addresses what is called the institutional setting. 'Institutional setting' is, for the purpose of the argument, the institutionalised part of social structure in which interactions and knowledge exchange and creation occurs. Institutional setting covers, with its subheadings organisational and funding, some of the more rigid forms of social organisation that appear to have had an impact on the inter-personal level of the knowledge intermediation project.

### 4.1.1 FACILITATED KNOWLEDGE PROCESSES

*Guiding research objective of this section:  b)iv. Determine if roles (taken at initiation stage) are maintained over the course of the intervention.*

In this knowledge intervention, interactions between knowledge holders, knowledge seekers and facilitators occurred in three main spaces. These are spaces where facilitation of exchange processes occurred and shall provide the structure for the following analysis (findings are synthesised under the headings of 'online forum', 'learning groups' and 'study visit'). Direct access to non-facilitated spaces, such as personal chats (instant messaging), private emails, and personal conversations, was impossible due to their closed nature. Thus, natural data was only gathered in facilitated spaces that were open to participants. However, interviews with the different stakeholders allowed insights into the interactions in more private spaces.

The following sections of the argument will look at the relationships that were, arguably, established in the three spaces of facilitated knowledge processes. With regards to the research questions and objectives this section will look at processes mainly from a role perspective. It shall illustrate what roles participants took in the course of the knowledge intervention. Various related factors are explored as they emerged from the data in the processes of coding, reiteration and reflection.

#### 4.1.1.1 ONLINE FORUM (LEARNING PORTAL)

The online forum/learning portal will be discussed in detail further below in the institutional setting (p.158), as it represents and imprints social structure. At this point it shall be noted that it is a purpose built online space with restricted access to 259 "approved members" (staff members of the facilitating organisations and other participants of the learning exchange). It resembles most closely what is commonly known as online forums (e.g. Gaia Online, Ubuntu Forums) but also includes elements that are common in social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn). The learning portal includes forums with discussion threads based around topics, networking opportunities, instant messaging and emailing functions; additionally, people's (contact) details are accessible to all participants.

As outlined in the methodology chapter, the research was accompanied by the writing of a research diary in which the researcher reflected on observations that carried relevance with regards to the research questions and objectives. When analysing the diary with regards to the actual conversations occurring in the online forum, reflections indicate a perception that the conversations, going on in the online space occurred at a macro-level. The personal

perception when looking at the conversations was that discursive cycles take about one week. This seemed to go hand in hand with some of the learning structures put in place and was explicitly influenced by how the conversations were facilitated. This will be discussed in more depth in the section on social structure (p.143).

Moreover, the impression was that people were engaging in conversations in a mostly friendly and objective manner. Contributions were (often very) formal and all participants that contribute to the forum seemed to attempt to make a good impression with their contributions. Essentially the tone was fairly consistent. The entire conversation was coloured by a tone of gratitude and appreciation. Whenever participants seemed to engage directly with each other they showed signs of appreciation and tried to engage in a constructive way with each other's contributions.

These, of course, are perceptions based only on participants' observable behaviour. The feeling was that after the initial introduction of one's self in the first week of the exchange the diversity of people contributing to the discussion dropped drastically. Over the weeks a small core of regular contributors emerged with other people contributing occasionally.

In terms of the relationships that seemed to have been established there were few people that consistently engaged with each other. The main focus seemed the facilitator who was also the main knowledge holder. Additionally, the facilitator raised the main questions in the weekly discussions that participants were addressing, and those made up most of their own contributions. Thus, most conversations pointed in one way or another to the facilitator and the issues raised by the facilitator. Seldom did people engage in peer-conversations about certain aspects of each other's' contributions. Relationships between participants therefore appeared to be fairly superficial, utilitarian, and pragmatic; they seemed to focus on issues raised by a third party (the facilitator).

Turn-taking therefore seemed limited and appeared to be over after three or four turns (whenever it did occur). The researcher's perception, captured in the research diary, was that prolonged conversations were not observed which supports the feeling that relationships were rather shallow and opportunistic.

That being said the coding done in the 'tone' theme gives a good overall impression of the atmosphere in the online space; good meaning that this is verified through triangulation

since the researcher's personal perception and participant's perceptions, known through interviews, go along very similar lines. There are 206 instances of people's utterances showing clear signs of an attitude of appreciation; e.g. *"Dear All, thank you very much for your postings the contents really add value to my understanding of rural development"*. 137 of these are thanking people for the sharing of their knowledge or the sharing of a resource (coded under purpose of statement); e.g. *"Thanks [X] for the ... report and sharing your experiences"*. The remaining 69 are expressions of appreciation that go beyond this; e.g. **"***Lively and refreshing. Bringing back those good days [of the study visit]"*, or are instances where people indicate appreciation as part of stating that they are 'happy to be here'; e.g. **"***I am very privileged and honoured to be part of this great alliance"*.

Participants' own perceptions regarding the tone of the conversations were described by an interviewee from Ghana like this: **"[Compared to social media] on the [online forum] I realised that people were being professional, where someone wants to uphold his profession and share, so quite formal, a very formal way of communicating, a very formal way of sharing ideas, being very professional"**; the interviewee attributes this to the feeling that some participants might have in that they **"are representing their country"** in the online forum. Another interviewee from Rwanda outlines the tone of the online interactions as **"very formal and polite"** mainly because people meet each other for the first time there. In line with this, open and personal criticism of each other only occurred once, whilst polite disagreement (and outlining of varying viewpoints) occurred regularly. Participants seemed to take the exchange seriously and their contributions (length, writing style, tone, etc.) lead to that perception.

Appreciation was by far the most visible attitude shown by contributors. The only other attitudes visible beyond one to three instances were 'apologetic', 'excited', 'critical' and 'curious'. Curious was the second most frequently shown attitude with 133 instances. All of the statements that indicated curiosity were statements coded under the purpose of 'seeking'. These statements either 'ask for an attachment' (1), e.g. *"Thanks [person's name]. The attached file on the LWR Tripartite Model does not appear in your post. Maybe you can attach when you add your comment with examples from West Africa."*; 'ask someone for information, opinion' (61), *"My query is in the case of Latin America, what*

*have been the impacts of such changes on small and marginal farmers and their lands?"*; 'indicate interest in something to someone' (18), *"Hello [person's name]! I am [author's name] from Zimbabwe. My interest area is crop production, focusing on sustainable technologies for small holder farmers. Your experience with organic farming would be of interest to me."*; or 'put a question or interest into the open' (56), *"now from what I have explained are we called middle men? And if we are called middle men why should we be eliminated in the value chain, and if we are not then who are we?".*

*Relationships*

All contributions play a part in formation processes of relationships. As described in the literature review, relationships are built through routine interaction; in discourse analysis interaction (through communication) is characterised by turn-taking. Instances of curiosity and questioning are a prime example for intended turn-taking. When looking at these instances in the observed interactions, in 32 cases people received an answer when they asked someone for information or their opinion (29 were left unanswered); this is a response rate of 52%. When people indicated an interest in something to someone ten instances were addressed and eight left unaddressed (response rate of 56%). Whenever people 'put a question or interest into the open' the response rate was 54% (30 addressed and 26 unaddressed).

The data suggests that there is barely any difference in response rates, no matter if the seeker addresses someone in person and/or asks a specific question or broadly states an interest for whomever to address. However, this is slightly misleading, which becomes clear when taking into account who was seeking knowledge in the particular instances. Most obvious is the difference in the theme of 'putting question or interest in the open'. When a facilitator did this the response rate was 78% and for non-facilitators (other participants) the response rate was 40%.[41] In the other seeking activities the difference is not as stark but a

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[41] Note: it was mentioned above, and will be mentioned again below, that the facilitator made an introductory contribution at the beginning of every week to introduce the week's topic. Part of that are initial questions; those have not been considered since they were not part of the space that

general tendency can be identified that seeking activities of the facilitator were more likely to be addressed than other participants' seeking activities (81% vs. 47% overall response rates).

As shown in the examples above, whenever statements showed signs of seeking they were coded not only under that purpose but also as taking the role of a knowledge seeker. A person acts in the role of a knowledge seeker when s/he makes a statement with the purpose of seeking or interacts with a statement made by someone else. A person interacting with a statement from someone else can take various forms; this includes reflecting on someone else's statements, thanking someone for the sharing of information and adding information to someone else's information on a certain topic. All of these make it necessary to interact or have interacted with another person and in the sociological view of knowledge creation (or construction of reality) this makes learning unavoidable; thus, indications of engagement with others are coded as knowledge seeking. Overall, in the online forum there were 494 instances of people taking the role of a knowledge seeker which represents 33% of the coded roles.

As outlined above, the other two roles that were coded are 'facilitator' and 'knowledge holder'. The role of facilitator was attributed to utterances 90 (6%) times and that of knowledge holder 926 times (61%). A person acts in the role of a knowledge holder when s/he shares a perspective, viewpoint, information, document, link, knowledge, or other with anyone or everyone in the discursive space. A person acts in the role of a facilitator when s/he makes utterances that serve the purpose of administration and management of the exchange processes, attempts to trigger discussion and dialogue, speaks for more than 'oneself', re-presents funders and other supporting institutions within the facilitated space, and tries to nudge practice, dialogue, etc. in ways that overlap with plans and strategies.

As can be seen by the statistics above people mostly acted in the role of knowledge holders, than as knowledge seekers and finally as facilitators. No matter in which context individuals were situated in (the context where "lessons" have been identified [sharing] or the context in which the lessons would be applicable [uptake]), the order in terms of which role was taken

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everyone had access to and could influence. The response rate to these questions has been 100% since every week there was at least (and usually many more than) one response.

most usually remains the same. In other words, even people that were targeted by the initiative to learn from 'lessons learned' in other contexts were acting more often as knowledge holders than as knowledge seekers. Only in one case does the order change; people from one particular geographical context (out of eleven) fulfil the role of knowledge seekers more often than they fulfil the role of knowledge holders. This offers direct insights regarding the guiding objective of this section; however, an explicit discussion will follow below in the section of social structure.

As can be seen above, whilst some people made considerable efforts in contributing to the online discussions the relationships developing were very shallow. The local expert from the South-East Asian region who was also a participant of the online network stated that **"[before meeting people] it was kind of, a little bit of, you see, I mean, you can say platonic"**. This is further substantiated in the social network analysis outlined below.

### 4.1.1.2 LEARNING GROUPS

Besides the online forum, the knowledge intervention included two other facilitated spaces for knowledge processes. One of the two spaces are learning groups where participants could meet face-to-face in a locality that was provided by the facilitating organisation. These were regional offices of the same organisation that was running the project. Members of the online forum, and others that were interested in the theme of the discussion were invited to participate in these local groups. Employees at regional offices worked on establishing local networks and tried to get as many people involved as possible.

There were two such groups, one in a South Asian country and one in a Central African country. These groups had their own facilitator that was working locally and were called 'regional coordinators'. A short description of the learning groups in the words of the overall facilitator (the 'moderator' reaching across all facilitated spaces), which he shared with people during a presentation in a learning group meeting:

> **Local experts meet monthly in [South Asian country] and [Central African country] face-to-face. The meetings are facilitated by [the intervention's] Regional Coordinators to enrich the discussion of the key issues to be addressed. The moderator takes part in the meetings via Internet. Meeting conclusions are shared with online participants in the [online forum].**

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The data gathered in relation to these learning groups include audio recordings of three meetings (out of five) in South Asia and two audio recordings (out of four) in Central Africa.[42] Facilitators and other participants have also been asked about the learning groups in the interviews that were conducted with regards to this case study.[43]

*Relationships*

In both learning groups the regional coordinators were instrumental to most interactions. Besides fulfilling the roles of facilitators they also commented on thematic issues and tried to bridge contexts and media channels by considering content that was shared and discussed in the online forum. Besides the regional coordinators, local experts were chosen to facilitate the bringing together of topical knowledge from various contexts (the context in which lessons were mainly expected to originate and the context in which they were mainly supposed to be applied); this expert was external to the facilitating institution. These two individuals (in both learning groups) developed stronger ties due to their centrality in the administration process, which they embarked on led by the overall moderator of the learning network (and online forum).

The centrality of the local coordinator can be illustrated in various ways. Firstly, the coordinators were, of course, the focus of all administrative responsibilities relating to the meetings and, thus, in an elevated position. However, their influence went beyond this. For example, on the agenda for the first meeting in the learning groups was the choosing of further topics for future meetings (that the moderator and a local expert would then prepare presentations on). Even though this process was implemented by the two regional coordinators slightly differently, it is observable that the coordinators' views of the importance of various issues and concepts in their contexts were influencing the outcome of

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[42] The quality of these recordings is sometimes very low (especially the ones from the Learning Groups in Central Africa.

[43] As outlined in the methodology chapter, attempts were made at gathering further data regarding the learning groups through an online questionnaire; however, response rates were very low. The data returned did not warrant conducting a social network analysis of the face-to-face meetings in South Asia and Central Africa. Also, further insights beyond the intention of a social network analysis were also limited since most respondents overlapped with also being interviewees; thus, their views were already gathered through that research method.

the topic choices reached by the respective groups; in one instance, in the learning group in Central Africa it looked like this:

After outlining the need to choose a further topic and what the choices of topics were (three in the case of this particular proposed meeting) the coordinator went straight into saying: **"If I can lead the discussion, personally, I would choose the first one of 'institutional transformation' because it goes together with 'contract farming' because without institutions it is not very easy to have contract farming"**. This then is followed by silence for two seconds after which the coordinator informs the moderator that they (the learning group) have chosen the first topic on the list. Whilst this might have been the outcome due to various factors, e.g. it being an obvious choice, a common sense rationale and/or people having nodded in agreement, the coordinator clearly uses his right/position to speak on administrative issues (and facilitation) to also comment on thematic issues and influences decision making processes; in other words, facilitation duties give the facilitator a 'foot in the door' to also speak on thematic (or other) issues.

Other participants' interaction also focussed around these individuals. This becomes clear in the recordings where discussions are often between other participants and the coordinator and/or local expert. An instance where this occurs (and that also reveals various other issues relating to social structure) is the following. In a general discussion on the modalities of the programme, a participant in the learning group in Central Africa made an enquiry that the regional coordinator than put to the moderator. Thus, in this example, communication is channelled through the regional coordinator towards the moderator.

However, this is not only due to the privileged position of the coordinator (in terms of her/his relationship to the moderator) but was also influenced by the factor of technology; for the moderator it is sometimes difficult to understand anyone else besides the coordinator (who can be assumed to sit closest to the microphone). Such technological issues make the moderator dependent on local facilitation and introduce further dynamics into the human relationships at work in the learning groups.

This can be linked to the institutional setting (discussed in detail below; p.158). Learning group meetings were set out so that a presentation of the moderator on the topic of the meeting (outlining the lessons from his/her geographical context) would usually be the first

major element of the meeting (the first agenda item after the regional coordinator had welcomed participants). This was followed by a perspective (on the same topic) presented by a local expert; a presentation that was prepared with input from the moderator and regional coordinator.

Besides discussions revolving around the regional coordinator and local expert, some lively discussions were observed in which participants talked freely to each other.[44] The moderator observed this as well; for example, "**Well, thank you. Although I do not hear you quite well I understand that you are discussing quite lively and heatedly; so, please don't fight each other. [Long silence] Well, anyway. I have taken note of three questions...**" This quote not only illustrates that the moderator perceived a vibrant dialogue between present participants but also how technology (and technological difficulties) impact the possibility of the moderator establishing relationships with the people in the physical meeting. Without feedback (see the silence after his 'joke' [that seemed due to connectivity issues]) on how the intended joke was received the moderator is likely to restrain from making such personal remarks in an otherwise fairly formal setting because of the unreliability of the communications technology.

This is particularly true for the meetings in Central Africa where the internet connection has been very poor at times; how this influenced the meetings, interactions and people's relationships becomes clear when the moderator says: **"Please go ahead with your debate, I am trying to hear you and [local coordinator] is doing a great job at letting me know your questions through our chat. So, please, continue your dialogue, I am here listening to you, go ahead, thank you"**. This quote illustrates how the moderator is dependent on the local expert for information about what is going on in the physical meeting, which influences their relationship. However, sometimes technology worked well in the learning group meetings and when the moderator indicated insecurity (regarding her/his accent, speaking too fast, and connectivity issues) about being understood well by people in the physical meeting the local expert responded: **"Just want to say that ... understanding**

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[44] Lively discussions occurred in the formal meetings (in which the moderator was present via WebEx) but also beyond; this was observable due to recordings sometimes continuing even though meetings had finished.

**is not a problem, you are doing a great job, at least for me and I can see that everybody can understand very well, so there is no problem here"**.

The same person later on, in an interview mentioned that s/he considered her/his job to be **"also coordinating, I was the national coordinator. So, my involvement was a little bit, I think, you know, more than the other members maybe because I was involved right from the beginning. ... and also, you know, other than the online interaction I had interactions with the [learning group] members here and also after the interactions in the internet or intranet, whatever, online, you had, I had also opportunities for personal interaction so it was a very positive and complete experience, you know, so far as I am concerned"**. At various points in the interview it becomes evident that the local expert considered her-/himself a member like anyone else but fortunate enough to have deeper involvement (and some [small] financial remuneration for their work).

This person's deeper involvement was born out of the fact that s/he had **"contacts in [the intermediary organisation] and then you know, I was working on this [national] strategy, for [South Asian country], so I was part of [that team] and then they were looking for people who were knowledge about [the country] and also [the topic]"**. Thus, the learning group meetings s/he experienced from the perspective of a facilitator:

> **"my involvement was, you know, based on, I mean also involved in conducting this workshop here, with the [learning group] ... so we had a series of workshops, I think 4 or 5. So we invited all these experts also and they would present their opinion and I remember one of the presenters who was, you know, the land use experts and I also, especially there was marginalised farmers or tenant farmers, you know, who did not have any land in [country], and tenants rights ... those people were involved and they would bring in perspectives and then there would be discussion in the workshops and then we would make a note of that and then circulate to the, you know, the [online forum members] and then the reactions and comments. So it was very, you know, I mean, interactive at that time. So, it was good".**

In general, the local expert's perception of the relationship dimension was very focussed on the distinction between online and offline (face-to-face); also, as can be seen in the quote, the people s/he recalls are mainly other presenters and experts.

Based on the recordings, examples are outlined in the above description, one can see that presenters mostly played the role that they were expected to. They acted as knowledge holders in the instances of their presentations, during the Q&A sessions and even for large parts of the following discussions. The structure of the learning group meetings gave the moderator and the presenters a floor for outlining their own knowledge and perspective on the chosen topic; in Q&A sessions the roles of knowledge holders and knowledge seekers were distributed as anticipated by such a set up. The same counted for the local expert who acted mostly as a knowledge holder (even when this person was not the presenter in that particular meeting). However, the local expert also took the role of the facilitator in many instances (mostly in the learning group in South Asia). In the recordings of the learning group meetings (as described in the examples above) the regional coordinator facilitated most of the communication, the digital link to the moderator via WebEx and most administrative matters; this all points at the regional coordinator fulfilling the facilitation role in the learning group space. Other members of the group were mainly active as knowledge seekers. Even though, in the discussions individuals shared their own views, knowledge and experiences, these were rather limited vis-à-vis the presentations and Q&A sessions. Thus, it can be surmised that these too maintained their role as knowledge seekers to a great extent.

### 4.1.1.3 STUDY VISIT

Besides the two learning groups in their particular national context there was a second face-to-face learning space. A study visit was organised and facilitated where members of the online forum could visit a country in which lessons had been identified for others to learn from. In the words of the moderator (based in that country) when introducing the group, in a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture of that country:

> **"And to finish this [knowledge intermediation project] we select, once some of the participants apply, this group of twelve; they are the twelve apostles of [the knowledge intermediation project]. They are from a total of more than 200 participants, more than 50 applied and we selected those twelve that have most**

**activity in the course, most leadership and most capacity in terms of being able to have great influence when they go back to their countries, no!? ... But, this activity is an activity of study; the visit we call a study visit. Thus, what we want is for the visit to be the final point for this type of course that we had for these four months"**.

The atmosphere in the study visit was overall very engaging, especially in facilitated sessions where members are among themselves (without other people brought in to share knowledge); for example, within the first hour of personal introductions (only a fraction of people had introduced themselves by that point) a passionate discussion broke out where participants reported their personal concerns illustrated by negative examples from their own contexts, others joined in either agreeing and letting others know that this is an experience they share or offered their own story of, for example, corrupt politicians and marginalised groups in their societies.

Cultural difference played a role in the study visit. For example, during the introductory session the moderator facilitated the orderly introduction person by person and at some point suddenly said: **"Let's move to the African side of the meeting room"**, followed by giggling in the room. However, there was no indication that these played a significant role in the facilitated knowledge processes. In the interview with the moderator he outlined that compared to previous study visits, there was no grouping by nationalities or the like in this study tour.

*Relationships*

During the study visit participants got to listen to and interact with many 'experts' that were chosen by the facilitating organisation and the moderator to share insights that they drew from experiences in their geographical context. These encounters were brief and usually were limited to a presentation and a question and answers session (the more formal sessions), as well as discussions with policy makers, farmers, entrepreneurs, and other actors.

Whilst the moderator was responsible for the facilitation in all these encounters,[45] there was also an interpreter present.

The interpreter was very much an active part of the group. On the second day, for example, inconveniences arose as people were not able to hear the interpreter from where they were sitting. The interpreter had to be re-positioned so that hearing the speaker as well as the interpreter was possible for all participants (and the interpreter alike). People in the room were inexperienced at working with an interpreter and kept talking to him/her; more than once the moderator stepped in and said, for example: **"Go ahead, go ahead, and [name of the interpreter] is going to – don't look at [the interpreter] [laughter in the room]"**.

The moderator maintained (from the online forum and learning groups) his position of not only facilitating discussions but also himself being an expert on the matters discussed. More than once he feels comfortable stepping into a discussion, interrupting someone sharing her/his knowledge (also the presenters), correcting them or offering additional information. Frequently, it seems as if the moderator pursues this strategy because he thinks he knows the audience better than the presenters; he attempts to clarify in line with their interests and general understanding.

Notable is also the way that the above mentioned question and answer sessions were facilitated. After a presentation the first few questions are gathered from the audience (by the moderator) and then answered by the presenter; this is then usually followed by a second and sometimes a third round. However, relevant to note is that these norms do not apply to the moderator as they apply to other participants. For example, in one instance the moderator wants to criticise how a participant uses a concept in a question to the presenter (**"be careful how you use the word private property"**); however, the participant defends the usage and they seem to settle on a compromise (both are partially right and wrong). He then continues to ask the participant a question for his own understanding. The noteworthy thing is that all this happens (the criticism and the question) without any apparent need because the discussion has been about something different. The moderator is clearly

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[45] Judging by the recordings: in all but one. In one of the recordings it becomes clear that the moderator is not actually present. The expert himself facilitates the question and answers session.

pursuing his own interests at a stage where participants were to have the opportunity to ask the presenter questions.

Additionally, after this discussion had ended it was the next participant's turn to ask questions. The participant starts: **"I do want to ask some few questions"** to then be interrupted by a joke from the moderator, **"A few questions, wow"**. This is one of various instances where the moderator shows signs of 'thinking that participants ask a lot of (if not too many) questions'. At another point the moderator even introduced the participants (group) to a presenter and said that they will **"ask you twenty questions afterwards"**; in another instance when thanking the presenters for having them, the moderator called the participants the **"burdensomes"** or **"nuisances"** (Spanish original: **"pesados"**).

However, the moderator mostly steps into conversations when he wants to clarify issues presented based on his understanding of the participants' knowledge. Not only does the moderator seem concerned with what participants get out of the presentations and discussions by trying to clarify content outlined by other knowledge holders but there are various occasions where he also seems concerned with the impression that the group makes in the places (with the people) they visit. When in a session with a local expert the moderator says: **"One help for tomorrow, we are going to meet with [Name] tomorrow. [Name] is the first name of the Minister of Agriculture, so I was willing to ask [presenter]: what should we ask [the Minister]? But now I am not going to do that; [the Minister] is a good friend of us and, but, [presenter] is working more closely with [another Minister]"**. He then continues asking the presenter to explain a particular issue, adding: **"This is one thing that has been pushed by [the Minister of Agriculture and the other Minister that the presenter actually works with]. Can you explain a little bit about this in order for everybody to understand because [the Minister of Agriculture] is going to talk about this tomorrow"**. Later, before the meeting with the Minister of Agriculture the moderator reminds participants of the questions that have been suggested to them to be asked in that meeting (**"my friend [presenter's name] suggested"**) and outlines her/his relationship to the Minister (**"it is a very close colleague of us"** - 'us' referring to other academics in this area that the moderator identifies with).

The moderator seems to have well established relationships with many of the presenters that the group visits. During the visit to a different think tank the presenter knows about the moderator's views on their current president and jokes about that. Further on more jokes are exchanged in the local language which the participants do not understand; for example, the moderator notices unrest in the group whilst a presenter answers a question and asks if the audio (interpretation devices) is fine, the presenter steps in and jokes: **"what happens is that they disagree with what I am saying"** - which stays without translation into English.

Such display of relationships, in addition to the moderator also being an expert and knowledge holder in the context that the study visit discusses, puts him firmly in the camp of the knowledge holders. This observation is further firmed by the fact that by the end of the study visit participants call the moderator **"prof"**. In an interview the moderator outlined that **"it [just] happened, basically in the study tour. In the study tour they treated me as professor because their understanding of the [learning group] process was that I was, quote unquote, the professor of the group, not only the facilitator of the dialogue. So, very hierarchical; even though I am very easy going and I was trying to go horizontal. Of course, they treated me like an authority"**. This goes hand in hand with the observations in the online forum and the learning groups where the moderator is the actor dominating the role of the knowledge holder as well as the role of the facilitator.

In the recordings, participants of the study visit prevalently fulfil the role of knowledge seekers. Conversational contributions from participants are dominated by the asking of questions, outlining issues of interest, and reflections upon contributions by knowledge holders (presenters, the moderator). However, participants also acted as knowledge holders. In various discussions they outline experiences from their own contexts.

### 4.1.1.4 CONCLUSIONS: EMERGENT SOCIAL STRUCTURE

*Guiding objectives of this section: b)iii. Map the relationships between knowledge holder(s), knowledge user(s) and facilitator(s); b)v. Analyse in terms of relationship patterns*

When considering the social structures that are based on the intervention (based on the data gathered and analysed above) an image emerges that varies slightly across the different spaces. This image is based on the patterns of interaction outlined above and the data

gathered through interviews. Before looking at the social structures across spaces insights generated through the social network analysis will be presented.

As illustrated in the coding examples above, statements for the SNA were coded when people addressed each other. The data was gathered through the coding of conversations into a directed weighted adjacency matrix. This adjacency matrix showed 'grouped ordinal measures of relations' ; meaning that the analysis considers the strength of relationships between individuals (nodes) on the basis of the frequency of their interaction, relationships are therewith weighted. In the following the relationship patterns between people are illustrated.
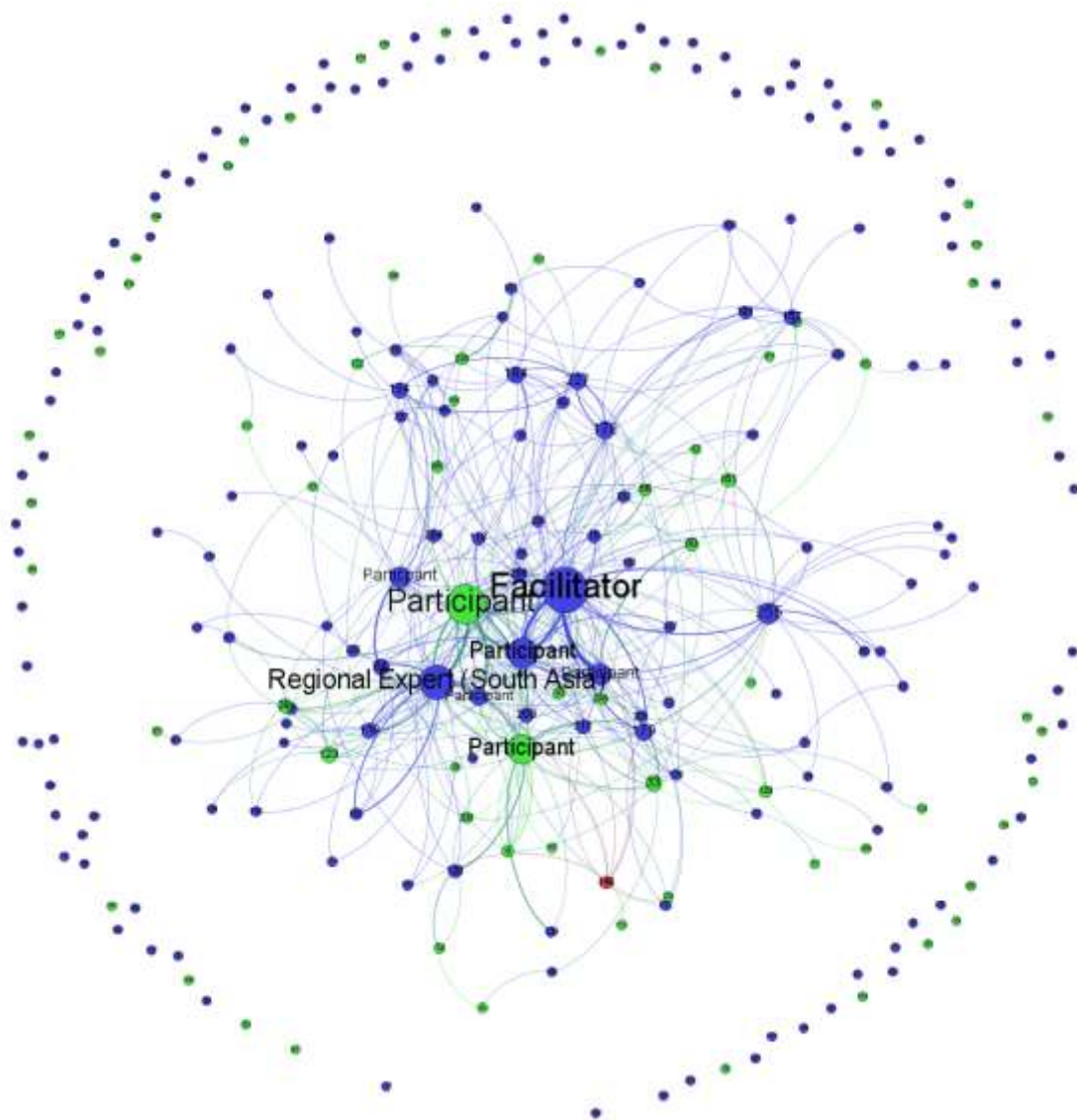
**FIGURE 16: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - ENTIRE NETWORK**

Figure 16 contains the entire network that emerged due to people's interactions in the online forum of the facilitator/funder initiated case study. It illustrates graphically how many people did not engage in any interactions (on the online forum) with other people (the outer ring of the diagram). It also illustrates gender differences in the network (female – green, male – blue, red – no data available).
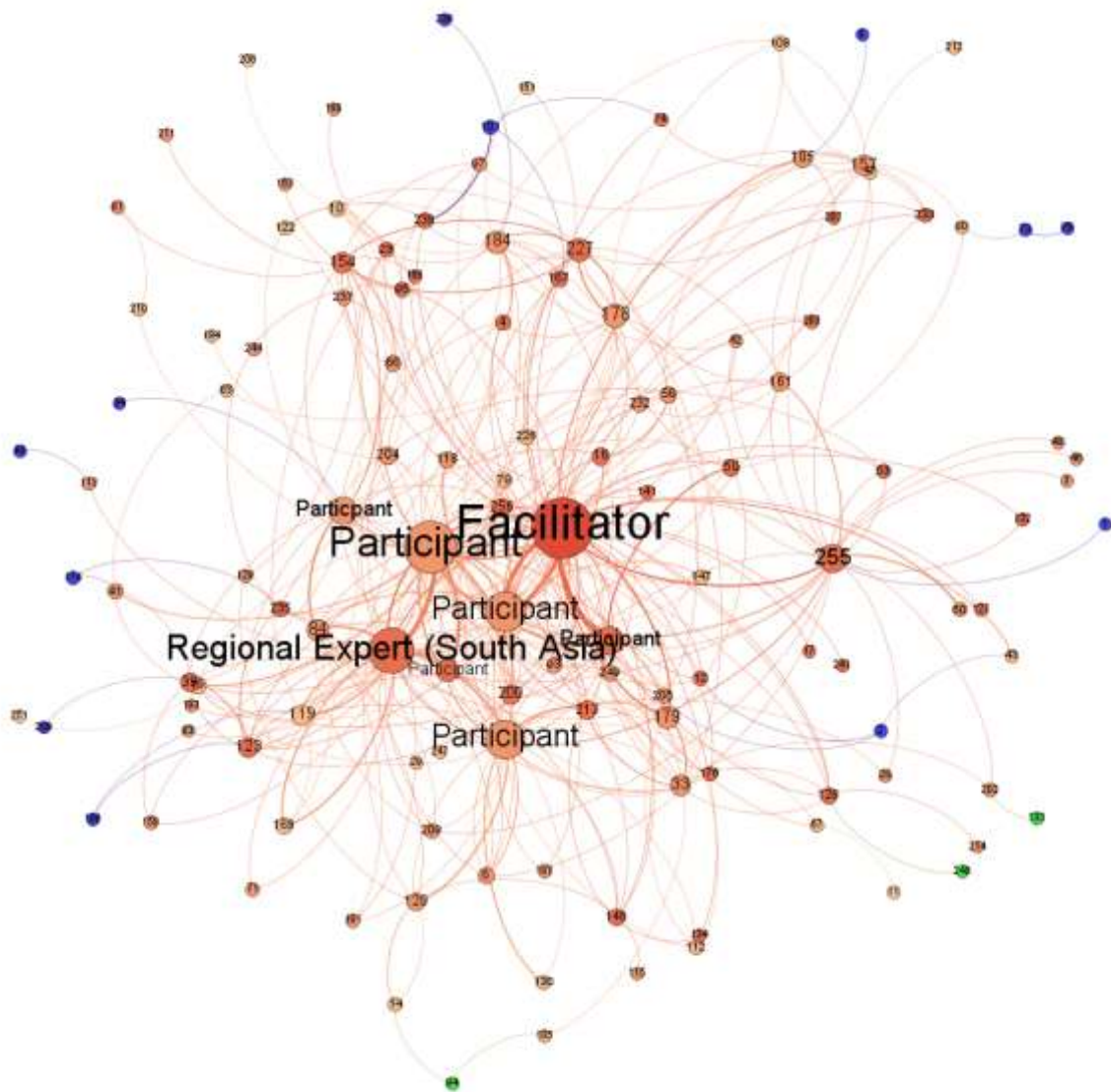


**FIGURE 17: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS**

Figure 17 is a heatmap that contains all individuals that interacted at least once with another individual in the online forum. It becomes apparent how central the facilitator and a few other individuals are to the network; this is not only indicated by their position in the map but also by the size and the colour of their node (and the size of their label). The thickness of the edges (connection lines) indicates who individuals communicated with mostly.

However, the fact that this network is relatively large and does not have any visible clusters makes it difficult to derive insights at this level. To gain more clarity, the following figures illustrate the same network but reducing the amount of nodes (people represented) by the amount of relationships they have with other people; Figure 18: n>=3, Figure 19: n>=10, Figure 20: n>=20. This illustrates that out of the ~250 participants only a very limited number have interacted with a range of people. The thickness of the connecting arrows indicate the strength of the connection (amount of interactions) whilst the arrows show whether or not interactions were incoming or outgoing.
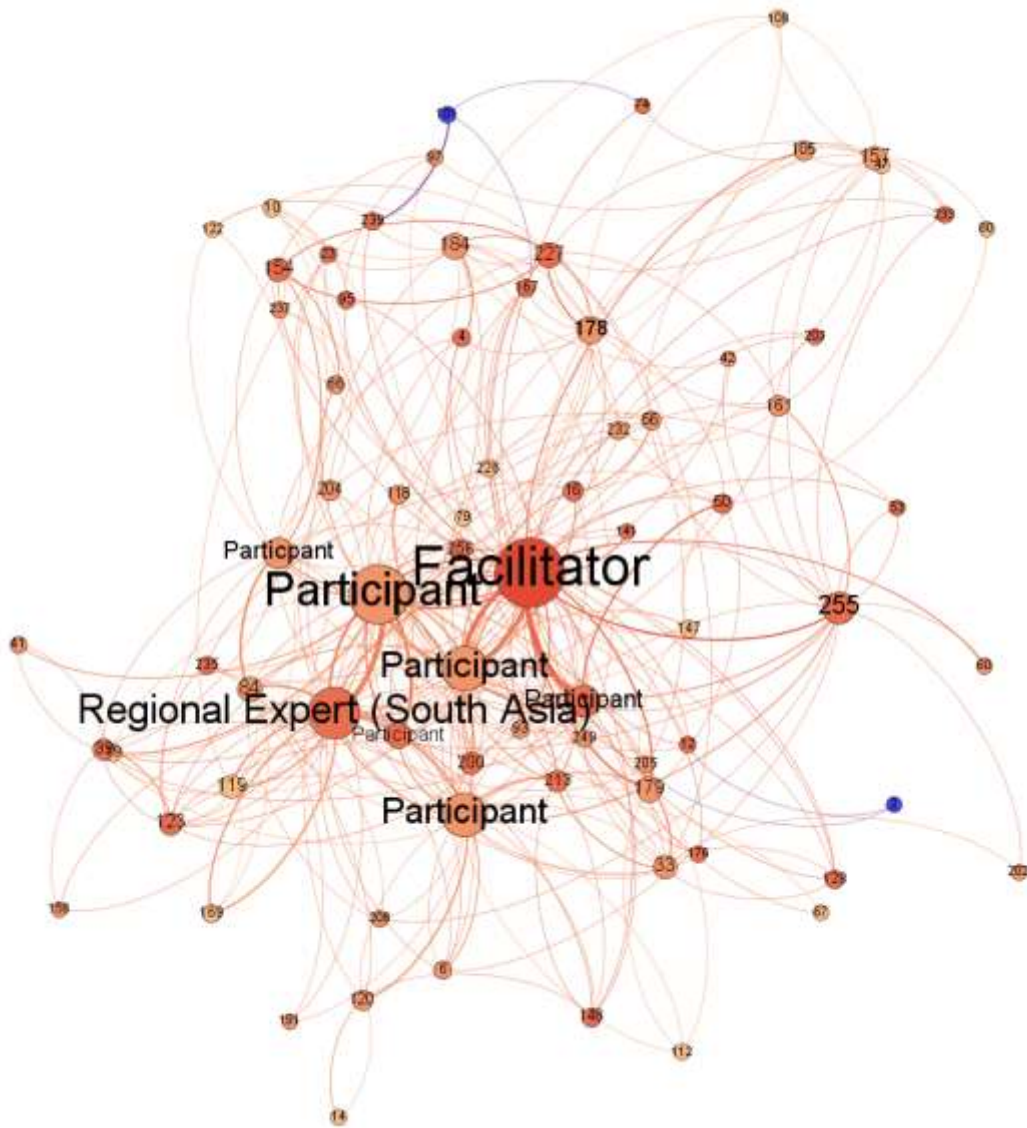
**FIGURE 18: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - N >= 3**

**FIGURE 19: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - N >= 10**
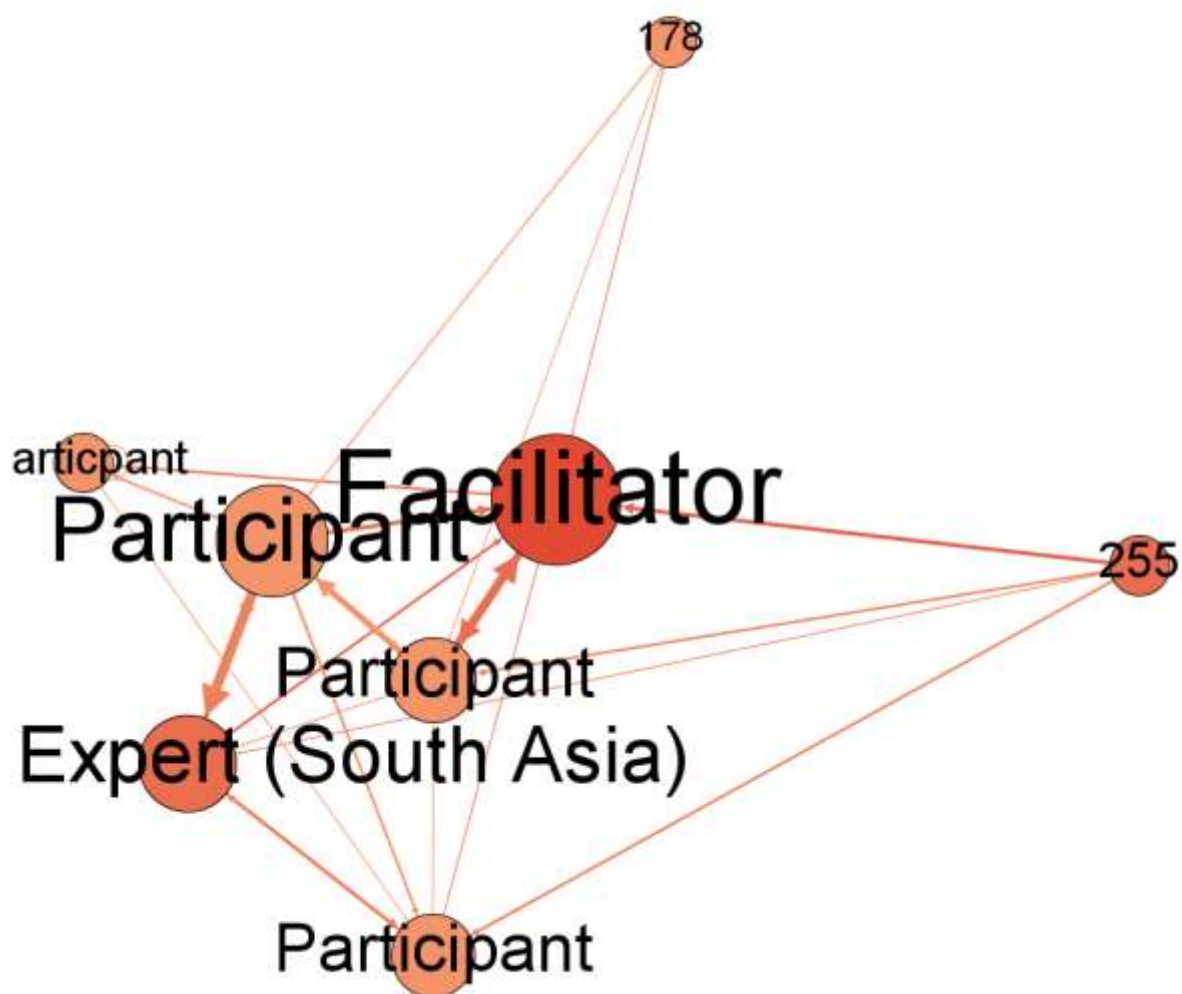
**FIGURE 20: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - N >= 20**

The individuals in Figure 20 have all interacted with at least 20 other individuals; two of those seven individuals are in an official role (moderator of online forum and Local Expert [South Asia]). The interviews with some of them showed that there were diverse reasons for them having connected to an array of people. What they had in common is that they valued networking and felt that they had time to invest in such an activity; the reasons for this varied greatly (e.g. drawing on others for research purposes, disseminating research findings, being on maternity leave, etc.).

In the following two figures, two of the participants are used to illustrate the best connected female (Figure 22) and male (Figure 21) participants (the large green arrow points out which

node represents them). The former works as an independent consultant and believed that that was part of the reason why she was able to connect to many people and the latter was a researcher who understood the learning network as both a place to gather data and to disseminate research outputs.



**FIGURE 21: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - EGO NETWORK MOST CONNECTED MALE PARTICIPANT**

Figure 21 and Figure 22 below illustrate the ego network (personal network) of the most connected male and female participants respectively. These serve as examples of ego networks that have been established through the initiative (as visible in the online conversations); they represent the opposite extreme to people that have not interacted with

anyone else on the online forum. Additionally, when seeing these as embedded in Figure 16 or Figure 17 one realizes how an individual and their own network and interactions are an intrinsically embedded part in wider social networks.
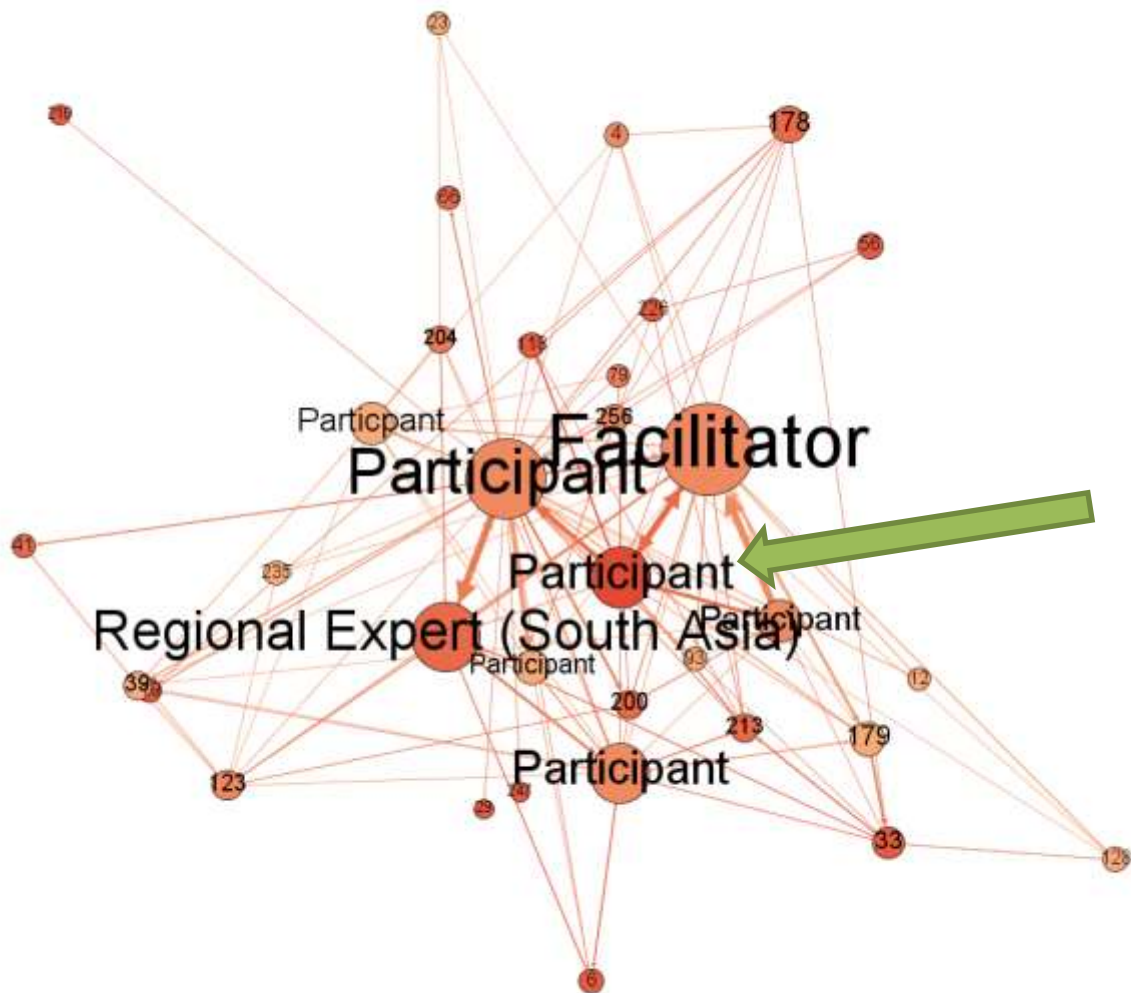


**FIGURE 22: FACILITATOR/FUNDER INITIATED CASE STUDY: ONLINE FORUM - EGO NETWORK MOST CONNECTED FEMALE PARTICIPANT**

As the social network analysis and the coding of the online forum (outlined above) show; interactions between people in that space have been limited which indicate weak relational ties. As outlined in the literature review routine interaction is necessary for relationships to develop and for ties to increase in strength. Whilst the size of ego networks of (the few) participants (that were highly engaged) are considerable, the strength of ties that they

developed with each of these individuals is rather weak. Interviewees attributed this partially to the nature of online conversations (discussed further below). Also, whilst the moderator acts mainly as a knowledge holder and facilitator across all three spaces, "participants" mainly act as knowledge holders in the online forum and as knowledge seekers in the two spaces where they encounter each other physically.

With regards to their relationships, matters are different in the learning groups. People had the opportunity to engage face-to-face. As discussed in the methodology chapter, data is limited with regards to how the social structures look that might have emerged due to the learning group meetings. The very low response rates to the questionnaire, and to enquiries about interviews, might be taken as an indication that the depth of engagement with the initiative was limited. Participant lists show that the number of people that were able to attend these meetings regularly (at least three out of four in the case of the Central African group and three out of five in the South Asian learning group) was limited; in Central Africa nine out of 23 attended at least once and in South Asia 12 out of 61 attended at least once. Within the realm of facilitated knowledge processes the image that emerges in the online forum and the learning groups is slightly different, yet similar. In the following, it will be discussed what this different, yet similar image is and how it relates to the study tour.

Across the various spaces differences and similarities in people's position in the social networks were observed; this is most evident in the case of the moderator. For example, during one of the learning group meetings the moderator said the following after someone else had finished his presentation: **"Yes, hello, I would like a question to [presenter] if possible"**. This act of asking to enter the space, to raise a question, never occurred in the online forum or during the study visit. In the online forum the moderator was the first to ask questions on any topic; at the end of his thematic introduction of the weekly topic he always asked the initial questions trying to draw out the experiences and insights from other participants. This different power structure shows that the social dynamics in the different spaces were slightly different.

This can be illustrated by another example occurring during a learning group meeting: **"So that is the material that I prepared for the discussion and let's try to be as open up, as open as possible to have a rich dialogue with you. So, [regional facilitator] I give you**

**back the hosting and you continue conducting the meeting, or [local expert]"**. There is an understanding that the host of the learning group meeting is not the moderator. In this space the moderator is engaged mainly as a knowledge holder (and occasionally knowledge seeker). His intention he described in the following way to people in one of the two learning groups: **"I would like to more to listen to you, and if we are successful in when we open up our microphones, if we can have a more open dialogue between you and ourselves here .... Thank you ... So, ok, we will give you... we will make you the host again so that you can continue; you can continue coordinating the dialogue. Thanks a lot"**.

This is in stark contrast with the moderator's usual position in the social structure. For example, in the introductory session of the study visit, as they go around the room for people to introduce themselves, people were taking longer and longer to do so. At some point the moderator notices time constraints and tells people to hurry up. Eventually the moderator asked people not to ask any questions anymore (e.g. enquiring about someone's background and context). However, all along the moderator was the one asking people that introduced themselves the most questions. Time and again the moderator starts asking people questions and then others join in only for him to suddenly shut that space again.

This points towards the powers of the moderator that he exercised during the study visit and, as described above, also in the online forum. Important to note is that the moderator controls the discursive processes of turn-taking. This becomes evident in the above discussed examples of the question and answer sessions; there are crucial parallels with the online forum which will be further discussed in the institutional setting and the discussion chapter below (p.201).

As shown above, this was different in the learning groups. Regional coordinators and local experts were seen as an extension of the moderator. In the learning groups it was them who organised the turn-taking. However, the preparation for the learning group meetings was done jointly between those two people and the moderator; so, whilst the moderator stepped down his engagement in terms of the organisation of turn-taking (facilitator role) and more into the sharing of knowledge (knowledge holder role) he did not step out of the learning groups set up all together.

The relationships between regional coordinator and local expert have their own dynamics; in various meeting recordings it seems like the local expert is doing most of the facilitation of the actual meeting. The regional coordinator seems in charge of the technology, keeping the moderator in the loop, and the opening and closing of sessions. This is particularly true for the learning group based in South Asia; the quality of recordings from the learning group in Central Africa make it difficult to identify the local expert so it is difficult to comment upon this.

Vis-a-vis other participants in the project, the two local experts had a special status. For example, in the personal introductions of participants during the study visit the moderator pointed the following out to everyone (after the South Asian local expert had introduced himself): **"Just to let everybody know that [the South Asian local expert] has been very instrumental for our [project] since he has been the coordinator or facilitator of the [learning group] in [South Asian country]. So as you may have seen in the [online forum] you have been receiving the [learning group] reports for the meetings, the minutes, as well as in [Central African country] with [the Central African local expert]"**. Everyone could have been aware of this by the distribution of the reports in the online forum; however, whilst the content and social network analysis show how central to the online forum interactions, especially the South Asian, the local expert was, no indications have been found that this is due to their particular institutional role.

When asked about the relationships they might have developed the interviewees that were also study tour participants often automatically referred to the study tour group as being the network they are part of. One participant from India said that he is still in touch with some people from Nepal and one person from Africa (fellow study tour participants). This is reciprocated in the other interviews where people refer to this particular person as the most active networker (who mostly sends academic articles). The South Asian local expert described his relationships in this way:

> **"Yes, I am in contact and still, you know, after the completion of the project still, there is, you know, this group is still active. I mean, it is not as active as before because the project is over and everybody has moved on to doing some different thing, but you know, still there is occasional sharing of information,**

**some papers, ... exchange of emails online, is going on. But participation is, of course with time you can expect that it was reduced and it has reduced but still there is one group of people you know, they are together in that, you know, exchange of emails and ideas and some information. ... Via email, some people write a paper and want to share it with the group they do that, but of course there is difference. Some people are in the profession of writing like the, in our group there is one guy, one Indian guy, you know, it looks like his job is just writing. So he is writing something every month and he is circulating it, you know. And others they are not into this kind of work and this guy runs a training programme ... Yes, yes [that is the person I mean] {giggling} this guy is really writing, you know, and also this other guys is sharing this papers, from online available papers, so they send the links ... But, I mean, it depends upon the person also, and then, you know, maybe if someone is really busy, you know, they cannot do as much as they want to. As myself, I am really not contributing that much in the forum, in terms of bringing new ideas and new information, but I do check what they are doing ...".**

The same person continued outlining how the physical encounter during the study visit might have influenced this.

**"It was very diverse group, from Africa and South Asia and also Latin America. Different backgrounds and then there were people with different, you know, expertise also. But it was a group, you know, when we met, and that [study tour] happened in [location], so kind of, relationship or friendship develops and then... So, it is a kind of, you know, they are friends for life. Like, you know, somebody is coming to [my country] I would be very happy to help them in any way possible so it is a good human relationship developed in that. ... Definitely [the study visit helped developing those relationships], I mean, I have no doubt. Because, you know, online, you know, if you do not see their face, I mean, you know, you cannot relate, you know. That is one level, you know, a level up for relationship building. Another level is that, you know, if you can, like, you know, if you visit a place; if somebody explains you about a place, you know, ten times**

**it never equals visiting that place even once. Ok? In that sense coming together and that, you know, visiting; it was definitely positive, you know"**.[46]

An interviewee from India outlined that **"of course the study visit was like the icing on the cake but the best part I think, or the most engaging part of the conversation was the online conversations we had. That was really what continued to trigger interest and was a great learning"**. She outlined that she is in touch with a few people **"we are sharing our work ... I am not doing anything specific with any person ... some of us are Facebook friends"**. In the interviews it became clear that all these people were referring to the same group (an informal email list containing the participants, facilitators and other staff members that were engaged in the study tour). The interviewee from India also recalls her experience with the moderator who she likes as a person and respects on a professional level; she added: **"I feel he is a friend"**.

Outside of the group of people that participated in the face-to-face events little evidence was found regarding people having developed sustainable relationships that they were able to maintain; a participant from Ghana mentioned that **"unfortunately [I am not in touch with anyone]. In the initial stages I tried to share a couple of emails. There were kind of respondents here and there but like I said because of my job schedule and the time pressure on me I could not sustain that kind of relationship"**. Later on in the interview the interviewee outlines that this included conversations with the moderator and a person from Bangladesh that asked the interviewee a question due to them both being situated in a similar organisational context and role. They communicated first via the online forum and then later sent each other emails. However, those interactions had tapered off.

A female participant from Rwanda outlined that she was very busy with her studies during the project but was kept up-to-date via email reminders. Due to time constraints she was

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[46] In an interview the moderator outlined that the networking during the study visit would not have worked as well if it had not been for the online forum interactions before the study tour. He continues saying that "there was sentimental bonding among the participants and a sentimental bonding towards the leader, in this case the same facilitator was the tour guide, the study guide. So I was like the professor of a high level group of twelve students ... In my opinion that is why I believe the networking of the twelve participants of the study tour is still alive". "They already had an idea of the thoughts of each participant".

unable to participate in many direct interactions with people. She continued outlining that **"if you are very active, you can keep in touch with people. If you are active, you have your time, you have internet. If you have internet, I do not think every member is fully {hesitation} have access of internet 24 hours"**. She continued stating that for her this is an activity she would have to pursue in her free time (her breaks at work) and that this is

> **"a matter of commitment. If you are committed and you value the knowledge you are getting from this networking I think you can invest, have time; maybe you can add an extra hour [to your working day] and you contribute". "If I am very interested in [interviewer's name] I just send you email because there is Email. You access your {hesitation} member address [(log into the online forum)] so you can Email him; some put their skype accounts, you can access anybody".** **"Even in my own country I met many people that I did not know before … so it was very good in my research area also, so I can ask them for information … It was my opportunity even to get updates from our country. … I just sent them in person the email, whom I was".**

She said that whilst she has not spoken to these people for a while she will try to stay in touch with them because **"even for them because we are speaking the same language, it is very easy. I got their personal contact, phone, telephone numbers, so I can call them directly and we can talk together"**. She argued that her reaching out to these people was partly enabled due to her doing a master's degree overseas (having the time) and motivated by the fact that she was looking for "data sources" for her thesis.

What this indicates is that people that see this as an embedded part of their job or lives can and do contribute. For most, so it seems, this is an additional (extra-curricular) effort. A participant from India outlined in an interview that **"the reason I could actually participate much more than would have normally is that I am not working full time these days … I have been consulting"** due to having a small child. Staying at home in front of the computer suited her. She continued outlining that when you are working full time it **"is hard to take time to engage in these kinds of conversation".** This is due to **"you [being] busy with your own stuff and its difficult, you know, to find a dedicated period of time**

**everyday ... to work on something that is of great interest to you. There are so many priorities"**.

The analysis shows that, whilst there were latent opportunities for the development of relationships generated through the intervention (available contact details, potential awareness of people's areas of expertise and interests, etc.) evidence of people developing relationships that they are sustaining beyond the duration of the project is limited. As outlined above interviewees state various reasons for this. A reoccurring theme is the perception that engagement in such learning initiatives is an extra effort rather than part of one's job or life. However, evidence has been found that suggests that some people were able to expand their ego-networks. They now know more people that have some relevance to their own work and interests. Whilst the ties with these people are very weak latent opportunities persist.

This is mirrored by the following. At the end of the study visit (during the wrap-up session), arguably the climax of the project, the moderator shared some concluding thoughts on the networking aspect: **"But of course, the easiest thing is to argue that we are going to continue networking and that we have produced, we have built a new group of small-scale farming researchers and policy practitioners, but it is easy to say it, to state it, and it is more difficult to do it and implement it. So, let me invite you to take this final day in [location] as the starting point of that network in the future"**. With this statement the moderator places the responsibility in the hands of the other participants to, so to speak, grab the opportunity presented to them. However, the language in this statement also reflects the understanding that was embedded in the institutional structure, that in many ways imprinted itself upon the interactions and relationships facilitated in the project.

### 4.1.2 INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

*Guiding objective of this section: b)vi. Link patterns to initiation act.*

An interviewee based in India outlined with regards to the study visit that **"in most cases, you know, what I shared there was driven, you know, by what I was hearing there, their [(the knowledge holders')] concern, what seemed to them, you know, {hesitation} the key things for them. My questions and what I was seeking from them, or what I was contributing was largely driven by that"**. She continues that **"online we had some**

**questions and we had some ideas already laid out. So, what I was contributing was based on that, not always based on what other people were saying"**. This statement shows how important the institutional setting, organisation and choices of topics are and how these influence the interactions, and therewith relationships, of participants. It becomes even clearer in the next utterance by another interviewee.

> **"If I, if I {hesitation} if it was something that I had knowledge about in terms of experience then, ja, in terms of experience and knowledge about than I share in my experience from my side of the world. So, that is how I come sharing knowledge on the [online forum] … So a topic comes up and you look at a topic and see if you are familiar with {hesitation} some bits of the topic and then with that in mind you share your knowledge"**.

The two statements show clearly how someone interacting in a knowledge sharing environment depends on that person's confidence in their own knowledge. However, the latter quote takes the impact of this further and outlines, similar to the other person above, that the topic also influenced the questions that would be asked, since this participant thought that they should be related (coding shows that she did ask one question that was related to the topic that was discussed in that particular week).

Considering the importance of the topics and their subtle but fundamental impact on social relationships this aspect deserves more attention. A participant during the study visit outlined the following: **"That brings me to something. During our online discussions we did not talk much about women [noises of agreement in background]. You know, it is a very sensitive issue, gender and especially women is a very sensitive issue, … especially in Central Africa"**. This was not the first time that this particular issue came up.

In the first learning group meeting in South Asia someone asked at what point there would be a chance to discuss certain topics. The moderator responded in the following way: "**Yes, eh, thank you. Well, I would think that the social dimension and the gender issues could be discussed both in [topic 1] and [topic 2]. … Yes, the gender issue is already embedded in the impacts of market reforms as well as the new set of policies and I think that… I feel that… [topic 2] will be highly important for you"**.

The moderator chose to (/has to), more than once, try to accommodate suggestions of this kind within already existing learning structures. At a later point in that meeting when participants of the learning group wanted a particular mix of existing topics to be the subject of a future learning group meeting the moderator said: **"Yes, everything is possible. [Loud laughter by learning group participants] No, no, I am just kidding [laughter again] but, eh, yes, indeed I understand that your main preference is regarding [topic 1] but there is also interest to discuss [topic 2]. I think it is a ... we need to work, [the local expert] and myself, to prepare this meeting in a good way in order to not have a three hours meeting, so that we can take advantage of your face-to-face meetings to discuss both issues"**. Whenever such demands were raised the moderator was placed in a problematic situation.

Towards the end of the lessons learned session during the study tour the moderator felt like he had to defend the content of the study tour. **"Of course, eh, I mean, what is small farming and whether or not we have really been able to touch, quote unquote, small farming... eh... smallholders engaged in contract farming ... For [this geographical context] these are small farmers but they still have five hectares, six hectares and they are medium sized farmers, medium sized entrepeneurs from other lenses. It is well taken your points but the comparative assessment has to be taken into consideration"**. Considering that the entire knowledge intervention focussed on small scale farming it is a significant fact that at the very end of the intervention there is open acknowledgement that what "small" means is very different in the distinct geographical contexts that participants come from. As shown above, the same counts for the gender aspects and other issues that were prioritised prior to the engagement with participants.

The South Asian local expert mentioned that:

> **"Well, it is, it was decided, before. The informational brochure provided in the beginning that OK, from this week the discussion topic is this. ... Yes, yes [that always triggered thoughts for me], of course. And then there are some, you know, issues, you know, that will not be relevant for, like in [my country]; things were like that also. {hesitation} From that point of view it is only learning about other environment {hesitation} that expands your knowledge and experience;**

**'oh oh, things are different there'. I see that as an added value".** At a later point in the interview he outlines that **"[A criticism] does not come readily to my head {hesitation} I mean {hesitation} maybe, the distance, the travel, maybe a regional thing would be a bit more beneficial. {hesitation} In terms of that distance, maybe, a bit of irrelevance crops up because of that. [Maybe within a region] that would be more relevant".**

However, important to note is that being part of thematically focussed interactions was perceived as an advantage by another participant. **"And the discussion was structured, so there is a topic you know, so, I mean, you can, be really focussed if you want to. So, that was a very good thing. So the online contribution and discussion, it was not going haywire. I mean, you know, there were of course some exceptions, but it was pretty much structured and focussed".** A Rwandan interviewee drew out another advantage of this approach: **"when they give out a topic ... this week we are going to go about this or this ... I think if you relate to your countries experience or your working experience ... [you] update yourself".** She continued and outlined that in her eyes, answering the moderators' questions on the challenges of her own country (regarding the current topic) made some research necessary and for her that is where a lot of the learning occurred.

Whilst it was difficult (if not impossible) for the moderator to accommodate people's own wishes and understandings in the choice of topics to be discussed the institutional set up also made it difficult for some knowledge holders. One of those mentioned the following during a meeting with participants that was part of the study visit.

**"Gracias [moderator], thanks [moderator]. (laughter) Have to switch to English now. {hesitation} I am really happy to be here participating in this meeting. When we talked with [moderator] about the brief I had to produce on microfinance for the rural areas, I was wondering what could be most useful; and this is something hard if you don't have any way to communicate with who is going to be your reader at the other end of the line. So {hesitation} I think one {hesitation} one thing that I {hesitation} why I have looking in anticipation to this meeting is to try listening from you what are your concerns about**

**microfinance. What are the problems you are facing and how can, what we have learned from, [our] experience help you in dealing with those problems".**

Such difficult situations regarding the choices of what to talk about, what to ask, what to share, etc. are, as can be seen above, a recurring theme. The moderator, experts, participants, etc. are placed in a context where such problems are unavoidable.

### 4.1.2.1 ORGANISATIONAL

Asking the moderator about how the themes were identified in which the lessons learned were to be synthesised he had the following to say:

**"In the inception phase [we had] what the [lead organisation] called demand assessment, a demand {hesitation} I do not remember the exact name that [the lead organisation] used; the demand study, the demand assessment. And, I am not sure how successful was this. I am aware that there were hundreds of questionnaires, small focus groups, a number of key people were interviewed, no? And, what we called in [the project] the [local centres of experts] ... we said to [lead institution] this is our set of themes, where we are experts and we can produce; obviously, we need to think on the programme, ... We sent to [the manager] a list of twelve themes on development, and most of them we were able to work [internally], inhouse. But some of them were thought from the perspective of what can [our continent] exchange with [two other southern continents] and not because we have the expertise in-house. But the match between the offer ... and the demand assessment, was not clearly, it was not an easy task, this matching".**

He continued outlining that:

**"[In a physical meeting in England during the inception phase] we had the possibility to have some live discussion with three-four representatives, of what we used to call in [the project] the 'demand brokers'. I mean, it was a key workshop, with this discussion we had a better idea of how to reduce the number of themes, understand better the demand side of the story, so we finally launched the project with already the themes and sub-themes already identified. However, it was fairly evident, during the initial stages of [the**

**project], of the already launched [project], that when we tried to advertise the engagement and participation in the [learning groups] that this was a bottle neck, this was a short coming of the process. In any issue … specific themes and specific research questions that in many countries in [the other two continents] were key for them, were not included in our offer. And this was, and this emerged, in our face-to-face meetings when [the project] was already launched. So, many of us, we adapted that into the [learning groups], not into the knowledge products. The knowledge products were already defined and closed, decided. The [learning groups] platform it was a very life and dynamic and flexible, had some degree of freedom in order to adapt to this specific requests"**.

With regards to the specific theme, of which he was the moderator, he said that:

**"In small-scale farming it was fairly from our expertise {hesitation} it was from [our continents] experience and it was a {hesitation} we have been strongly engaged in this issue from rural development and the evolution of economic thought and public policies regarding rural development. {hesitation} The map of the themes and sub-themes was build, or was drawn from [our continent's] experience. And with very little input from this demand mapping, or demand needs assessment that was carried on by [the project] in the inception phase. When we offered this to the demand brokers in the inception phase we did not have too many adjustments, at the beginning, no. It was once again, during the [learning group], during the exchange in the [learning group] that, we, I mean, [our institution], myself, we had a better understanding of the differences between [one continent and our continent] and the specific needs and questions from [the other continent] that were not initially considered by ourselves, no?".**

He went on to describe that desk research is not enough when trying to understand what people are interested in and what debates in that context are about. **"One thing is to review documents and policy briefs and another thing is to have an exchange with researchers and policy makers. … [for this one geographical context] we used this background paper {hesitation} to try build a bridge between [the two continents] but**

**that is one thing. The other thing is when you have a dialogue with your, with the participants themselves"**.

The demand brokers were the same people as the regional coordinators. However, in the case of this thematic learning group they got help from the local experts that were contracted. **"These played a strategic role for the functioning of the [learning groups] at the beginning, especially. Basically, for two reasons: First, they prepared a sort of background paper on the key issues for this target country in order for ... myself to have a better understanding from the beginning, no? Of the main issues being discussed in the target country. {hesitation} This was extremely helpful for me. {hesitation} And secondly, and since they [both] were also engaged in the [online forum] they already knew the knowledge products, the materials, the interviews, all the inputs from the online. Not everybody in the offline learning groups were aware of what we were discussing in the online"**.

The question arises, thus, how did the entire approach come about? It is by no means coincidence. For example, the moderator described the online forum to participants as containing two main elements. **"We have the online space where there is the structured materials and structured discussion and we have the networking space that is an open forum ... it is a not structured exchange platform. This space may be used to share information, disseminate activities, engage in informal conversations and discussions that may go beyond these specific themes of the modules and the course, the structured course, that we are having on the online space, on the online learning space".**[47]

This structure also extends into the regional learning groups which the moderator described in the following way:

> **"the purpose of the [learning groups] is to have a more in depth discussion of the key issues that are being discussed and addressed in the online space. The**

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[47] In an interview the moderator later states that: "But the networking environment of the learning environment was not really exploited, from the positive point of view, by the participants. ... After the closing of the exchange, of the discussion forum, we made an effort to switch the coordination and the discussion to the networking space but it didn't work, it didn't work at all".

**moderator, myself, is going to participate in every meeting of a [learning group] {hesitation} so that I can have a better grasp of the feedback and the learning process that you are experiencing using the materials and the questions that we are presenting in the [process]. ... and these meeting conclusions are going to be shared with online participants so that other participants in the other countries can learn from what you have discussed in your meetings"**.

This shows that what the moderator above calls the "structured course" extends into the learning groups. Evidence outlined above (and below) about how these were conducted supports this idea.

As hinted at above, with the process of defining the themes and topics of the exchanges, the project itself was set up in a way that leads to the institutional setting being accommodating to certain developments more than others. The way that the organisational approach was understood is illustrated in the following.

**"Why we try to bring this project forward? Because we have been... it just that we are trying to bring all the countries, all the continents together and I think that the learning alliance is the best way to build a good network among the experts and the researchers and try to bring lots expertise to this kind of learning alliance, to bring all the learning from [one southern continent] to [the two other southern continents] we have started this learning alliance. This means that the main aim for [the project] is to learn, to share and to network. I think that these words, for the development, these three are the key stepping stones of development and unless we strengthen ourselves by learning, sharing and networking we will not be able to go, move forward. So I think with these three objectives in mind we started this programme"**.

What the South Asian regional coordinator outlined in that quote, and further outlined in that presentation, portrays a linear progression of learning, sharing and networking. First existing knowledge is being transferred from one context (continent) to other contexts (continents) via the use of knowledge products and the structured course. This is meant to enable innovation through **"bringing learning from the best practices"**. **"Sometimes the contexts might be different and this might not work but with the good practices and**

**all I am sure it will be helpful".** **"After learning, comes sharing. Because learning is not enough I am sure that we are really excited to share our learning because we too are equally capacity and have our rich knowledge so we are equally excited to share. So what we are going to share are our experiences, challenges and solutions with organisations and individuals. So get ready to share your learning also. And then we want to do networking. We want to link you all".**

During the study visit the moderator indicated that he sees meetings they have with various knowledge holders as preparations for the visiting of the field **("being better prepared for the field visits")**. In the study visit, the moderator was again, leading other participants through an instigated procedure. In this respect the study visit is the same as the online forum (structured course). This becomes apparent at another point during the study visit. In the learning goals (lessons learned) session the moderator tries to restrict people to reflect only upon the learning goals that they had outlined in writing before they embarked upon the visit. After having mentioned it a few times already; e.g. **"[Participant's name], I was curious, you did not start with your learning goals, your pre- {hesitation} ex-ante study tour learning goals, you went straight forward to your own conclusions and did not refer to the learning goals".** This assumes that the only learning that can take place (or is valuable to reflect upon) is in one way or another anticipated. This, as well as the other examples outlined above, hint towards a linear programme logic.

The approach is entirely intentional. In a description of the project to the Minister of Agriculture the moderator introduced the project in the following way: **"And how we commented yesterday, it is a semi-course, it is not a formal course but neither is it an open forum, it is a forum semi-open semi-closed, and has a curricular structure that has lasted three months, four months".** He continues saying that **"As you know the foundation of the discussion is going to be based upon [our continent's] experiences but the participants are invited to raise examples and issues from their own countries; we have participants from more than 30, 40, countries in [two other continents], so the idea is to, based upon [our] experiences, launch a two way learning exchange and learning network in order to enrich the discussion of [our] learning experiences".**

This, again, makes clear that at the core of the project is the transfer of lessons learned in one context for individuals situated in different contexts to learn from. This shall be "enriched" by people in other contexts sharing their challenges, experiences and lessons so that a **"two way learning exchange"** occurs. However, this is mostly rhetoric. In an interview the moderator, who was involved in the project from the very beginning, made it clear that

> **"[the project] was designed as a one-way learning platform. What I mean is from one continent draw lessons that may be useful and helpful to [people from two other continents] and we clearly understood, and immediately understood that, of course, the expectations of the [others] is to share their own lessons and to try to contrast and compare, not necessarily adapt [our lessons]".** He continues stating that **"I would say that [the unidirectional approach is] one that [the project] really misfired in the {hesitation} and actually that is the scope of work, the original scope of work prepared by [the funder] {hesitation} I mean, the expectation that [the other continents] could not provide synthesis and lessons on the table; that is a clear underestimation"**.[48]

### 4.1.2.2 FUNDING

The funder, in official documentation, outlined the purpose of the project as the following: **"The purpose of the programme is to ensure that lessons learned in Latin America on good practice in development research and policy are accessible to the development community"**. This then converted into the following outputs: **"1. Lessons learnt from development practice and research in Latin America are systematically identified and prepared for dissemination, including to [the funder] itself (30%). 2. Promotion of sustainable knowledge sharing through a) ensuring that lessons learnt are captured through appropriate monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and b) ensuring that there is an effective network in place for sharing the lessons captured and influencing future**

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[48] He also mentions that the lead organisation and the funder have learned from this and will take this work forward in a different manner in future.

**programme design (60%). 3. Selected synthesis of Latin America research with relevant research from other regions to contribute to broader debates (10%)"**.

In an interview, the person overseeing the project on the funder side during initial stages (after the tender had been awarded) outlined the project rationale in the following way (this person is not working with the funder anymore and not speaking for the institution):

> **"There had been a lot of internal discussions, and it was actually born out of [the funder] closing its Latin America programme but there was a sense that there had been a huge amount of learning about, sort of, policy and implementation and all kinds of things across the whole spectrum of sectors ... from extractive industries through to social protection and that [the funder] did not want that to be lost. And it thought that if it could create some sort of knowledge platform to try and synthesise some of that, but in a way that would be of interest and {hesitation} I guess, to be taken up by people working on similar issues in Africa and Asia. So, it was a sort of classic birds eye view; so, we are shutting down our stuff on that continent but maybe we can build some pipes and get the knowledge across to the other continents where they are struggling with sort of similar issues and that, with the idea of South-South learning being really important".**

The interviewee added that "**I had forgotten the origins that it was a secretary of state priority to set up [the project] so that there was some learning once the programme had closed, so there was quite a lot of internal reporting to start with. But, I think, we reached a sort of compromise between what was a kind of ambitious expectation on [the funder's] side but what was really achievable in a more realistic pace**".

The core of the project was thus, as outlined above, on the synthesising of lessons in one context and trying to produce knowledge objects that would capture those. **"Synthesis is what [the project] was all about; because it is trying to generate overarching lessons ... [with the contractual changes] I think the idea of synthesis remained but [what changed was] the fact that it could not only be about very highly academic type reviews"**.

The interviewee continued outlining that:

**"[The implementing organisation] knew that there was no actual demand that existed, I know that in, amongst, kind of, African nations, people working on similar issues, there is no awareness even that there were kind of relevant lessons, and even less so I think in Asia. ... During the inception the emphasis [emerged] kind of strongly that there had to be some kind of element of demand creation, as part of the programme, it couldn't just be a supply side and then cross your fingers and hope it sort of connects with something**". Later on it was added that the implementing organisation **"did all the right things ... and build a good model; even though just the supply bit was going to be hard enough let alone trying to build demand from nothing"**.

## 4.2 DEMAND INITIATED CASE STUDY

*Guiding research objective of this section: b)ii. Describe a seeker initiated knowledge intermediation projects from a procedural- and role-perspective.*

In the following section, a case study is discussed that can be described as demand initiated.[49] The programme under discussion is a technical enquiry service that responds to people's technical questions and enquiries when raised from (or regarding to) a low income country context. What makes this programme demand initiated is that the enquiries are at the core (and the primary cause) of all work that is being conducted within the programme.

As with the facilitator/funder initiated case study; the analysis of this case study attempts to illustrate how the initiation "act" has influenced the relationships between actors in the knowledge exchange. What will be outlined cannot be equalised with a causal relationship; thus, what in principle might seem like a detailed description of a theory of change is a description of potential contributions (rather than attribution as in the common understanding of causal relationships).

The analysis is organised in an order that reflects the inductive tendencies of the study. First, the analysis will focus on the actual interactions that occurred in the knowledge intervention and describe what can be seen with regards to the relationships that were established in the course of the intervention. This section, called 'facilitated knowledge processes', draws on all methods and techniques of data collection that were applied to the case study.

Secondly, the analysis addresses what is called the institutional setting by, mainly, drawing on interview data. 'Institutional setting' is, for the purpose of the argument, the institutionalised part of social structure in which interactions and knowledge exchange occurs. Institutional setting also covers, with its subheadings organisational and funding, some of the more rigid forms of social organisation that have had an impact on the inter-personal level of the knowledge intervention.

### 4.2.1 FACILITATED KNOWLEDGE PROCESSES

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[49] In line with the above discussed, 'demand initiated' means that processes of knowledge exchange are initiated by someone playing the role of knowledge seeker.

*Guiding research objective of this section:  b)iv. Determine if roles (taken at initiation stage) are maintained over the course of the intervention.*

As described above, at the core of this knowledge intervention are the technical enquiries that are received by the institution. The analysis of facilitated knowledge exchanges is divided by types of enquiries; international enquiries and local enquiries. Local enquiries are mainly enquiries that are raised with facilitators (and/or knowledge holders) in a face-to-face communication setting; international enquiries are mainly raised through online forms and email communications.

However, the distinguishing factor is that international enquiries are always dealt with at a global level (through a global network of experts coordinated by the facilitators working for the global headquarters) and local enquires are dealt with, first and foremost, at a local level (through a local network of facilitators and knowledge holders coordinated by regional and country offices on various continents). Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that these efforts are not separable, even though they are distinguishable. This categorisation originates from the institutional structure that has been set up to deal with technical enquiries but there are examples of enquiries that transcend these categories and social spaces.

### 4.2.1.1 INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRIES

In the research diary the researcher noted some general observations regarding the international enquiries. For example, the context and particular question of an enquiry seemed to have great influence on the following processes. The responsibility for answering particular enquiries is distributed across the institution and the process of finding the right person to answer enquiries is the main occupation of the facilitator(s). It seems as if facilitators frequently have to 'call in favours' from fellow employees and external people in their network to be able to deal with the diversity of questions they are confronted with.

This led to the perception that relationships, the building and maintaining thereof, are of critical importance to the delivery of this service. The quality of relationships and the manner in which these are fostered appear to have a direct impact on how fast and accurate responses to enquiries can be. The manner of communications seemed to be very pragmatic and to the point as is supported by the codes that emerged with regards to the tone of the conversations.

The top level code 'tone' was used 55 times when the attitude of authors was observable. People showed signs of being apologetic, **"Sorry for being so rude and not replying"**; appreciative, **"Wonderful and thank you!"**; curious, **"I have now come into another issue that you might be able to help me with"**; and hopeful**, "I hope it adequately address your queries"**. However, most conversations were short and to the point and it was often impossible to identify anything besides the technical character of the queries and their responses. This and the limited amount of other observable attitudes led to the perception that the conversations were mainly formal and technical.

What these interactions were about becomes clear through the 161 references of the 'purpose of statement' being coded. The character of these was very diverse and many sub-codes emerged. 'Questioning' was observed 21 times and consisted mainly of people 'asking for information' (**"I need information for a solar powered water pumping system"**). 'Context of query' was coded 19 times and includes 'intended usage of information' (**"i would be glad if you could give me information and resouces that i can track my animals and keep proper record for my farm and other farms here in Ghana and extend to West Africa"**), 'personal/organisational/project introduction' (**"I am trustee of small UK (regd) Charity whose sole aim at the moment is to get a well drilled in Molo Kenya. We have funded the electricity and have the storage tank ready. We have been let down by the organisation who were going to drill the well for us one year ago and we still don't have a firm date."**),  'why asking YOU' (**"It is an area you have expertise"**) and in one case 'prepared to pay' was coded because an institution indicated that they were in the position to pay for the help received.

'Reflection' was observed when people were 'reflecting on knowledge objects' or 'reflecting on query'; in the latter case, people fulfilling the knowledge holder role usually asked for more information on the context of a query (e.g. **"If you can provide more information on this project including location, water source, cause of low pH (if known) and the need for disinfection"**). The next sub-level code that emerged is 'response', under which 'got info/expertise/background in required area' (**"We definitely have expertise in biogas and waste management."**), 'referring to knowledge object' (**"Please go through the attachment which provides a detailed information on Rabbit keeping."**) and 'responding to query by sharing knowledge' (**"The binding process should be carried out after the**

**carbonization of raw materials. Even in the case of coconut husks, the carbonization is done first and then the binding"**) were the sub-codes. Besides responding in those four ways, 'sharing contacts' was also frequently employed. These were either 'contact details of mine', 'having used own knowledge to find contact' or 'having used a knowledge object to find contact'.

The most diverse group of codes (out of the ones in 'purpose of statement') that emerged in the open coding procedure falls under 'facilitation'. In the data fifteen different types of facilitation statements emerged. By far the most frequent was 'asking for help in responding to query' **("I have a question here that maybe you have some experience on relating to the tsunami work done in the past.")**; some of the others were of administrative nature, e.g. 'logging query' or 'attributing responsibility for next step', and others indicate how facilitators act as communication channels, e.g. 'transferring query' or 'transferring response'.

In line with the 'purpose of statement' codes above the roles which actors were playing with their statements were determined. The role of the facilitator was observed in 45 instances and the roles of knowledge holder and knowledge seeker were observed in 37 instances each.

*Relationships*

Only in two of the 13 observed interactions did more than one circle of turn-taking occur between knowledge seeker, and knowledge holder and facilitator. Invitations, as outlined above, about further enquiries being welcome usually stayed unpursued. Relationships, as build through *routine* interaction, could thus not be identified on the basis of the observational data. Processes of interaction were very short and to the point (technical).

Interviews with knowledge holders, knowledge seekers, and facilitators allowed further insights into the relationship dimension of this discursive space. Indications from knowledge seekers about routine interaction were low; for example, despite one interviewee mentioning that this institution is one of his sources, when asked about his history of enquiries he responded: **"It is the first one in a long time, at the very least, I do not remember, I mean, I probably have but might have been years and years ago {hesitation} for recent memory, yes, the first one"**.

Later on, he indicated that he actually went to university with one of the facilitators that work on the international enquiries. However, he states that "**But, actually, to be honest. No, I contact [the facilitator], quote unquote, anonymous because he was the contact person on the website but I happen to know [the facilitator] also because I went to Uni with him**". It also turned out that he worked for the institution in the past and **"know[s] the folks there"**. **"He [(the facilitator)] is not a friend in that sense, just an acquaintance"**. Regarding his interactions that started with his enquiry he said that **"They provided me a second point {hesitation} a second contact and a hope of a piece, I mean the document that would be relevant. In the end it did not work but, oh well {laughing}"**. He had not followed this up since it is in the nature of his job that the themes he works on continuously change, **"so it is my fault to some extent"**. He believes he would get in touch with the institution again if he had future enquiries since he had a "**sort of standard professional email relationship**" which matches his expectations. These personal perceptions are in line with the above observed character of the conversations.

Another enquirer described his experience as **"quite disappointing. I thought that [name of programme], being an international level organisation, would be properly staffed and endowed with adequate resources from which I would obtain satisfactory answers to the questions I raised"**. This was due to him "**Not [getting an answer] as I would have expected from an international organization of this reputation, from whom I just received contacts of people I should further consult for answers**". He also stated that **"To improve the services, questions should be directed to appropriately qualified personnel, and not left only to communication experts who, in most cases, would do nothing much than only give a list of references. Technical questions should be directed to technical officers and so on"**.

On the other side a knowledge holder, who responds to between ten and twenty enquiries per year, stated that the people he receives the enquiries from are **"mainly students and people interested in setting up their own businesses"** but also NGOs. Since they are mostly from abroad he **"rarely gets to speak to them ... and mostly communicate[s] via email"**. The exchanges he is engaged in usually do not lead to sustained interaction but he states that **"when I did work for [the facilitating organisation] than it was possible to develop more of a dialogue with people. Some people would come back with repeat**

**enquiries"**. He believes that the reason for this having changed might be that he is not acting on behalf of the organisation anymore and that providing his 'personal details' (rather than being a staff member) **"puts people off"**. He then stated that **"they can [get directly in touch with me] but [the facilitating organisation] rather [take over] communication themselves. So, I don't want to get directly in touch with a person. I would rather {hesitation} it goes through [the facilitating organisation] so they can log it because I do not log my enquiries"**. Having said this, he usually responds straight to the knowledge seeker and copies in a facilitator that would then log the answer (for monitoring and accounting purposes). Whenever people respond to him directly he notifies the institution because that enables him to get paid for working on the response.

Another individual responding to enquiries (since 1981) stated that how he responds to enquiries changes from case to case. **"When the enquiries come in you can pick that some are just somebody who has gone on the internet and said 'Oh, I will ask a question', yeah. It is a waste of time; they just sat down for two minutes, you know. Others come in and you realise, this person is actually serious and that is when I put time to it and if I can get on the telephone to them {hesitation} I mean, in 15 minutes on the telephone you can do so much that you can't do in writing"**. **"It is that personal touch … making a connection with the enquirer so that you begin to understand their problems and they begin to understand my limitations, which are very limited, you know"**. He mentioned that his field (food processing) **"it's just enormous. So I cannot be an expert in all of those things but I always tell people 'I am sorry but I do not know much about that but I think I know somebody who does'"**. His usual procedure would be to call the expert he knows and get the relevant information from that expert back to the enquirer. However, he thinks that these sort of conversations (**"which I find much more useful, you go around in a circle, you find one problem and then there is another problem and then you begin to clarify"**) just make up about 10% of the enquiries he deals with; more frequently he just answers one question and the interaction comes to an end.

In the case of an employee of the organisation that responds to enquiries (despite it not being part of his job description) half of the enquiries he responds to directly and half of the responses are transmitted via one of the facilitators. He stated that the language used in the conversation is often formal and this might be because **"they want a response from us"**.

His own approach of being formal is based on the idea of **"having to respect the other ... it is good to have a formal dialogue between these two actors"**. He argued that he never gets to a point in a conversation where he feels that he knows a person good enough to start speaking more informally. He added that **"we don't dig deeply into those conversations; once we {hesitation} once we complete our job it is done. That is why we never again come around to that point and have another kind of discussion"**. He mentioned that in most cases one email is being sent in each direction. However, sometimes two to three turns are taken; these are mostly direct follow ups rather than new enquiries.

The main facilitator for international enquiries reported that those follow ups are necessary because **"Normally what people do, they just ask a vague questions like 'give me some suggestions about this and that'. So that we are not able {hesitation} sometimes I find it out myself and sometimes I forward the questions to the experts and they ask me to ask the enquirer for further details on the questions again"**. However, she also reported that people send entirely new enquiries to her after having dealt with her once. "**I have noticed people sending me enquiries directly even after two to three months. ... Two or three people have done that".** Whilst this happens seldom in her case as a facilitato,r she has not heard the same happening to the experts they work with. She believes that this is due to the very short engagements the enquirer has with experts; if they speak to each other at all.

Whether or not they engage with each other is down to the knowledge holder. **"It depends on the expert who is answering the question. We have {hesitation} I can give you an example from [our office] ... so what he does is I go to him personally and ask him for an answer to a particular question and what he does is, he doesn't answer the enquirer directly, he gives me the answer. So it depends on the person who I am contacting for the enquiry to be answered. ... Yes [it is always the preference of the expert that decides]"**. She believes that the reason for experts preferring not to speak to knowledge seekers directly is that **"Some are very busy to {hesitation} because it is a, it is quite a bit time taking process; sometimes the enquirer does not answer you for months, sometimes they answer you within a day or within some hours. This is quite time-taking process and maybe the experts prefer me to contact the enquirers directly rather than them contacting them"**. She also adds that she, as the facilitator, prefers it that

way **"because it is my duty to communicate with the enquirer, actually. I am working here as a facilitator. … And I prefer doing so myself before I want to give an answer to enquiries as quickly as possible but if I forward it to an expert and they do not reply to it immediately then [the programme's] service would not be of that quality; I mean for quality assurance as well I prefer it rather than the experts doing it themselves".**

The coding of conversations and the data gathered through the interviews give insights into how enquiries are dealt with at the international level. Due to the conversations being focussed on the enquiries and their responses enquirers mostly act as knowledge seekers and experts as knowledge holders. The social structure emerging from those processes is discussed below (p.188), where this question will be considered for the international enquires and the local enquiries together.

### 4.2.1.2 LOCAL ENQUIRIES

For the study of facilitated knowledge exchange processes at a local level one country office (Nepal) has been chosen and various data gathering methods were applied to ensure a comprehensive analysis (with regards to the research questions) of the programme at this level.[50] As is outlined in the methodology chapter, the following will draw on data gathered through interviews with country office staff, interviews with managers and coordinators in two (community) knowledge hubs, interviews with facilitators (operating from knowledge hubs in two communities), observations of two facilitated knowledge exchanges, interviews with community members from both communities, and the analysis of related documents.

When analysing the research diary with regards to the local enquiries by far the strongest perception was the embeddedness of knowledge hub staff and facilitators in the communities that they were serving; e.g. these people were part of the communities before

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[50] As outlined above and below, different country offices respond to demand/enquiries in different ways (due to differing contexts). This country office was chosen on the basis of accessibility and the fact that it also hosts the main facilitator for the international enquiries. As outlined in the limitations (part of the conclusions), it would have been preferable to visit more than one country office; however, due to financial and time limitations this was not possible.

they took on these roles and identified themselves with the community. Being so closely linked to their context had a variety of advantages and drawbacks.

Existing relationships between knowledge seekers and facilitators seemed to reduce communication/seeking barriers for some and increase them for others. Trust seemed to have been established prior to a person's appointment as a facilitator (with small parts of the community) and in the selection/employment of the facilitators, consideration was given to this according to programme staff's comments. This seemed to have a positive impact on a variety of aspects; e.g. knowledge seekers and facilitators share a lot of knowledge that was not specific to the enquiries. Cultural and language barriers did not seem to play a role; on the contrary shared knowledge seemed to be the foundation of all processes that were observed. An important drawback that comes out of the observations documented in the research diary is that working through "community member facilitators" might lead to a re-enforcement of existing power relationships and inequalities.

*Relationships*

In both communities facilitators were working as part of the local knowledge hub (library). In both cases, when visited, facilitators spent time travelling to a group of community members that was established for the purpose of gathering technical enquiries.

Overall, in the first case, the ten participants seemed very comfortable with, the space they were in (outdoors in front of someone's house), each other and the facilitator; this was observed due to very lively discussions of broad participation in which it was accepted to speak over and interrupt each other in a friendly manner. The facilitator tried to take note of enquiries (mainly relating to agriculture, e.g. animal diseases) as they emerged in the discussion; frequently engaging in the discussion to clarify questions and problems to understand what a particular technical enquiry was about.

When enquiries were raised the facilitator gave immediate feedback and committed to get a response to enquiries from the relevant expert as soon as possible and then get back to the individual (or group if it was relevant to various people) that had raised the enquiry. However, the facilitator also acted as a knowledge holder. The interpreter reported that "**there were occasions where he also gave his views, you know, taking his experience into consideration … he also had some knowledge about the subject and he also said it"**.

The work with the interpreter led to the following observations and cultural interpretations of the facilitated knowledge exchange meeting. **"It seemed a very participatory group ... that had variety in it ... women of different age groups ... and even the kids were around him"**. **"The participants were really really interactive amongst themselves, rather than the [facilitator] being the centre of the conversation"**.

The community members **"do not see him as a friend but they are open to him as well ... they do not consider him as one of them ... not as an equal"**; the interpreter outlined that **"this guy is friendly, but he is not friends with them"**. This became apparent in the sitting arrangements (the male facilitator was sitting on a chair provided by the community members whilst the mostly female participants were sitting on the floor) but also in the conversations. Participants seemed to respect the facilitator and were receptive of his communications, yet they were also open with him and comfortable to raise issues; **"they respect him, but don't fear him"**.

Two incidents in particular illustrated that the participants were comfortable with the facilitator to an extent that allowed them to criticise him. First, participants outlined that the facilitator was late for their meeting. The interpreter reported what the participants said in this way: **"You came late today and we have lots of work to do. We also have to take care of cows and goats and all and it would have been nice to have started earlier. But anyways, since we are here, let's start it"**. Secondly, the facilitator presented an audio knowledge object to the group in response to a question that was raised about an animal disease (gobaro). However, the audio played addressed another disease and participants outlined this to the facilitator (once they had listened to the entire recording), who apologised and promised to bring along the right file to the next meeting.

The fact that participants listened to the entire recording before outlining to the facilitator (who had already realised this himself) that that recording addressed another disease is an observation of significance that might add further insights to the relationship aspect. It was observed that whilst the audio was being played, participants increasingly withdrew their attention and were quietly sitting in the group but had obviously stopped listening to what was said in the audio presentation. The interpreter noticed this as well stating that **"At the**

**end there was almost no attention anymore ... and you could see from their body language that they were not actually getting from it what they were supposed to get"**.

The facilitator also mentioned that they had already discussed this disease at a previous meeting; however, the only participant who had also been present at that meeting said in joking manner that it would be good for her to hear it again for revision. In the words of the interpreter: **"So, it showed that they were quite comfortable with him because they could joke with him"**.

In the second observed knowledge exchange, the 13 participants seemed less comfortable with the space they found themselves in. Even though they had been there for many hours prior to the facilitator joining them for the gathering of enquiries (due to them receiving training in tailoring in the location of the meeting) participants seemed absent-minded, looking around or at the floor whilst the facilitator was speaking. It was also observed that the facilitator spoke more than the rest of the group taken together.

As a note of caution, the facilitator seemed to be addressing the interpreter (eye contact) quite frequently; especially when emphasising that more support was needed for the participants to be able to enter a second phase of the tailoring training they were receiving. Despite the investigators having outlined various times that they had no affiliation with funding bodies or development NGOs and were there purely for research purposes the observed facilitated knowledge processes were clearly influenced by the presence of two external individuals (one white non-Nepali speaking foreigner and a "professional" English speaking Nepali from Kathmandu). **"He [the facilitator] kept going on about the advanced training even though the participants had not really talked about it"**.

Participation in the meeting mainly came from an "inner circle" of women that were sitting close to the facilitator (who sat with them on the floor) and were frequently addressed by him personally (eye contact whilst asking a question, etc.). **"There were two ladies who did most of the talking ... he [the facilitator] kept asking questions and eventually managed to get five people to talk ... eventually they felt comfortable"**. **"If he [the facilitator] talked a lot it is because he was asking questions all the time ... trying to get enquiries out of them"**.

The community members raised a variety of concerns and enquiries with the facilitator. Not all of these were enquiries with the purpose of personal learning. Participants used the facilitated space to voice concerns of non-technical nature; for example, requesting training for family members. **"The participants had a major concern about their husbands; according to them they were the ones that are working and their husbands are not working at all. The majority of the participants agreed on the fact that if [their husbands] had some kind of knowledge about farming and agriculture, especially the animal farming they would also utilise themselves and they would also share the burden of the family ... so they requested for the [facilitator] give their husbands training"**.

The atmosphere of the meeting was less open and less conversational then in the other facilitated knowledge exchange; the interpreter observed that **"There were some occasions where they did not understand things but they did not stop him and ask him again"**. It is impossible to say why exactly that was the case but there were a few things that might have contributed to this. Some due to the space and timing of the meeting: **"The women were quite interested in their work as well [tailoring training] ... even whilst he was talking there was two participants who were constantly working and there was one time where the [facilitator] had to say: 'Hey, take a break, take a break. I am talking here and I think you need to focus on this'. They stopped working, one of them immediately"** and others due to the facilitators' actions: At another moment the facilitator **"snatched a book from the girl who was not paying attention"**.

On the other hand, the facilitator took a phone call during the meeting and when reflecting on that in light of the facilitator telling people off the interpreter felt that **"he does have a different opinion about himself; when it comes to him speaking and when it comes to the other, you know the participants, talking to each other"**.

These things led to the general situation perceived by the interpreter as: **"He had control ... he took control of the entire situation ... he was in command ... there were side conversations and he stopped them and he requested them to concentrate and the participants obeyed him"**. However, **"the facilitator made some jokes as well, [the participants] were making some statements in a sarcastic way, I do not think they were**

**scared of him. But again, I would like to say, that the younger generation, the young girls over there, were not as confident as the elder women were"**.

The facilitator emphasised that community members could not rely on him indefinitely. **"He kept saying that the library is not there to spoon feed them, you have to be sustainable, you have to be linked with the government agencies"**. He tried to encourage people to legally link with government agencies (register for services that they have a right to receive, etc.) but at the same time he cautioned them: **"He said that they have to work hard, only registering with the government for registering sake is not enough because you have to pay taxes. If you do not work hard it would not only be embarrassing for yourself but also for [the knowledge hub] because we have a good record with the government"**.

This attempt at facilitating direct relationships between knowledge holders (government agencies) and knowledge seekers (community members) was quite explicit in the communications of the second facilitator. In the case of the first facilitator it was not recognisable. However, before trying to look at the relationships between knowledge seekers and knowledge holders the relationships between knowledge seekers and facilitators deserve some more discussion.

The community members respect the facilitators. Even though the relationships appear very friendly they see them as professionals rather than friends. In the first observed facilitated knowledge exchange they were friendly and comfortable with each other to an extent that they could criticise each other. As described above, in the second observed facilitated knowledge exchange the atmosphere was less open and friendly but still comfortable enough for queries and discussions to emerge. Overall, in both cases it seemed as if there was mutual respect, even though observations did not always indicate that people were communicating with each other on an equal hierarchical basis (eye level).

The interviews with the two facilitators explored their perspective on the relationships they maintain with people in their community (knowledge seekers). One facilitator put it this way:

> **My relationship now with the villagers is like nail and flesh. When they do not see me for at least one or two days they call me, and ask me whether I am doing alright or not. {hesitation} Before I simply used to work in the library and it was**

**not like that, now with a lot of public interaction and all of that, it has changed drastically. And before there were no queries at all, when I was just an ordinary guy, they never came to me and asked me questions, you know. But now, whenever they see me they ask questions and want to know how they can improve. {hesitation} Now I am regarded as a respectable person in the society. I am almost like the social worker but I would not be exactly a social worker since I am getting my salary from library; but other than that I feel like I am a social worker and am doing something really good for the society.**

His relationship with fellow members of his community was not always like this. Even though people knew him from before he took up the job as a facilitator a lot of work was invested into developing relationships and his standing in the community.

**People have started knowing me because they see me working in the library in the first place. And other than that I have been working in this area for quite a long time; before I worked here in the election commission and during that time also I had to do a lot of public interaction so that way also they knew me and apart from that I also ran three computer courses in this area. And besides, it is an obvious thing; they are neighbours so they are quite familiar to me. {hesitation} I worked with existing group [that his predecessor had established] and in my spare time I worked in the community, I did door to door campaigns; I tried to know the people, so in the very first month of my job I collected around 2400 plus queries, and later on those people who I met during that door to door campaign, I brought them into groups and now we have started to work in groups**.

There are various reasons why he thinks people approach him with queries. As outlined above, in the beginning, just after his appointment, there were not many questions but he kept working in the library (and did door-to-door campaigns) and once **"they knew about me, they knew that I am the problem solver for them, if they would go through me then their problems would be solved quite easily and quite fast as well, that is why I think they come to me"**. Another reason is, in his opinion, that **"they [community**

**members] now know that I have phone numbers of all the technical experts and when they have a problem I can immediately sort it out by even calling them"**.

Even though he is seen as a professional and has developed his standing through his working engagement the people in his community draw on him continuously. **"Regardless of whether I am working or whether I am on my holiday, every time when the villagers see me they make sure that they ask me questions, no matter what route I take, which street I take they ask me questions"**.

Reflecting on the fact that there are 35,000 people in the catchment area of the knowledge hub he works for he states that, **"I would not say that all of them are my neighbours, but I treat them equally ... yeah, it is a true fact that those people that live nearby my house are a bit more interactive with me and come up with more queries but even if those people that live far away from my house come up with queries I make sure that I treat them impartially"**. With pride he outlined that **"the situation has come up like this that when I do not show up for a few days than the villagers call me and ask: 'where have you been, you have been lost for so long'. So they kind of miss me these days"**.

The other facilitator presented similarly strong relationships with people in the community.

> **As far as I know people do not have any negative views against me, I think that people love me ... I can guarantee that ... not only because I have been here before [working as a facilitator]. Maybe because I have been working with different organisations before as well and I interact with a lot of people, maybe that is why they have been loving me quite a lot. But overall, they love me very much.**

This might be linked to an earlier observation when the same facilitator was interacting with members of the community. The interpreter noted about the interactions that **"to some of the people he referred to like they were family, to some of the women he said 'sister' and to others 'sister in law' ... in his words it seemed as if he was trying to relate himself to them ... as if they were related by blood"**.

The facilitator himself noted that **"there might be few people, really a few people, who might be disappointed with me"**. These disappointed people, so he says, might be local

organisations that had come and asked for funds, which he cannot respond to due to a policy the library has in place for such matters.

> **So maybe some of them are kind of angry with me, but other than that I don't think that any people are angry with me. {hesitation} These days, if there is a simple problem, even the simplest problem, people call me, even if one potato gets wilted and gets some kind of disease people call me and ask me for help. I love them very much {hesitation} and I make sure that I do not show any discrimination towards them. I do not care about caste; I do not care about race or any kind of ethnicity.**

When enquiring with community members that know the facilitators and the work that they are trying to do it seems that these perceptions are quite appropriate. The people that know the facilitators are usually appreciative of their work. A community member said: **"We feel very good about his suggestions and we feel energised after hearing him"**. And that **"he constantly visits us, and I believe he has taken our voices to the right institutions but then again even his voice might not be heard. I think he is trying from his side but his voice might not be heard"**.

The people that know the facilitators seem to be comfortable with them; some of them consider their relationship like family ties, e.g. **"We are very happy with his appointment, he is like a brother, he treats us very well"**, or as friendship, e.g. **"Sometimes [I see him around] but most of the times I also visit his house because he has a mother and I am friends with her {hesitation} he is like a friend"**; **"Just as friends I meet him"**.

A group that works with one of the facilitators seems to place trust in him. One member of that group outlined that **"our relationship with him is very very good, but also, another thing that has to be considered is that he is a very busy person, he has lots of work to do. He stays in the library and he also has to look after many things, so even though he has taken our voices to the concerned entities, I think his voice has still not been heard"**. Another member added: **"I do not know if he has taken our voice to the concerned entity or not. But, well, we still have not received any kind of monetary assistance. I strongly believe that he is doing his best because he sees us every time, he sees the hardship we are going through {hesitation} so definitely he has that in his**

**mind and he definitely has made some efforts to meet that"**. What they perceive to be happening overlaps with their expectations, which they outlined in the following way: **"We expect that the [facilitator] takes our voice to different kinds of organisations … so we receive some monetary assistance"**. As it seems, even though no such assistance has been received yet they do not perceive that to be the fault of the facilitator.

Facilitators attempt to link groups of community members to the Village Development Commitee (VDC); **"the facilitator accompanied us to the VDC that provides us with this kind of assistance [(chairs to sit on)] but we are not happy with the assistance, it is not up to the standard that they have promised us"**. And there is evidence for some direct relationships between knowledge seekers and knowledge holders in the same group; **"whenever we have this kind of problem we write a letter and submit it to the Village Development Committee"**.

Community members' idea of what the facilitators' job is was usually vague. **"Exactly I do not know what he does but I think he is somewhat associated with the library … and I think he earns about 5000 from the library and he also does this kinds of works, suggesting and advising but he has not come to my place or to this area"**.

The random sampling of non-users (in the same community) showed that there are people that know the facilitator but do not know what his current job is. The person that considered him a friend (mentioned above), is a friend of his mother and visits his house frequently, outlined that **"previously he used to work as an electrician but he has stopped working as an electrician. But right now what he does I do not exactly know"**. Another male farmer in the same community stated:

> **If some problem arises during farming I go to a place that basically sells fertilisers and medicines and when some problems arise with the animals then we go to the vetshop, veterinary clinic. … I know him but as of now I do not really know what he does. … He has not come to my place. … Whenever we have problems we deal with someone from the clinic.**

However, out of the 15 randomly sampled community members most did not know the facilitator responsible for their geographical area at all. When asked about where they go when they have a problem (regarding their occupation or subsistence activities) they

mentioned the Village Development Committees (VDCs) or private businesses. **"I don't know what the library does. … Only youngsters go to the library to study. … It is not associated with us – related to us. … Whenever we have problems with the animals and with farming we go to the VDC"**.

A female tailor mentioned that: **"There is nobody around here [to ask about improving tailoring skills and income] and I usually learn these things by looking at designs and pictures and all, nowhere to go [to enhance my skills]. … I might be able to know him once I see him".** Even though some people go to the library for certain activities they did not know the facilitator and were not familiar with the services being offered. **"Whenever I want to learn something I go to the VDC and, these days, I have started taking classes … at the library … I want to learn a bit of reading and writing. … Nobody from the library has come to my house".**

Some people knew the facilitator and the offered services and still prefer to go to the VDC. **"We know who [the facilitator] is and know about the library. … I, myself, do not go to the library but sometimes the facilitator comes and asks me if I have some problems … but I find it very convenient to go to a nearby VDC … where they have medicines and all … I find that much easier".** A retired woman that is engaged in subsistence farming stated: **"I go to [private agriculture and veterinary company] and I get the pesticides and all. … Yes, I do know him and know that he works in the library"**.

Regarding the relationships between facilitators and knowledge holders the facilitators reported that these are maintained on various levels. At a personal level one facilitator described his efforts in the following way:

> **It is a tough thing, knowing the experts and all. … I always kept contact numbers of people I met, even before working in the library. Regardless of who he is, whenever I see a person who might be useful for the library I take his mobile number, his landline number; and I frequently call them to keep in touch with them and sometimes I find out that that person is no longer there and has been replaced by another guy. So in turn I ask for that persons contact number, of the new person who is in that position. I immediately call that person and make sure I am in constant touch with them.**

As described, the low level of direct relationships between knowledge seekers and knowledge holders is also illustrated by the fact that knowledge holders are very removed from the processes of knowledge exchange. To knowledge seekers they are literally (in most cases) inaccessible.

### 4.2.1.3 CONCLUSIONS: EMERGENT SOCIAL STRUCTURE

*Guiding objectives of this section: b)iii. Map the relationships between knowledge holder(s), knowledge user(s) and facilitator(s); b)v. Analyse in terms of relationship patterns*

In the following the international enquiries approach and the local enquiries approach are integrated to shed light on what the demand initiated case study looks like in terms of relationship patterns and emergent social structure. In many respects the emergent patterns in the two facilitated spaces are very different. However, before looking at both together the findings from the social network analysis (Figure 23) are used to visually illustrate the social structures that emerged at the international enquiry level.

The network is based on the international enquiries (digital, in writing) that have been coded in this case study (see above). This network shows the various assumed roles (facilitators, knowledge holders [KH] and knowledge seekers [KS]) working in the head office (HO), in country offices (CO) and regional offices (RO) (East Africa [EA], South Asia [SA]). The nodes that remain with a numerical value (as a label) are staff members that were contacted but never reacted. 'Info@HQ' stands for an institutional contact point (rather than individual) and represents the institutions general email address monitored by the reception. Similarly, 'anonymous' stands for comments on online knowledge objects (contact point) and for other instances when an individual was not identifiable (by name or institutional association).
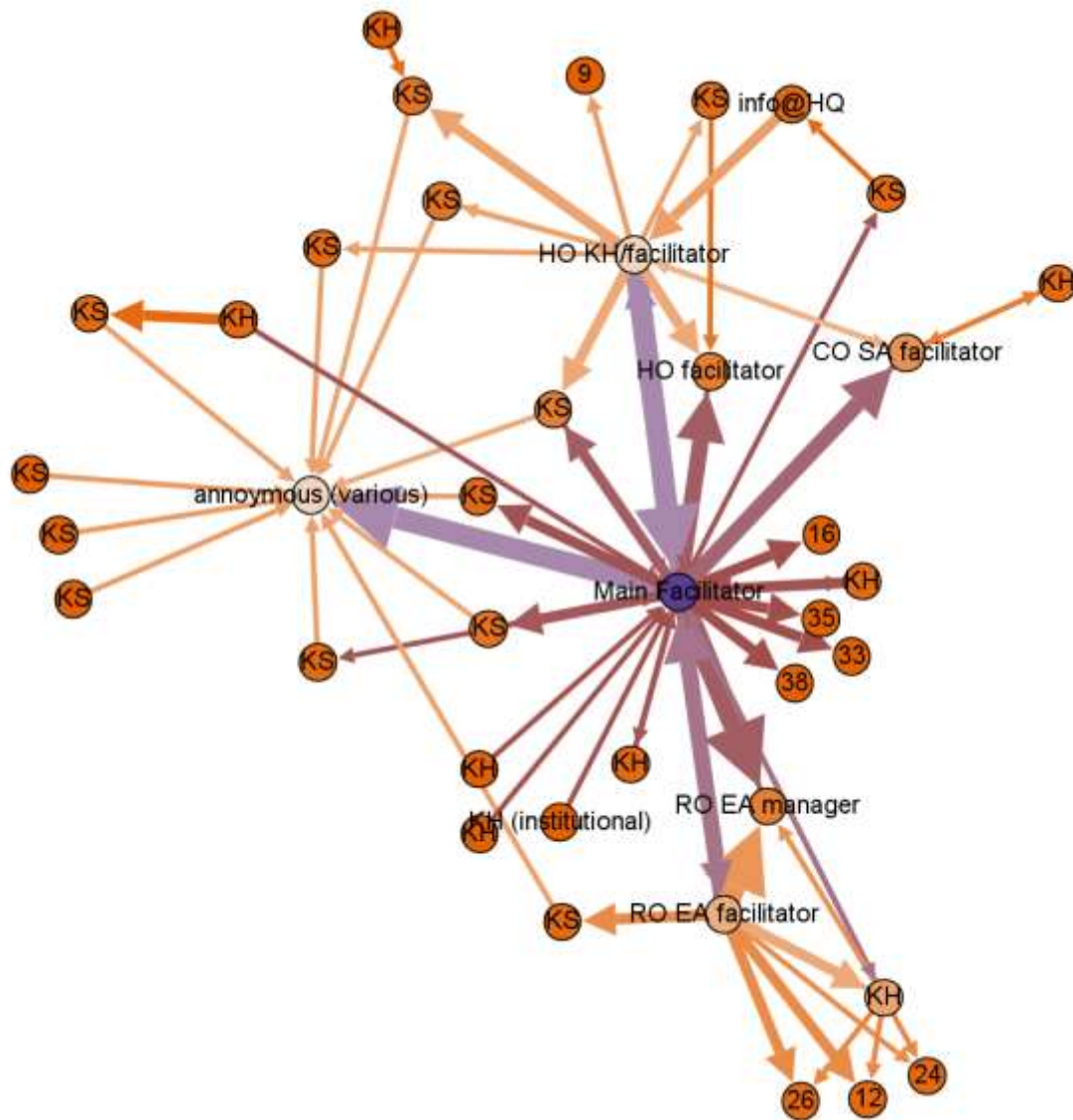
**FIGURE 23: DEMAND INITIATED CASE STUDY: INTERNATIONAL ENQUIRIES - ENTIRE NETWORK**

When analysing this case study further, the first thing to note is that, with regards to international enquiries, people usually maintain their expected roles in very short conversations. Only if dialogue emerges, due either to not enough information (context) being presented with an enquiry or follow up exploratory interactions, do actors start varying in the roles they play in conversations. At the local level, this happens a lot more frequently since people always, and by default, engage in personal and often also dialogical conversations; so in this environment actors switch roles a lot more frequently.

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Secondly, in the case of the local enquiries, the person is synonymous with the service received. For example, in the case of one facilitator, it was noted that some of the community members would call the facilitator to enquire about his health when they had not seen him for a few days. After observing interactions between knowledge seekers and the facilitator, the interpreter perceived this to be linked to the following: **"He is their need ... they depend on him"**. In the conversations it surfaced that some of the services he delivers are of crucial importance to the knowledge seekers in that particular community. **"The participants raised a voice about weather as well ... weather was a real concern because of untimely rains. And this guy gives them information on weather, so they really rely upon him these days {hesitation} they have started calling him 'weather expert'"**. The social relations observed in the communities were complex due to the facilitators being highly embedded into existing (longstanding) communities; ultimately, knowledge seekers' strong relationships with the facilitator are **"a blend of both, the friendliness but the villagers need as well"**.

However, this must not be the case across the board. The manager responsible for the programme in the regional office for East Africa reflected upon the relationship dimensions in this way:

> **When you look at the kind of enquiries we deal with and the kind of beneficiaries, most of the beneficiaries are individuals who either use this information for their own gain, for their own purpose or to start-up businesses and so on, but it is individual. And unless the references are clear, that they got this information directly through [our organisation] {hesitation} it becomes very very hard to get them to talk about it. They have their solution and they have been able to implement it and that's it. I think it is the nature of the kind of clients we have. But when you come to solutions delivered to groups; groups talk much more, they even hold [excursions], exchange [excursions] to discuss the initiatives that they have implemented after they got solutions done.**

By 'groups' he is referring to local enquiries that they deal with in their region. In contrast to this the usage of the website for the gathering of enquiries has an individualising effect on the enquirer and an anonymizing effect on the facilitation of the knowledge processes; this is

due to enquirers usually directing their communications at the service (through an online form) rather than an individual.

At a local level enquiries are mostly gathered in face-to-face situations and also in the above mentioned groups. In the observed local context, setting up these groups is one of the first jobs the local facilitator tackles when starting to work in a community. The intention is to maintain the demand-led character of the programme yet enable the facilitators to gather more enquiries in less time (scaling of service). The generation of these groups creates spaces in which issues can be raised and answered; not only by the facilitator but also by other people present in these meetings.

The international enquiries lack both the face-to-face and the group elements. In the eyes of one facilitator operating from the head office the lack of the face-to-face element makes it very difficult to find people that are willing to respond to the international enquiries; she outlines that various facilitators based in country and regional offices (who have the experience of dealing with local and international enquiries) mentioned this to her.

However, even via digital communications relationships sometimes develop, as outlined by another facilitator based in the UK head office:

> **"It varies, some of the people that contact us {hesitation} we do get to know and we have a relationship and they would come back to us and they might be asking a range of questions on different or related but different elements of a particular piece of work that they are doing. On occasions you also have a sort of dialogue in which that they would have an initial question and we might ask more details or provide some information and they would come back and then comment on that. … So you would have more than a single question coming in and then a response. So there is a proportion that are like that a bit more involved and they tend to {hesitation} already involved in a project and they need detailed information and then there is other who are maybe just reviewing options, which might just be an initial investigation into something; so they just have a fairly general response to that one. They may not continue in that particular area of work; so that would be a one off and a sort of simple type of enquiry. Alternatively, they might decide to then, at a later date, pick up on**

**some of the information they have been provided and they might come back much later on it. So there are {hesitation} is people involved in various areas of work that do come back to us on a repeat basis over long periods of time; and sometimes we can help and sometimes we can't. Depends on what subject they are really focussed on at the time".**

Whilst this illustrates that relationships might emerge through the international enquiries service the institution provides, these relationships are the exception rather than the norm. As can be seen above; this is the main difference between international and local enquiries highlighted by this study.

At the local level facilitators, knowledge seekers and knowledge holders are embedded in already existing social networks (communities and institutions) and the enquiry service builds on these relationships to channel information to interested parties and individuals. Repeat enquiries (on related or entirely new issues) are the norm because facilitators continuously work with groups of community members.

### 4.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

*Guiding objective of this section: b)vi. Link relationship patterns to the initiation act.*

It was outlined above that at the local level facilitators find it difficult to work on the relationships with the knowledge holders due to the assumed unwillingness and/or inability of the knowledge holders to engage with knowledge seekers (community members) directly. However, institutional structures have been put in place, firstly, to connect the experts to the knowledge hubs and, secondly, to connect the knowledge holders to the community without gatekeeping by a facilitator. The former has been described by one of the facilitators in the following way:

**Local experts are kind of affiliated to the library ... they have some obligations towards library as well ... to care for the welfare of the library, so the local experts I know them personally through that way, too. But other than that, even if [the facilitator] would not meet them personally the local experts have to mandatorily be present in the library at least four times a year, that way also some kind of interaction is always there.**

This group of people institutionally affiliated with the library (knowledge hubs) have been called knowledge management committees. The head of the committee (that consists of knowledge holders) at this particular knowledge hub is the secretary of the locally responsible Village Development Committee (a local government institution). This is **"quite a reputable post, so when the secretary makes a request to the local experts then they seldom say no to it, so in that way they are kind of obliged to it"**. The experts working with the other analysed knowledge hub and corresponding facilitator are

> **from agricultural centre, from health centre and also the vets. ... When it comes to handling the experts, we have a separate committee for this which links the experts to the library and the [library's] committee. Usually in the expert panel we have government officers and government officers are kind of busy persons so they won't be able to frequently visit the library. However, we tell them to please drop by at your library whenever they pass it. But still regardless of that we have managed a system, in which they have to mandatorily attend three to four meetings a year. ... That way we can tell to the experts and the government officials that the library only acts as a bridge, that actually you should be accountable to the community because it is our people.**

The latter, connecting knowledge seekers to knowledge holders without depending on a facilitator is attempted through bringing community members into the institutional structure of the library for direct liaison with the knowledge management committee. A facilitator introduced the idea in the following way:

> **The main objective of creating this technical knowledge sub-committee is, even if in the future there is not any [facilitator] the community would at least benefit from the library. ... The community would benefit a lot if they could link with the government ... every Sunday I go to the government offices so that I can create that [link] between the government offices as well as the community {hesitation} and I am not shy to beg at all.**

This institutional approach appears necessary at the local level because, as the same facilitator outlined: **"whenever the normal villagers call the technical experts they do not respond [to] them well ... the experts might not respond properly"**. This particular

aspect, and the general potential for linking knowledge holders and knowledge seekers was elaborated upon further by the programme manager in this particular country office:

> **There are few instances were government people where so generous and so helpful that they have given their contact number and they are always ready to help and instruct by phone also, remote service also, they are providing. So, it depends, but basically is playing such a role as facilitator that the government people are even willing to support with their knowledge to the enquirer. That is also the practice that we have in so many places".**

Following up on what it 'depends' on he mentioned that **"it depends upon the nature of the people, you know, all of the people are not so accommodating or reachable, you know. Some of them are quite professional, they do not want to {hesitation} if they are not paid and some do not want to work after hours".**

In the eyes of the programme manager solving these issues can only be done by putting institutional structures like the knowledge management committees in place. **"So basically we have formed knowledge management committees in each of the libraries; that is a pool of experts that {hesitation} most of the experts are government service providers, are government experts. They have a periodic meeting in the libraries and they have access to the enquiries that is collected by the [facilitators] as well. ... So they know what is going on in the community and what is their problem and the government service can aid with what we are offering or vice versa".**

However, besides these committees one of the facilitators explored other ways of facilitating direct relationships. This is **"by linking the community with the government and for that they need to register and get a PAN number. If they do that the government will be kind of obliged to do something because they have their investment on it and time and again, very frequently, they come to them and ask them: 'how are things going?'".**

As explored above, with regards to the international enquiries, direct interactions between knowledge holders and knowledge seekers are not the norm and, similarly to the local level, also depend on the individual knowledge holder. It being highly dependent on the preferences of individual knowledge holders leads to this being handled in a flexible manner.

However, it is nonetheless linked to the way facilitation is conducted for the international enquiries, as described by the main facilitator:

**I get an enquiry first, I look at it to make sure the question is complete; the information that we need to answer that particular question is enough. If it is not enough I will contact the enquirer again for the details on the question itself. And when I get a complete question, [including] the details that I require to answer the question, then I do a quick search on our [online knowledge object database] and if I find an answer from the knowledge materials that we have produced already then I will answer the enquirer directly. If I do not find them on the [online] repository then I try to find which country of which one of my [organisation's] colleagues can answer that particular enquiry. If I find {hesitation} if I think it can be answered from other [organisation's name] country offices then I forward it to them. And if that is not the case then I will have a look at the question again and if we have a consultant {hesitation} we have a few consultants in the UK ... if that question is answerable through our consultants then I forward it to the UK office, to [names of two UK based facilitators]. If I do not find any answers to the questions from our internal experts and our consultants than I will just send them an apology Email saying that we are not able to answer the question.**

She added that there are very few enquiries that cannot be answered and explains further procedures that apply to the responding of enquiries:

**When I forward an enquiry to [another office] I forward it to ... the local coordinator. And after that he is responsible to follow up on the enquiry. I am not the one to follow up, I do sometimes but when I forward an enquiry, say Bangladesh office, it becomes that particular coordinators responsibility to get an answer to that question from their experts. And sometimes they do offer the answer back to me but usually they answer the questions directly.**

She added that **"when there is a question, and I am not sure who can answer it, then I forward it to this group [(email list containing all facilitators and coordinators from the**

**various offices)]. ... If anyone can answer it then they will send me an email saying 'Yes, I can answer it'".**

Due to these institutional processes knowledge seekers and knowledge holders are usually part of separate faciliated spaces. Facilitators gather enquiries and are responsible for communicating with knowledge seekers whilst (behind the scenes) doing everything possible to get a response from knowledge holders. As a result, direct links between seekers and holders are minimal.

### 4.2.2.1 ORGANISATIONAL

In the following section some reasons for this being the case are explored by analysing the organisational setting. From an organisational perspective one local programme manager (country office South Asia) outlined the coming about of the programme in the following way: **"There were lots of ups and downs from the beginning and lots of learning also; we are customising the service as per community needs ... It evolved during a long period of time".**

The programme has experienced a decentralisation process over the last one to two decades along with general organisational developments. In the eyes of the programme's manager:

> **"it was just a kind of general reflection of [the organisation's] philosophy. You know, [the organisation's] general philosophy is to empower our offices in the global south and to take as much work away from head office as we can do, really. So, it would make sense that the expertise was increasingly in the global south anyway; our engineers and our water engineers and our energy engineers are in the field, and also that is where people are going to come and ask the questions. So, I think we have set up resource centres in the 80s and 90s based around that. That was also the decade of the tele-centres anyway, wasn't it, was starting to, sort of, come on to the agenda. So there was a general drift in development thinking that way".**

The "customisation of the service as per community needs" and the decentralisation of the service are two streams that underpin the programme. A programme manager (located in a regional office in East Africa) made the case for the demand-led approach:

**"There is something similar that comes up [in all the enquiries I have dealt with over the years]; it is the livelihoods aspect. People are looking for actual, tangible responses, not sources of material to source for the responses to the enquiries but actual tangible solutions; what I would call the solutions to their enquiries. Which makes it very {hesitation}, it is actually a daunting task, if I may so say. No one wants to read; the culture {hesitation} the kind of culture people have, especially in my region: they do not want to be referred elsewhere, they want the solution packaged in [a way] as easy to consume as possible. I see that coming up very very clearly. ...**

**I see the most effective way of doing that as giving them an actual response, not a reference. Most of the people we have been able to give references have not come back to us which simply {hesitation} If we did a review it would reason clear[ly] {hesitation} to find out if they got references or if they got their responses directly. [The programme] is unique in that it is able to respond and give enquiries up to the mark successful solution. In the places where we have given references it has been very difficult to find out if people were able to implement that.**

This illustrates that the way enquiries are dealt with is dependent on the enquiries themselves. Whilst this points towards the demand-led and decentralised nature of the service the programme manager (in the headquarters) acknowledged that it is not purely demand-led.

**Outreach knowledge brokers [do some translation work]; some of it is literally translation [of knowledge objects], some of it might be turning it into a speech or into a talk or into a focus group discussion, or into video or podcasts. Yeah, so it is doing that brokering and changing the format really. ... and adding ... local knowledge as well. The outreach bit I think of as people who basically get out of offices and take {hesitation} it is a bit the supply going out to the demand rather than waiting for people to come to you. So the extension workers ... and the knowledge brokers ... who actually literally go out into the community and say: 'OK, have you got any questions?', [rather than] waiting all**

**the time. … Back in 2006 [after discussions with a funder] … we sort of backed off a bit and we said: 'OK, look, let's wait until people come to us, but in reality people don't know what they don't know and I do not think we are embarrassed about going out there and doing some supply push really**.

This illustrates an issue similar to what has been observed with regards to the other case study and warrants further analysis; this is presented below in the discussion chapter (p.201). At this point it is important to note how the decentralised (and mostly demand-led) character of the service impacts on what is happening in regional and country offices. It becomes clear that there is not a single answer to the question about how to manage the gathering of enquiries and the responding to these. The manager of the programme outlined this himself when stating that:

**So, take the digital work, the websites. Obviously [this one office] is well developed on that and the others are not; and they are not all interested because they don't see it as relevant to their audience. So it wouldn't be that in ten years' time we would aim to have everybody with fantastic websites. … There is a sort of general direction of travel, which is towards this outreach. As I said, … [that office,] they were really inspired by the work [another office] was doing, which is why they have increased the work they are doing with promoters. So that is certainly seen as part of it. Maybe part of the issue, certainly for me, is that we don't yet have a model for any of these for how to do it at huge scale in a sustainable way.**

Whilst there is an approach that is applied for international enquiries (coordinated mostly by individuals working for the head office and general management of the programme), the programme's foundations in local enquiries that are coordinated in their respective local offices makes it impossible for there to be a unified approach. This becomes clear when looking at how programme managers, based in regional or country offices, are at the interface between international facilitators and the experts that are linked to their respective offices and, through that, are situated at the interface between local enquiries and international enquiries. This becomes clear in the following statement by the programme manager located in the East Africa regional office.

**There are many many enquiries coming from individuals, organisations and, probably, in and out of the region [that he is responsible for]. But at least some of them have been directed from the … UK office into the East African office or from any other office. So, these enquiries are also directed to me from the Nepal contact [person's name], who is running now the unit [(facilitation of international enquiries)] from the Nepalese office. All our enquiries come like that but at the same time the enquiries come through phone and direct through face-to-face meetings; people who come into the office and some we meet on contract, when we attend meetings and so on. So, all these enquiries are handled from this point.**

### 4.2.2.2 FUNDING

The above illustrates how in regional and country offices the distinction between international and local enquiries is less meaningful; the concern at that level is mainly on the particular audience of individual enquiries. The programme manager outlined how the above links to funding when stating that **"perhaps one of the reasons why we don't have a, sort of, single trajectory as you put it, is because we do not have a plan that really works. We have some plans that work better than others but we do not have this route and we have not been able to attract external funding for any particular initiative which would be a critical thing I think".**

This indicates that due to the lack of external funding no particular aspect of the programme has become (pre-) dominant. The programme is actually part of the ongoing services that this institution provides, "independent" of external project funding being available. It is perceived to be a core function of the institution rather than a programme or project that only exists due to (restricted) funding being in place. Thus, the management outlined that it was not really clear whether what is studied in the case study is a project, a programme or an approach.[51] This insecurity partly stems from the fact that the provision of the technical enquiry service is ongoing and has been for decades now. So whilst, it is a service that is an

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[51] For the purpose of this study the term 'programme' has been chosen.

integral part of the organisation it is decentralised due to being based on the enquiries and, as a result, stakeholders' (or audiences') diverse needs.

Since there is no single approach to service provision there is no single approach to funding the services in the different institutional units.

**[National office in South Asia] is our most advanced one [being self-financed] because we are taking away their unrestricted funding. They are not really sustainable yet but they have a lot of interesting ideas; one of which is around selling consultancy and the other is about charging a membership fee. But it is certainly not yet sustainable. In [another South Asian national office] they are just entering some interesting discussion with a mobile phone company, so there is a possibility of an income stream there as well which we might explore. But we have not really managed to crack any major funding.**

**The biggest challenge {hesitation} So most donors give projects for three to five years and, you know, the big part of the question on the application form will be: 'what happens at the end of five years?' because nobody wants to fund a project, which at the end of five years is not sustainable. And we can't say that it won't be; you know, we have been going for 45 years and here we are, we still need money. ... I think we probably could get funding if we said at the end of five years all these people will be able to pay for their technical information but I do not think we really believe that.**

**It has only been sustained [over the 45 years] because we occasionally found donors that are prepared to put in for certain elements of the work or we had sort of strategic partnership arrangements with people like [this big development agency], who are sort of funding it at the moment through our partnership agreement, and that makes it possible. But any kind of traditional EC three or five year we have not been able to attract because of that.**

# 5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the overall aim of this research project is the main focus; which is: To be able to deliver valuable insights and ideas for practitioners and academics through an investigation of how knowledge intermediation projects in the international development sector are shaped by their approach (demand initiated, facilitator/funder initiated), especially in terms of the relationships they foster. In addition, it discusses what implications the findings have for the intermediation of knowledge processes.

It was established in the methodology chapter that there are various research questions that need to be addressed for these aims to be achieved (p. 81). The methodology and analysis addressed question a) How can knowledge intermediation projects be monitored and evaluated with regard to the relationships they entail and facilitate? and aspects of research question b) and c); 'How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in a knowledge intermediation project?' and 'What implications might this have for the intermediation of knowledge processes? These questions are addressed in that order.

## 5.1 INITIATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

The guiding research question for this section was, how does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in a knowledge intermediation project?

Initially both approaches (demand initiated and facilitator/funder initiated) will be analysed in terms of their relationship patterns. To achieve this, the social network analysis of both case studies will be compared and contrasted, followed by a discussion of the general conclusions from both case studies. This is then followed by a discussion that links the relationship patterns to the initiation acts (objective b)vi.) and vice-versa.

### Network Patterns

The network diagrams provided in the analysis chapter make various relationship patterns visible. Evident is the high centrality of the facilitators in both case studies. This shows how facilitators develop a wide array of relationships with knowledge holders and knowledge seekers. They are the reference point for most people in the networks and if removed the networks would become highly fragmented (especially in the demand initiated case study).

In the demand initiated case study the network patterns show that knowledge holders and knowledge seekers are usually linked through a facilitator (rather than directly). This makes their connection dependent on the presence of the facilitator. As outlined in the analysis chapter, in the facilitator/funder initiated case study participants (knowledge seekers and [a limited amount of] knowledge holders) have each other's contact details and, thus, the opportunity to engage with each other directly. In the same case study the facilitator is also the main knowledge holder drawn on in the exchange and as a result participants have a single person to turn to for answers (either sourced directly from the facilitator or someone else in the facilitator's network). However, this makes the facilitator even more central to the intervention due to fulfilling both functions.

It already becomes evident that the two case studies are in some respects similar and in other respects different. This relates to the relationship patterns but also for more general insights that can be drawn from the two case studies. In the following discussion some similarities and differences are outlined, with reference to the relationships facilitated by the two case studies.

## Distribution of benefits and challenges

As can be seen above, with regards to the relationships developed, the facilitators receive by far the greatest benefit from the two knowledge interventions discussed in this argument. Not only do they receive a salary for engaging in the network activities but also develop the largest ego-networks in their respective interventions. These relationships signify latent opportunities of which the main facilitator in the facilitator/funder initiated case study is fully aware (however, he mentioned that he has not been developing these due to lack of time). In the demand initiated case study one of the local facilitators has accepted a lower salary (compared to his previous job) to work in this position and has developed, through his network, various other income streams.

Part of the reason for there to be very few direct relationships between knowledge holders and knowledge seekers is the fact that knowledge holders are often not prepared to take on the extra workload of sharing their knowledge; this has been observed in the online forum of the facilitator/funder initiated case study where many questions stayed unanswered and participants reported the limited amount of time they were able to dedicate to the project.

Additionally, this was also apparent in the demand initiated case study where knowledge holders stated this as a reason for not engaging in direct relationships with knowledge seekers (in the domain of the international enquiries). In the domain of the local enquiries facilitators had experienced knowledge holders not being willing to engage directly with enquirers; in this case, besides workload issues, it was put forward that knowledge seekers and knowledge holders appear to be moving in different social circles.

Additionally, in both case studies many communications were channelled via digital media (online forum in facilitator/funder initiated case study and emails for international enquiries in demand initiated cases study). This has major consequences for the potential of developing human relationships. It was outlined in the literature review that without nonverbal-communication it is impossible to relate to other people (because communication that does not contain nonverbal cues does not exist). To develop relationships we have to develop a shared language and social spaces that enable us to interpret subtle behavior as displayed in non-verbal communications. The decoding of people's relational messages necessarily includes the interpretation of non-verbal cues and with digital channels only offering limited bandwidth for the communication of these, it is argued by Duck (2007), building and maintaining relationships exclusively by digital means is very unlikely.

*Dialogue and turn-taking*

In both case studies there was very little evidence for dialogical communication. Turn-taking was seldom and when it occurred, it was situated at a rather abstract level. In other words, at a personal level few sustained interactions were observed and in both case studies attempts were made to institutionalise turn-taking at a higher level. In the facilitator/funder initiated case study turn-taking started with the facilitator posting the topic and introduction to the weekly discussions (including the main questions to be addressed), then other participants responded (sometimes engaged in conversations), and the week was concluded by a synthesis produced by the facilitator. In the demand initiated case study, at the local level, groups were visited by the facilitator on a monthly basis and questions gathered in a previous meeting would usually be responded to then (if they could not be responded to on the spot); however, within those meetings dialogical communications were evident.

A downside of institutionalising turn-taking is that in the same process the roles that people can take in a given situation are institutionalised as well. When critically appreciating this with an eye on the relationship literature one can point out that this makes the establishment and maintenance of symmetrical relationships very unlikely; these need the switching of roles in terms of who guides who, who helps who, and who mentors who in order to constantly negotiate symmetry in a relationship. However, the upside of such an approach is that it allows certain partners to play their expected roles in complementary relationships. The establishment of complementary roles in a relationship is usually associated with, or the result of, power differences between the actors (Wood & Duck 2006).

Institutionalising turn-taking to some extent is an attempt to ensure knowledge exchange. However, in both case studies, the managers and facilitators struggle to find a satisfactory working model (in their eyes) to match demand and supply. For example, in the facilitator/funder initiated case study this was made clear by the manager who repeatedly outlined that the demand-side (the assumed knowledge seekers) asked the facilitator what the supply-side (the assumed knowledge holders) has got to offer them. The same goes the other way around where the supply-side asked the facilitator, what the demand side needs. In the demand initiated case study matters are slightly less pronounced but the underlying struggle with mapping resources onto needs (and vice-versa) is apparent in the many different ways the programme is run in the different contexts.

## Similarities in setup

Another issue of similarity that is worth mentioning at this point is the fact that both programmes are very ambitious in their own way. In the facilitator/funder initiated case study large thematic areas are being covered, which results in very large amounts of information being synthesised. Additionally, the potential audience that could be interested in the programme could be expected to exceed millions and in the process of synthesising information that audience is mostly anonymous and their needs mostly unknown. In the demand initiated case study the institution attempts to be relevant to an even larger potential audience (at least two-thirds of the world's population), promises information on all areas of technical knowledge that is, additionally, tailored (appropriate) to the particular context in which the enquiry is raised.

Before moving on to contrast some of the more substantial differences it needs to be noted that whilst both case studies were initiated by different types of actors some similarities prevail. The difference lies in the fact that, it was the funder who initiated the intervention in the facilitator/funder initiated case study. In the other case study, as outlined previously, knowledge seekers mainly initiate processes of knowledge exchange. However, this can also be considered a similarity between both case studies since the implementing (intermediary) institution responded to expressed demand in both cases.

*General themes vs. contextualised response*

Nevertheless, besides those similarities various stark differences stand out. In line with the above the facilitator/funder initiated case study addresses fairly generic themes around which interest is gathered. In the facilitator/funder initiated case study the focus is on contextualised problems/questions.[52] The focus of the former case study led to the necessity to define generic themes prior to engaging the individuals that are meant to benefit from the intervention. This led to processes becoming highly institutionalised (e.g. see weekly turn-taking outlined above). This is in stark contrast with the second case study. The embedded nature of enquiries emerging from people's practice and immediate need led to an approach that has comparatively little standardisation. This is apparent in the many different ways regional and country offices attempt to implement the approach in their respective geographical, cultural and political environments.

The emphasis on the importance of context in the demand initiated case study is also the reason for working with mostly existing networks. Especially at the local level facilitators are part of, and work with, established communities and settlements (small clusters of dwellings/neighbourhoods). Through the programme the attempt is made to strengthen these networks and enable them to address the needs that arise within. With regards to the international enquiries this aspect is less pronounced yet still present. In the interviews it was identified that some knowledge seekers had pre-existing (sometimes weak but longstanding) relationships with the institution or individuals within; on the other hand, enquiries were

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[52] See: contextualised knowledge in literature review (p.12)

usually responded to by consulting staff members or other individuals that were already part of the institution's network.

The facilitator/funder initiated case study was fundamentally different in this respect. Whilst the thematic syntheses were conducted via partially existing individual and institutional networks, most of the relationships developed as part of the programme (in the online forum and other facilitated spaces) were entirely new. However, as outlined above, many individuals that participated did not develop any relationships with other members and the ties that were developed were/are too weak to be considered sustainable. The latent potential for horizontal (peer-) engagement in the facilitator/funder initiated case study remained for the most part unused.

In the demand initiated case study this is different. Whilst knowledge seekers (and holders) only get to interact with a very limited amount of people, they are always relevant and in most cases, necessary, for the response to the original enquiry. Thus, the few opportunities to engage with other people are usually taken up by participants.

*Patterns of communication*

This points to a further difference in the two case studies regarding the type of communications and the resulting networks. The above outlined already indicates that in the facilitator/funder initiated case study (especially in the online forum) communications were usually one-to-many;[53] this is true for the facilitator but also for everyone else. The same dissemination logic is applied (lecture type sessions with questions and answers at the end) in the face-to-face encounters of the same case study (learning groups, study visit), despite the amount of participants being smaller.

In the case of the demand initiated case study communications are usually one-to-few (groups at local level) or one-to-one (international enquiries). Whilst group meetings are used by the facilitators to disseminate knowledge, this is only a result of prior listening to emergent issues/questions and peer-discussions within those same groups. Whether digital

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[53] One-to-many: One sender and many receivers.

or physical spaces are occupied, communications in this case study are rather personal and spaces are perceived to be more intimate.

## Closeness to knowledge-in-practice

A final difference is that from the perspective of the implementing institution and the individuals engaging with each other (facilitators, knowledge holders and knowledge seekers) the impact of their efforts (on improving livelihoods and wellbeing of people in different contexts) are more or less distant. In other words, in the facilitator/funder initiated case study the knowledge shared is abstract and generic and as such not directly applicable to a (/any) context. The individuals engaged in the initiative might or might not (at that point in time) tackle problems that the shared knowledge relates to. As a result, participants need to use their imagination to see the effort of participating in the programme to reap tangible benefits down the line.

In the demand initiated case study this is fundamentally different; since knowledge sharing is a response to knowledge seeking, an attempt is made to share knowledge that is relevant to the context in which the enquiry has arisen. The knowledge seeker is addressing an issue at that particular point in time, which was the motivation to raise the query in the first place. However, this has its disadvantages since the specific information shared with regards to that enquiry might not be applicable when similar issues arise (in future in different contexts). Nevertheless, it can be argued that due to this difference the following holds true: in the facilitator/funder initiated case study the implementing institution and facilitators are more removed from the ultimate impact of their work than the facilitators in the demand initiated case study are.

## Concluding thoughts

When linking the above outlined relationship patterns to the initiation act (facilitator/funder initiation and demand initiation) a distinct picture emerges that offers two broad insights. These insights are based on the case studies discussed in this research project and, as a result, might not be universally applicable. These insights should be seen as a theory developed as part of this research project; further study is needed to confirm or refute them.

The two sides of the theory put forward are that facilitator/funder initiation of South-South knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to many potential relationships, most of them irrelevant to an individual and, therefore, unused. Demand initiation of South-South knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to very few, yet highly relevant, relationships.

As outlined above this theory needs further study; however, on the available data further qualifications can be made. Neither approach appears to be ultimately superior. Various strengths and weaknesses have been outlined above and, thus, which approach is the most appropriate in a given scenario depends on the purpose and aims that the actors involved are pursuing. In the following section, this is developed further.

## 5.2 INSIGHTS AND THE LITERATURE

The guiding research question for this section is: What implications might the so far found have for the intermediation of knowledge processes? This section draws out the implications from the analysis chapter and the previous section. To address the guiding research question, four research objectives are addressed. First, the information gathered on both approaches is compared and contrasted. Secondly, similarities and differences are analysed to derive conclusions/implications. Thirdly, the patterns of relationship that were discovered are related to the relevant literature to derive conclusions. Fourthly, the findings from the previous three elements are related to the literature on international development.

When contrasting the information gathered on both approaches a particular focus needs to be put on the link between the patterns of relationship that were discovered and the initiation act. It has been argued that facilitator/funder initiation leads to many potential (mostly irrelevant) relationships while demand initiation leads to few highly relevant relationships.[54] This can be supplemented by further insights.

In the case studies analysed demand initiation leads to information seeking through already existing relationships that are, in the seeking process, complemented and expanded as necessary; this appears to be an iterative process. As a result, efforts to facilitate discursive spaces conducive to such behaviour are trying to strengthen already existing networks and complement them where appropriate. Facilitator/funder initiation led to broad syntheses of thematic areas around which new networks were facilitated that emerged for the duration of the facilitated exchanges.

As was outlined above, no approach is generally preferable neither should demand initiation and facilitator/funder initiation be understood as either/or categories. From the analysis conducted it seems most appropriate to think about the two extremes (facilitator/funder initiation and demand initiation) as opposing ends of a single scale. The ends of the scale are ideal states rather than real possibilities; meaning, whilst they are imaginable they are in practice unlikely to make sense in any scenario.

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[54] As a reminder, relevance means from the viewpoint of the knowledge seeker and his or her situation and information needs.

At the absolute end of the scale demand initiation would mean that absolutely no institutional structures are in place to address needs of certain audiences strategically. In this scenario the individual knowledge seeker would be approaching individuals for help through already established networks and go through an iterative process on her/his own; there would be no 'intervention', 'programme', 'project' as such. At the other end of the scale pure facilitator/funder initiation would entail the development of institutional structures (and thematic foci) entirely based on the needs and worldviews of the facilitator/funder without any regards for knowledge seekers that might benefit from the facilitator/funders initiative; there would be an intervention that is entirely devoid of the context in which it is supposed to unfold its impact. Thus, the two case studies have clear leanings to their respective ends of the scales but are not ideal states; as outlined above, in the context of international development, it is unlikely for any of these ideal states ever to materialise.

Generally, it can be argued that if the attempt is to create potential for (latent) social capital at scale then facilitator/funder initiation is a valid approach. If targeted interventions (high/deep impact per engagement) are sought then demand initiation appears to be the appropriate approach. In other words, the former can be described as a top-down approach where the birdseye view of the funder/facilitator leads to an appreciation of breadth and the potential to foster networks that span cultural, linguistic and political boundaries. The latter can be described as a bottom-up approach where the contextual nature of the problem at hand and the embeddedness of the person that experiences it in its social environment leads to an appreciation of the depth (and complexity) of the situation to which any intervention needs to cater. As with the above the breadth vs. depth and top-down vs. bottom up are not separate categories but represent ends of sliding scales that can be seen as parallel to the scale that represents the two approaches taken in the two studied cases.

However, the above insights do not stand on themselves but can be compared and contrasted with established knowledge in the fields of information science and international development. This will enable the complementary and contradictory positions that have been established by prior research (and practice).

5.2.1 INSIGHTS AND THE INFORMATION SCIENCES

The guiding objective of this section is to relate patterns of relationships that were discovered to the information science literature and derive implications/conclusion. In the following section, the findings and insights founded on the empirical aspects of this study are linked with the literature associated with the information sciences. This discussion is based on the literature reviewed above (p.16) and the analysis and discussions outlined so far; a focus on relationships is maintained.

The relationship patterns (as well as other findings) in the facilitator/funder initiated case study point towards a view that emphasises generic knowledge. As outlined in the literature review, generic knowledge consists of principles that can be applied across time and context. As a result generic knowledge is considered to be transferable. It has been discussed that generic knowledge is often considered to be scientific knowledge in that science's claims to objectivity guarantee the cross-contextual (and non-subjective) applicability of knowledge.

On the other hand, in the demand initiated case study it has been found that embeddedness, context, and situation play a crucial role; both in terms of social embeddedness of the knowledge seeker (and other actors) as well as the contextual applicability of the knowledge shared in response to enquiries. It is local (or indigenous) knowledge that is most likely to be appropriate for the problem faced by the individual; subjectivity is seen as an unavoidable component in the quest for context appropriate information (to the seeker).

In line with Ekblom's (2002) discussion of generic and local knowledge it has been suggested above that this apparent dualism contains two elements that are actually opposing ends on a common scale where approaches need to be found/balanced in light of their utility for a certain purpose. Thus, this research supports Briggs (2005; 2013) claims that we have to overcome the commonly held *perception* that one is necessarily better than the other.

At a fundamental level this study suggests that the approach taken is highly dependent on the worldview that the main actors entertain. In the literature review it has been outlined how scientific and indigenous knowledge have for a long time been discussed as opposites that are based on fundamentally different worldviews (associated with the "West or the rest"). Whilst this perception still seems to be prevalent it is argued that different worldviews are entertained at sub-national level and even within only slightly differing personal, institutional and political contexts.

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Differences drawn between scientific and indigenous knowledge have been outlined to (partially) exist also in concepts as diverse as tacit and explicit knowledge, information and knowledge, knowledge transfer and co-creation, adaptive learning and generative learning, etc. When applying this to the two discussed cases then it becomes clear that the facilitator/funder initiated case study subscribes more value to explicit knowledge than tacit knowledge, and emphasises information and knowledge transfer over co-creation (the opposite is true for the demand initiated case study).

Metaphorically speaking, the facilitator/funder initiated case study subscribes to 'teacher-centred learning' type pedagogy as well as to the underlying ideals of a 'banking model of education' (Freire & Ramos 1996). On the other hand the demand initiated case study is closer to 'problem based learning' (Savin-Baden & Major 2004) and 'learning webs' (Illich 2004).

Further differences can be seen when considering the innovation literature, as put forward by Leeuwis and Aarts (2011) and Prasad Pant (Pant 2009). The latter picks up ideas around disruptive innovation and it can be argued that the facilitation of knowledge exchanges across fundamentally different socio-political and geographical boundaries may lead to the questioning of underlying mental models in participants; this in turn may enable disruptive innovation. The approach seen in the demand initiated case study follows more closely the incremental innovation concept where small changes gradually lead to innovation (Kilelu et al. 2011).

Again, it needs to be outlined that whilst these differences can be observed with regards to the analysed case studies the discussion does not offer a basis for categorically preferring one approach over the other; as outlined earlier, it depends on what the purpose and aims of a given process are.

That being said, there are various insights and critiques that can be outlined when discussing the empirical data in light of the established information science literature. Both case studies fall short of fostering sustainable processes of knowledge co-creation; e.g. not enough space is created for people to participate in all aspects of the process as described by the SECI model (Nonaka et al. 2000). The limited amount of turn-taking, interaction and dialogical communication in the facilitated spaces overall resulted in weak relationships that are mostly

dependent on facilitators to be sustained. However, this only partially applies to the demand initiated case study where (at the local level) facilitators have been members of the community and the people worked with (in groups) knew each other before the intervention. Nevertheless, even in this setting the virtually non-existent *direct* links between community members (mostly seeking) and extension workers (mostly sharing) point towards the dependence on facilitators and local institutions (knowledge hubs/libraries) for the maintenance of the social system.

The facilitator/funder initiated case study attempts to balance a curricular structure with networked learning ideas as suggested under the banner of learning alliances they applied (Faminow et al. 2009). Faminow et al. (2009) point out how in the case studies they analyse ideas of exploitative[55] learning and exploratory learning regularly clash (they believe that this is due to donors being risk averse and preferring exploitative learning). This can be confirmed on the basis of the studied case study. In the facilitator/funder initiated case study explorative learning (social learning) was dominated by exploitative learning (curricular structure) and this can be traced back to the original objectives and priorities of the funder.

Additionally, whilst the concept of learning alliances stresses the importance of iterative learning cycles it can be argued that, in the analysed case study, the iterative learning cycles fall short of genuine co-creation through the involvement of all concerned stakeholders. Part of the reason for this is that learning alliances are meant to be applied in the facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes (Lev-On 2004), which are usually concerned with institutional actors rather than individual human beings. "We understand a learning alliance in the agrifood context to be a process undertaken jointly by research organizations, donor and development agencies, policy makers and private businesses" (Faminow et al. 2009, p.441).

The language applied for the benefit of 'learning alliances' sounds rather inclusive. "A learning cycle includes the development of common research and development questions, the identification of existing knowledge—academic and empirical, local and external—and its recombination, the extraction of key principles and the development and/or adaptation of prototype tools, methods and approaches to test these principles in the field" (Faminow et al.

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[55] Meaning: learning of content existing prior to the learning processes.

2009, p.443). However, only by proxy of local knowledge are actors mentioned that development initiatives are ultimately to help. This lack in the theoretical foundations of learning alliances has been observed as well in the facilitator/funder initiated case study where a concern for knowledge seekers (especially the ones actually participating) was minimal when it came to involving them in the process described above.

About the demand initiated case study one can state that the underlying principles and the general approach are to a certain degree in line with user-centred approaches that have become prevalent in the information sciences in recent decades. The consideration of the context and situation of individuals in their information seeking behaviour and the recognition that the prime motivator for such behaviour is problem solving are clearly recognised in the literature and the demand initiated knowledge intermediation project. However, the original intention to cater to vast potential audiences and failure to secure funding that matches this ambition make it difficult to put this into practice; thus, the above outlined criticisms prevail.

### 5.2.2 INSIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The guiding objective of this section is to connect the findings of the already addressed research questions with the international development literature. Thus, in the following section, the findings and insights founded on the empirical aspects of this study are linked with the literature associated with development studies. This discussion is based on the outlined literature above and the analysis and discussions outlined so far.

As mentioned above, facilitating relationships is not a conscious aspect of either programme (design and delivery). The same is the case with regards to how sustainable the potential relationships are. This is in line with Eyben's (2004; 2006; 2011b) work and supports her general findings. This research project not only reinforces her findings but also adds aspects to her discussion by considering the literature on human relationships, and observing and analysing these in two development interventions. The work of Eyben has, so far, not touched on the interpersonal level (especially through empirical analysis) and stayed more abstract with its considerations. This will be discussed below.

Before going into further detail about the relational aspects of this thesis a few general observations regarding the findings of this study are outlined. It was put forward that the

two case studies apply different theories of learning as well as definitions of knowledge/information. Applying different understandings of concepts is not just the case when considering the case studies in the light of the information science literature but also the case when discussing them in terms of the development literature.

For example, when following considerations of 'participation' the difference becomes clear. Discussions of participation as the 'new tyranny' led to the realisation that ownership (and empowerment), whilst being crucial in development processes, are a difficult to achieve in practice (Cooke & Kothari 2004). Ownership means empowering local actors and, as hinted at above, Eyben (2011a) questioned if the current development system is actually set up to make local concerns visible.

Chambers' (2011) assessment of the current state of the development system seems to take similar forms. He considers the importance of the underlying values of 'participation' and states that

> the sheer logic and necessities of turbulent complexity can hardly fail to loosen the current tightening of procedures and upward accountability. Supporting that loosening, the contributors [to the book he concludes with his thoughts] show how vital flexibility and freedom have been for us, and always will be for those who work in development (Chambers 2011, p.259).

In the same volume Jamie Watts (2011) illustrated what Chambers might mean when he refers to 'freedom' versus 'tight procedures' (Figure 24).

| | From | Expanded to include |
|---|---|---|
| **Paradigm of and for:** | Products | People |
| **Orientation and power:** | Top-down | Bottom-up |
| **Key words:** | Planning | Participation |
| **Modes / approaches:** | Standardized<br>Linear<br>Reductionist | Diverse<br>Complex<br>Systems |
| **Conditions:** | Controlled<br>Stable<br>Predictable | Uncontrollable<br>Dynamic<br>Unpredictable |
| **Research mode:** | Experimental | Constructivist |
| **Learning:** | *Ex post* | Continuous |
| **Roles:** | Teacher<br>Supervisor<br>External Evaluator | Facilitator<br>Coach<br>Evaluation facilitator |
| **Outcomes:** | Products and infrastructure | Processes and capability |
| **Valued behaviours:** | Rigorous/ objective | Critical self-reflection |
| **Dominant professions:** | Agricultural scientists and economists | All |
| **Patterns of change:** | Predetermined perspective | Evolutionary |
| **Characteristic management tools:** | Logframes and external review | Action research, participatory review and reflection |
| **Main purpose of evaluation:** | Accountability and control | **Learning and improvement** |
| **Accountability to:** | Donors and peers | All stakeholders, especially the poor |
| **Vision of capacity development:** | Build capacity of others | Develop own capacity |
| **Treatment of failure:** | Buried or punished | Valued as learning opportunity |
| **Consequences of failure:** | Cataclysmic | Continuous programme readjustment |

**FIGURE 24: FRAMEWORKS FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE: SHIFTS AND EXPANDED OPTIONS** (WATTS 2011, P.237)

Watts' illustration looks very much like an exploration of dualism(s); even though the right column is described as expanding upon the left column. His presentation makes the fundamental differences in paradigm and approach visible. It shows on the left side a standardised and controlled approach to planning; what Chambers would call 'tight

procedures'. On the other side it illustrates a complex and uncontrollable process of participation, what Chambers would refer to by 'freedom'.

When considering Watts' frameworks (Figure 24) and applying them to the two case studies, it becomes apparent that the facilitator/funder initiated cases study sits with the left column (middle column) whilst the demand initiated case study is closer aligned to the right column.[56] Whilst the two case studies are of course merely approximations at the two frameworks the overlap is stark. For example, whilst in the former case study the focus was on the creation of knowledge objects (products), the implementation was top-down, working models linear, and the roles played along teacher lines, in the latter case study the focus was on the individual enquirer (people), working models responsive to bottom-up demand, approaches diverse and conditions uncontrollable. Drawing these parallels make clear how much the two different case studies are informed by fundamentally different ways of thinking about development practice.

One particular aspect that deserves further attention Watts' labelled 'Vision of capacity development' (Figure 24). The two frameworks offer, in this respect, 'building capacity of others' and 'develop own capacity'. As with many of the other aspects the facilitator/funder initiated case study has leanings towards the left (middle) column and the demand initiated case study towards the right column. When considering this in the light of the information science literature and wider development literature it becomes clear that 'the development of others' and 'self-development' are at the core of the two approaches to the facilitation of South-South knowledge exchanges.

It was outlined above how the demand initiated case study is more in line with current developments in the information sciences that put the user at the core of considerations and highlight such processes as social learning, and there are other lessons in the same literature that appear to be closer in line with the approach taken in the demand initiated case study.

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[56] Having said that, **both** case studies are clearly influenced by the framework outlined in the middle column. With the demand initiated case study one can observe that the underlying principles are leaning towards the right column (the general setup) but at an implementation level those ideals are aspirational rather than reality.

Appreciating context and situation as crucial in information seeking endeavours (and learning) is in line with concepts like self-development.[57]

Self-development sits broadly with the applied definition but, as discussed in the literature review, needs to be understood as person-in-context (environmental as well as social). Supporting individuals in their quest to self-development (exercising freedom) is an intention of the demand initiated case study and this very idea makes adaptive and flexible management practices necessary. This, of course, has its draw-backs since necessary accountability to funders, conventions regarding programme delivery, etc. are more aligned with the facilitator/funder initiated approach.

An advantage of the facilitator/funder initiated case study is that this approach enables greater breadth (array of themes covered) and scale (quantity of people reached). The centralisation and standardisation of procedures and the externalisation and codification of knowledge allows for a wide distribution of information and rapid coverage of thematic areas. The rapid coverage is due to the fact that knowledge does need to be appropriated to always new contexts (and situations) and does not require frequent updating (both due to abstraction).

The facilitator/funder initiated case study is, from an administrative and managerial perspective simpler to oversee (due to these standardised structures and procedures as well as relatively centralised delivery). The empirical study of that case study has shown that whilst the intervention is facilitating South-South knowledge processes the main locus of power is still in the global North since accountability is mainly to the funder and the main characteristics of the programme are based on the funder's priorities (e.g. the focus on synthesis and broad dissemination).

As outlined in the literature review, this study follows Foucault in his understanding of power (one aspect being its embeddedness in discourses) (Foucault 1970). Whilst, in the

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[57] Rahman (Rahman 1993) draws out some further parallels between self-development and the right hand column in Watts' illustration of frameworks. He connects most of these to action research, which is also represented in Figure 24.

facilitator/funder initiated case study, the power to define which knowledge is considered valid has partially moved to a facilitating institution (situated in the "global South") this process has not emancipated itself from the Northern funding body. In other words, whilst the content of the intervention is mainly in the facilitator's hands these needed approval from the funding body; additionally, the modus operandi (discussed above and below) is fundamentally funder-determined because decision-making processes and control over political agendas are based in the global North. This is slightly different in the demand initiated case study, and Gaventa's (2006) power cube (Figure 25) might help to illustrate the differences.
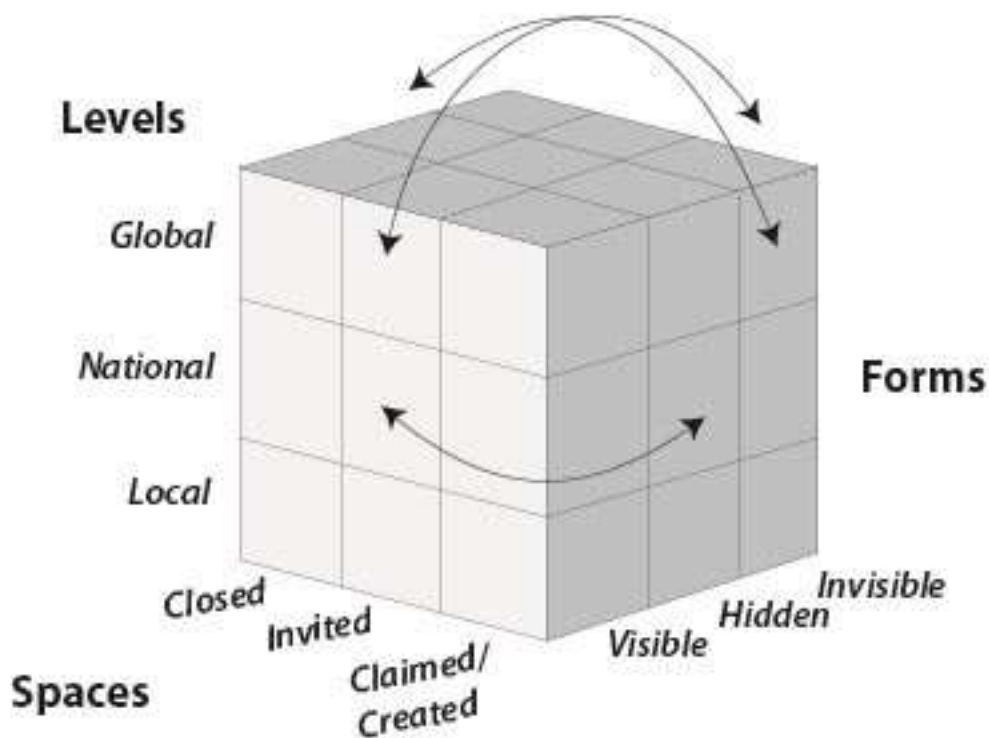


**FIGURE 25: POWER CUBE** (GAVENTA 2006, P.25)[58]

With the help of the above figure, one can argue that whilst the facilitator/funder initiated case study is situated on a scale between closed and invited spaces the demand initiated case study is situated on a scale between invited and claimed/created spaces. This difference is mainly based on the possibility of local/community groups self-organising and still using

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[58] This model has already been presented in the literature review. However, the illustration is included again for easy reference for the reader.

(claiming) the services offered by the demand initiated case study and the fact that the institutional processes are based on queries and knowledge seekers' needs.

The decentralisation of the demand initiated case study's services leads to power being expressed at all levels (local, national, and global). In the facilitator/funder initiated case study power relationships can be observed that are situated mostly at the global (and partially at national levels). As was described in the analysis of both case studies, instances of (power) execution have been visible, hidden, and invisible to the eyes of the participants.

Overall, it can be said that power dynamics did not emerge as an issue of concern in discussions in the facilitated spaces or the interviews with staff members and participants; neither was it visible in the programme documentation that was shared with the researcher. Another conclusion that can be drawn from both case studies is that when observing power relationships it became apparent that both case studies have a tendency to facilitate hierarchical relationships where the (assumed) knowledge holders (and facilitator) are situated at a higher level than the knowledge seekers. In the demand initiated case study this can be demonstrated through knowledge holders' involvement in institutional knowledge creation processes that are hidden from the knowledge seeker; this is also true for the facilitator/funder initiated case study. The difference being that knowledge seekers involvement of re-iterative processes of knowledge co-creation is facilitated to an even smaller degree.

This is partly due to the fact that the facilitator/funder initiated case study is a *programme* focussing on knowledge synthesis (and the creation of knowledge objects). The limited time-frame (3.5 years) for the delivery of products and services impacts what can and cannot be done; the 'programme-approach' also reflects the middle column in Watt's frameworks (Figure 24). This is a parallel that works especially when considering the research mode being described as experimental. As with experiments the intervention develops a model (what is considered relevant) that brackets out actual proceedings; in the case of the programme approach it mostly brackets out what came before and comes after the particular time period that funding is committed to.

When analysing this in the light of the literature on human relationships, it is apparent how such an approach precludes the development and (especially) maintenance of relationships;

especially with regards to equal power relationships and the time necessary for co-creating knowledge and institutional structures. It has been outlined, in the literature review, how a shared past (and the conversation about such) and the imagination of co-creating a future (and the conversation about such) are pivotal in the development and maintenance of relationships and this makes clear how unlikely the development of such are, especially when taking a 'programme-approach'.

In the demand initiated case study this aspect is fundamentally different. In the interviews with management staff, it became clear that there was insecurity regarding what to call the intervention; 'project', 'programme' and 'approach' were mentioned as potentials. The fact that the intervention was ongoing for decades and was set to continue until demand ceased makes it difficult for staff to categorise the intervention with conventional development concepts. Whilst such an approach theoretically enables the development of relationships by potentially sharing a past and co-creating a future it also carries the notion of dependency.[59]

This leads directly to questioning notions of sustainability.[60] From the two case studies two distinguishable understandings of sustainability can be extracted. Assuming that the facilitator/funder initiated case study is an approach towards sustainable development would mean that sustainability is running along programme lines. A context is entered, (knowledge) contributions are made but "beneficiaries" are essentially left to their own devices with regards to the implementation because time-scales of the intervention do not permit continuous collaboration and "seeing things through" together. Assuming that the demand initiated case study is an approach towards sustainable development would mean that sustainability is running along approach lines; a merging of contexts and life worlds is worked towards that serves as a foundation for continuous engagement and (mutual) dependencies.

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[59] *Theoretically* speaking because as outlined above, in practice little evidence was found for ongoing relationships (especially with knowledge seekers at the international enquiries level).

[60] In an interview, the manager of the demand initiated case study mentioned sustainability and funders' criticism based on the ongoing nature of the demand initiated case study.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis and discussion has shown that the two different approaches do foster different kinds of relationship patterns. It has been found that underlying these different approaches are fundamentally different understandings of key concepts, e.g. knowledge, learning, and sustainable development. Different points of departure lead to differing institutional arrangements and priorities. However, it has also been outlined that both case studies, in their own way, respond to certain demands and that neither consciously facilitates the development and maintenance of relationships between knowledge holders and knowledge seekers. In the following, the findings and insights will be outlined again in further detail.

# 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has investigated how knowledge intermediation projects in the international development sector are shaped by their approach (demand initiated, facilitator/funder initiated), especially in terms of the relationships they foster. Such an investigation was placed in the contexts of development studies and practice, and the information sciences; as well as the literature on relationships and networks and discourse and power. This interdisciplinary approach allowed for an understanding of the phenomenon through various lenses, which, in turn, enabled a rich analysis and discussion of the discursive practices, and facilitated spaces that were entailed by the two cases studied in this research project.

The research questions were developed in a participatory (open) process and served as the main guide in the academic pursuit. They focus on different layers of social reality. At a micro-level there are the relationships between different individuals that participate in the knowledge intermediation projects, at the meso-level there are social structures and dispositif, and at the macro-level there are institutional structures and funding. This research attempted to uncover connections between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels and, thus, the focus of the investigation was on the linkages between these different layers. As a consequence a mixed methods approach was taken that enabled diverse insights into the various aspects of the research questions and led to a broad range of innovative techniques to gather and analyse the necessary data.

In this section all three research questions are addressed once again to outline the main insights generated by this research project. This is then followed by a short discussion of unexpected links to currently highly relevant development topics, recommendations for development practice and suggestions for further research.

**Research question a) How can knowledge intermediation projects be monitored and evaluated with regard to the relationships they entail and facilitate?**

In answering this question this study developed an innovative methodology that allows monitoring relationship development and maintenance in spaces facilitated by knowledge intermediation projects. When reviewing the methodology with monitoring and evaluation practice in mind, it became evident that the analysis of discursive practices, acts of speech, and other forms of communication (e.g. non-verbal) is pivotal in any attempt to understand

human relationship building and maintenance and the influence facilitated spaces might have on these. Thus, a confrontation with qualitative data was unavoidable. This has implications for any institution or individual undertaking such an endeavor; especially in terms of scalability. It has been found that case studies are very useful in this context since they allow for the exploration of interconnectedness between different processes and deliver the depth/detail of data needed to pursue such questions.

Due to the significant depth in understanding that the applied methodology adds knowledge intermediation projects should consider integration of the methodology or aspects of the methodology in management processes undertaken in the delivery of knowledge intermediation projects and other endeavours that aim at facilitating knowledge processes. Monitoring and evaluation must not be seen as a separate undertaking to project delivery (even though this might lead to conflicts of interest). In such a scenario, where learning and improving programme delivery goes hand-in-hand with monitoring and evaluation (and upward/downward accountability) the usage of a methodology leaning towards analysis of qualitative data might be easier to justify.

In the following, some general reflections on the methodology, on coding processes and on the particular case studies are offered. The overall impression was that despite some limitations and challenges the methodology led to an accurate description of the knowledge intermediation projects and the relationships facilitated in the process. From the viewpoint of the researcher, the confidence about this being the case originates in the two levels of triangulation outlined in the methodology (Figure 14, p.80). It needs to be said that the methodology was developed with the pursued research questions in mind and, considering that, the aspects analysed in the two case studies would be different if other research methods had been chosen to address different research questions.

Most beneficial in bringing together the researcher's thoughts on knowledge, discoursive practice, institutional structures, and power relationships was the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD) and any study attempting to link human interaction with institutional structures by looking at processes of structuration should consider this innovative approach to discourse analysis.

**b) How does the initiation act influence the relationships between actors in a knowledge intermediation project?**

This was the main question addressed in this research project. With that in mind it shall be warranted to repeat the research objectives that stem from this research question:

i. Describe a facilitator/funder initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role-perspective.

ii. Describe a seeker initiated knowledge intermediation project from a procedural- and role-perspective.

iii. Map the relationships between knowledge holder(s), knowledge user(s) and facilitator(s).

iv. Determine if roles (stated at initiation stage) are maintained over the course of the intervention.

v. Analyse both approaches in terms of relationship patterns.

vi. Link patterns to initiation act.

After linking the outlined relationship patterns to the initiation act in the respective case studies (facilitator/funder initiation and demand initiation) a picture emerged that offered two broad insights. Firstly, facilitator/funder initiation of South-South knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to many potential relationships, most of them irrelevant to an individual and, therefore, unestablished. Secondly, demand initiation of South-South knowledge intermediation projects appears to lead to very few, yet highly relevant, relationships.

The character of the relationships that were actually established in both case studies are in some respects similar and in others different. The relationships facilitated in both case studies are relatively generic, formal, and opportunistic; the fact that people engage temporarily and with the purpose of exchanging information in mind firmly imprints itself on the established relationships. Relationships differing from this were mainly observed at the local level in the demand initiated case study where the longitudinal character of the engagement in familiar cultural contexts (and the working with pre-existing networks) led to the observation of relatively strong bonds (at least between community members and the project staff).

Generalisation brings us immediately back to this study and the complex web of interconnected notions held by funders, managers, facilitators, and others involved with knowledge intermediation projects about what development, knowledge, communication, learning and other concepts mean. It has been shown how discursive practices, human interactions, and personal relationships are influenced by the worldviews (patterns of thought encompassing one's understanding of all these concepts) held by people in positions of influence.

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It has been found in this study that knowledge-power (see literature review on concept) is constantly present and by engaging in social processes knowledge-power is constantly negotiated. This is, however, an element that is not consciously dealt with in the two case studies and it shall be recommended that awareness of knowledge-power needs to increase especially when knowledge intermediation projects aim at facilitating the establishment and maintenance of (symmetric) relationships. If people with interest in facilitating knowledge processes are not conscious of the risks outlined by Flood (1999) and others then most likely, the status quo is (whether or not it is satisfactory) continuously re-constructed through discoursive practices and other structuration processes ongoing in social spaces.

Davies (1994) argued that when "Northerners" work with "Southerners" the relationships are arranged mostly hierarchically. This hierarchy is mirrored within local communities and causes concerns with regard to the information and knowledge that is used by Northern actors in the initiation of programmes and projects. Whilst it has been found that the two studied cases have not been able to overcome this, the demand initiated case study shows potential for addressing such inequalities.

It has also been argued that, when looking at international development as an ideology and industry, the environment in which those two case studies operate is not conducive to any (knowledge intermediation) programme or approach, employed by a Western development institution, achieving the facilitation of symmetrical relationships.

The existence of such relationships would indicate interdependencies, polycentric development processes, and mutual learning processes. Also, they might enable the creation and facilitation of spaces in which both adaptive learning (exploitation) and generative

learning (exploration) are combined in a way that creates most value for all involved actors (Faminow et al. 2009).

In the facilitation of such spaces it has been found that the institutionalisation of turn-taking practices needs particular attention. It has been found that this practice might lead to the structuring of conversations in ways that are preventative to processes of knowledge co-creation. However, since institutionalisation is often unavoidable (especially when working with large donor organisations) different theories about knowledge creation processes shall be considered. The information sciences offer many insights that can help improving upon current practice.

For example, the four modes of knowledge conversion: socialisation (from tacit to tacit), externalisation (from tacit to explicit), combination (from explicit to explicit) and internalisation (from explicit to tacit) outlined by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) might serve as a reminder that spaces need to be created in which learners can experience and participate in a variety of activities. Theories like, information space, Ba and social learning might help in the instigation of these in various contexts.

Other key insights from the literature, that have been outlined above, shall be repeated since the evidence suggests that these have not found sufficient recognition in the case studies analysed in this research:

- Generally, in line with information grounds theory, information behaviour scholars (e.g. Nahl and Bilal (2007)) argue that the social and personal purposes which information serves need to be looked at in an integrated manner. The individual and its information needs are inherently seen in its information environment. This is a similar consideration to the connection of mental space and discursive space outlined above.

- Also, as outlined by Wilson (2005), problem solving is the pivotal motivation behind information seeking and retrieval.

- Moreover, human information seeking behaviour is dominated by the principle of least effort. People will base decisions on information that they can conveniently find and that seemingly suffices the purpose of their endeavour (Bates 2010).

Whilst Dervin criticised certain assumptions and myths that prevail in people's views on human information seeking in 1976 the research has shown that they are still held by funders and NGO staff members in the development sector. These myths, outlined by Dervin, include: "1. Only 'objective' information is valuable … 2. More information is always better … 3. Objective information can be transmitted out of context … 4. Information can only be acquired through formal sources … 5. There is relevant information for every need … 6. Every need situation has a solution. … 7. It is always possible to make information available or accessible … 8. Functional units of information, such as books or television programs, always fit the needs of individuals … 9. Time and space – individual situations – can be ignored in addressing information seeking and use … 10. People make easy, conflict-free connections between external information and their internal reality" (Case 2006, pp.8–9).

If these misunderstandings were addressed fundamental changes in development thinking and practice could occur. These include, but are not limited to, a move away from knowledge objects towards facilitating processes of knowledge co-creation, focussing on effectiveness of information rather than on quantity, focussing on knowledge co-creation rather than dissemination, working with broad social networks rather than individual (formalised) sources, embedding information provision within wider endeavours to support problem solving, acknowledging when help cannot sensibly be provided, recognising that an individual's situation is key in any endeavour to address information needs and recognise that people always have an existing knowledge base.

**c) What implications might this (answers to research question b) have for the intermediation of knowledge processes?**

Finally, implications (some of them high level) of the research for theory and practice and, in particular, the original contribution of the research and recommendations that stem from the research, are outlined below.

### *Original contribution*

This thesis questions and explains what usually lies in the dark. International governmental and non-governmental institutions press political agendas based on vague ideas and idealistic visions. Funding allocated for conducting research is made subject to the same rationales and visions and, as a result, seldom addresses potentially critical domains and

questions. This research has, for the first time, enquired how macro-level ideas around south-south knowledge exchange (and sustainable development) actually play out at the meso- and micro-level.

Empowerment, trust, respect and learning are ultimately processes that happen between people; individuals occupying a shared mental space that is held by even more people. By looking at human relationships and the spaces within which they develop this thesis, for the first time, sheds light on the actual hierarchies and networks emerging in the context of development minded knowledge interventions. Without such research political processes, strategic and managerial attempts and tactical decision making are based on theory and ideals rather than evidence. In the following some further insights are outlined about how this research project has contributed to our knowledge.

In the discussion chapter it was outlined how the two case studies covered by this research project can be understood as two examples for different understandings of *sustainable (or inclusive)* development. It was outlined above that seeing the facilitator/funder initiated case study as an approach towards sustainable development would mean that sustainability is running along *programme lines:* A context is entered, (knowledge) contributions are made but "beneficiaries" and participants are essentially left to their own devices with regards to the implementation because the time-scales of the intervention do not permit continuous collaboration and "seeing things through" together; this "protects" from establishing lasting dependencies. On the other hand, seeing the demand initiated case study as an approach towards sustainable development would mean that sustainability is running along *approach lines:* A merging of contexts and life worlds is worked towards that serves as a foundation for continuous engagement and mutual learning and inter-dependencies. Therefore, it can be said that different understandings of sustainable development influence the approaches (and implementation) of knowledge intermediation projects in international development. Furthermore, it has been argued that this distinction echo other dualisms, such as, bottom-up/top-down, tacit/explicit, local knowledge/generic knowledge, etc. These dualisms and parallels have been pointed at by other authors but had not been explicated as clearly or substantiated via empirical study before. This was achieved by drawing on and relating insights from different disciplines that had not been done prior to this research project.

The main gaps (identified in the academic literature) that were addressed by this study regard the understanding of intermediating knowledge processes concerned with learners situated (partly) across cultural, language and political boundaries. Such projects/programmes/approaches, coined South-South knowledge exchanges by the World Bank, have only seen very limited amount of research; especially from people independent of the big development organisations. The foci of this research, human relationships and initiation acts, have made this project unique in even wider contexts (development literature and information science literature).

The application of the relatively new approach to discourse analysis (SKAD) used in this study in combination with social network analysis and the usage of interpersonal relationship literature to understand knowledge processes in development interventions have never been undertaken before. By doing this, this study improved our understanding how processes of knowledge intermediation are facilitated in the development sector.

Table 6 summarises insights that this study has contributed in terms of our understanding of the facilitation of south-south knowledge exchanges and the intermediation of knowledge processes in general.

| Facilitator/funder initiation of knowledge intermediation processes | Demand initiation of knowledge intermediation processes | General insights |
|---|---|---|
| Shared knowledge addresses generic themes | Shared knowledge addresses contextualised problems | Facilitators receive by far the greatest benefits from the interventions in terms of growth of their ego-networks |
| Institutional processes are highly centralised and standardised | Institutional processes are highly de-centralised and little standardised | Knowledge holders are often not prepared to accept extra workload of sharing knowledge |
| Networks are emerging where there were none | Partially existing networks are strengthened (especially at the local enquiry level) | Both case studies had evidence of little turn taking (dialogical communication) |
| Knowledge seeking individuals have the possibility to network | Knowledge seeking individuals get to interact with a very limited amount of | Both case studies are struggling to find satisfactory working models about how |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (horizontally) with a large number of peers | people that are relevant to their query | to match demand-supply |
| Communications are usually one-to-many | Communications are usually one-to-one or one-to-few | Facilitators are very central to knowledge exchanges |
| Facilitators are very removed (in time and space) from the potential impact of the intervention | Facilitators are relatively close (in time and space) to the potential impact of the intervention | Impact of facilitation and programming on human relationships is not a conscious part of projects |
| Generic knowledge and information is valued most | Local/contextual/appropriate knowledge is valued most | Out of the two approaches none is generally better; context is key |
| Curricular structure takes priority over social learning | Is more in line with recent (user-centred) approaches in the information sciences | |

**TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF (SOME) ORIGINAL INSIGHTS**

## *Recommendations*

*Guiding research objective of this section: Outline recommendations for the sector.*

This research objective asked explicitly for recommendations and these shall be outlined in the following. Firstly, some important findings are restated. Secondly, general recommendations are outlined before, thirdly, more detailed aspects and recommendations are highlighted.

As mentioned above, the insights and recommendations are based on the study of a small-N case study comparison. Before outlining recommendations it should be stated that these recommendations are based on hypotheses that would benefit from further study and testing. However, these recommendations have been selected, in particular, because they reaffirm the existing literature.

### *Taking a funder's perspective*

Again, no single approach is universally superior. Rather, they can be seen as exemplifying ideals that are situated at opposing ends of a scale reaching from purely demand initiation to purely facilitator/funder initiation (neither of these *ideals* exists in practice). Each approach can fulfil certain purposes and is suited to certain contexts.

The facilitator/funder initiated approach is likely to be favourable in a situation where:

- Knowledge gaps between individuals and knowledge groups are clearly identified.
- Knowledge, in domains where gaps exist, has boundaries that remain valid across-contexts of knowledge seekers.
- Knowledge, in domains where gaps exist, can be expected to remain valid for a reasonable amount of time.
- Needs have been expressed and target individuals/groups are clearly identifiable to the initiator.
- Knowledge already exists that can address the needs outlined by knowledge seekers.
- The target group is made up of international actors (internationalised professionals and institutions).
- The vision of sustainability is to address particular needs without developing lasting interdependencies.

The demand initiated approach is likely to be favourable in situations where the above conditions/attributes are **not** fair descriptors of the situation at hand. Since these conditions/attributes are unlikely to ever be met in their entirety (any condition to its full extent and/or all of them at the same time) this points towards them describing an *ideal* situation that, again, describes one end of a scale. The decision maker would judge the situation at hand and to what extent these conditions are met. This in turn will depend on the definitions of knowledge/information, learning, and sustainability that that individual (or team) applies. This has been discussed above and should give the reader some indicators for not only recognising the conditions that impact the situation that they find themselves in but also help that person question their own understanding of learning, knowledge, sustainability, etc.

In many cases doubt will prevail and the recommendation for those situations is to pursue the demand initiated approach. The social processes of communication and relationship building and maintenance, observed in the case study pursuing that approach, offer a sound basis for exploring knowledge seekers needs, understanding contexts and situations and getting close to the environments in which impact is ultimately meant to unfold. This can at a

later stage (or in an ongoing manner) serve as the foundation for facilitator/funder initiated interventions.

*Taking an intermediary's perspective*

Whichever approach is taken it needs to be considered that any knowledge intervention has to create spaces that enable dialogical communication amongst stakeholders (including the ones that are actually meant to benefit from the intervention) early on in the process. Additionally, space needs to be created for iterative processes to influence programming and delivery of projects by those very actors. Feedback circles need to be more frequent than they generally are to locate interventions closer to "users'" needs and to ensure that design and delivery is as close to the "user" as possible.

It is worth it problematizing the concept of 'user at this stage. Whilst the word 'user' is often used in this context it is not an ideal descriptor since it contains notions of passiveness. As outlined above, iterative co-creation process change relationships and categorising some as providers (facilitators, knowledge holders) and others as users (knowledge seekers) will be meaningless in those situations.

The relationship dimension is fundamental to any attempt to facilitate learning (especially through networks and communities) and needs to be a conscious consideration in intervention design and delivery. This includes considerations of power structures and how these are institutionalised. Before delivering anything that could be considered content, time should be spend exploring the status quo of relationships, networks, and social structures that are used and/or established for the delivery of that content. It has been shown above that it is impossible to "send" content without also "sending" relational cues. This firmly establishes that when communicating in social networks the status quo gets reinforced and this can potentially lead to negative outcomes for the communities that are being "supported". The above contained information on human relationships and knowledge-power adds more ideas useful to anyone attempting to navigate this space.

Monitoring and evaluation needs to improve (urgently and drastically) to address these shortcomings and ongoing feedback cycles need to be designed and implemented; the developed methodology outlines a variety of ways in which this can be achieved. It has also been suggested that processes of programme management and monitoring and evaluation need to merge and benefit each other. Whilst this reduced "independence" of monitoring

and evaluation efforts it allows for more resources being invested in ongoing learning and feedback that can improve programme delivery.

Additionally, when attempting to facilitate the emergence of sustainable (resilient) knowledge networks then responsibilities, power, turn-taking, etc. need to be as widely distributed (across the network) as possible. This leads, for example, to the recommendation not to make the main knowledge holder also the facilitator (or vice-versa), since this increases the centrality of that individual and makes the network more dependent on that person.

## Limitations

It has been mentioned in the methodology and analysis chapters that a number of challenges influenced this research project. The decentralised nature of the demand-led case study made minor changes to the methodology necessary (vis-à-vis the other case study). Additionally, the analysis of the demand initiated case study, at the local level, would have benefited from speaking to some knowledge holders. Additionally, more observation of the relationships between facilitators (in local knowledge hubs), community members (mostly knowledge seekers) and knowledge holders would have benefited the enquiry. Either was not possible due to organisational and financial challenges. It is therefore acknowledged that this has been an exploratory and inductive research project that has now established an area of enquiry and developed theories and insights that can serve as hypotheses for larger scale studies.

Furthermore, it was intended to apply social network analysis across all facilitated spaces to illustrate the social structures that emerged across these spaces. It was attempted to gather the necessary data with the help of surveys. However, the fact that a very high (close to 100%) response rate is required for this approach to work made this impossible in practice. In retrospect, applying social network analysis to face-to-face scenarios makes it necessary that the researcher ensures that every relevant individual fills out the questionnaires.

## Future Research

This study has been inductive in kind and the responses to the research questions, the insights and the original contributions are based on the discussed case studies (and the existing literature). As a result, the findings may not be universally applicable. The presented

insights should be seen as a theory developed as part of this research project that needs further study that allows their rebuttal or confirmation. As such, they might serve as hypotheses for future research projects that might be more quantitative or larger scale qualitative research that aims at generating findings that allow for more generalisation.

This study has considered how facilitation and intermediation can influence the building and maintenance of human relationships. However, it would be very valuable to follow this up by a further study that looks at how this then influences participants behaviour and actions; in other words, it would be valuable to know how these influence the impact of knowledge intermediation projects. Does the breadth of the facilitator/funder initiated approach lead, in fact, to greater impact than the depth of engagement seen in the demand initiated approach or vice versa? Is the overall impact greater when giving many people the opportunity to connect with each other or by pointing out a few individuals that are relevant to a knowledge seeker's situation then and there?

This need for future research is partly due to this study having been the first to have looked in detail at how different approaches to knowledge intermediation projects impact the building and maintenance of human relationships. Overall, it has been found that relational aspects enjoy little consideration in the observed knowledge intermediation projects and that there is great potential for further study and improved practice in this domain. Further research is needed (maybe along action research lines) that applies elements of the employed methodology for the purpose of programme monitoring and evaluation, and possibly, integration with approaches like 'outcome mapping' and 'learning organisations' might be highly beneficial. Additionally, this research has led to the understanding that there are contesting notions of sustainability (dependency vs. interdependency) at work in the two case studies, and with the current focus on sustainable development in the international policy arena further research could have great impact.

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# APPENDICES

## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Facilitation of Knowledge Exchange in International Development**

**Participant Information Sheet**

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Dr Mark Hepworth, Department of Information Science**,** Bridgeman Building, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, United Kingdom, [m.hepworth@lboro.ac.uk](m.hepworth@lboro.ac.uk), +44 (0)1509 223039

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This purpose of this study is to understand better how knowledge interventions in international development are facilitated and how this facilitation can be improved. A focus of this study is on the communications going on between the different actors involved in the process of a knowledge intervention.

**Who is doing this research and why?**

The study will be undertaken by Philipp Grunewald as part of his PhD studies. Thus, this study is part of a student research project supported by Loughborough University. He receives support from Louise Cooke and Mark Hepworth, who are his supervisors.

**What personal information will be required from me?**

NO personal information will be collected at this stage.

**Can I opt-out?**

Yes! You can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. Just let Philipp Grunewald know ([p.grunewald@lboro.ac.uk](p.grunewald@lboro.ac.uk)) and no data will be gathered that is related to you.

**What will I be asked to do?**

Nothing! You do not have to do anything else but what you would be doing. The investigator (Philipp) will merely take part in the activities organised by (facilitating organisation) and its partners and observe the proceedings.

**What will be collected/saved?**

The researcher will keep a log of the interactions, evolving around the knowledge intervention, for analysis. Snippets will be included in the research outputs.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Yes! The data collected in this study will be kept confidential and in a secure location. No one else but the investigators and assessors will have access to the data. Once analysed, all data will be deleted (at the latest: 31/12/2015).

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of the study will be used for assessment purposes, for publication, shared with (facilitating organisation), and some of it will hopefully be openly accessible online. If you would like to be informed about the results being available just let Philipp Grunewald (p.grunewald@lboro.ac.uk) know.

**I have some more questions who should I contact?**

Philipp Grunewald (p.grunewald@lboro.ac.uk) is happy to answer any questions related to this study.

**What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?**

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact the Mrs Zoe Stockdale, the Secretary for the University's Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee:

Mrs Z Stockdale, Research Office, Rutland Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU.  Tel: 01509 222423.  Email: Z.C.Stockdale@lboro.ac.uk

The University also has a policy relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which is available online at http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm.

**Title:** *Knowledge for Development – as in: learning is development*

**Body:**

This statement is a record of a continuously changing understanding of the above mentioned subject matter. Due to its objectified nature it will never be entirely up-to-date and/or encompassing the entirety of the holistic picture that is one's mind. It serves various **purposes**.

*(a) it acts as a point of departure and reference for every conversation that I engage in that relates to the above topic.*

*(b) it acts as a reminder of the underlying concepts of my activities in this field.*

*(c) it's evolving nature shall illustrate a learning process when looked at in retrospect.*

**Development means learning** and learning is something that only animals (including humans) are capable of (organisations and other systems **change** rather than learn and develop). Thus, development is about people and this has implications for facilitating (people's self-)development.

The result of learning (personal development) is knowledge (and sometimes/maybe wisdom) and as such stays at the individual level. Anything abstracted from the context of an individual's mind and being (and everything that comes with it) is either information or data. This statement itself, is an information (no matter how long and complex it might be/get).

Knowledge objects do not exist, knowledge transfer does not exist, knowledge management does not exist, knowledge exchange does not exist. Knowledge creation is a personal thing happening as part of people's intrinsically motivated information (seeking) behaviour.

Human beings and their context can only be separate at the conceptual level; never in actuality. **The lived experience is never abstract.** Yet it is the lived experience that enables learning. Engagement with the self and context (which are only in theory separate things) enables development, no one can do that (for someone) but the self.

**Development is about freedom**; *facilitating* development is about reducing barriers, tackling injustice and unfairness, listening and understanding, conscious practice, modest expectations, awareness of systems and complexity, awareness of the self in the environment.

Every single statement above has implications, in relation with the other statements (coherent in my mind) and on its own. Responses to some questions become somewhat (but never entirely) predictable.

This information is a product of my mind; as such, highly personal and (if you like) subjective, but also well informed by research and practice.

Please comment or contact me @ **p.grunewald(at) lboro.ac.uk**

The blog that existed thus far can be found here (link).

*Interview with programme manager:*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation. I might ask questions that cover issues that have been outlined in programme documentation that you send me. However, the purpose of the interview is to get your personal views on the issues covered.

1.  Where did the idea for the project originate?

    a.  How do you think it came about? (WHO and HOW)

2.  Why did you choose to call them "learning alliances"?

3.  How did you find working with [funder] on this project?

4.  What were [funder]'s expectations for this project?

5.  How did you go about implementing [funder]s expectations?

6.  You were initially contracted to implement a project called "[title]". This changed over time; could you describe how the project changed in character?

    a.  Why did it change in those ways?

7.  How did you experience the work with the Regional Centres of Expertise?

8.  In the 2010 annual report it states that you "validated the demand for learning from Latin America", how did you go about this?

9.  How were the themes for the [project]s chosen?

    a.  Could you clarify the role of the 'demand brokers'?

10. How did [programme] use/tap into already existing networks?

11. What is your experience of the [case study project]?

12. What are your thoughts on the facilitation of the learning alliance?

13. What do you think about the way the learning groups worked in comparison to the online forum and the study visit?

14. What sort of relationships do you think [programme] fostered between people?

    a.  Do you think it contributed to the generation of social capital?

    b.  How do you think this was achieved?

15. What are the most important lessons you are taking away from this programme?

16. How are you thinking about taking this sort of work forward?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

*Project staff*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. What do you think were the main goals of [programme]?
2. What do you think of the themes and topics covered in [programme]?
3. What is your experience of the [project]?
4. What do you think about the online learning part of the [project]?
5. What do you think about the learning groups of the [project]?
6. What do you think about the study visit of the [project]?
7. What sort of relationships do you think [programme] fostered between people?
    a. Do you think it contributed to the generation of social capital?
    b. How do you think this was achieved?
8. What are the most important lessons you are taking away from this programme?

**Additional questions for certain individuals:**

Female facilitator in South Asia:

1. How would you describe your relationship with [moderator]?
2. What was your experience with regards to the [learning groups]?
3. What do you think about how gender issues were dealt with in the [learning group]?

Female staff member in project office (interview was never conducted):

1. What do you think about how gender issues were dealt with in the [project]?
2. What do you think about the [learning groups]?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

*Moderator*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. When did you (and your organisation) first get involved with [programme]?
2. Why did you want to take this on?
3. What do you think you got out of this initiative?
4. Who did you work with in the facilitation of the [project]?
    a. Follow up: Relationships, contributions, processes, etc.
5. How did you make the decisions about the course content?
6. How would you describe your role (and/or contribution) in the:
    a. Online discussions
    b. Study visit
    c. Learning groups
7. How would you describe your experience of working with the demand brokers?
8. In the study visit. Did people have many questions?
    a. If yes, why do you think that was the case?
    b. How did it influence your facilitation?
9. What was the motivation for the questions you asked people in Peru that were sharing their knowledge and experiences?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

*Participants (knowledge seekers and holders)*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. What is your experience of the [project]?
2. Why did you get involved with this?
3. What do you think you got out of this initiative?
4. Are you in contact with any of the other participants?
   a. If yes, who, why, how did it come about, etc. follow up.
   b. If no, why, etc. follow up
5. Generally, how would you describe your relationships with the people that you got to know during the [project]?
6. How would you describe the way in which people talked to each other in the [project]?
7. What do you think about the facilitation of the [project]?
8. How would you describe your relationship with [moderator]?
9. How did you know what to talk about (what knowledge to share)?
   a. What do you think was the impact/results of the knowledge you shared?
10. Did you ask questions in the [project]?
    a. Did you get answers to your questions?
11. Who's responsibility do you think it was to respond to questions that were asked in the online space?
12. What lessons do you take away from you participation in the [project]?
13. What criticisms would you voice with regards to the [project]?
14. What do you think you got out of this initiative?
    a. Did the [project] meet your expectations?

**Additional questions for certain individuals:**

Best connected female participant:

1. How would you describe your relationship with [most active male participant (from same country)]?
2. What do you think about how gender issues were addressed in the [project]?

Local expert South Asia:

1. How did you become (project's) facilitator?
    a. Why did you do it?
    b. What was you experience facilitating in [South Asian country]?
    c. What are were the differences you perceived between online conversations and learning groups?

Lurkers:

1. What do you remember of the online discussions?
2. How did you engage with the online content?
3. The last time you engaged with [project] what did you do?
    a. How did you go about it?
    b. Is this something you did before?
    c. What else did you do with regards to [project]?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

## Funder

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. Where did the idea for the project originate?
2. What was your experience in working on this project?
    a. How did it come about?
3. What was the purpose of this project in your eyes?
    a. What were [funder]'s expectations?

4. You initially contracted [implementing organisation] to implement a project called "…". This changed over time; could you describe how the project changed in character over time?

    a. Why did it change in those ways?

5. What was you experience of working with [implementing organisation] on this programme?

6. How do you perceive [programme]?

7. How did [implementing organisation] implement your expectations about the project?

    a. How do you perceive the quality of what [implementing organisation] delivered?

8. What do you think of the [projects]?

9. Where did the themes for the [projects] come from?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

Due to the mentioned flexibility of the programme and the diverse ways that enquiries are handled the below interview guides only mentions very general questions. These interviews were more exploratory and unstructured than in the facilitator/funder initiated case study.

*Project staff*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. What do you think are the main goals of [programme]?
2. How would you describe [programme]?
3. How do you think [programme] became what it is today?
4. What do you think about the way local enquiries are handled?
5. What do you think about the way international enquiries are handled?
6. What sort of relationships do you think [programme] fostered between people?
    a. Do you think it contributes to the generation of social capital?
    b. How do you think this was achieved?
7. What are the most important lessons you are taking away from this programme?

**Additional questions for certain individuals:**

Manager:

1. How is the programme funded?
2. How would you describe the business model of the programme?

Particular facilitator in head office:

1. Do you think of yourself mainly as a facilitator or a knowledge holder?
    a. Why?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

*Participants at international enquiries level*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that?

The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only. Everything we say will be on the record, if there is anything that you want to tell me off the record please let me know whilst we are having the conversation.

1. What is your experience of [programme]?
    a. Was this the first time you send an enquiry to [programme]?
        i. If yes, follow up.
2. What triggered your enquiry?
3. Did you try any other ways of finding the information you needed?
4. Why did you decide to use the service/get involved with this?
5. What do you think you got out of being engaged with [programme]?
6. Are you in contact with any of the people you got to know when using [programme]?
    a. If yes, who, why, how did it come about, etc. follow up.
    b. If no, why, etc. follow up
7. When did you last speak to one of these people?
8. Would you get in touch with them again?
9. How would you describe the way in which people talked to you?
10. Generally, how would you describe your relationships with the people that you got to know through [programme]?
11. What do you think about the facilitation of the [programme's] service?
12. How would you describe your relationship with [facilitator interviewee dealt with]?

**Additional questions for certain individuals:**

Seekers:

1. What sort of question did you ask?
    a. Did you get answers to your questions?

2. Where did the response come from?

3. What lessons do you take away from using the [programme's]service?

4. What criticisms would you voice with regards to the [programme's] service?

5. Did the service meet your expectations?

Holders:

1. How long working/helping with [programme]?

2. Why do you respond to enquiries?

3. What kind of enquiries do you deal with?

    a. How would you describe those enquiries?

4. How would you describe the people that send enquiries?

5. How do you communicate with the enquirers?

6. How did you know what to talk about (what knowledge to share)?

7. How do you relate to the people that ask questions?

8. What do you think of the facilitation by the [programme] staff?

    a. Or: What do you think of the way enquiries are handled?

9. What do you think was the impact/results of the knowledge you shared?

OK, I do not have any more questions for now. Do you have any questions for me?

Note: I might want to interview you again (after I did all the other interviews) and, thus, cannot comment on conclusions, etc.

*Service recipients at local enquiries level*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that? The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only.

1. What do you do for a living?

2. What do you think about [the initiative]?

3. Since when do you know the facilitator?

4. How did you get to know the facilitator?

5. What is [the initiative] helping you with/the service you receive?

6. What do you think about that?

7. Have you ever asked the facilitator a question?

    a. When did you last ask the facilitator a question?

    b. What was it about?

    c. Did you receive a response?

    d. What did you think about the response?

8. How would you describe your relationship to the facilitator?

9. How does the facilitator treat you (and the other people in your group)?

*Other community members at local enquiries level*

I am recording this interview, are you happy with that? The information provided by you in this interview is for research purposes only.

1. What do you do for a living?

2. When you got a question regarding [what that person does for a living] and in other areas where do you go for help?

3. Has anyone ever come to your house and asked if you had any questions regarding [what that person does for a living]?

    a. If yes, who?

4. Do you know [the initiative]?

5. Do you know someone who works at [the knowledge hub]?

    a. What is his/her name?

    b. What does s/he do for a living?

6. Do you know [name of local facilitator]?

7. Do you know what [name of local facilitator] works as?

8. How have you come to know him/her?

9. Has [name of local facilitator] ever helped you with something?

10. When did you last ask [name of local facilitator] a question?

    a. When did you last ask the facilitator a question?

    b. What was it about?

    c. Did you receive a response?

    d. What did you think about the response?

11. How would you describe your relationship to [local facilitator]?