Demystifying Facilitation of Multi-Actor Learning Processes

Annemarie E. Groot

Propositions

Facilitation of complex change becomes more effective when facilitators help politicians and policy makers to move from being mere stakeholders to being fully engaged actors in the process (this thesis).

The facilitation of actor 'learning about learning' and 'learning about facilitation' is essential for arriving at the desired situation wherein actors empower facilitators to intervene (this thesis).

Meta-facilitation – that is to say, the facilitation of facilitators – fails if it does not address the institutional working environment of the facilitators (this thesis).

A 'participatory method' per se does not exist because whether or not a method becomes participatory, relies on the frame of mind of the facilitator (this thesis).

The effectiveness of facilitation largely depends on the enthusiasm of the facilitator and most importantly, on his or her sincerity. As such, no training course can ever enable a complete grasp of facilitation practice. (this thesis).

Facilitation of participatory processes addressing complex issues implies the reverse of the proverb 'look before you leap' – facilitators must 'leap before they look' (Geldof, G., 1999).

"Participation is discipline" (pers.com. Janice Jiggins in the course 'Participatory Technology Development', 1994).

Francis Bacon could have been the perfect example of a modern facilitator: creativity emerges at the interface of order and chaos, solidifying in tangible results.

Proposition 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 illustrate why women in particular are attracted to the 'art of facilitation'.

Having a second child is an effective way to learn about systems practice - the work and fun arises from interactions between the first child and the second.

Propositions accompanying the doctoral dissertation

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Glossary

AKIS:	Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems
AOC:	Agricultural Education Centre
ASIP:	Agricultural Investment Project (of the World Bank)
CA:	Technical Assistant
Ceddo:	Warriors
CLM:	Center for agriculture and environment (The Netherlands)
CNCA:	National bank for credit and saving (in Senegal)
Cuballo:	Fisherman who used the flood-plains for fishing and started to use the river banks for agriculture (Senegal)
DANIDA:	Danish International Development Agency
DELTA:	Development Leadership Teams in Action
DLV:	DLV-advisory group, the former Dutch Governmental Extension Service
DGIS:	Directorate General for Development Co-operation (The Netherlands)
DRPD:	Department for Production and Development
DWK:	Directorate for Science and Knowledge Transfer
Faalo:	Riverbanks
GIE:	Economic Interest Group
GTZ:	German Enterprise for Technical Co-operation
Jeeri:	Sandy village soils
KNEAD:	Kissi Network for Ecological Agricultural Development
IAM:	Ile à Morphil (Irrigation project in Senegal)
IKC/L:	Information and Knowledge Centre for Agriculture
IKC/N:	Information and Knowledge Centre for Nature Management
ISG:	International Support Group
LISSA:	Livestock Stakeholders Self-help Association
LTO:	Farmer organisation for agriculture and horticulture (The Netherlands)
LNV:	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (The Netherlands)
M&E:	Monitoring & Evaluation
NAJK:	Dutch agrarian youth contact
NGO:	Non-Government Organisation
Niébé:	Beans
Nieuwlanden:	Consultancy agency in the Netherlands
NPA:	New Agricultural Policy
PAR:	Participatory Action Research
PIP:	Podor's Integrated Programme
PIV:	Village Irrigation Scheme
PM&E:	Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation
PROGONA:	Gonakier project
PRA:	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTD:	Participatory Technology Development
Pullo:	Nomads, herdsmen whose cattle used the flood-plains for grazing after the flooding water had withdrawn (Senegal).
RAAKS:	Rapid Rural Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems
SAED:	Company for spatial planning and cultivation of soils in the Delta and Senegal Valley (Senegal)
SEV:	Social Economic Extension
SDC:	Swiss Development Co-operation
SSM:	Soft Systems Methodology
STOAS:	Institute for agricultural education and the agro-food sector
SNV:	Dutch Development Organisation
Toorodo:	The 'noble' who used the flooded fields for agricultural purposes (Senegal)

USAID: United States Agency for International development
Waalo: Floodplains
WAU: Wageningen Agricultural University (now WU)
WU: Wageningen University

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Acknowledgements

1 Demystifying facilitation of participatory processes to address complex issues

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to demystify the role of professionals in the facilitation of participatory processes to address societal issues. Blue print approaches such as liberalisation and centralisation have shown little ability to build capacities for natural resource management, food security, and rural development. It seems we can no longer rely on the exclusive use of free markets, economic incentives, and legislation to change towards a more sustainable and democratic world. An emerging alternative and potentially feasible response for democratic societies is collective action of multiple actors at multiple scales This alternative recognises that our society is a pluralistic society, characterised by multiple actors with conflicting interests, values and perceptions. It highly values participation of relevant stakeholders for developing context specific improvements and for creating a sense of ownership. Multi-stakeholder participation is considered to increase the acceptance of policies and solutions and to improve people's own (collective) innovative capacity (e.g., Röling & Maarleveld, 1999; Renn et al.,1995).

There is an abundant and growing interest in participation in many parts of the world. What started in the fields of local community and organisation development in the 1950s has nowadays widely expanded and includes participatory policy analysis (Van Woerkum, 1979; Mayer, 1996), environmental management (Renn et al., 1995; Lee, 1993), integral design of land and technology (Leeuwis, 2000), and health promotion (Koelen et al., 2001; De Koning & Martin, 1996). Participation has become a popular means to bring about different types of social, cultural, physical and technical change across the globe. It is trumpeted by agencies right across the spectrum, from the huge multi-laterals, to the smallest people's organisation. Participation is often presented as the golden key to unlock the door to a more sustainable and democratic world.

The task of ensuring that the golden key is used and the door is unlocked is, in general, placed in the hands of the so-called 'facilitators': the (wo)men responsible for the management of participatory processes to deal with issues that involve multiple interrelated actors and factors (e.g., Scoones & Thompson, 1994; Pretty et al.,1995). The work of facilitators is considered crucial for the change towards a more sustainable and democratic world but difficult to grasp and to judge. Most will agree that their work includes more than convening gatherings of actors and taking care of logistics. It also involves much more than skilled listening, asking the right questions of the right people at the right time. Facilitation has something to do with fostering synergy among people and to improve their capacity of (collective) decision-making and action by linking relevant actors with each other or with other resources (Campbell, 1994). At the heart of this thinking lies the assumption of actors' inability to openly examine their thinking and behaviour on their own. For this to happen, they are assumed t o need a facilitator who assists them to critically look at the way they see and act upon their world and eventually to support them to adapt for improvement (Pretty et al., 1995). Consequently, facilitation is about intervention. In this study, a facilitator is considered a person 'who purposefully intervenes i.e. enters into an ongoing system of relationships among individuals, groups, organisations and objects for the purpose of assisting them' (adapted from Argyris, 1970:15).

Facilitators are referred to as change agents, activists, catalysts, policy analysts, network managers, moderators, mediators, resource persons, advisors, communication specialists, helpers, 'andragogues' or critical analysts (Mayer, 1996; Chambers, 1993; Scoones & Thompson, 1994; Renn et al., 1995; Glasbergen, 1996; Van Woerkum, 1997; Brookfield, 1990). Strikingly, some

(e.g., Schwarz, 1994) view facilitators as substantively neutral managers. These managers have decision-making authority and intervene to assist actors to improve their problem-solving capacity, but they do not influence the content. These authors look at facilitators as process managers, who improve *how* people identify problems, *how* they take decisions and collaborate. However, facilitators are not considered to influence *what* actors are talking about and working on. Others, including myself, reject the notion of substantive neutrality or impartiality. They consider facilitators as professionals who have their own values (things worth striving for), beliefs (things considered to be true), interests, relationships and theoretical and methodological assumptions that highly shape the process *and* content of the intervention and as such, its outcome (e.g., Steins, 1999; Maarleveld & Dangbegnon, 1999). However, usually these assets remain implicit. The facilitator him or herself is not considered a critical variable in the participatory change process. In the case facilitation is acknowledged as a distinct task, it is often referred to as an artistic enterprise. Facilitators are viewed as artists drawing upon their power, creativity, improvisation, innovation and sensitivity (Brookfield, 1990). Facilitation is often equated with "Fingerspitzengefüll". It is an operative intelligence that is not easily made visible and expressible, highly personal, and hard to formalise, making it difficult to communicate, to share with others and to evaluate (Groot & Maarleveld, 2000). The specific roles and responsibilities of the facilitator are not at all transparent. Consequently, the extent to which a facilitator can be held accountable for ineffective performance of actors is unclear.

It would be exaggerated to argue that nothing is known yet about facilitation. Nowadays, in the fields of environmental management, sustainable agriculture, spatial planning, organisational management, community development and adult education, the term 'facilitation' turns up as one of the new buzz words. In business management and adult education, a number of authors have made transparent the roles and skills of facilitators to improve the learning competence of individuals, groups, and organisations for improved innovative performance (e.g., Heron, 1992; Schwarz, 1994). For instance, Brookfield (1990) highlights that there are different types of facilitators, each operating with a specific focus. Facilitators as *resource persons* or *helpers* assist people to solve their immediate problems by acquiring specific skills and behaviour. The *andragogues* or *learning analysts* foster people's capacity for self-direction and helping people how to learn. They develop people's meta-learning skills of awareness and self-reflection rather than skills of content transmission. Facilitators as *critical analysts* try to engage people in alternative ways of thinking and acting, drawing attention to contradictions and ambiguities prompting their previously unexamined assumptions.

Remarkable is that quite often the notion of facilitation is somehow 'depersonalised'. People refer to it in terms of 'incentives' that help to bring about a desired change (e.g., Van Woerkum, 1997). This does not acknowledge the facilitator as a critical success variable or as a person who brings along his or her own interests, perceptions, values, assumptions, styles and competencies that influence the participatory process and its outcome. Another grey spot in the current discourse is the facilitation of processes to deal with issues that are considered complex because of the involvement of numerous interconnecting, evolving human and natural entities. So far, the facilitation of participatory processes is usually directed to small-scale changes and only at one decision-making level. In addition, if various decision-making levels are considered, the facilitator usually treats the grassroots, organisational, national or international level as separate layers of intervention. However, today's 'reality' shows fuzzy interactions, the local and global levels are interconnected. Fields such as sustainable agriculture and environmental management are heavily influenced by current globalisation, privatisation and decentralisation trends. These trends force people increasingly to discover themselves to be interdependent and to realise that everything is interconnected and subject to continuous change. Therefore, for societal change processes to be sustainable, facilitators need to capture the interconnectedness

of actors and factors as well as the dynamics, by involving multiple, interdependent actors at multiple layers.

In order to deal with such a complex process, the call for a 'new professional' in facilitation is increasingly heard (Ison & Russell, 2000; Jiggins & Röling, 1999; Chambers, 1993; Pretty, 1995). A few recent studies have contributed to elucidating the key ingredients for effective facilitation of participatory processes that address complex issues (King, 2000; Buck, 1999). These studies highlight the role of facilitators in taking multiple actors through a collective process that captures the learning about the human and natural dimension in agro-forestry and agricultural development *(ibid.)*. In these studies, it is argued that for effectively managing complex change, facilitators appear to be a new type of expert with a distinct set of ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological perspectives, and who have specific competencies and roles. And, who highly shape a participatory process and its outcome by the choices they make *(ibid.)*. Below two personal experiences with facilitation of complex issues are described to clarify the issues raised.

1.2 Personal facilitation realities

This thesis aims to make explicit the facilitation of participatory processes and as such to improve its professionalism. This study heavily draws on my own professional practices. My own experience with facilitation and especially my successes, failures and questions, form the main impetus behind this dissertation. The two examples described below reveal some of my concerns with respect to facilitation that largely shaped this research.

Example 1: The facilitator's choice of whose interest, perspectives, and values count most
During the period 1994-1996, a Dutch colleague and I were asked to facilitate a process of phasing out the SAED/IAM[1] irrigation project in the North of Senegal. The Dutch donor, the Directorate General of Development Co-operation (DGIS), and the Senegalese government decided to withdraw from activities such as the marketing of rice, the supply of inputs and to cut technical and organisational assistance. DGIS considered privatisation the appropriate response to this disengagement. Soon after the facilitators had accepted the job, they became pawns in a power play and were strategically used by key stakeholders such as DGIS, the Dutch Embassy, the project co-ordinator, project staff and the leaders of farmer organisations. These stakeholders, including the facilitators themselves, had different, and sometimes conflicting, interests, strategies and perspectives with respect to the future of the irrigation project (see table 1.1).

Consequently, the facilitators saw themselves confronted with the choice of whose interest, strategies and perspectives to follow or at least, whose to put on the table for further negotiation. The facilitators felt that those actors, whose interest, strategies, and perspectives were mostly valued, ultimately would become the owners of the intervention process and consequently, would shape it. In this case, they took the interest of DGIS, to close to project as soon as possible, as given but not its proposed operational strategy that became subject to negotiation. In addition, DGIS, the Dutch Embassy and project management regarded us the facilitators as trainers, who were to organise a number of training sessions for farmer leaders to develop organisational and entrepreneurial skills. The facilitators, however, decided to negotiate the application of a participatory problem- solving process, open to all relevant stakeholders in and outside the project intervention area, as a more effective strategy towards privatisation. This experience made me realise that the start of any facilitation intervention is crucial because it largely determines *who* will be involved in *what, how* and *why*. A facilitator has the choice what role to play in the beginning of an intervention. Each role has its own specific process and outcome.

Table 1.1: *Key actors of the SAED/IAM Project, their interest, strategies, and perspectives.*

Key actors	Interest	Strategy towards privatisation	Dominant perspective
DGIS	To close down project as soon as possible	To strengthen farmers' organisational and entrepreneurial capacity through training, To focus on project intervention area	Entrepreneurial
Dutch embassy	To phase out the project	To strengthen farmers' organisational and entrepreneurial capacity through training, To focus on project intervention area	Entrepreneurial
Dutch project co-ordinator	To phase out the project gradually	To strengthen farmer organisations and the skills of project trainers, To focus on project intervention area	Technical
Leaders of farmer organisations	To continue assistance and to remain in power	To maintain autocratic leadership, To focus on the whole area for which they were responsible	Short term/individual
Project staff	To keep their jobs	Following power	Technical
Dutch facilitators	To develop experience with the methodology 'Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems' (RAAKS) in a real life context	To strengthen the institutional context including actors outside the project area	Participatory/ systemic

In the same assignment, I experienced that conflicting values can lead to serious facilitation dilemmas. The dependency disposition of the Senegalese farmers and their leaders was in great contrast to the value of self-reliance dominating among the Dutch, including the facilitators. It gave rise to mistrust and formed a serious barrier for an open collaboration. These values acted like invisible forces structuring actors' behaviour. The specific difficulty the facilitators faced was how to make values discussible and subject to negotiation.

A related difficulty I encountered in Senegal was that farmer leaders blamed me for my effort to actively involve 'ordinary' farmers in the process. The leaders regarded these farmers as people slowing-down the process because of an assumed lower level of information and understanding, whereas I considered broad participation and full transparency in decision-making crucial for the future of the irrigation system. I realised that striving for genuine participation involves a shift in power and as such power conflicts. How to deal with strategic powerful actors was a concern that guided this research. Then, again in the same experience, I discovered my own power as facilitator. When the number of personnel needed to be reduced, I was asked to provide information about the (potential) competence of extension workers in a participatory mode of working. What to do in such a situation? I decided to share my view with the project management on the performance of project employees in relation to required future profiles and strategies that were jointly developed by multiple actors. However, I felt (and still feel) very uneasy about my performance. It was like balancing between daring to take up responsibilities and commitment for future project development and loyalty to the people who gave their energy and views during my intervention.

These experiences are illustrations of the kind of (ethical) choices confronting facilitators. They show that facilitation entails a complex interplay of multiple and often conflicting, values, interest, strategies and perceptions, including those of the facilitators themselves.
Facilitators can choose to go for the line of least resistance when they choose to follow the interests, values, perceptions, and strategies of the most influential actors. In other situations, in which space for manoeuvre exists or is created by the facilitators themselves, they can choose to put the different interests, values, and perceptions on the table for negotiation with the relevant actors involved.

The ethics of facilitators have been raised by participation practitioners as a burning issue during the 'International Retreat on Pathways to Participation'. This retreat was organised at the Isle of Thorns Conference Centre in the UK, April 2-5, 2000. One set of concerns that emerged during the conference was about the difference between facilitators, who in the pursuit of personal interest sell the set of participation values, and facilitators who live by this set of values or ideals they promote. The need to identify core values for facilitation was raised as well.

Example 2: How to navigate in a complex environment?
One of the major challenges I faced (and still do) in my facilitation work is how to deal with complex and messy environments in which everything/body is connected to everything/body. No actor or factor can be understood or acted upon independently from others. For example, in the facilitation of a participatory curriculum development process at a number of Agricultural Education Centres (AOCs) in the Netherlands, the different decision-making levels appeared to be strongly interconnected. The learning of lecturers about how to facilitate students' learning, appeared to be strongly dependent on the AOC management and on the future employers of the students. The institutional environment of the lecturers highly determined the sustainability of their learning about a new way of lecturing i.e. the facilitation of learning rather than teaching. In agreement with the lecturers, the facilitators (four 'progressive' lecturers and myself), decided to facilitate a more inclusive learning process, involving actors at different decision-making levels. In one of the facilitation activities, various lecturers, students, future employers, and the AOC management jointly identified competencies that the students would need to adequately deal with their future work. However, during the entire process the AOC management felt reluctant to get too much involved in the participatory learning process. In a workshop specifically addressing the necessary changes in the management environment to make it more conducive to the facilitation of students' learning, the majority of the management members showed little commitment. They got stuck in and hid themselves behind dozens of regulations they themselves

had installed. I as facilitator was not able to get them out of this situation. This experience (and I had several of this kind) left me as a facilitator with questions such as: 'how to engage actors operating at the higher authority level in such a way that they are actively involved in a partici-patory learning process together with actors at other decision-making levels'? And, 'how to design multiple interlocking processes that would meet the different interests of actors at different decision-making levels, and that would mutually support each other as well'.? Existing theories and methodologies consider international, national, local or strategic and operational decision-making levels as separate layers (Mehta et al., 2001). I was curious to learn about theoretical and methodological perspectives that could help facilitators to ensure that the learning at each of these levels would be of mutual support.

When I worked in the fields of environmental management and sustainable agriculture, I experienced that the notion of *interconnectedness* did not only apply to *actors* at interrelated levels but also to *non-human factors* and the relationship between these two. This raised questions such as 'how to design a process for learning that captures the human or institutional dimension, and the biophysical dimension as well as the relationship between the two'?

1.3 Research focus of the study

By making my own tacit knowledge explicit, I intend to contribute to the demystification of the facilitation of participatory processes to address complex issues. I will systematically and system-ically explore my own personal facilitation experiences in the fields of agro-ecosystem management and, agricultural and institutional development. These fields can be characterised as having complex or ill-defined issues due to the involvement of various individuals, groups and organisations with different perceptions and interests, and who have a stake in how the issues are defined and dealt with. The complexity is also caused by the numerous interrelated and evolving factors and actors across different cultural, technical and administrative levels, that play a role in these issues.

By exploring my own experience, submitting my analysis and findings to co-facilitators for reaction, I intend to (further) open the black box of facilitation. In particular, I aim to increase transparency on how the facilitators' perception, their values and theoretical and methodological perspectives shape their actions, and as such the participatory process and it outcomes. Transparency in the roles and influence of facilitators will help to make more precise their responsibilities and to improve their accountability to the actors with whom they are working. In addition, by looking at inconsistencies in and the effectiveness of my own facilitation performance, I intend to contribute to deepening the understanding of effective facilitation of complex interactive processes in terms of theoretical and methodological key ingredients. Such an understanding also helps to clarify the required competencies for the facilitation professional.

It is a legitimate question to ask whether facilitators of (rural) development are in need of theories as they are often more motivated by ideology (see box 1.1). Understanding the management of participatory change processes from a theoretical perspective may appear to be an academic exercise that detracts from the real business of getting things done.

Box 1.1: Do facilitators need theory?
When I discussed the focus of my research with some co-facilitators, some of them seriously questioned the need for developing theories for facilitation. Some of their reactions were the following: "Does a plant breeder need to know the theory behind breeding in order to be skilful professional.? Moreover, facilitation is more about attitude than about theory and methodology".
(Source: Author's project notebook)

I certainly do not want to suggest that 'good practice' is only dependent on awareness of underlying theories and concepts. However, Checkland (1985) reminds us that all practical action is theory laden. Keynes (1936) suggests that people who described themselves as practical men proud to be uncontaminated by any kind of theory, always turned out to be the intellectual prisoners of the theoreticians of yesteryear. With this study, I hope to prove the statement that 'there is nothing more practical than a good theory'. I believe that facilitators, who prefer to focus on methods and procedures, can improve their professionalism by a critical reflection on the choice of these tools and the way they are applied in relation to their beliefs, values, and theoretical and methodological assumptions. Linking facilitators' theories, concepts and ideas with the methodologies they apply to act upon an area, enables learning about the interconnectedness of intellectual frame, methodology and area of application (Checkland, 1985). My assumption here is that it is worth the struggle to become aware of one's own epistemological, ethical, theoretical and methodological framework when engaging in purposeful interventions like facilitation, because it enables taking responsibility for the effect that this intervention has. Becoming aware often leads to personal change which may enable me, and hopefully some others, to work more effectively and ethically (Cerf et al., 2000).

This thesis focuses on the facilitator as a person having dispositions such as values, interests, experiences, perspectives, competencies, and relationships. Usually, such a facilitator operates in a team and belongs to an organisation and/or (virtual) networks. In this thesis, I distinguish two types of facilitators. First, there is the *'ordinary' facilitator*, who supports individuals and sets of actors towards more effective decision-making and (collective) action. Secondly, there is the *meta-facilitator* who develops and strengthens the capacity of other ('ordinary') facilitators to enable them to support other actors towards more effective action. In this thesis, the first two empirical chapters will explore my experience as a 'ordinary' facilitator. In the third case, I performed as a meta-facilitator. Through this case, I intend to develop insights into the roles and competencies of meta-facilitators to support 'ordinary' facilitators. These insights can assist (agricultural) educational institutes in facilitating the development of new kind of professionals in the facilitation of participatory processes addressing complex issues.

By way of summary, the following questions have underpinned this study:
1. What have the facilitators of participatory processes that address complex issues deliberately undertaken to achieve the desired change?
2. What were the theoretical and methodological perspectives and values of the facilitators in the cases? How have these dispositions influenced the process, outcome, and effect of the facilitation?
3. What competencies do facilitators require to be effective in their work?
4. What are the principles and ingredients for the meta-facilitation of participatory processes that address complex issues?

1.4 Empirical frame

To address these questions, this thesis explores three experiences in the facilitation of participatory processes gained by teams of facilitators of which I had been a member.
The first experience explores the facilitation of a privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in Senegal. The second case study addresses the facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya to support decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services. The last case study deals with the meta-facilitation of DLV's (the former Dutch governmental extension service) facilitated learning process. It explores the role of meta-facilitators in the facilitation of facilitators i.e. DLV advisors.

However, my thinking about and practice in facilitation are based on more than ten years experience as a (meta-) facilitator in diverse developing countries and in the Netherlands. I facilitated multi-actor processes in different fields of application such as agro-ecosystem management, sustainable agriculture, and rural development, with a specific focus on institutional and organisational development, and privatisation and decentralisation of (agricultural) services. In each intervention, I kept notes on the process and outcomes in the form of Project Notebooks, the outputs of the facilitation team reflections, participant evaluations and consultancy reports. that, together with t They consultant reports, formed the empirical an important basis for the analysis of the cases. The major preliminary findings have been discussed at various international workshops and seminars, and published in (scientific) journals. In chapter three, I describe the research methodology in more detail.

1.5 Organisation of the study

In the next chapter, I address the emergence of the participatory paradigm that has largely shaped the way I interacted with the actors in the empirical part of this study. Chapter three discusses the research methodologies that underpin this study. I discuss the implications of the purpose of this research. My purpose is not to verify or falsify existing facilitation theories and methodologies, but to use my own experience as a foundation for the construction of a grounded theory and methodological insights for the facilitation of participatory processes that address complex issues. In the same chapter, I look at my research as an action research and learning process and clarify my epistemological position. Bawden's model of praxis is introduced as the analytical framework that I use to explore my facilitation experiences. Chapters four up to eight contain the empirical material of this thesis. Each case study consists of three parts:

1. A description of the theoretical and methodological perspectives that the facilitators used in the facilitation.
2. The exploration of the facilitation praxis by looking at a) how the facilitators perceived the *context*; b) the *actions* undertaken; c) the facilitators' *values*; d) the *theoretical* and *methodological perspectives* applied; and, e) the *interrelationship* among these elements.
3. An intermezzo providing preliminary insights into a grounded theory and methodological insights on the facilitation of participatory processes.

The concluding chapter forms the synthesis of the study. It discusses the grounded theory and methodological insights that can be used to make facilitation of participatory processes effective. It also highlights the tasks and competencies that facilitators require for being effective in their work. This forms the basis for concluding about a perspective to meta-facilitation of participatory processes. It also highlights the fundamental change that is required in educational institutes to create a conducive learning environment for (potential) facilitators. In the concluding chapter, I also discuss a number of emerging insights that derived from the synthesis of my preliminary findings. It provides a number of criteria for effective facilitation that can be used as a basis for evaluating facilitators' performance. Such an evaluative basis contributes to increase facilitators' accountability to actors with whom they are working.

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[1] SAED: Societié d'Aménagement et d'Exploitation des Terres du Delta et de la Vallée du Sénégal, IAM: Ile à Morphil

2 The emerging participatory paradigm and the call for a new professional

2.1 Introduction

As the thinking and practice of the facilitators in the case studies are heavily based on the so-called *participatory paradigm*, in this chapter I discuss its emergence in the areas of 'rural poverty reduction', 'agricultural development', and 'environmental management' with a link to 'policy reform'. These fields of applications are chosen because the facilitators in the case studies dealt with these areas. For each field, the shift in thinking towards participation is described as well as the dominant beliefs, assumptions, and competencies of the facilitators who are referred to as, amongst others, community workers, development professionals, extension workers or beta/gamma professionals. In addition, as Guba claims that each paradigm can be characterised by the way their proponents respond to ontological, epistemological and methodological questions, I also clarify the ontological and epistemological beliefs of facilitators who operate within the participatory paradigm and the methodological consequences. By describing the critique on positivist science in section 2.4, I address the following questions (Guba, 1990:18):

1. Ontological: What are the beliefs of facilitators operating within the participatory paradigm belief with respect to the nature of reality?
2. Epistemological: What are the beliefs of these facilitators with respect to the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?
3. Methodological: What are the beliefs of these facilitators with respect to the way the inquirer should go about finding out knowledge?

At the end of this chapter in section 2.5, I discuss some of the weaknesses in the mainstream facilitation practice for which facilitators of participatory processes are often criticised.

Before I start describing the emergence of the participatory paradigm in the field of poverty reduction, I want to point out that the abundant and growing interest in participation in many parts of the world is impressive. Participation is no longer limited to the more progressive organisations such as NGOs, but has nowadays gained an important place in the discourse of governments, donors and private companies in the so-called developing as well as developed countries. What started in the 1950s in the spheres of local community and organisational development has nowadays widely expanded and includes interactive policy reform (e.g., Van Woerkum, 1997; Mayer, 1996), sustainable agriculture & and development (e.g., Ison & Russell, 2000; Pretty, 1997), environmental management (e.g., Finger & Verlaan, Glasbergen, 1996; Lee, 1993), health promotion (Koelen et al., 2001; De Koning & Martin, 1996) and integral design of land and technology (Leeuwis, 2000; Van Veldhuizen, 1997). In all these fields participation is seen as an interesting perspective to deal with pluralism, uncertainty, interconnectedness and dynamics that characterise the issues in these fields (Pretty, 1995).

The arguments in favour of participation can be classified as *pragmatic* and *normative* arguments (Johnson & Wilson, 2000). The pragmatic arguments deal with *effectiveness* and *efficiency*. It is claimed that participation leads to (Johnson & Wilson, 2000: 1892; Michener, 1998: 2106):

• Effective interventions because they are inclusive processes where all actors or stakeholders can indeed take a positive stake in their success. Through participation in planning, implementation and, monitoring and evaluation, actors are more likely to agree with and support the intervention.
• Effective interventions because they reveal the complex social dynamics that surround them.

• Improve cost-effectiveness of social development because they bring on board civil society actors who take ownership of interventions and are an added resource in terms of for example knowledge, labour, or land.

People using *normative* arguments claim that participation can lead to *empowerment* of disadvantaged individuals, groups and organisations through increasing their capacity to make decisions that affect their lives as well as changing the power relationships between dominant and disadvantaged actors. They usually consider participation as a basic *human* and *democratic right*. Both the pragmatic and normative arguments have highly shaped the perspectives on participation and participatory practices in the field of poverty reduction during the last few decades. This is discussed below.

2.2 Participation for poverty reduction and rural (agricultural) development

To begin with, I want to emphasise that 'participation' is not something specific to the last five decades. It is difficult to trace precisely the beginning of the concern for participation as a guiding concept in development. But in the early days, the Greeks already have been using the idea of participation in their conceptualisation of democracy in which people, albeit the male freeborns only, had the right to participate in political decision making. In the 1930s, in many European countries participation practices existed in forms compatible with the labour movement. Driven by a strong belief in social justice, employers involved labourers in the (co-) determination of organisational management as way to empower and to protect their (self-)interest (Renn, et al., 1995). In the 1930s and 1940s, many researchers and community workers were influenced (and still are) by the tradition of 'Action Research'. Action Research emerged when a number of social scientists and community practitioners concluded that traditional social science was not helping to solve social problems. They stressed the importance of lay knowledge, group discovery and group decision making and thus participation of local people to improve social relationships and racial issues (Lewin, 1952). The action researcher involves his or her clients as co-researchers in iterative cycles of problem identification, planning, experimentation, and action to collectively seek solutions for their social problems. The intended change typically involves *re-education* to encourage changing the patterns of thinking and acting at the level of norms and (democratic) values.

The 1950s and 1960s
During the 1950s and 1960s, 'community development' and its French version "animation rurale" can be considered important steps in the evolution of 'modern day' participation in rural development in developing countries. Community development aimed to help prepare the British colonies for a peaceful transition to independence by supporting the emergence of stable, self-reliant rural communities (Uphoff, 1979). Likewise, "animation rurale" emerged as a French effort to promote rural modernisation as a prerequisite for transferring power from the metropolis to the independent states (*ibid.*). Both approaches were framed by the conceptualisation of 'underdevelopment' by the 'more developed' countries. The underdevelopment of the Third World was considered to be caused by, in part, a technology gap and as such community participation was regarded as a means for increasing the adoption of new technologies. Moreover, because of scarcity of government resources, it was asserted that the development at the local level had to be addressed and solved by the local communities themselves. Both 'community development' and "animation rurale" have been judged largely ineffective in transforming rural communities because they ignored the heterogeneity of rural communities and the complexity of the rural development process. This independence often became eroded as they were co-opted into the promotion of centrally planned government projects (Uphoff et al., 1979; Bergdall, 1993) Typically for this time, rural development workers and animators had a

background in a single technical discipline and were concerned chiefly with transferring technologies and practices.

The mid 1970s

The mid-1970s (and early 80s) showed a high-level commitment to what was termed *popular (or people's) participation.* Donor governments put popular participation on their agendas, aiming to shift away from top- down, technocratic and economistic interventions towards greater popular involvement and human resource development (Cornwall, 2001). This commitment to participation was encouraged by a number of studies and other initiatives that were undertaken to develop guidelines for alleviating rural poverty (e.g., Morss et al., 1976; Uphoff et al., 1979; Röling & De Zeeuw, 1983).

The United States Agency for International development (USAID) funded a large quantitative and qualitative evaluation study covering 35 projects in Latin America and Africa. Morss et al. (1976: 203) concluded that "the overall success for small holder development was most affected by *local action* taken by small farmers to complement outside development management and resources". Farmer participation in decision making and their willingness to contribute labour and money to the development effort appeared to be important as determinants of local action. Another USAID-funded study (Uphoff et al., 1979) focussed on the feasibility and applicability of rural development participation. Their study highlighted that the complexity of agricultural systems in Third World countries made them less amenable to the technical solutions created under high potential circumstances. They argued that if the benefits of better technology, better crops and practices were to reach the poor, there was need for an approach to participation involving people's consciousness, experiences and creative forces (Uphoff et al.,1979).

It is remarkable that these studies make only little reference to the 'development professional'. Röling and De Zeeuw (1983) concluded that since development aiming at poverty alleviation, is dealing with people and organisations that are intrinsically uncertain and unpredictable, it is not so much a question of 'technical' assistance as also of 'social' assistance. Or, it is not so much a matter of installing changes in the physical and biological attributes of an environment but it is rather a matter of permanently inducing changes in social processes (*ibid.*). They proposed five different functions, including 'mobilisation', 'organisation', 'technical and resource support' and, 'system maintenance', needed to be fulfilled in order to alleviate poverty. Likewise, Uphoff et al., (1979) refer to the social scientist as a new comer in the development scene. His or her role is to ensure that farmers' perspectives are taken into account. Through interaction and collaboration between physical scientists and social scientists, problems of inappropriate technologies are to be solved.

Cornwall (2001) points out that the arguments made for participation in the 1970s form three distinct streams of thought. The first stream argues for participation on grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. The development professional persuades the intended target group to get them directly involved in the implementation of the project to engender their commitment to achieve the objectives. The second argument looks at participation as mutual learning. The development professional acts as a co-learner encouraging people to engage themselves as active subjects who participate, co-operate and contribute their own sources to the process of their own development. The third set of arguments entails the right of self-determination and equitable distribution of resources.

The 1980s

The 1980s show two lines of thinking and action. First there was the *projects with people* type of thinking. 'Community participation' was related to intervention projects in which the rather

technocratic development professional encouraged the *targeted beneficiaries* to participate in development projects, initiated and designed by development agencies or the state, to benefit them and to achieve cost effectiveness, compliance and sustainability (Cornwall, 2001)[1]. Training and Visit became the mainstream agricultural extension approach. The role of extension workers was to deliver new technologies developed by researchers to farmers. Extension workers were trained in demonstration and communication skills enabling them to sensitise and persuade farmers to adopt promising technologies. Officially, farmers were allowed to participate in setting the research agenda but due to poor feedback mechanisms among farmers, researchers and extension workers this remained wishful thinking.

The 1980s also saw the rise of an alternative way of thinking about participation and its practice. *People's self-development* involved a process of collective action and mobilisation that could lead to self-reliant development. Inspired by Paulo Freire (1974), who focussed on participation for people's personal transformation, approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Development Leadership Teams in Action (DELTA) became popular among NGOs. The development professionals became *political activists* animating people's critical learning. They lived closely with the people i.e. the poor and assisted them to articulate their own identities and concerns and to reclaim their *agency*. These activists helped people to *un*learn a perception of themselves as being useless. They assisted people to consider themselves as human beings who *are* able to understand problems, to solve them and as such to change their life (Freire, 1972). Use was made of alternative communication methods such as oral histories, songs, and theatre.

The mid-1980s showed a renewed emphasis on local institutional development. When the 'users as choosers' perspective gained ground, within a short time span development workers were in charge of mobilising and organising thousands of sectoral user-groups i.e. irrigation committees, drinking water committees, village development committees (Cornwall, 2001).

The 1990s
The 1990s show a growing consensus on the importance of participation. The drive towards economic liberalisation and decentralisation gave new meaning to the concept of participation. Participation moved beyond the project and local level into *governance* and *policy*. Participation had become a means to engage civil society in providing a check on the controlling tendencies of the state. Moreover, participation was considered the way to operationalise decentralisation as the motor for democratic transformation (Cornwall, 2001). Consequently, the development professional intervened both on the side of the state and on the side of the citizen, to narrow the gap between them. In the field of poverty reduction there was a further shift away from the modernisation development paradigm towards a participatory paradigm focusing on diversity, context specifics, and non-linear (learning) processes. With the aim of increasing the influence of rural people (e.g., men, women, elders, youths, social interest groups) in shaping their own livelihoods and improving sustainable agriculture, various populist schools of thought were developed, of which 'Farmer First' (e.g., Chambers et al., 1989) and its successor 'Beyond Farmer First' (Scoones & Thompson, 1994) are probably the most known.

In the 1990s, the concern was less with why participation might be a good thing to do, but with how to do it and do it at scale. Many donors and governments were not too pleased with approaches such as PAR and DELTA that required not only intensive and open-ended and long-term engagement but also radical social transformation (Cornwall, 2001). The quest for an operational solution to the issue of how to do participation provided a fertile terrain for the emergence and evolution of numerous participatory methodologies such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Pretty et al., 1995), Participatory Technology Development (PTD) (Jiggins & De Zeeuw, 1992), Rapid Rural Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS) (Engel &

Salomon, 1997) to mention only a few. Epistemologically, theoretically and methodologically, these methodologies were based on the 'Farmer First' and 'Beyond Farmer First' schools of thought. For the first time reference is made to the facilitator i.e. the outsider, who encourages rural communities to analyse and share their knowledge about their own situation, to generate, negotiate and design options for improvement, and reflect critically on the process and outcome. Ultimately, the aim of these methodologies was to give local people more control over their own development.

As a reaction to criticism of his earlier work in which the role of the development professional remained implicit, Chambers (1993) has been one of the first to identify the 'facilitator' and his or her values, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour as a critical actor in enabling or inhibiting participatory processes. He argued that the dominant behaviour and attitude of the so-called 'normal' professional largely contributed to the fact that so many development interventions failed (Chambers, 1993). These professionals tend to be biased in terms of superiority, gender and season. They failed to honour aroused expectations, rushed the process of engagement and were extractive. According to Chambers, to become a *new professional*, these behaviours, and attitudes needed to be reversed. The 'new professional' in contrast, shared assumptions, beliefs and values such as (adapted from Chambers, 1993; Pretty, 1995):
• Assuming that realities are socially constructed, and so participatory methodologies are required to relate these multiple perspectives to one another.
• People first (women before men) instead of things first.
• Local people's knowledge and ideas are of value in innovation processes.
• Accepting complexity and local diversity.
• Valuing extended peer evaluation for quality control.

And, the 'new professional' was seen to require competencies in:
• Making explicit underlying values, including his or her own values.
• Enabling of open-ended learning processes for more effective (collective) decision-making and action.
• Facilitating individual and collective change processes instead of teaching and transferring technologies.
• Involving a broad range of societal and cultural institutions and movements at all levels.
• Empowering and transforming people and institutions.
• Listening and probing.
• Applying visualisation methods.
• Working with multidisciplinary teams.

In the call for new professionals with reversed values, skills, attitudes, and roles. Chambers and Pretty have been supported by many others (e.g., Ison & Russell, 2000; Daniels & Walker, 1997; Reason, 1994). However, Pretty (1995) correctly points out that a polarisation between the 'old' and 'new professional', implying in someway the bad and the good, would be wrong. The true sensibility lies in the ways opposites are synthesised.

2.3 Participation in environmental management

Environmental management is a relatively new field of application in which the call for participation has emerged as an alternative to traditional strategies. Traditionally, approaches such as privatisation, centralisation, and science-led technology fixes have often failed to fulfil their promise to resolve environmental issues (Maarleveld, 2000; Ostrom, 1990). In particular, the use of the so-called reductionist approaches has proven to be a persistent barrier to deal with complexity, uncertainty, and continuous change that characterise environmental issues. The

traditional approaches tend to (Röling & Maarleveld, 1999):
- Ignore the concept of 'multiple perceptions of realities' for the sake of objective analysis.
- Cut and study problems into isolated parts by using fragmented disciplinary theories and methodologies to establish clear cause and effect relationships and to draw general laws.
- Reduce human nature to a Pavlovian reflex, responding solely to economic incentives.
- Reducing the complexity of human aspiration to the simple notion of a utility maximising 'homo-economicus' excluding emotional, social and cultural aspects. In this perspective human beings are considered selfish, rational, calculating beings who anticipate others' moves in order to pursue their advantage in conditions of scarcity.

The traditional approaches have resulted in outcomes that lack popular acceptance and are increasingly considered incompetent, irrelevant, or simply not workable. Their focus on technical innovations and free markets as driving forces for environmental management are considered to reinforce ways of living that are increasingly out of touch with ecological processes (Jiggins & Röling, 2000; Renn et al., 1995).

In response to this criticism, an alternative participatory perspective to environmental management emerged in the 1990s. The new perspective acknowledged the *(collective) behaviour* of *multiple stakeholders* as the main *driver of environmental change* (e.g., Renn et al., 1995; Daniels & Walker, 1996). Daniels and Walker (1996) argue that as the outcomes of natural systems are largely determined by human interests, values, perceptions and actions, not a single party such as science, but all relevant stakeholders have to become the main drivers of environmental change. They suggest that when scientists continue to focus predominantly on developing the best technical means to achieve given, undisputed ends such as higher agricultural productivity, science becomes part of the problem, not the route to the solution *(ibid.)*. Likewise, Röling (1997) refers to the 'soft side of land' to stress the importance of incorporating the human dimension in natural resource management. He considers natural resource systems coupled systems encompassing a 'hard' ecosystem but also a 'soft' (or human) system of interlocking interests, shared visions and common objectives. Several studies have shown that human beings are not only rational choice-makers but, under certain conditions, they act as communicative actors, ready to perceive collective action as a feasible win-win strategy for natural resource management (e.g., Uphoff, 1979; Van Woerkum, 1997). Therefore, in the new participatory perspective, the outcome of environmental management depends more on how people (are assisted to) manage themselves rather than (only) on the management of technology and markets (Röling, 1997).

The participatory perspective to environmental management has brought into play four important viewpoints. First, there is the notion of human behaviour as the major driving force in natural resource management instead of science-based technologies and free markets. Second, it emphasises the *participation of all relevant stakeholders at multiple decision-making levels* instead of only very few at the local level. Third, it acknowledges that *conflicts* in natural resource management are inevitable due to the multiple (and often conflicting) values of multiple stakeholders and the limits to the natural world (Lee, 1993). Fourth, it suggests paying attention to *(collective or social) learning* as a *perspective* that is shared among the numerous evolving approaches to ecological management (Finger & Verlaan, 1995; Maarleveld & Dangbégnon, 1999).

The participatory learning perspective on environmental management also adds new dimensions to the profile of the new professional. In participatory or interactive environmental management, instead of informing people about fiscal and legal policies and delivering technologies (only), the role of facilitators is to manage a learning process in which multiple

actors negotiate competing values, visions, interests, perceptions and actions for improvement. The use of a learning perspective leads the facilitator to focus on process (instead of situations), on interactions and interdependencies, and on iterative cycles of action and reflection to jointly find a way out. As conflicts are considered inevitable in natural resource management, facilitators need the abilities to perform as conflict managers or mediators.

In this respect, it is interesting to look at recent development within natural science and agricultural departments at universities and schools. Traditional discipline-based courses gradually are changing into curricula in which the social/human dimension is explicitly referred to (e.g., forestry towards social forestry or community forestry, soil chemistry towards participatory soil fertility management, pest control towards integrated pest management) (Jiggins & Röling, 2000). Both social and natural scientists are challenged to leave their comfortable inward-looking disciplinary nests and to go beyond them by developing new theories, concepts, methodologies, and language that are shared across disciplines. At the Wageningen University this challenge falls under what is labelled *beta/gamma science* that addresses the duality i.e. a mutually perturbing structural relationship, between human/social and natural processes. The notion of integral design (Leeuwis 1999) is an example of a jointly developed concept that challenges and replaces to an extent, the traditional top-down and discipline-based technocratic planning approach in agriculture and natural resource management. Integral design incorporates the idea of: 1) natural resources having multiple functions for multiple stakeholders; 2) inter-disciplinary collaboration; and 3) the need for an interactive design process in which relevant actors participate.

One of the outcomes of this development is the emergence of a new type of courses to develop the new 'beta/gamma' professional. Looking at these courses and drawing on the experience of innovating universities (e.g., University of Western Sydney in Australia, The Open University in the UK), an emphasis is placed on (adapted from Jiggins & Röling, 2000; Bawden et al., 2000a):
• 'Experiential learning' that inter-weaves practice and theory.
• Situated learning to engage students as co-involvers with other stakeholders, in messy 'real-world 'projects to jointly look for outcomes that are considered to be improvements by all involved.
• Critical reflection on assumptions underpinning participatory practice.
• Learning about the human and biophysical dimensions of natural resource management.
• Learning to work in interdisciplinary teams.
• Learning about facilitation of interactive processes.

New thinking about 'participation' in policy and governance has influenced interactive environmental management. Public participation in policy-making on complex societal issues such as natural resource management is a reaction to traditional policy making. Traditional policy making is criticised because of its science-led, top-down and linear character, its heavy reliance on legal and financial policy instruments, its limited relevance and especially its undemocratic characterfeature (Mayer, 1996). Traditional policy-making has been an activity of experts for other experts. The direct involvement of citizens and other stakeholders has been limited to conventional modes of voting, party involvement and economic co-determination in union-led processes. Nowadays in interactive policy making, all kinds of forums (e.g., public hearings, referenda, future search conferences) are organised to facilitate the communication among governments, citizens and other stakeholders on problematic issues in, amongst others, environmental management (Mayer, 1996). Through such (direct) participation, it is believed that individual citizens and other stakeholders can become engaged in a learning process that could lead to change their attitudes, opinions, and interests at large social scales. Citizens and other interest groups are encouraged to participate, not only because of their democratic right but also because their views and insights will contribute to improved governance (Van Woerkum, 1997;

Renn et al., 1995). From a facilitation perspective, interactive environmental policy formulation is interesting because of its emphasis on democratic institutions and dialogue among policy makers, citizen, and other stakeholders.

So far, interactive environmental management, enriched by trends in environmental policy formulation, leaves us with the picture of facilitators as 'network managers, policy analysts, mediators, communication specialists or moderators. Facilitator are considered to believe that (Röling & Jiggins, 2000; Van Woerkum, 1997; Glasbergen, 1996; Renn et al., 1996; Sellamna, 1999):
• Science based-technologies and free markets will not suffice for sustainable use and /or regeneration of the ecosystem.
• Human beings are not (only) rational choice-makers. They are considered communicative actors conceiving collective action as a feasible 'joint gains' strategy for sustainable use and /or regeneration of the ecosystem.
• The emergent property of an ecosystem is largely determined by human interests, values, perceptions, and practices.
• Citizen participation in decision-making is essential to enhance the responsiveness and legitimacy of public institutions and for defining the collective will.

And facilitators should be able to:
• Apply a holistic and integrated perspective to enable the participants to understand and act upon the multiple and dynamic facets of environmental management.
• Focus on learning processes instead of situations (making use of group dynamics, team building).
• Link and integrate different levels of decision-making and action.
• Mediate negotiations and moderate democratic decision-making processes among multiple stakeholders at and between multiple levels.
• Foster democratic institutions.

2.4 Scientific legitimacy for participation

Participation in poverty reduction and environmental management gained ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings through the criticism ofby social scientists of 'normal' or 'positivist' science. From a facilitation point of view, the critique of *positivist science* contributed to the elucidation of the set of values and beliefs of 'positivist' professionals, and in the construction of a different set through the development of a 'critical theory' and a *constructivist* perspective on *science.*

Criticism of positivist science
The dominant way of thinking underpinning most of the past (and present) development efforts appears to be embedded in the so-called 'positivist paradigm'. Positivists are epistemological realists. They consider knowledge an objective reflection of an outside reality. They assume that neutral observation, i.e. observations which are not coloured by subjective aspects of the scientist or his or her instruments, can lead to objective knowledge (Guba, 1990). The expert role is non-negotiable. Science is considered *the* source of true knowledge. It is also believed that this knowledge as an individual property can be transferred to other people. Technical knowledge is supposed to provide the answers to societal issues. Problem-solving is portrayed as a number of analytical steps in a linear sequence. Positivists emphasise analytical and quantitative methods to produce true statements about reality on which interventions e.g., in areas of public concern can be based. The goals of these interventions are taken to be unambiguous. "The focus is on the 'best technical means' for achieving any stated goals" (Röling & Wagemakers, 1998: 11).

Criticism of the positivist intellectual framework has been conducive to the further development of the participatory paradigm. The following five points summarise some of the critique:

1. *Objective truth*: The assumption held by positivists that the function of science is to develop one objective truth becomes untenable. The following describes various examples to illustrate this:
   - In agriculture, positivists assume that agricultural innovation follows a linear sequence, starting with agricultural research that develops new technology which extension then delivers to farmers. These farmers are expected to adopt these technologies to improve their farming practices. However, experiences show that innovations are, for example, not unchanging commodities which pass from one individual to another or accumulate on the shelf. In fact, technologies are usually 're-invented' as they are adopted (Rogers, 1995). In addition, most new ideas do not originate from research but from practice itself (Kline & Rosenberg, 1986). Farmers themselves often appear to be active information seekers, keen experimenters and good facilitators. They are capable in sharing information and experience for promoting collective change. Stakeholders such as male and female farmers, extensionists, researchers, NGOs, policy makers, credit suppliers, businessmen and environmentalists can all be considered sources of knowledge and information relevant to agricultural development.
   - On issues of public concern such as environmental management or biotechnology, there is much fundamental disagreement among scientists. For every scientific claim in areas that are value-laden, there are as many scientists who dispute it due to differences in values, interests, and experience among them (Beck, 1992).
   - The idea of one-dimensional development is in contradiction with van der Ploeg's multiple styles of farming. Farmers make different choices. Each choice leads to a different development path.
2. *Anti-democratic character*: In policy reform, positivist policy models have been questioned for their anti-democratic character. The world of positivist policy analysts has an elitist character that separates the policy maker from citizens (Mayer 1996; Renn et al., 1995).
3. *Unambiguous development goals*: Woodhill & Röling (1997) argue that the positivist assumption of unambiguous goals and the focus on the 'best technical means' to achieve these goals has become irrelevant. Development is increasingly considered to have multiple, often incompatible, goals. Agricultural development for example, includes negotiation among the multiple users of land, water and genetic resources, about the multiple functions of agriculture.
4. *Ignorance of the complexity and dynamics of real life decision-making*: The stepwise and linear thinking, usually combined with a single actor view and a top-down management style, ignores the complexity and dynamics of real life decision-making in which multiple actors are involved (Mayer, 1996; Meppem & Gill, 1997). The claim of positivist science to find out regular and recurrent patterns in nature so as to act on them and to achieve stability, regularity and predictability is considered not appropriate in complex situations in which multiple human and natural dimensions are interlocked.

Positivist professionals tend to believe that (Sellamna, 1999; Chambers, 1997; Guba, 1990):
- Reality exists 'out there' and is driven by immutable natural laws. Scientists are assumed to be able to develop objective or true knowledge. Scientists' values and other biasing and confounding factors can be excluded from influencing the outcome of their research.
- The ultimate aim of scientists is to predict and control complex phenomena through the use of reductionsist approaches.
- Science (and research) is the main source of innovation.
- The expert's role is one of an outsider. This role is considered non-negotiable. The value of lay knowledge is ignored.
- Human beings are rational choice makers. Through a linear or cyclic stepwise process of

problem formulation, goal setting, analysis, implementation and evaluation improvements can be realised.
• Human beings can be treated like objects.

The positivist professional is able to:
• Use (quasi-) experimental and quantifiable methods to test predetermined hypothesis under carefully controlled conditions.
• To use reductionist approaches such as the logical framework to planning.

In reaction to the critique of the positivist paradigm, alternative paradigms have evolved. They include *critical theory* and *constructivism* (Guba, 1990). Both 'critical theory' and 'constructivism' have nurtured the further development of the participatory paradigm.

Critical theory

One of the basic beliefs of 'critical theory', or 'ideologically oriented inquiry' (Guba, 1990), is a rejection onf the positivist claim of value freedom. Nature can not be seen as it 'really is' or 'really works' except through a value window. However, paradoxically, critical theorists do believe that an objective reality or a perception of 'the truth' ultimately is possible under ideal circumstances. The critical model defines truth as *constraint-free consensus* (Mayer, 1996: 42). The criteria for a constraint-free consensus are derived from Habermas' ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1984). In addition, critical scientists support a subjectivist epistemology and believe that inquiry is shaped by the values of the inquirer. Critical theorists take a dialogic approach that seeks to eliminate false consciousness, in order ultimately to enable them to transform the world. Freire's 'conscientisation approach' (Freire, 1974) and Participatory Action Research (Reason, 1994) are examples embedded in the critical science paradigm.

Constructivism

Both positivist and critical scientists contend that objective knowledge ultimately is possible when theories are sufficiently probed and debated. Constructivists have a radically different conception of reality. To them, all reality is socially constructed. It exists in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific and dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them (Guba, 1990). There is not one single but multiple perceptions of truth. Like the critical theorists, constructivists believe in subjectivist epistemology. The inquirer and inquired into are considered fused into a single entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two. Methodologically, constructivists proceeds to identify the variety of constructions that exist and moulds them into as much consensus as possible. This process has two aspects 1) hermeneutics: depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible, and 2) dialectics: comparing and contrasting constructions with respondents.

Thus, the development professional whose practice is rooted in constructivism tends to believe that (Sellamna, 1999; Chambers, 1997; Guba, 1990):
• Realities only exist in the form of multiple mental constructions dependent on the persons who hold them. Realities exist in people's minds. Innovations emerge from social interaction processes in which scientists' and lay-people's knowledge is equally valued.
• The role of the development professional is one of an insider whose values and biases can never be excluded from influencing the outcome.
• In order to deal with societal issues, the participation of all people holding a different perception on the same issue is required.

The development professional whose practice is based on constructivism requires the ability to:
• Depict individual constructs as accurately as possible and compare and contrast them with those of other people.
• Bring individual constructions into as much agreement on action as possible.
• Apply multiple social and locally-specific methods.
• Apply multiple theories.
• Apply the principle 'triangulation' to information-gathering due to the subjective nature of data.

To conclude, be it for pragmatic, normative, ontological or epistemological reasons, participation is increasingly recognised as the golden key to unlock the door to a more sustainable and democratic world. Participation does not happen all by itself. It requires a professional i.e. facilitator with specific beliefs and competencies. Reflections on facilitators in participatory development have generated a serious critique on the paradigm at large, and in particular on the role of the facilitator. Some of the core critique is summarised below.

2.5 Critique on the facilitation professional

Facilitators' non-transparency about the justification for 'participation'
Participation is now part of the normal language of facilitators working for agencies such as NGOs, governments, international development banks, and farmer organisations. Participation is such a fashion that almost everyone claims that participation is part of his or her facilitation work. However, the term *participation has different meanings for different people*, which has created many paradoxes in participatory practice. The term 'participation' has been used to justify the control of the state but also to build local capacity and self-reliance; it has been used to justify external decisions, and to devolve power and decision-making; it has been used for data collection, and for interactive analysis (Pretty, 1997). But, "more often than not, people are asked to participate or dragged into participation in operations of no interest to them, in the very name of participation" (Pretty, 1997: 168). The way facilitators interpret and use 'participation' range from *passive* or *manipulative participation*, *consultative* and *incentive-driven* participation towards the *interactive* and *self-mobilisation* end of the spectrum, where participants jointly decide about and control how their natural and human resources are used *(ibid.: 173)*. Facilitators often apply 'participation' without clarifying what type of participation they are looking for and its application specifics. Such non-transparency easily leads to stakeholders misleading stakeholdersbeing mislead as most types of participation threaten rather than support the goals of sustainable and democratic development.

Facilitators' depoliticised vision
Although, in the field of poverty reduction many facilitators of participatory processes aim to empower 'the masses' and to shift the focus of legitimacy from the political and project elite to the ordinary people, they are criticised for achieving the opposite. As power relations are hardly analysed in terms of structural dimensions rooted in deep histories, the facilitation of participation seems to contribute to strengthening the 'status quo' in terms of position of the of the middle class elite and the power of the international development agencies (Brown, 1997). White (1969) criticises facilitators' failure to address the political dynamics of participation and complex conflicts of interests, between those driving it 'top-down' and those involved from 'bottom–up'. The question of 'who' decides on 'who' participates, 'why', 'how' and on 'whose' terms', usually remains implicit, with the risk that existing power relations are entrenched and reproduced.

Mosse (1994) argues that participatory methods are far from neutral vehicles for (local) knowledge processes. If facilitators assume the poor to be a homogenous category, the designed

collective events create a social context in which the minority (often women) or deviant views are likely to remain hidden. In this way, participation can easily lead to practice in which the dominant interest gains legitimacy. Leeuwis (2000) calls the facilitators of participatory (social) learning approaches who strive for communicative action wishful thinkers. According to Leeuwis, there are considerable theoretical and practical problems in creating conditions for collective action arising from agreement and shared understanding. Even when a facilitator is able to gather all relevant stakeholders, it will not be easy to make actors set aside their conflicting personal and/or institutional interests *(ibid.)*.

Public participation for environmental policy making has often been negatively assessed for not being (totally) fair. Organised interests with large economic stakes often dominate forums. They show limited evidence that lay participation can influence policy. Citizens or other stakeholders feel cheated when they are asked to participate after the major decisions have already been taken by the policy makers. At the end, citizens and other interest groups are left behind with limited trust in public institutions and in the designers of the 'participatory' decision-making processes (Webler & Renn, 1995).

Facilitators' non-theoretical and pragmatic practice

Some social scientists blame facilitators for not making explicit reference to theory. For instance, Richards labels the practice of PRA as superficial pseudo-science or quick and dirty theory; a poor substitute for the real thing (Richards, 1995). Cooke criticises users of participatory approaches for failing to apply social psychology theories. The role of 'risk shifts', 'the Abilene paradox', 'group thinking', and 'coercive persuasion' is usually overlooked in participatory processes (Cooke, 1998: 2). Among many others, Sellamna criticises facilitators for operating in a technique-led mode. He blames the naïve thinking of participation practitioners, when they assume that the sophisticated participatory methods and procedures carry their own meaning with them, and for failing to recognise that meaning can be copied by other people (Sellamna, 1999). Likewise, Guijt and Cornwall (1995) argue that because of confusion about theories, concepts, principles and objectives underpinning participatory approaches, many practitioners take the easiest way and overemphasise the techniques. This phenomenon is reinforced by the recent 'manual and training mania' that focuses on quickly capturing participatory approaches in terms of techniques and managerial procedures, but hardly addresses underlying (theoretical) principles and assumptions. In addition, little attention has been paid to development of skills in facilitating processes of critical analysis, that question underlying values, beliefs and theoretical and methodological assumptions (Guijt & Braden, 1999). The 'manual hype' tends to take facilitators far away from the original aim of overcoming blueprint thinking of set procedures and of encouraging creativity. Facilitators seem to use the same methods in the same way in different contexts. The principle of 'local diversity' appears not to be applied by the facilitators themselves (Guijt, pers.com). Rigidity and lack of innovation characterise some of today's facilitation practices (Guijt & Van Veldhuizen, 1998).

Scoones (1995) explains that the justification for criticising the lack of explicit theories is related to the absence of a conventional disciplinary focus in participatory approaches. He argues that participatory approaches have grown out from practice and not from universities and as such make use of 'action research theory' *(ibid.)*. Others have responded to the critique by making explicit the theoretical perspectives underpinning participatory practices (e.g., system thinking, action science, collaborative learning) (amongst others: Ison & Russel, 2000; Daniels & Walkers, 1996; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Parson & Clark, 1995). However, this does not take away the fact that the absence of explicit (social science) theories or the political agenda characterising participation practices, undermines any debate about where and how 'good and bad practice' can be assessed.

Facilitators' limited scope and scale

Originally most of the participatory approaches claim the necessity of creating long term partnership but practice shows often short-lived, diagnosis oriented fieldwork. The facilitators tend to ceaselessly become engaged in the business of deconstructing and reconstructing life-worlds. The focus seems to be more on discourse than on turning discourse into action. This phenomenon is reinforced by donor policies that tend to squeeze social analysis into tight schedules (Richards, 1995), but also by the way the majority of participatory approaches are methodologically framed. Except from a few such as PTD, the involved activities of most of the participatory methodologies do not permit a focus beyond diagnostic phases.

Especially in the field of poverty reduction, facilitators of participatory processes are often criticised for their focus on the micro level only. Since the early 1990s, mechanisms were sought and tested for the rapid scaling-up of participatory approaches. However, the mechanical use of packages of methods, the failure to influence the institutional culture and the accommodation within bureaucratic procedures (e.g., project cycle, logical framework), stripped away much of the transformational promise of the new approach (Thompson, 1995). Improving facilitators' competence in helping bureaucracies to find fulfilment in disempowering themselves in favour of empowering others, is seen as one of the major challenges, confronting facilitators today (Chambers, 1993).

Facilitators' ethics: Lack of transparency in facilitators' influence and values

Facilitation is part of what one might call the 'helping' or 'caring' professions. The participatory paradigm leaves the facilitator with the noble mission of humility who accompanies participants in their voyage of self-discovery. A more critical look shows a person who strongly influences the choices of the participants and the 'ground rules' of the participatory process. And, who often lacks the competence to reflect on the role of her or his own personal biases and assumptions in the process and its outcomes (Guijt & Cornwall, 1995).

The facilitation profession has ended up with hardly any professional standards to be judged on by. Usually, 'good' or 'bad' practice is only assessed according to the standards of how to apply a method. Moreover, as Sellamna argues, "how can facilitators be criticised anyway as they are told to embrace errors and to use their own best judgement at all times" (Sellamna, 1999:52). Peer review is encouraged to ensure good quality and trustworthiness (e.g., Pretty et al., 1995), but still lacks reflection on an epistemological and ethical level as well as the participation of all stakeholders. Brown (1997) opts for the recognition that changes in the facilitation profession are subject to negotiation involving various interest groups.

2.6 Back to my own research

In this chapter, I described the emergence of the 'participatory paradigm' as the thinking and practice of the facilitators in the case studies are strongly influenced by this paradigm. Although the specific values, practices, and competencies of the facilitators in the cases are discussed in detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis, these characteristics largely correspond with those discussed in 2.2 and 2.3. The facilitators in the cases had taken a constructivist stance. The empirical chapters clarify how this standpoint influenced the way they facilitated participatory processes. Moreover, in this thesis, I take up the challenge to largely address the critique as put forward in section 2.5. Through a critical analysis of my own facilitation experience of participatory processes in the fields of 'poverty reduction', 'agricultural development', and 'natural resource management', I aim to increase transparency on facilitators' practices, values, theoretical and methodological perspectives, and how these can shape processes and outcomes in a particular context. Transparency in roles and influence will help to precise facilitators'

responsibilities and to improve their accountability to the actors with whom they are working. By exploring my own facilitation practice that went beyond the local level and the diagnostic phase, and that addressed the issue of conflict and power, I develop various theoretical, methodological and ethical key ingredients for effective facilitation. The next chapter describes how the analysis of the case studies is methodologically framed.

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[1] Although the 1980s are characterised by 'project cycle thinking' and its implications for planning, among others, Korten (1980) highly questioned the project approach to development and suggested a learning approach to development.

3. Research paradigm and methodology, including a framework for analysis

This chapter describes the research paradigm and methodologies informing the inquiry process that underlies this research. First, I clarify some of the considerations and circumstances present at the beginning and during my research because of their influence on the choice of the research paradigm and methodologies. Next, the chosen research paradigm and the applied research methodologies are presented. At the end of the chapter, I introduce the framework that is used for analysing the case studies.

Often, the terms 'methodology' and 'method' are used synonymously. In this thesis, a distinction is made between the two. The term 'methods' refers more specifically to the individual techniques (e.g., surveys). 'Methodology' is taken more broadly to suggest both multiple methods in a particular sequence as well as their link to theory. It is an overall strategy of constructing specific types of knowledge and is justified by a variety of epistemological assumptions (Morrow, 1994).

3.1 Considerations and circumstances

Research process as a learning process
At the onset of my research, I started with a general interest in facilitation. My overall objective was to demystify the facilitation of participatory processes and to further develop theories and methodologies for more effective facilitation practice. There were only two aspects I was quite sure about at the beginning of my research: firstly, the starting point, as constituted by the experience of being a member of teams of facilitators, secondly, the end goal was to achieve a dissertation providing insights in the facilitation of participatory processes that would be of scientific importance, but would also lead to immediate improvements in its practice. However, the path to reach this end was open and I wanted to keep it like this. I preferred to consider the research path as a discovery learning process rather than planning each step in detail beforehand. I expected insights to be gained along the way through a process of case data collection, analysis, reflection, reading and sharing, which would guide my decisions on the next steps in the inquiry process. Through interplay of scientific insights developed in and for (improved) practice, I expected the inquiry to provide useful insights in the facilitation addressing complex change. Therefore, I decided to search for research methodologies that would allow me to conduct and present this research as a learning process.

Paradox between practising facilitation of participatory processes and doing research on it
A second consideration that has influenced the choice of the research methodologies is the tension between doing the job i.e. facilitation of participatory processes, and studying it. In my profession as a facilitator, I believe in and strive for a worldview that is more holistic, pluralist, and egalitarian, that is essentially participatory. I believe that complex issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable agriculture and environmental degradation require an active partici-pation of actors because no single person, organisation or party, holds the key to address these issues on her/his/its own. Therefore, in my profession, whenever appropriate, I try to involve relevant stakeholders in the entire process. However, conducting a Ph.D. involves predominantly myself; it is quite in contrast to my consultancy practice. A participatory worldview can not be taken off like a coat. Therefore, I decided to look for a research methodology providing opportu-nities to incorporate the perspectives of co- facilitators, peers, and other actors with whom I had been working in the case studies. However, soon I discovered limitations and failures in bringing a participatory perspective into my research. Many actors I could not reach for ongoing

discussion because of geographical distance and the lack of communication infrastructure. Of those I could reach, many of them were simply not interested in the subject of facilitation as such. They considered facilitation just a means to an end that was not worth studying. Especially when it came to theory, most of them lost interest and left me alone with my academic exercise. Therefore, only a few actors who were engaged in facilitation practice themselves have been involved in the analysis of the case studies. In the end, although the co-facilitators and peers have not controlled my research process, the aim of involving relevant actors in this study has influenced the choice of the research methodology and the choice of the paradigm underlying this research.

Juggling with my roles as both consultant and Ph.D. researcher

A final consideration relates to my double role as both consultant and researcher. I wanted this thesis to be a reflective thesis for which the empirical basis would be the experience in facilitation gained by teams of facilitators of which I had been a member. By the time, I started to think about conducting Ph.D. research and about issues that my research could address, part of the empirical work had been carried out already through a series of consultancy projects. From a research perspective, this created methodological advantages and disadvantages.

In the course of the research, I discovered some advantages of reflecting on professional experiences I had been closely involved in. It is relatively easy to trace what was done, how, why and, to some extent, to elucidate underlying assumptions. Moreover, the close relationship I had (and still have) with my co-facilitators enabled me to explore their part in our experience much better than if I had to only observe and interview them. A real advantage of being an insider of my own research, I discovered, is the facility to obtain information on informal talks and decision-making.

After I had started my research, I soon discovered some limitations and risks of conducting research in this manner. I realised that it would cost me more time to discuss my analysis and preliminary findings with the co-facilitators and peers in order to avoid drawing conclusions on a too limited basis. In addition, reading more and more about peoples' inability to learn, I started wondering if I would be able and daring enough to discover weaknesses in our own professional work and making these known to a wider audience. Perhaps, I would feel embarrassed or even threatened. In addition, I questioned the quality of our facilitation experience for the purposes of this research, as our consultancy work had not been designed to demystify facilitation of participatory processes. I did not start the consultancy assignments with hypotheses to be tested or with research questions to be answered. When we as a team of facilitators accepted an assignment, we were always driven by a practical task that was to be fulfilled within a specific timeframe. Even in the consultancy projects I carried out after I had started my Ph.D., I performed as a trainer, communication expert, or change agent rather than as an academic researcher. Coming back to the university, I became merely a Ph.D. researcher and reflected on our practice in a more academic way by giving scientific meaning to our facilitation experiences. However, the more I became involved in my research, the more both roles became intertwined as the following will show.

The choice not to conduct my research on the basis of falsifying or verifying a given hypothesis, did not mean that we started the facilitation interventions in a theoretical or methodological vacuum. In each intervention, we wanted to try out a concept, a theory, and/or a methodology that we assumed to fit the task at hand. During and after the intervention, I, together with colleagues, reflected on the usefulness of these theories or methodology to accomplish the job and drew conclusions from the reflection for a next consultancy project (figure 3.1).
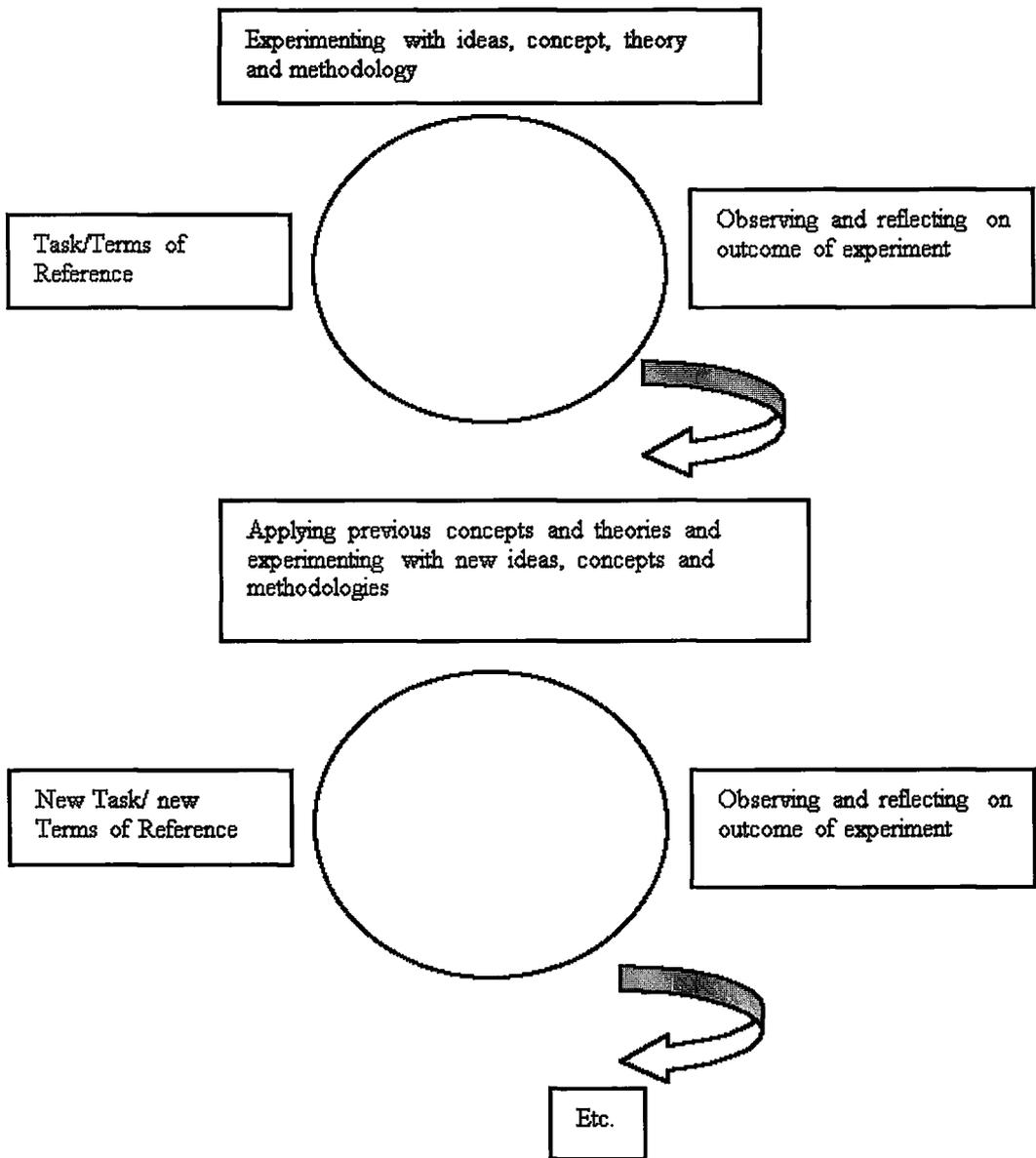
Figure 3.1: Learning through continuous actions and reflections for an improved facilitation performance.

However, the more I became involved in my Ph.D. research, the more the options I experimented with in the consultancy projects as my professionalism became informed by the research. Moreover, the lessons drawn after each intervention were not only used for future consultancy projects, but they increasingly shaped my research process as well. Because of this recursive phenomenon, I needed to look for an alternative research methodology that would not be based on predetermined hypotheses and at the same time would allow me to juggle with my roles as both Ph.D. researcher and consultant.

3.2 Research paradigm: A constructivist epistemology, and 'grounded theory' and 'action research' methodology

A constructivist epistemology

I agree with Ison that for researchers it is important to be aware of and to make explicit one's ontological, and epistemological position as they shape how one sees and acts upon the world (Ison, 1994). From an ontological point of view, I have taken a *relativist* stance (Morrow, 1994; Woodhill, 1999). Consequently, concepts such as 'truth', 'reality' or 'norms' must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society or culture (Bernstein 1983: 8). As opposed to 'realist' or 'positivist' researchers who "believe that there exists a 'reality' *out there* driven by immutable laws of nature" (Guba, 1990: 19), I consider myself a *constructivist* researcher assuming that reality is socially constructed. I believe that each human being holds a personal reality based on his or her perception, interests, and culture. Different people have different but equally valid 'realities' (though not necessarily equally desirable) that are brought forward through language (Maturana & Varela, 1987: 241-245). However, relativism can easily lead to the risk-full thinking that 'everybody is right'. The belief that reality is social constructed does not necessarily means that each construct leads to effective action. For dealing with a specific issue, some constructs appear to be more effective than others.

The so-called objectivity of positivist scientists implies that they believe that 'reality', 'truth', or 'knowledge' exists independently from the observer. Holding a constructivist position, I however believe that the researcher and research object are closely linked. My own values and biases influence what I observe, hear, and read. Therefore, I consider my research a continuous interplay of interpretations of meanings. First, there is the facilitation experience under study that has been the result of an interactive process involving multiple actors including the facilitators. Second, as a researcher studying this experience, what I observed and how I interpreted the data by giving (scientific) meaning to it has been largely influenced by my own interest, values and perspectives. Third, by cross-checking the analysis and findings with some other actors, co-facilitators and peers, I interpreted their interpretations of my analysis and conclusions (that were the result of an earlier interpretation process by myself). Jiggins and Röling (1999) have referred to a similar phenomenon as 'triple hermeneutics'.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe the consequences of a constructivist research paradigm in terms of methodological design. Such a design usually shows *less focus* on: 1) well-formulated hypotheses; 2) a clear distinction between the formulation of hypotheses and their testing; 3) tightly framed sampling frames; 4) structured interview schedules; and 5) predetermined research strategies and methods and forms of analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The characteristics of a constructivist research paradigm fitted my intentions and circumstances of my research. The testing of predetermined hypotheses has driven neither my facilitation practice, nor my research on it. However, I realise that looking at the learning process I went through in my work as consultant (see figure 1), one could argue that it looks similar to the testing undertaken in positivist research. Within each intervention a kind of 'hypothesis' i.e. a theoretical and methodological idea to try out, was hidden. Notwithstanding it was not so much the verification or falsification of a (implicit) hypothesis, but the empirical output of a previous action that formed the driving force behind each new intervention. As such, the empirical output formed the 'testing' ground, not the implicit hypothesis. Likewise, the research on my facilitation practice was not guided by formal hypotheses. I started from an interest in the area of facilitation of participatory processes, but not from a clearly defined research problem. Only after reading relevant literature on facilitation and a quick exploration of the consultancy projects already undertaken, I was ready to formulate a first set of research questions that were reformulated several times. In compliance with the *research methodology of 'grounded theory'* most of the theoretical and

methodological insights were developed in the course of the research process and not before hand.

Research methodology: Grounded theory

'Grounded theory' is a qualitative research methodology. Strauss & Corbin (1998: 273) define 'grounded theory' as "a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in empirical data systematically gathered and analysed". The starting point is not so much an existing theory formulated in terms of hypotheses that the researcher wants to verify with case studies, but the gathered data itself is used to develop new theory. This generation of theory from data emerges through looking systematically for patterns in similarities and differences in events that are compared with each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) first developed 'grounded theory' as a new way of thinking about and conceptualising data. They developed 'grounded theory' in reaction to the traditional research approaches focussing on testing hypotheses rather than developing theories. Since its intro- duction 35 years ago, a number of guidelines and procedures have evolved to enhance the effec- tiveness of the methodology. Nowadays, 'grounded theory' does not only focus on the *generation of theory* from the data. If *existing* (grounded) *theories* seem appropriate to be investigated, then these may be *elaborated* and *modified* as well by comparing the 'goodness of fit' with data as it is collected and analysed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the course of time, 'grounded theory' has been developed by various schools that vary in thinking about the role of the researcher. In the beginning, the developers of the 'grounded theory' held a positivist position regarding the relationship between the research and the researched. Presently, some researchers continue to hold a positivist position, proposing that researchers keep their distance and independence from the phenomena observed. Researchers following the Straussian school, such as Strauss and Corbin, have accepted a constructivist stance, acknowledging that researchers carry into the research their experience and values as well as explicit theories when interpreting the data, to arrive at new conceptual categories and theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Influenced by 'Symbolic Interaction' that theoretically underpins 'grounded theory', Strauss and Corbin stress that the interpretation of the researcher *must* include the interpretation and multiple perspec- tives of the actors under study. In this, the researcher takes responsibility for interpreting what is observed, heard, or read (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A central characteristic of the analytical approach of 'grounded theory' is the method of '*constant comparative analysis*' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The making of comparisons starts as soon the researcher starts forming provisional conceptual categories from the data. Each incident (or sub- category) within a category receives a code, to allow comparison among incidents within the same category. The coding will prompt the researcher to decide on which phenomenon additional data are required to further develop the conceptual categories. In a later stage, the categories are compared. This process of constant comparison and theoretical sampling continues until data gathering and comparative analysis raise no new examples and no additional properties of a conceptual category can be found. At this point, a 'grounded theory' can be formulated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Pursuing the principles of 'grounded theory' methodology, the following steps have been taken in this research:
1) I started from an interest in the area of facilitation of participatory processes involving multiple actors, but not from a clearly defined research problem.
2) I read substantive literature about the subject to develop understanding on the state of the art of facilitation, on possible research questions and on the justification of the study.
3) I quickly reviewed a number of consultancy projects that I had already undertaken, in order to

select case studies from which insights regarding the research questions could emerge.

4) I did a first exploration of project documents, personal notes, minutes of meetings concerning the selected case studies as well as reading scientific publications to develop a general framework for analysing the case studies.

5) For each of the selected cases, I further explored relevant project documents, consultancy reports, personal notes, e-mails, faxes, minutes of meetings to discover thematic *categories*, in this thesis referred to *as facilitation actions*, that could be interesting in the light of answering the research questions. For each case, several actions have been identified on the basis of their assumed relevance for demystifying the role and mental framework of facilitators.

6) Then, I analysed the identified facilitation actions of the first case study for which I used Kolb's learning cycle as analytical framework (see next paragraph). However, I was not satisfied with it and decided to use Bawden's model of praxis (see next paragraph) as alternative analytical framework.

7) With the use of this new analytical framework, I turned back to the first selected case. I explored all actions by looking at the facilitators' values, the theories, and methodologies used to act upon a perceived context. The analysis of each action and a comparison of the various outcomes helped me to develop general concepts.

8) Meanwhile, together with co-facilitators and peers, I co-authored a number of (theoretical) articles inter-weaving a number of concepts relevant to facilitation (Lightfoot et al., 2001a. Lightfoot et al., 2001b; Groot & Maarleveld, 2000). These articles, combined with the reactions to them, also contributed to the development of general concepts.

9) I continued the analysis of the second case with a new framework and used the same procedure as in the first case.

10) I rewrote my research methodology chapter and, as I gained better insight into the methodologies and analytical framework, I decided to re-analyse the case studies. New concepts and key concepts emerged as well as a number of critical observation points that I considered crucial for effective facilitation.

11) I cross-checked the analysis and preliminary findings with co-facilitators and reviewed my work based on their reactions.

12) Then I linked and integrated concepts and key concepts derived from the different case studies and begun drafting a grounded theory, including methodological insights, for facilitation.

13) Next, I studied relevant scientific and professional studies to compare and integrate my 'preliminary' grounded theory with existing theoretical and methodological insights. A new 'drafted' grounded theory was written and again was discussed with peers and some co-facilitators. At last, I incorporated their reaction to formulate a grounded theory on facilitation of participatory processes that address complex change.

Due to this way of working, the grounded theory as formulated in chapter 10 is in fact a synthesis or an extraction of earlier drafted 'grounded theories'. For the development of a 'grounded theory and methodology' on the facilitation of participatory processes, I used the description by Strauss and Corbin of what grounded theory is. According to these researchers, a 'grounded theory' consists of *relationships* proposed *among concepts* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In compliance with the characteristics of 'grounded theory', the 'grounded theory on the facilitation of participatory processes' as formulated in chapter 10, has a limited universal character. It is limited in the sense that if elsewhere approximately similar conditions obtain, then approximately similar consequences should occur (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, in line with the grounded theory approach, for each case study I identified various observation points that I consider crucial in terms of their impact on the outcome of the process. Then, I translated these critical observation points into criteria that can be used for assessing facilitation performance.

Research methodology: Action research
I had two reasons for drawing on a second source of inspiration for my research methodology. The first reason had to do with my intention to consider my research process as a discovery learning process. Through continuous reflection and (corrective) action, I expected to learn about 'what works' in facilitation and 'why'. 'Grounded theory' did not give me much support on how to operationalise and present my research as a learning path. The second reason dealt with the use of 'grounded theory'. Although it is stressed that the usefulness of a 'grounded theory' lies in the field of 'understanding' as well as in direct application, the practical applicability is not a necessary requirement (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, I decided to include a second source that emphasises learning through action and reflection, focuses on transforming experience into theory and that in turn informs practice. I expected *action research* to offer a number of suitable methodological principles, although I was aware of the limitations to fully involving all relevant actors in my research.

'Action research' had been developed during the 1930s and 1940s in the US, in reaction to the felt inability of traditional social science to solve social problems. Lewin as pioneer of 'action research' stressed the importance of incorporating lay-knowledge, group discovery and group decision-making and thus participation of local people in social science to improve internal race problems (Lewin, 1947). He advocated eroding the expert-subject distinction and promoted the right of the individual to influence the research process. Kemmis and McTaggart define 'action research' as:

> *"a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social and educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out"* (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988:5).

Even more appropriate for this research is the definition of Bawden who describes 'action research' as

> *"a particular way of critical learning about events in this world in order to change them. It combines theory with practice into a critical process"* (Bawden, 1991: 10).

In this definition, the term 'critical' refers to the idea that those involved in the research not only look for improved practices, but also to develop themselves into self-critical agents of change with regard to aspects constraining their practices. Or as Argyris and his colleagues have put it "the intended change obtained through action research involves *re-education,* a term that refers to changing patterns of thinking and acting that are presently well established in individuals and groups. The intended change is typically at the level of values and norms expressed in action" (Argyris et al., 1985: 9). I felt that the critical aspect or re-education (of myself in the first place and perhaps of some colleagues as well) was important for my research because I had experienced that facilitation had much to do with assumptions of facilitators themselves.

In brief, 'action research' involves iterative cycles of action, reflection, observing and planning (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991) (figure 3.2). Its focus is on immediate, practical problem-solving. The learning occurring in 'action research' is progressively (and publicly) achieved by doing and making mistakes following this self-reflective spiral of planning, acting observing, reflecting, replanning, etc. As the process continues, increased knowledge, improved practices and critical learning are obtained.

Zuber-Skerritt's action research spiral is quite similar to the spiral of intervention I have gone

Observe

Reflect   Plan   Reflect   Revised
                                                                    plan

Act   Act
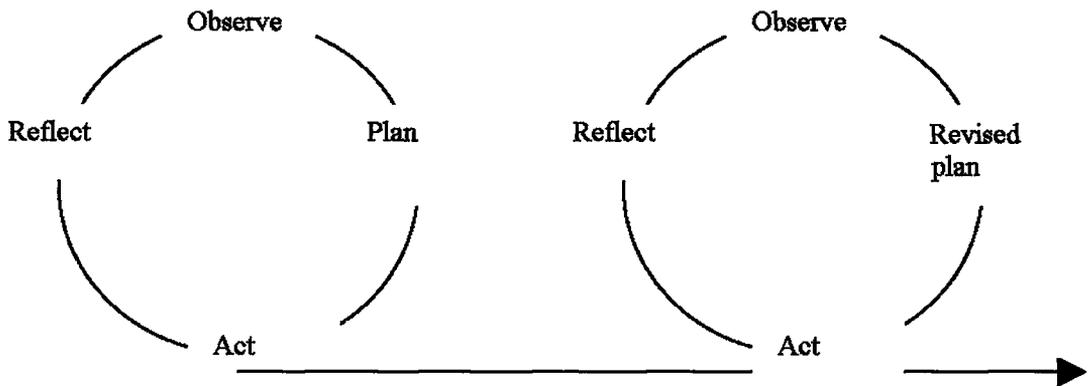
Figure 3.2: The action research spiral (Aadapted from Zuber-Skerrit, 1991: 127).

through in the series of consultancy missions (figure 1 in 3.2) and consistent with the way I wanted to do research on the experience. So, by taking into consideration that:

> "Action research is intended to contribute simultaneously to basic knowledge in social science and to social action in everyday life" (Argyris et al., 1985:9).

I decided that the action research methodology could provide useful insights in how to further operationalise and present my own research as a learning process.

3.3 Quality assurance in constructivist research

Positivist researchers tend to look for causal explanations, predictions and generalisations and use the conventional criteria 'internal validity', 'external validity', 'reliability' and 'objectivity' to persuade their audience that their findings can be trusted. To constructivist researchers, the ultimate goals of the inquiry are ideographic explanations, hence interpretations of individual cases that capture their particularity and uniqueness. These explanations are based on interpretative procedures and focus on understanding and not on prediction or generalisation. Over the last few decades, several constructivist researchers have opposed the use of conventional evaluation criteria and have looked for alternative criteria to assure and judge the quality of the research. Based on the work of Guba and Lincoln (1985), Pretty and his colleagues developed a set of 12 criteria for judging the trustworthiness of a research process. In the course of time, many researchers in the field of qualitative research have also worked on alternative criteria to judge the quality of the inquiry process (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Heron, 1988). Based on the work of all these researchers, I have listed a number of alternative criteria that I used to ensure rigour and quality in my own research (see box 3.2).

3.4 Framework guiding the analysis of the case studies

After a first quick exploration of diverse consultancy projects, I selected three case studies for which I still had sufficient data and from which I expected that a 'grounded theory' and method-ological insights for facilitation could emerge. The first case study deals with the *facilitation of a privatisation process in Senegal.* In the second case, I explore the *facilitation of a 'linked local learning' process in Kenya.* The third case addresses facilitation at a meta-level by analysing the *facilitation of facilitators' learning.*

Box 3.1: Criteria to ensure rigour and quality in my research.

• Intense engagement among various people for building trust and support and learning the particulars of the context.
• Triangulation by using multiple sources, methods, investigators and disciplines.
• Participants' and peer checking.
• Auditing trail: careful documentation of the conceptual development so that interested parties would be able to reconstruct the process by which I reached conclusions.
• Impact on stakeholders' capacity to know and act.
• Making explicit the techniques and methods that have been used to ensure the integrity and validity in terms of "does the given explanation fit the description".
• Making explicit what the researcher brings to the study in terms of assumptions, experience and qualifications.
• Development of concepts grounded in the data.
• Relating concepts systematically.
• Bringing broader conditions into the analysis.
• Systematic engagement in cycles of action and reflection.

(Source: Adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Pretty et al., 1995; Heron, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

When I started to study these cases, I recognised the need for an analytical framework that could accommodate the research questions underlying this study (see chapter 1). Because I considered my Ph.D. research a learning process, I first decided to use the four interrelated elements of 'Kolb's experiential learning cycle' as analytical framework (see figure 3.3). By pursuing multiple iterative experiential learning cycles, I expected to make transparent my learning 'progress' over time, within and among the cases. In addition, because experiential learning focuses on knowledge generated on the basis of context specific experience, I assumed the model would assist me in generating theory through reflection on my own facilitation experiences.
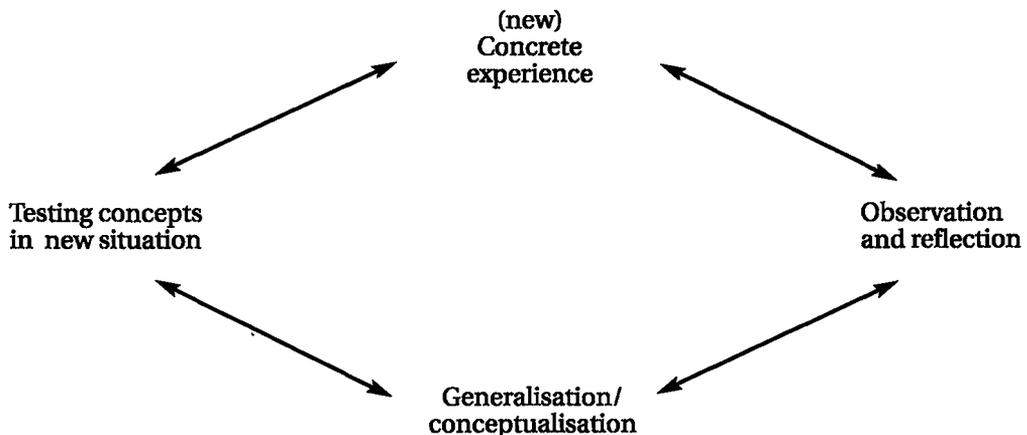
Figure 3.3: Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984)
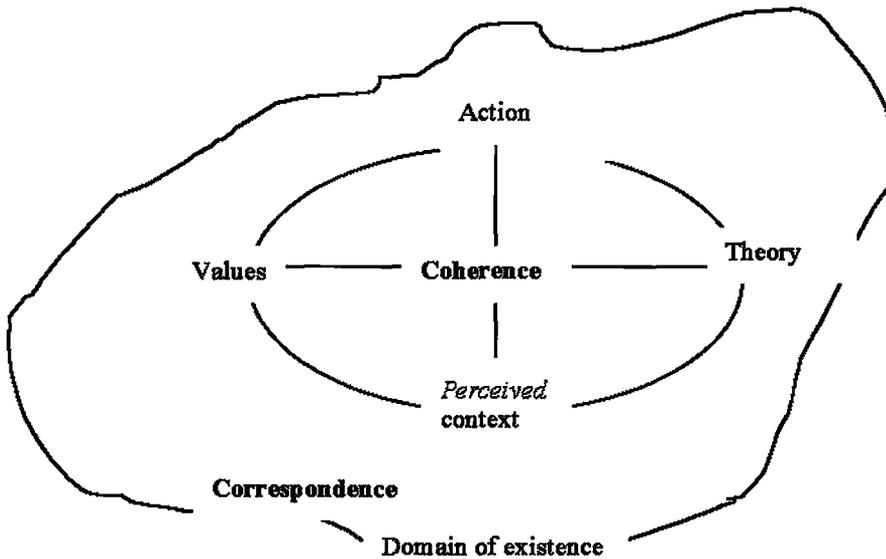
Figure 3.4: Bawden's model of praxis (Adapted by Röling, 2000)

Soon, I discovered limitations to Kolb's learning cycle in relation to my purpose. Because I was not able to transform all lessons drawn from an earlier experience into active experimentation in a subsequent experience, I could not make much use of the iterative character of the cycle. In addition, Kolb's learning cycle did not help me very much in addressing the ethics of facilitators that I felt were important to deal with (see chapter 1 in 1.2).

At this point, I came across Bawden's model of praxis (figure 3.4). Bawden defines praxis as "the way theories, practices and ethics are interrelated with each other by people in their everyday actions. Praxis can be considered the property of individuals that emerges from the interaction of theories (beliefs) they hold, the actions that they practice, the values they assume and the contexts that they interpret of the world around them" (Bawden, 2000: 2). Röling adapted Bawden's notion of praxis by relating it to a larger context or 'domain of existence' with in which the individuals are structurally coupled . Röling also made explicit the *coherence* and *correspondence criteria* to assist users of the model in learning about consolidations or changes in praxis and how to self-renew.

I was attracted by (the adapted version of) Bawden's model as a framework to reflect and to learn about the three facilitation experiences in which I had taken part. It covered my initial research questions and in addition, it allowed me to explore these questions in a systemic way. A focus on praxis would help me to explore the facilitation experiences by studying for each case the perceived facilitation context, the facilitation actions, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the facilitators' values. It would assist me to find out how these elements interact and then to study the whole. I was attracted by the opportunity to systemically explore my praxis because I had noticed that often although the literature on facilitation deals with practice, methods and procedures (e.g., PLA Notes; Pretty et al., 1995; Van Veldhuizen et al., 1997), and sometimes with theory (e.g., Heron, 1988; Schwarz, 1994), . However, these two elements rarely are linked. When they are, they are not complemented by examination of the role of the facilitators' values and perceptions, whereas it had became increasingly clear to me that these aspects significantly influence the choices made in facilitation. The four elements of praxis are

related and therefore it would make no sense to look at them in isolation. In addition, examination of the relation among actions, perspectives, values, and context is in line with the constructivist paradigm that assumes that perceptions of the thereality of the context not to exist irrespectivare constructed by ely of the human observer. and not to be objectively knowable.

As people tend to look for internal logical coherence in decision-making strategies, I expected the use of the *coherence criterion* (i.e. *consistency-seeking* through among the four elements), to assist me in discovering consistencies and inconsistencies in my own facilitation praxis. The search for cConsistency-seeking through my own experience would elucidate points of reflection that would lead, in some cases, to consolidation in my praxis. In other situations, it would help me to discover restrictive traps in my own praxis and to think about how to get out of them.

In addition, I realised that to be able to assess the effectiveness of my praxis I would need to do more than look only at consistency. Bringing actions, context, theories, and values into full coherence, does not necessarily imply that my facilitation praxis correspond to the larger context or domain of existence in which I was operating. .In this respect Röling (2000: 22) puts forward "consistency-seeking iteration through the elements gradually gels into a configuration which blinds the person or collective to the changes in the environment". To break through the bondage of such self-referential practice, he suggests adding the use of the *correspondence criterion* to assess the extent to which praxis leads to effective action in the domain of existence. The correspondence criterion is about maintaining the structural coupling between the facilitator's praxis and the domain of existence in which he or she is operating. In the cases studied, the application of the correspondence criterion is referred to as the assessment of the effectiveness of my the facilitation praxis.

When, I decided to use (the adapted version of) Bawden's model as a framework to analyse the case studies, I also adapted the model slightly by adding the concept 'methodology' to the element of theory. For each of the three cases, I applied Bawden's model several times depending on the number of selected facilitation actions. For each of these actions, I used Bawden's model to make explicit how the facilitators perceived the facilitation context, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the facilitators' values. Next, I systemically explored these actions by looking for consistencies and inconsistencies to discover the building blocks for a 'grounded theory' on facilitation as well as the values that would go along with them. Moreover, for each facilitation action I applied the correspondence criterion to help me to renew my own actions in order to better fit 'reality'. In the next chapter, I describe the theoretical and method-ological perspectives the facilitators used in the facilitation of the privatisation process in Senegal. I have based the analysis on my own project notebook, the material and exercises the facilitators used in the process, and project documentation and reports. As in all such attempts, the analysis carries the dangers of recall, that the eyes of the present blur and mis-represent the past. But, re-reading the jokes and stories that were recorded at the time, also brings the vividness of experience again to life, and the values that informed that experience. Moreover, the relevant chapters of the three case studies have been read and commented on by my co-facilitators.

4 The Senegal case: The theoretical and methodological foundations

At the end of 1994, a Dutch colleague and I were invited to facilitate (a part of) the privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in the North of Senegal. In this chapter, I make explicit the theoretical and methodological perspectives that the facilitators used in their work. They were asked to strengthen the capacity of the farmer organisations in order to enable them to cope with the forthcoming disengagement of the donors of the SAED/IAM irrigation project. After reading some (project) documents and talking with people who had been involved in the project, the facilitators perceived the issue at stake as complex. The complexity was considered to be caused by various interrelated (bio)physical, economic and political factors and the involvement of multiple actors having different perceptions and interests.

Superficially, the facilitation performance was more guided by ideology than by theory. However, a critical look at how the facilitators perceived the issue at stake and how they acted upon it shows a clear theoretical and methodological bias that largely shaped the participatory process and it outcome. First, I summarise these perspectives in a *descriptive* way as to clarify what they are about. In the next chapter, I come back to these theoretical and methodological perspectives in more *analytical* manner. Then, I look at how the facilitators have used these perspectives, the coherence with their values, the way they perceived the context and the actions undertaken as well as at the effectiveness of their praxis. So, this chapter does not provide a state of the art view of theoretical and methodological perspectives, but it describes the way the facilitators applied these perspectives and the rationale for their choice.

4.1 'Soft systems thinking', 'Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems' and 'Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems'

The invitation to intervene in Senegal came a few years after I had started working at the Department of Communication and Innovation Studies of Wageningen University[1]. My reason for joining the academic world was the need for new perspectives after living and working for 3.5 years in agricultural extension and development in the rural areas of Burkina Faso. My educational background in tropical agronomy had helped me to develop useful technical knowledge and practical skills, but I felt I missed a social science foundation. Therefore, I decided to look for social theories and related methodologies that would enable me to improve my performance as a development practitioner.

Among the first theoretical perspectives I came across was *soft systems thinking*, and in particular the *Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems* (AKIS) perspective (Röling, 1988). I became interested in it as I felt it could help to improve my performance as a development professional. The AKIS perspective is an application of systems thinking and in particular of soft systems thinking. Systems or systemic thinking has emerged as a meta-discipline in response to the limitations of the reductionist nature of modern, discipline-based science (Checkland, 1990). Systems thinking is usually referred to as looking at relationships amongst the parts and focusing on the whole rather than on isolated elements. Several authors (Wilson & Morren, 1990; Ison & Russell, 2000) propose the use of systems thinking as a way to understand and facilitate complex issues of both a physical and social nature through the insights provided by the metaphor of a 'system'. The dimensions of a system include 'the boundaries', 'the external environment', 'the components', 'the emergent property', and 'a set of hierarchically organised and interconnected subsystems'. Systems are parts of and are interconnected to other systems. Essential is the idea that the characteristics of a system's components can only be understood in the context of a

whole. Each part comes into being in relationship with other parts. A system has emergent properties, which means that in general the whole is more than the sum of its constituent parts.

Influenced by constructivism, systems thinking has been further developed into a distinction between *hard and soft systems*. Hard systems thinkers take the world as being systemic. They consider systems to exist and to have a clear purpose and well-defined boundaries. Hard systems analysis is concerned with mechanical or relatively simple administrative or biophysical problems and is thus concerned with settings in which clear-cut goals can be set, performance maintained and implementation achieved (Woodhill, 1999). Hard systems thinkers experience biophysical but also social phenomena as constant, regular, reoccurring and predictable. Checkland (1989), one of the founders of the soft systems thinking perspective, argues that problems will occur when hard systems thinking is applied to problem situations in which human perceptions, behaviour or action seem to be dominating factors and where goals, objectives and even the interpretation of events are all problematic. A soft systems thinker experiences phenomena, including the social ones, as dynamic, chaotic, changing and unpredictable. Soft systems thinkers do not take the world to be systemic but think it is sometimes useful to deal with it as if it were systemic. They consider soft systems to be deliberate social constructs. Soft systems exist only to the extent that people agree on their goals, their boundaries, their membership, and their usefulness (Röling & Wagemakers; 1998). Röling defines a soft system as "the articulated network of actors (individuals or organisations) expected to work synergistically to support innovation in a given domain of human activity" (Röling, 1994: 17).

As an operational tool for soft systems thinking, Checkland (1989) developed the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as a problem-solving methodology for ill-defined problem situations where humans are undertaking activities that achieve some purpose. SSM has proven to work successfully in situations where people who are involved in it, perceive and interpret the world in their own way and make judgements about it, using standards and values which may not be shared by others (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). In SSM use is made of system models that are considered abstract conceptualisations of patterns of thoughts which are set against the perceived (experiential) world to more adequately intervene in it, or more generally, to learn about it (Engel, 1995).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the role of knowledge and information processes among actors in improving their innovative capacity received high attention in extension science. In Wageningen, a special application of soft systems thinking called the *Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems* (AKIS) perspective came into being (Röling, 1988; Röling & Engel, 1989). This perspective focuses attention on aspects such as 'stakeholders' who have a stake in the issue, 'actors' who have the agency to act upon the issue, actors' perceptions on the issue at stake, their objectives, their relationships, their tasks and their information needs and preferences in sources of knowledge. Or, in other words the AKIS perspective focuses on how actors (inter)act together in the creation, adaptation, sharing, storage and application of knowledge and information (Engel, 1995). As the AKIS perspective is epistemologically underpinned by constructivism, if one uses AKIS one assumes that knowledge is socially constructed. Over the years, the focus has shifted away from knowledge and information processes to learning about how actors are socially organised (or not) for handling problematic societal issues.

To apply AKIS as an analytical perspective to design and evaluate interventions, an application of soft systems methodology called *Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems* (RAAKS) has been developed (Engel, 1995) (see box 4.1). If used in a participatory way, RAAKS encourages participants to regard themselves as actors forming a soft system to improve a jointly felt problem situation. It can help them to analyse the way they socially (inter)act and to jointly develop strategies to respond to complex situations. Meanwhile, the application of RAAKS contributes to

raising the quality of collective decision-making and action among the actors themselves (Engel & Salomon, 1997).

Box 4.1: Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS) (An executive summary).

RAAKS is a (participatory) action-research methodology for analysing and improving social (inter)action for innovation in complex problem situations. It helps professionals and other stakeholders to perform a strategic diagnosis focussing on actors attribute features such as interest and perceptions as well as on relational aspects like information and knowledge. A RAAKS exercise consists of three phases:

Phase A: Problem definition and system identification
Phase B: Constraints and opportunity analysis
Phase C: Articulation of intervention analysis

For each phase, relevant windows and tools are provided to explore various facets of the social organisation of innovation development (e.g., communication, actors' objectives and missions, information sources, linkages and co-ordination). The outputs of a RAAKS exercise are joint agreements on strategies to improve collective innovative performance.

(Source: Engel and Salomon, 1997)

In the Senegal case, the facilitators expected the AKIS perspective and RAAKS to provide the actors with useful insights for improved (collective) action. Both facilitators had experienced before that AKIS and the use of the RAAKS windows can offer actors a meaningful fresh perspective, because they often tend to deal with their problems from a technical or marketing perspective only. In addition, the facilitators had good experience with RAAKS for organising a systemic and systematic process of joint problem-formulation and analysis in search for opportunities to improve a problematic situation. Therefore, the facilitators decided to apply the AKIS perspective and RAAKS in the facilitation of the privatisation process.

4.2 Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation and Participatory Rural Appraisal

At the time of the facilitation intervention in Senegal, personally I was very much intrigued by emerging methodologies such as Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) with which initially promising results had been gained. Before the Senegal experience, I had take part in a study on the design of PM&E processes (Groot &Boon, 1992). The study aimed to provide a participatory perspective on M&E as an alternative to traditional M&E. Traditionally, it had long been important (and still is) for funding agencies to assess actual change against stated objectives, and thus to judge whether assistance has been successful or not. Traditional M&E activities usually involved people from hierarchically higher levels evaluating lower levels, against indicators determined by the first. M&E used to be carried out by lower level actors for the benefit of the higher levels. However, influenced by the emerging participatory paradigm, changes had taken place in the field of M&E as well. Alternative i.e. participatory forms of M&E were increasingly used for the purpose of internal learning and improvement (e.g., Marsden et al., 1994; Patton, 1987; Feuerstein, 1986). PM&E had proven to have the potential to improve mutual understanding, mutual accountability and to strengthen organisational and institutional reform (Marsden et al., 1994). In the 1992 study, the authors developed a learning frame addressing key questions such as the 'why', 'for and with whom', 'what', 'how' and 'when' of it (Groot & Boon, 1992). These questions appeared to be helpful in

designing PM&E processes. In the Senegal case, the facilitators decided to use these questions also to stimulate actors of the SAED/IAM project to (jointly) monitor and evaluate the changes that occurred in the process towards privatisation.

The early 1990s showed the first promising reviews of results in the field with the use of other participatory methodologies such as PRA (Chambers et al., 1989; Pretty et al., 1995) (see box 4.2).

Box 4.2: Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (An executive summary).

Though many versions of PRA are in use, it mainly concentrates on analysing, with farmers and other resource users, local farming and livelihood systems and the conditions enabling and/or constraining their development. PRA emerged out of criticisms on its predecessor Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA was developed in the 1970s in response to the need for methods of information gathering and analysing that were more multidisciplinary and less time consuming than survey approaches. Increasingly, RRA was considered better and more cost-effective for outsiders to learn from rural people as they generated data and discussed the research findings. However, these people were excluded from any analysis (Scoones & Thompson, 1994). Criticism with respect to this point lead to the emergence of PRA with a change in focus from rapid collection of information to facilitate local communities to generate, represent and analyse their own data (Guijt & Van Veldhuizen, 1998). The most critical differences that PRA encourages is rethinking the relationship between development agents and local residents, and not just on the information that is generated by those involved. PRA makes use of a rich menu of methods to enable reflection on local circumstances in new ways by encompassing different perspectives on the resource system being analysed leading to (improved collective) action (Aadapted from Scoones & Thompson, 1994):
• Group performance methods (e.g., team contracts, villagers' and shared presentations, report writing).
• Sampling methods (e.g., transect walks, social maps, interview chains, wealth ranking).
• Interviewing methods (e.g., focus group, traditional practices and beliefs, local stories, local songs).
• Visualisation and diagramming methods (e.g., seasonal calendar, venn diagrams, impact diagram, resource-benefit flow diagram).

The encouraging experience I had gained with these innovative methodologies made me decide to use them also in the facilitation process in Senegal. Fortunately, before I went to Senegal, I had gained some experience with the facilitation of a participatory learning process with international students enrolled in a course on participatory methodologies and processes (Jiggins & Röling, 1994). Still I remember my excitement in experiencing a process that empowered students to progressively take control over their own learning, as well as the realisation that the process requires a sharing attitude on the part of the facilitator and specific analytical and process skills. I also discovered the benefits of making use of the diversity of experience of the participants and the limitations of my own knowledge. I experienced the power of PRA methods in making peoples' experiences and perceptions transparent, in analysing and jointly developing opportunities for improvement as well as in tracking change. However, I had gained these experiences in a relatively safe classroom setting and I was looking forward to an opportunity to practice my acquired facilitation skills in a complex setting outside the academic world. Therefore in the Senegal case, I did not hesitate to add on the use of PRA and PM&E to RAAKS in the design of the facilitation process. At the time I applied PM&E, my Dutch colleague was no longer involved in the project. I worked together with Senegalese facilitators who were members of the project's training division. They all had a technical agricultural background and were not

familiar with participatory methodologies. I organised an on the job trajectory to enable them to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes to apply these methodologies in the field.

The above briefly describes the theoretical and methodological perspectives the facilitators applied to facilitate the privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project. In the next chapter, I further unravel this experience by relating these theoretical and methodological perspectives to the facilitators' values, the actions they undertook, and the way they perceived the intervention context.

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[1] At that time the Wageningen University was still called Wageningen Agricultural University.

5 The facilitation of a privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in Senegal[1]

This chapter builds upon the previous one and further explores the praxis of the facilitation of the privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in North Senegal, for which I use Bawden's model (see chapter 3). Its four constituent elements i.e. the perceived context, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, the facilitation actions, and the facilitators' values as well as the interrelationships among these elements and the emergent property are used as lenses enabling me to make transparent and discuss:

• How the facilitators perceived the facilitation context and how they acted upon it.
• How the theoretical and methodological perspectives were used and the outcome achieved.
• How the facilitators' values shaped the facilitation praxis.
• The consistency among the four elements (coherence criterion).
• The effectiveness of our facilitation praxis (correspondence criterion).

I begin this chapter with a description of the facilitation context, as the facilitators initially perceived it. Then, the facilitators' values are explored. Hereafter, the case study is split up into four facilitation actions. These actions form the basis for further exploration of the facilitation praxis. Each action will be looked upon in terms of facilitators' 'espoused theories' and their 'theories in use'. Next, each action will be discussed by applying the criteria 'consistency' and 'correspondence' (see chapter 3). Figure 5.1 summarises the structure of this chapter.

The findings on (in)consistencies and (non)effectiveness in the facilitation praxis form potential building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights into the facilitation of participatory processes that address complex issues. These findings are presented in intermezzo I, after this chapter.

Context as perceived by the facilitators			
Facilitators' values and the shaping of praxis			
Facilitation action 1: Negotiation of the objective of the intervention and the approach to be used by the facilitators	Facilitation action 2: Building trust and commitment among actors with different perceptions of realities	Facilitation action 3: Participatory diagnosis of (new) actors, roles, relationships, and competencies to jointly search for options to cope with the future	Facilitation action 4: Developing multiple monitoring and evaluation systems
How the theories and methodologies were used	How the theories and methodologies were used	How the theories and methodologies were used	How the theories and methodologies were used
Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, action 1, theories and methodologies and, values	Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, action 2, theories and methodologies and, values	Consistency-seeking Coherence among the perceived context, action 3, theories and methodologies and, values	Consistency-seeking Coherence among the perceived context, action 4, theories and methodologies and, values
Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)

INTERMEZZO I:
Building blocks for a grounded theory and
methodological insights on facilitation

Figure 5.1: Structure of the case 'facilitation of a privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in Senegal'

The choice of facilitation actions has been made after studying the case material in the light of the research questions (see annex 1 for an overview of all activities during the intervention). I selected four actions that I considered as pivotal because of their impact on the process and outcome. Hereafter, I begin by portraying the perceived facilitation context that formed the working environment and determined the issue at stake.

5.1 Perceived context

Poor economic potentials and disengagement of donors

Voyaging to Ile à Morphil, the island on which the irrigation project is located, used to give me the impression of going to the end of the world and even beyond that. Coming from Dakar, add one hour journey on a manually operated floating 'ferry' and a ride along a dike, cut off by flood water at various places during the wet season, add then another eight hours drive on a tar road and one arrives at the project base in Cascas. There is no public transport and, hitchhiking on a donkey-cart or a project car is the only way to reach the villages. During the rainy season and flooding period, however, some of these villages can be reached only by pirogues (local canoes). Anyway, there is no visitor who would dare to deny the main concern of the local people "nous sommes enclavés" ("we are isolated")

Due to drought and overexploitation, the isle has sparse vegetation and degraded soils. Ile à Morphil is surrounded by the water of the Senegal river (see figure 5.2).

When the river floods in August-October, the lower parts of the riverbanks overflow and the floodplains on both sides of the river become inundated. With a low and irregular annual rainfall of about 200 mm a year (Scheer, 1996), the water of the Senegal river is the true vein of life for plants, animals and the Haalpulaar society living on Ile à Morphil. The flooding of the river creates a rich environment for fish to multiply and for fishermen. The floodplains (or *waalo*) are used to grow sorghum and *niébé* (beans) after the floodwater withdraws. Vegetables and maize are cultivated on the riverbanks (or *faalo*) after the withdrawal of the water. Millet is cultivated under rainfed conditions on the higher sandy village soils (*jeeri*). As a way of spreading risks, farmers' agricultural practices combine dry and wetland cultivation.
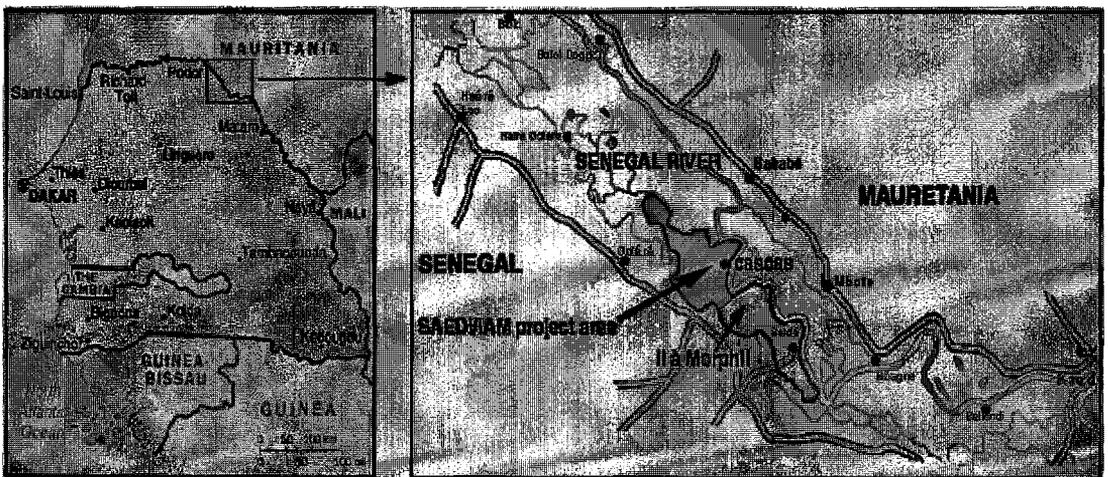
Figure 5.2: Map Senegal and Ile à Morphil

The 1970s were characterised by notorious droughts, hunger, and serious degradation of the ecological environment. The traditional way of farming and fishing was no longer sufficient to meet people's basic needs. New (agricultural) practices were to be adopted. A revival of (donor) interest in irrigation projects emerged with the aim of reducing the need for food aid. The donors' interventions were based on what Diemer describes as a new irrigation paradigm rooted in successes of village-based, small scale irrigation systems (Périmetres Irrigués Villageois or PIVs) (Diemer, 1990). The paradigm recognised the importance of incorporating the social environment and tried to build upon local social and cultural patterns in the design and implementation of irrigation systems.

Hence, in 1977, the KIP-Kaskas project (KIP: 'Kleinschalig Irrigatie Project' ~ 'small scale irrigation project') was founded on Ile à Morphil, in the department of Podor. This project was financed by the Dutch government and jointly implemented by the Wageningen Agricultural University and the SAED (a parastatal body under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture). The project started with the aim of achieving food security and a decline in migration to the big Senegalese towns and European countries. In the course of implementation, these objectives were modified many times. In fact the project reflects all the trends that have characterised Dutch international co-operation policy over the last 20 years, including technological development, poverty alleviation, basic needs approach, women and development, integrated development, ecological sustainability and good governance (Berghauser Pont, 1997).

For the people of Ile à Morphil, irrigated agriculture is a relatively new agricultural practice. Only since the end of the 1970s, have farmers started to assimilate irrigated agriculture into their (traditional) way of life. The importance of irrigated rice and sorghum production for the people on the isle is difficult to assess. Out of the two or three meals taken each a day, one consists of rice. If rice is not (sufficiently) produced, it is bought at the market. It is estimated that only 10-15% of the irrigated rice production is sold at the local market or to rice factories (Groot & Bakker, 1994a). However, irrigated agriculture is not without risks. Costs are high for inputs such as fuel, seeds, pesticides, or maintenance activities, especially after the devaluation of the Franc CFA by 100% in 1994. On the island, traditional agriculture involves risks as well. Although it requires relatively little in terms of labour and financial inputs, it highly depends on rainfall and water management practices in the upper stream areas. Since the early 1990s, the cropping intensity in the PIVs has seriously declined. In the period 1990/1991-1994/1995, the cropping intensity decreased from 85% to 48% (Slob, 1996). The decline in interest has various reasons of which the financial risks are among the most important. However, especially for those households not owning or having access to *waalo* fields, irrigated agriculture forms an essential element of their risk spreading strategy and affects 42% of the households, mainly composed of slaves, artisans and politically unimportant freeborns (Scheer, 1996).

At the time of the facilitation intervention, the SAED/IAM project had just started a process of privatisation as a response to the disengagement of the SAED and the Dutch donor (DGIS). The disengagement of the SAED stemmed from the *"Nouvelle Politique Agricole"* (1984)(NPA). The 'New Agricultural Policy' foreshadowed the introduction of a structural adjustment programme and aimed to decrease the state expenditure on agriculture. The SAED had to accept a significant reduction of employees and, at the same time, a decentralisation was to take place. Consequently, the SAED had to withdraw from many production-related activities such as (subsidised) pesticide and seed supply, credit facilities and the marketing of rice. Its role became to co-ordinate and to advise. Its previous responsibilities were to be turned over to private operators and farmer organisations such as the farmer Federation, the farmer Unions and the Economic Interest Groups (GIEs) In 1994, the minister for Development Co-operation in the Netherlands introduced a new policy prescribing a withdrawal from all projects that had received

support for 10 years or longer. Consequently, DGIS started a disengagement process from the project after 18 years of intervention[2]. DGIS requested a mission of consultants to formulate the contours of a transition project that would develop favourable conditions and strengthen farmer organisations to cope with the expected change. The proposed strategy of the transition project included: 1) improving farmer knowledge and their access to information; 2) strengthening the organising and enterprise capacity of male and female farmers; 3) developing a saving and credit system; and 4) creating a farmer owned unit for construction and maintenance of PIVs and one for marketing (Van Groen et al., 1994). The SAED/IAM project management requested the 'Working group Irrigation Sahel' (WIS), consisting of staff members of the Irrigation Department and the Department of Communication and Innovation Studies of the WAU, to supply a 'trainer-extentionist' to assist in the operationalisation of the proposed strategy. Instead, WIS suggested a series of short missions, I took part in all five of these. Annex 1 provides an overview of these missions and specific facilitation activities carried out during the period November 1994 – July 1996. The annex also provides the names and background of the Dutch and Senegalese facilitators involved.

In short, the (Dutch) facilitators perceived the Senegalese *project context* as *complex* especially due to the involvement of a large variety of actors of whom some would soon disappear from the scene but were still very influential. Others were still unidentified or non-involved but were to play a crucial role. Public and private sector actors were expected to collaborate more closely but there were hardly any who had experience in this. In addition, the complexity arose also because the various parties had different expectations of the consultancy missions, while the (Dutch) facilitators had their own interpretation of what 'should be good and effective' (Bakker, pers.com). Moreover, the future was perceived as very uncertain. Nobody knew whether the national government would abolish subsidies on the imported rice from Thailand. The influence of the devaluation of the FCFA on the functioning of the PIVs was also very unpredictable. Although the increase in the number of farmers who constructed their own private irrigation scheme looked quite promising for the irrigation future of the island, most of the youth abandoned their irrigation schemes to look for better opportunities elsewhere. And, what to say about a whole generation who had grown up in the presence of a project offering presents in the form of (free) technologies (Scheer, 1996), who now had to become familiar with the future reality of surviving on their own strengths.

5.2 Values of the facilitators and how they shaped praxis

Below, I discuss the values of the Dutch facilitators and how they shaped their praxis.

The values of the (Dutch) facilitators were dominated by a strong feeling for *social justice* and *(local) people's democratic right and capabilities to shape their own future*. People need to participate intentionally and with awareness in the creation of their world. The facilitators considered participation as 'a process through which people gain increased control over decisions that affect them'. Their wish to start with a joint formulation of the problematic situation involving a wider range of actors, including the farmers, was driven by their experience that oftentimes local people tend be overruled by people in authority position who are usually the ones who determine what the problems of 'ordinary' people are. They strongly believed that genuine participation of local people is possible and that such involvement could reinforce their capacity to influence their own future. Moreover, the facilitators considered the farmers as a unique source of knowledge and therefore highly important for the process. The facilitators thus strategically involved farmers by approaching relatively a large number of them and creating favourable preconditions for allowing them to express their views.

The facilitators' belief in *multiple perceptions of reality* was decisive for the way they tried to enhance the development of mutual trust, respect, and commitment to the process. For them, everyone's view is heavy with interpretation, bias, and meaning. This implies that there are multiple possible descriptions of any real world phenomenon. The facilitators considered every individual's perception of reality different but equally important. This consideration also explains the facilitators' efforts to include a large set of stakeholders in the process. In addition, the facilitators believed that if 'you want to change people, you have to start with making their perception of reality explicit' (Bakker, pers.com.). The facilitators had observed that so far collective action had failed because each of the actors tended to focus on their own perception only. Therefore, some of the facilitation activities were deliberately designed to encourage actors to accept of the principle of 'multiple perceptions of reality'.

The facilitators were convinced that for dealing with complex issues such as privatisation, relationships among actors are crucial. They believed that by facilitating the development of new linkages among actors and/or the improvement of existing relationships, synergetic collective action could emerge (Bakker, pers.com.).

5.3 Action 1, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the appreciation of praxis

This section explores the first action. It discusses the activity of the facilitators to negotiate the focus of the intervention (5.3.1) and the theoretical and methodological perspectives used (5.3.2). In the last part of this section, I assess the consistency and the effectiveness of the praxis of action 1 (5.3.3).

5.3.1 Action 1
One of the first facilitation actions the facilitators initiated was a process of *negotiation about the focus of the intervention*. In retrospect, I consider this action as crucial as it highly determined who the participants were, the focus, and the methodology of the facilitation process and as such the outcome achieved. It all started before the facilitators even arrived on the spot. Whilst still in the Netherlands, I negotiated the Terms of Reference with key players such as DGIS in The Hague, some staff members of the Irrigation Department and the Department of Communication and Innovation Studies of the WAU and with the Dutch project co-ordinator in Senegal. Soon it appeared that there were at least two different points of view under debate. DGIS headquarters' main interest was to elegantly close the project as soon as possible. For this to happen, DGIS was in favour of a strategy of training representatives of the farmer organisations. DGIS preferred to train the farmer leaders in leadership and financial management, in order to build the necessary capacity to cope with the forthcoming change. The (Dutch) facilitators did not agree with this strategy and proposed a broader focus, in which some members of the WIS supported them. According to the facilitators, coping with disengagement and privatisation would require discussions and negotiations about (new) partnerships, (new) roles, and (new) competence in which a diverse group of actors including farmers, public and private sector actors, would be involved. Therefore, the facilitators opted for a broader focus that aimed at system-wide institutional development as they assumed that this would enable farmers to link up directly with a wide range of actors, including the private and administrative sector. The facilitators believed that direct, interpersonal contact between potentially conflicting interests, by making use of group pressure and face-to-face accountability, would be more likely to improve farmer capacity than training farmers isolated from the market and other special interest groups. So, the facilitators suggested a problem-solving process involving a large number of old and new actors such as traders, project staff, farmers and their leaders, neighbouring farmers and other projects, who would jointly formulate the problem situation and jointly search for constraints and opportu-

nities to deal with the forthcoming change. DGIS regarded this alternative as going two steps backwards. "We (DGIS) know what the problem is, you have to work on the solution" was what the facilitators heard. In the end, DGIS allowed the facilitators to pursue their own ideas, as long as the disengagement of DGIS was taken as an established fact (Groot & Bakker, 1994a). The Dutch co-ordinator of the SAED/IAM project welcomed any assistant who was willing to lighten his burden. However, he felt not always comfortable with outsiders with different points of view on how the project was managed...

Upon arrival in Senegal, the facilitators continued the discussion on the Terms of References with the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Dakar and the SAED's headquarters in St. Louis. The issue of starting with a participatory diagnosis of the problem situation was questioned but they gave the facilitators permission to proceed. During the negotiations with the project management and various project staff members, the facilitators proposed a number of criteria to identify the stake-holders and actors to be invited for active participation in the coming process.

In the discussion about criteria for actor identification, the facilitators made a distinction between *stakeholders* (in French they used the term "acteurs de développement") and *actors* (in French they used the term "acteurs clés dans le développment"). By stakeholders the facilitators meant all those i.e. groups, organisations and individuals who affect and/or are affected by policies, decisions or actions within a particular system (Grimble & Wellard, 1996). A stakeholder is not necessarily *actively* involved in the process. An actor is any stakeholder who has the *agency* to act upon the issue at stake and who is actively involved in the process. The term actor indicates that the participant is considered knowledgeable and capable to strategize their dealings through interaction and negotiation with other actors (Long & Long, 1992).

A good number of actors were listed based on the following criteria: 1) ability to affect decision-making or being (or will be) affected by decisions made; 2) looking for a large diversity of actors to include multiple rich perspectives and building partnership; 3) including both powerful, legitimised and organised farmers and unorganised farmers, gender and youth desegregated; and 4) having an open mindset/ mental flexibility. The facilitators had long discussions about the option to involve farmers from a neighbouring geographical sector (Saldé Wala). They opted for this idea as these farmers belonged to the same Federation. The project management was against, as Saldé Wala did not fall under the project area. However, finally it was agreed that one farmer representing Saldé Wala could participate. The size of the conference room allowed a maximum of 30 participants to communicate face-to-face. In the end about 20 actors, repre-senting various GIEs (male/female), the farmer Unions, the farmer Federation and, the public and private sector, participated intensively in a series of the four workshops (see annex 1, consultancy mission 1, for more details).

The above shows that at the start of the intervention, the Dutch facilitators together with a few other influential actors (e.g., DGIS, Dutch Embassy, project management, project staff) had largely shaped the facilitation process in terms of participants, focus, and approach. However, at that time the facilitators did not realise how determining these first negotiations had been. I now realise that the facilitators' perceptions of the issue at stake and how to act upon it was largely influenced by their theoretical and methodological mindset.

5.3.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used
This section discusses the use of AKIS and RAAKS in the negotiation of the focus of the inter-vention. At the onset of the intervention, the AKIS perspective and the RAAKS methodology influenced the facilitation praxis in the following way.

AKIS and RAAKS assisted the facilitators to juggle with two alternative intervention focuses i.e. 'training of farmer leaders' versus 'institutional development involving multiple actors, and to link these focuses to relevant participants i.e. 'irrigating farmers and their leaders only' versus 'a wider range of actors'. As such, AKIS and RAAKS allowed the facilitators to make visible and discuss different objectives of the intervention i.e. 'capacity development of farmer leaders' versus 'institutional development'. Or, in systems terminology, AKIS and RAAKS assisted them in *bringing two alternative soft systems into existence by defining its actors, its boundaries and objective.*

5.3.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis
The facilitation praxis that aimed to bring the soft system into being (figure 5.3) has not been fully coherent. Within their praxis, the facilitators experienced a significant gap between the perceived (policy) context on the one hand, and on the other hand the used theoretical and methodological perspectives, and their values. The combination of AKIS, RAAKS, and genuine participation required a policy context favouring active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the 'definition of the SAED/IAM irrigation system' by identifying its actors, objectives, and boundaries. However, at the onset of the intervention, the policy context (DGIS, Dutch Embassy, SAED) was not supportive of this idea.

I now realise as a result of the analysis presented that at the start of any intervention, it is important to purposefully facilitate a process of 'bringing a soft system into existence' by formulating its objectives, its boundaries, and its actors. It is important for facilitators to realise that often a few influential actors, including the facilitators themselves, decide on the definition of the system. It appears that facilitators have a choice whether to accept certain predetermined rules as a frame within which their intervention will take place, or to regard these regulation subjects of negotiation. Looking back at the facilitation praxis in Senegal, the questioning of the usefulness of the 'training of farmer leaders' strategy and opting for 'institutional development' was important, but a relatively minor change in the game. Interesting to mention is that a new project co-ordinator, who joined the project two years after the facilitators' intervention, decided to radically change the project focus towards the macro-economic and political level as well as

Action 1: Negotiating the objective and approach of the intervention

Values:
Genuine participation of local people to increase their influence over their own development, Every persons' knowledge is unique and valuable

Facilitation praxis

Theories/methodologies
Soft systems thinking, AKIS, RAAKS

Perceived context:
Project setting
Disengagement of donors
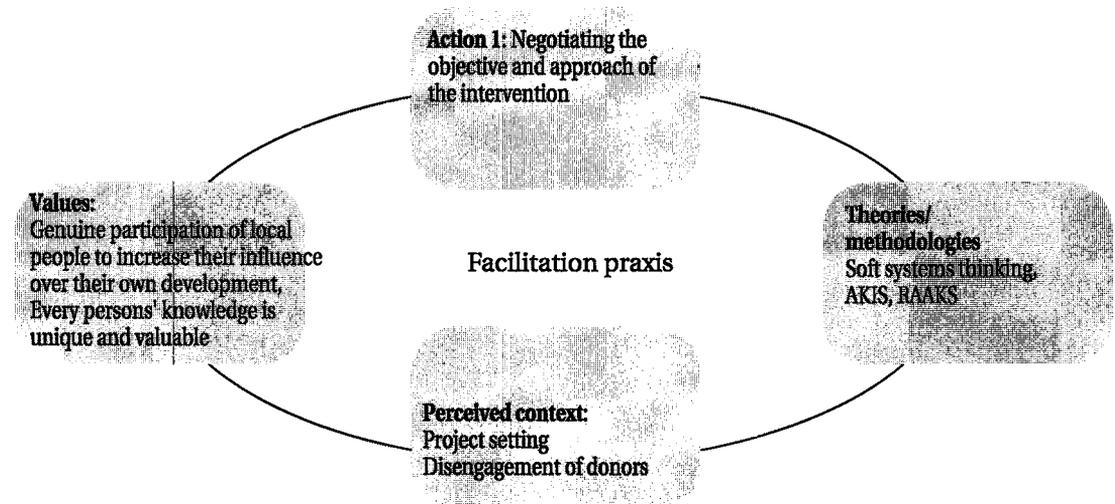
Figure 5.3: Facilitation praxis to bring the SAED/IAM irrigation system into existence.

towards supporting only female farmers. As such, he had a clearly different perception of the system boundaries. He negotiated infrastructures (e.g., a bridge connecting the island with the mainland) with relevant ministries and Japanese donors. From the beginning until the end of the intervention, the leading question for the facilitators had been 'how to cope with the disengagement of the donors'? The disengagement itself was never considered, or allowed to be considered, the subject of negotiation.

To what extent has the facilitation praxis at the start of the intervention been effective? Later in the process, the facilitators experienced that they had underestimated the complexity of the choice of actors. For individuals, groups or organisations, to become an actor is related to 'being noticed', 'making oneself visible' or 'having a voice' which in turn is the result of having attributes such as 'legitimacy' and 'agency' in relation to the issue at stake. When the facilitators arrived, they had not carried out a detailed social stratification analysis in the area. Later, I realised that at the start, the facilitators had not sufficiently acknowledged the role of the caste system in relation to the 'agency' aspect. For the choice of the actors, the facilitators depended very much on their first contacts and these consisted of the project elite. Soon, *representation* turned out to be a major issue. Farmer leaders did not represent those whom they were supposed to represent (box 5.1).

Box 5.1: Farmer leaders poorly represented their constituency.
In the first workshop, the participants jointly agreed that leaders of farmer organisations would take up the responsibility to share new insights with and to receive feedback of their members. Monitoring showed this was not the case. Quite the contrary, farmer leaders expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the participation of their constituency in some of the activities as these 'ordinary farmers' were considered to slow down the process.

(Source: Groot, 1995b).

Later, I heard rumours that the leaders of the farmer Unions and Federation were selected by the SAED as part of its strategy against the ministry of Agriculture, and not locally elected by the villagers. Because of the poor representation, it appeared that farmers considered the results communicated by their leaders as 'odd'. These results were the outcome of a negotiation and so, according to some, were enriched, but to others, contaminated by other actors' interests. The negotiation process from which the results had emerged remained implicit. Farmers who had not directly participated in the negotiation found it difficult to recognize their own interest. Representatives and their constituency had grown apart. Consequently, the farmers who had not directly participated did not always commit themselves to the agreements made in the workshops.

In addition, representation appeared to be a constraining factor when representatives of some public organisations for example the department for production and development (DRPD), did not have the mandate to commit themselves to collective activities or to facilitate necessary changes within their own organisation.

In addition to 'representation' issue, there was the aspect of inclusiveness. The facilitators were not able to fully involve the actors in authority positions and the private sector actors in the process. Although, the number and diversity of actors increased gradually as some actors such as the bank (CNCAS) and the local administration came aboard later in the process, somehow they failed to get the whole system involved. Their facilitators' focus was predominantly on facilitating interaction among actors at the local level. They did not sufficiently focus on actors at higher

decision-making levels. From the beginning, it was evident that the SAED in St. Louis and DGIS headquarters in The Hague, were important actors due to their power to take strategic and financial decisions. However, these donors showed a clear aversion tof becoming too involved, or as they saw it, being captured by the process. They preferred the role of critical observer, preserving the right to make final decisions. It seems that somehow the facilitators accepted the position of these actors. Of course, the geographical distance and full agendas made it difficult to involve such actors in the activities as intensively as those living and working on or near Ile à Morphil. Faxes, e-mails and telephone calls could not replace face-to-face communication and the experience of real process dynamics. The facilitators organised a restitution day that aimed to share the gained experiences with a wider group of actors including the Dutch Embassy and SAED. But even such a day did not replace the active involvement in a two months intensive participatory process. Moreover, especially DGIS headquarters was hardly involved which probably contributed to the forthcoming incident: one year later, DGIS headquarters, against the advice of the Dutch Embassy, bluntly rejected some of the major negotiated results of the multi-actor workshops and preferred to follow its own agenda. This clearly shows the limitations of the impact of the facilitators, regardless of their values (Bakker, pers.com.).

In addition, the facilitators have not been able to fully involve the private sector. Transport companies and private mechanics had been identified as important stakeholders, but were not invited as the facilitators assumed the private sector would not be interested in participating actively. As representatives of the private sector, only one rice trader and the bank participated in the process. Probably, this assumption was rooted in the governmental mode of working with which farmers, project staff, and the facilitators were stuck.

After all, it remains questionable whether the facilitation praxis widened the gap between the empowered and the disempowered in the way that important decisions about the future were taken by a relatively small group of participants. The facilitators looked for optimal rather than for full participation. It also remains questionable whether this is inherent in the used theories and methodologies, or a matter of faulty or constrained practice. But, at least it became clear to me that although soft system thinking, AKIS and RAAKS can contribute to elucidation of differences in perceptions and interests, the way they are currently designed does not provide sufficient hands-on strategies to address power issues and constraining policies at higher decision-making levels.

5.4 Action 2, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the appreciation of praxis

This section discusses the second facilitation action. It explores the efforts of the facilitators to develop trust and commitment among a first set of the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system. It also discusses the theoretical and methodological perspectives used. The last part of this section addresses the coherence and effectiveness of the praxis.

5.4.1 Action 2
After defining a first set of actors and clarifying the focus of the intervention, the facilitation of direct interaction among diverse actors started. The facilitators organised three workshops of three days inover a period of two months to build trust and commitment among these actors and to support them to find out about (new) partners, (new) relationship, (new) roles, and (new) expertise in order to cope with the forthcoming change. Although in all workshops, the facilitators emphasised process management, the first workshop specifically aimed to create a conducive process through development of trust and commitment.

At the onset of the intervention, mistrust and poor communication characterised the atmosphere in the project area. Oftentimes, discussions between the project management and farmer leaders resulted in shouting and mutual accusation. The facilitators also observed a poor relationship between the leaders of the farmer organisations and their members. When the leaders of farmer organisations called a meeting, the role of the members was to listen and to obey. There was hardly any open communication enabling people to exchange ideas and perceptions. Therefore, the first out of a series of multi-actor workshops was used to specifically build trust and mutual understanding among the actors (including the facilitators). For this to be realised, two interlocking process dimensions appeared to be of major importance: 1) starting from actors' tangible concerns; and 2) elucidating and validating each actor's perception of reality. I explain these aspects hereafter.

The facilitators decided to start from a tangible concern in order to trigger actors' interest in the process. They realised this was a tricky choice as it could have easily resulted in a situation in which the actors became stuck in their everyday problems.
Together with the project staff, three main areas of (assumed) common concern were identified namely 'marketing', 'input supply' and 'functioning of the PIVs'. The participants started to diagnose these concerns in three relatively homogeneous subgroups i.e. members of GIEs, farmer leaders, project staff, 'external' actors such as a rice-trader and representatives of the 'DRPD, the NGO 'Programme Intégré de Podor (PIP) and of the 'Projet Gonakier' (PROGONA: a project within the forestry department). The subgroups were asked to discuss possible causes of these concerns. After a plenary discussion of the results of the subgroup analysis, the participants were organised into new heterogeneous subgroups. Each new subgroup composed of a few members of the earlier homogenous subgroups. The new subgroups were asked to pick the cause (or problem) that was of most importance to them.

This exercise was purposefully designed by the facilitators to elucidate the differences in perceptions and interest. As expected within the subgroups, heated discussions took place. Participants tried to convince each other with arguments why some causes or problems were more important than others. They started blaming each other for poor performance and causing problems. At a certain moment, the facilitators stopped the discussion and asked the participants to reflect individually on the problem/cause that was of most important to him or her and on the reasons why. The results were written on cards. Then the facilitators asked a number of participants, especially those with outstanding and different opinions as well as the women, who were usually not being heard, to stand in front to explain openly their perception. Differences in experience, interest, position, and/or mandate appeared to be important reasons for different choices. The facilitators asked questions to help the actors seek for complementarity and interdependency among each other. At the end of this session, a working-environment had emerged in which the actors felt respected and committed to continue working together.

This action can be regarded as the first step in a process of building trust and commitment among diverse actors. The project management was willing to continue to financially and logistically support similar multi-actor gatherings. Moreover, in spite of the *'waalo'* activities and the fact that no allowance was provided, the farmer leaders were eager to continue to be engaged in the rest of the process. All participants who had been involved in this first workshop remained involved until the very end of the facilitation intervention. The created commitment and enthusiasm created in this first workshop certainly benefited the next steps (for more details see 5.4.2 and especially 5.5.2). However, throughout the intervention, the facilitators continued to consider process management as their core-business.

5.4.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used
This section discusses the use of soft system thinking, RAAKS, and PRA for building mutual trust, respect, and commitment.

Soft system thinking, RAAKS, and PRA
At the start of the workshop, the participants were asked to agree on and formulate a contract showing the norms of participants' behaviour during the process (for more details on the method, see Pretty et al., 1995: 164). The facilitators made use of this contract in any case in which the agreed rules were not respected.

RAAKS, based on soft systems thinking, offered tools that enabled the facilitators to support the participants to visualise the difference in actors' realities and the richness of such diversity. More specifically, the facilitators used the method 'problem tree' in combination with a 'problem definition exercise' (Salomon & Engel, 1997) to facilitate an *exchange of perceptions* on 'rice marketing', 'input supply' and 'the functioning of the PIVs'. Unfortunately, RAAKS (and PRA) did not help the facilitators very much to take the process one step further and to encourage actors to *critically question each others' perceptions*. In fact, the facilitators were using their past experience in asking questions to support the self-discovery of inconsistencies in people's thinking. Moreover, the used theoretical and methodological perspectives were not very helpful to deal with the strategic behaviour of some of the more influential actors (e.g., project co-ordinator, some farmer leaders).

A process favourable to open communication, trust, mutual understanding, and commitment to the process will not develop by itself. It needs time, money, and facilitators who carefully design such a process. Designing does not follow a recipe, but requires a responsive approach to the flux of process. The lessons learnt from one step in the process need to inform the design of the next.

5.4.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis
When examining the consistency in the facilitation praxis that aimed to build mutual trust and commitment among actors (see figure 5.4), here it is again the context and especially the cultural context that provoked some tension during the workshop and even more, later in the process.

Action 2:
Building mutual trust and commitment among actors

Values:
Multiple perceptions of reality, but equally important

Facilitation praxis

Theories/ methodologies
Soft systems, RAAKS, PRA

Perceived context:
Project setting, Disengagement of donors
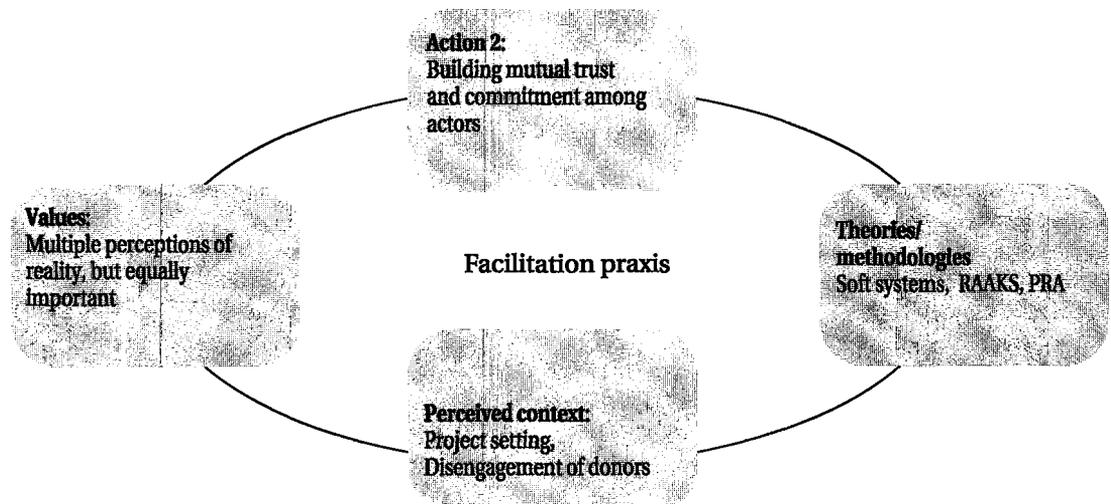
Figure 5.4: Facilitation praxis to build mutual trust and commitment among actors.

The cultural context i.e. the caste system appeared not to be in line with the values of the facilitators. At the time of the workshop, the facilitators had underestimated the caste system as a contextual factor.

Every Haalpulaar village is populated by a variety of classes, castes, and social categories, who have settled on the isle in the course of history. The caste of *'Pullo'* used to be the nomads, herdsmen whose cattle used the flood- plains for grazing after the flooding water had withdrawn. Nowadays, most of them are sedentary farmers. The *'Toorodo'* or the 'noble' came later and used the flooded fields for agricultural purposes. They left their land to the *'Pullo'* who grazed their cattle on the sorghum stalks in the dry season. The fisherman or *'Cuballo'* used the same flood-plains for fishing and started to use the river banks for agriculture. The *'Ceddo'* were the warriors. Together with the *'Cuballo'* they started to cultivate the *waalo* for agricultural production as well. A caste of 'artisans' with carpenters, weavers, singers, and forgers has arisen as well. In addition, a category of *slaves* exist encompassing 22% of the population in 1960 (Scheer, 1996). In some villages the access to irrigated plots is relatively equal for freeborn and slaves. In other villages however, the existing inequalities of the Hapulaar society are reproduced in the repartition of the irrigation schemes *(ibid.)*. Traditionally the villagers delegate authority to the head of the villages:, a man who always originates from the freeborn class. When contacts with the SAED, projects or other relative outsiders is required, the village leader, who is always a man, represents his village. The influence of the caste system and related power relationships is declining because of the rise of a new elite formed by young educated people of whom quite a number are still regarded as slaves. However, the caste system had a negative impact on the facilitation process of this particular action and later in the process.

Most of the participants were leaders of farmer organisations (GIEs, Unions, and Federation) and as such belonged to the freeborn caste. The participants of lower castes formed a minority in both number and social status. In general, a Haalpulaar gives higher value to the point of view of a freeborn than to that of someone of a lower class; there was tension due to the contradiction between this point of view value and the (Dutch) facilitators' values, that gave who valued each perception as of equal importance. Later in the process, when I (my Dutch colleague was no longer involved), became more aware of the role of the Hapulaar culture, I brought in strategic actions to favour lower caste participants and to make explicit their perceptions and interests (Box 5.2 and 5.3).

Box 5.2: How the caste system shaped the facilitation.
About a year after the start of the intervention, one day before a multi-actor workshop was organised, a group of farmers, ordinary GIE members but of lower castes, came to see me. They told me that the next day they would not be able to put forward their opinion about the functioning of the PIVs because of the presence of their leaders. Therefore, they wanted to tell me their opinion right away. The next day, I put emphasis on some aspects and put others to the background in such a way so that I felt that the participants were exposed to a rich diversity of realities, including those of lower caste people.

(Source: Author's project notebook)

In the course of the intervention, I observed the impact of the caste system among the project staff as well.

Box 5.3: Influence of the caste system among project staff.

Almost at the end of my intervention, just after the chief of the training division had left the project, I again was confronted with the impact of the caste system. In the discussion about who would be the new chief, I tried to promote somebody with good qualifications and who was actively involved in the facilitation of the process. However, this person was still considered a slave by some of the staff members. In the end, another person was chosen who was, according to me, much less qualified but belonged to the freeborns.

(Source: Author's project notebook).

By applying the correspondence criterion to the facilitation praxis, hereafter I examine the degree to which it has been effective. First, the validation of the participants' different perceptions of reality caused an important turn in the process. Afterwards the actors felt more respected and (re)gained self-esteem. Actors who before did not dare to put forward their views felt comfortable enough to stand up and to express their opinions. On the other side, the project management, which that was used to dominate, now became more willing to listen to others. The project management logistically supported meetings that were initiated by the farmer leaders. Before, the management only organised meetings with the farmer leaders when the directors felt the need for it. As such, the quality of the relationship between the management and farmer leaders was improved. Through this workshop, a basis for daring to ask questions was builtd. 'Asking questions' used to be a sign of being incompetent.

In addition, when the researchers and SAED/IAM project staff explained the mandate of their organisation or project and the constraints they were facing in meeting farmers' demands, it was like putting faces to policies and practices. The personal relationships that were developed helped to weaken stereotypes and prejudices (box 5.4). Actors were more ready to accept that their views were partial and provisional, and that each individual will have a different view. A collaborative working attitude was being established from which tangible results emerged.

Box 5.4: Improved relationships between the farmers and the rice-trader from which tangible results emerged.

The farmers and the rice trader were blaming each other for putting stones in bags instead of rice and of disbursing too late. The presence of other actors helped to create essential group pressure so that both parties took ownership of the problem and promised improvement. Moreover, the felt interdependency motivated them to negotiate a contract.

(Source: Groot & Bakker, 1994a)

The mutual trust and respect that had started to emerge did not imply that conflicts that arose later in the process were easily resolved. In addition, it did not automatically lead to willingness to critically question personal perceptions, attitudes, or interests and to eventually adapt them. If one considers accommodation of perceptions and interests as a precondition for synergistic action ofin a soft system, elucidating and validating different realities is important, but certainly not sufficient.

At the end of this workshop, the facilitators themselves felt accepted. They sensed they had gained credibility and felt it was worthwhile to continue.

5.5 Action 3, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used and the appreciation of praxis

This section describes the third action that is analysed in this thesis. It explores the facilitation of a participatory diagnosis of (new) actors, roles, relationships, and competencies in order to search for options to cope with the future privatisation. It discusses the theoretical and method-ological perspectives. In the last part of this section, I discuss the appreciation of the praxis for facilitation action 3.

5.5.1 Action 3

This action reveals the facilitators' role in designing an analytical path to enable the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system to find out about the way they should be socially organised in order to cope with the future privatisation. In three multi -actor workshops (workshop no. 3, 4 and 5 in annex 1), the facilitators organised activities to engage the actors in a diagnosis of (future)'actors' of the SAED/IAM irrigation system, their (future) relationships, (future) roles, and (future) competencies to realise these roles. These activities were based on the assumption that disen-gagement of donors and privatisation would imply new partnerships, roles, and responsibilities for farmers, farmer organisations, NGOs and public and private sector actors. The facilitators also assumed that direct, interpersonal contact between potentially conflicting interests, by making use of group pressure and face-to-face accountability, would be more likely to improve farmer capacity than training farmers in isolation from the market and other special interest groups. Moreover, the facilitators emphasised the participatory character of the diagnosis and encouraged other joint activities to improve collaboration as they had observed that the partici-pants had very little experience in working together.

In the three workshops, with the help of an analytical frame, the participants were asked to look at the present and the future situation of 'marketing', 'input supply' and 'performance of the irri-gation schemes', in terms of actors, necessary relationships, role and competencies (see box 5.5)

Box 5.5: Analytical framework applied to facilitate the diagnosis of the present and future situation of the SAED/IAM irrigation system.

Present situation
• Who are the actors involved in the problem area?
• What role do they play in the problem area?
• To what extent do relationship and role performance contribute to the problem area?
• What solutions do you see to solve the problem? And what could be your role in this?

Future situation
• What changes in actors' tasks do you foresee?
• What changes in relationships do you foresee?
• Considering the proposed changes in tasks and relationships, what new expertise and support do you need?
• What risks regarding the recommendations about the future do you foresee? What could be done to minimise these risks?

Planning of future actions
• What are important/ urgent actions to be carried out by you?
• With whom?
• When and what duration?
• What preconditions do you see?

(Source: Groot & Bakker, 1994b)

In the workshops, the diagnosis assisted the participants in developing action plans in a systemic way so that each plan was in coherence with the action plans of others. For instance, when farmer leaders mentioned a training on financial management as one of the urgent actions to be undertaken to meet future standards, this training appeared also as an action in the plan of the training division, that was supposed to facilitate it.

In addition, in between the workshops, a number of *joint fact-finding* activities were facilitated such as a visit to the bank (CNCAS) and to neighbouring farmer organisations which were involved in a similar disengagement process. These activities aimed to handle unresolved issues and queries that had come up during the workshops. However, these activities had other important effects as well (see section 5.5.3). Moreover, in between the workshops, feedback sessions with the constituency in the villages and within the participating organisations were organised to engage a larger public in the process (Groot & Bakker, 1994a,b).

5.2.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used

AKIS and RAAKS
AKIS and RAAKS helped the facilitators to encourage the actors to look at the SAED/IAM project as if it were a human activity system, and to convince them that the irrigation future in the area
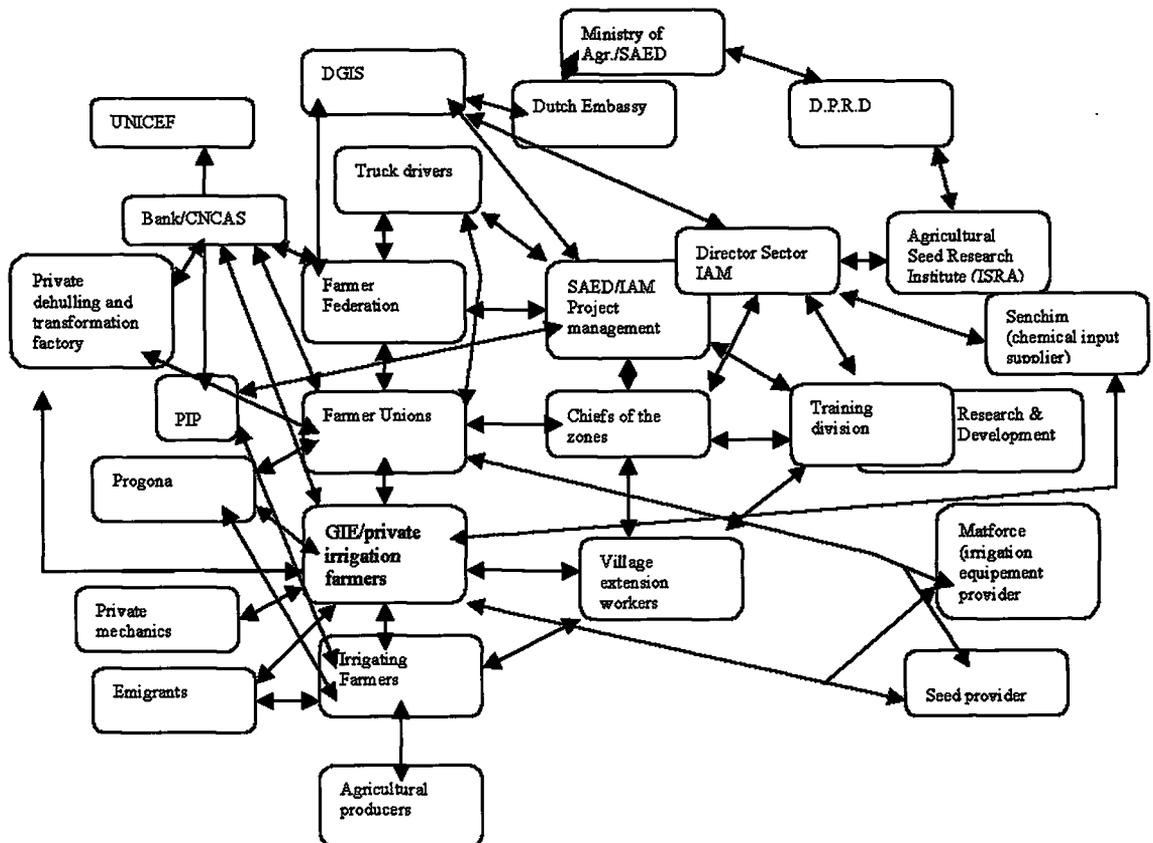
Figure 5.5: The actors in the SAED/IAM irrigation system and their relationships (1994) (Groot & Bakker, 1994a).

would also emerge from their own collective (inter)action and not only from technical and economical measurements of outsiders. In addition, the RAAKS windows were used to support the actors in discovering the role of their own interest, perceptions, values, practices and relationships in the functioning of the irrigation system. By doing this, the facilitators broadened actors' range of options for improvement. Previously they were used to consider their problems mainly from a technical and economic point of view, usually resulting in a request for outside assistance. The RAAKS windows were useful in developing the analytical framework for diagnosing the present and the future of the SAED/IAM irrigation system and for searching collectively for specific improvements in the domain of social organisation. The visual RAAKS tools helped to make explicit actors' perceptions about (past and future) roles, relationships, partners, and expertise and to share them with others. Figure 5.5 shows the participants' perceptions of the actors ofin the SAED/IAM irrigation system and their relationships

Table 5.1 and 5.2 show how the use of the RAAKS exercise 'task analysis' supported the participants to develop a shared perception representing a reality the actors agreed on .

Table 5.1: Present and future tasks of the Unions as perceived by the representatives of GIEs, Unions and the Federation (Groot & Bakker, 1994b).

Present tasks of the Unions	Future tasks of the Unions
Transmission of information from the Federation to the GIEs and vice versa,	Idem
Management of the central store,	Idem
Organisation of regular meetings,	Idem
Collecting and centralising the needs of GIEs in terms of inputs,	Idem
Input supply (seeds),	Idem
Fixing prices of products of the central store,	Idem
Organising farmer visits,	Idem
Encouraging farmers to use animal traction,	Idem
Selling cards to members of GIEs,	Idem
Distribution and selling of inputs to GIEs,	Idem
	Encouraging farmers to use motorised traction,
	Facilitating agricultural diversification,
	Supporting marketing activities,
	Search for funding,
	Identifying training needs among its members and contacting potential trainers,
	Examining demands for credit,
	Permanent sensitisation,
	Multiplication and renewing of seeds,

Table 5.2: Future tasks of the Unions as agreed by all participating actors (Groot & Bakker, 1994b).

Future tasks of the Unions
Transmission of information from the Federation to the GIEs and visa versa
Management of the central store
Organisation of regular meetings
Collecting and centralising the needs of GIEs in terms of inputs
Sending the needs in terms of inputs to the Federation
Distribution and selling of inputs to GIEs
Fixing prices of products of the central store
Organising farmer visits
Encouraging farmers to use animal traction
Multiplication and renewing of seeds
Facilitating agricultural diversification
Selling cards to GIE members
Searching for credit
Searching for external support, including funds
Financial management
Conflict management
Examining demands for credit

Discrepancies between the present and the preferred future situation were translated into action plans. The action plans, because they were negotiated in an interactive and transparent way, served as social contracts (Groot & Bakker, 1994a).

5.5.4 Assessment of the facilitation praxis
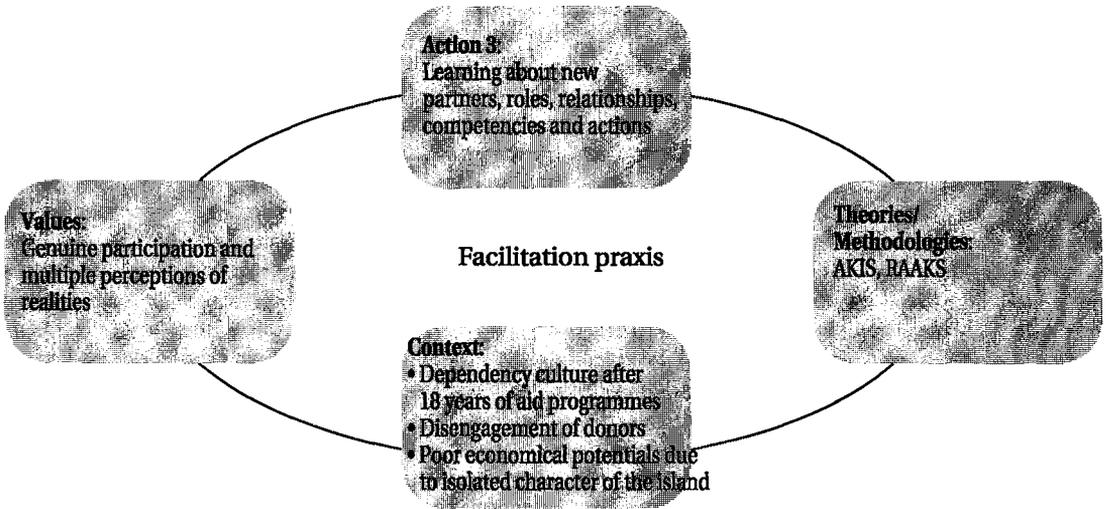
Figure 5.6: Facilitation praxis to support participants to develop understanding and agreement about actors, roles, relationships, competencies, and actions.

When assessed against the consistency criterion, to a large degree the facilitation action, the theoretical and methodological perspectives applied, the facilitators' values, and the perceived context, form a coherent whole. At the beginning of the facilitators' intervention, the project management had just started to abandon the policy of 'providing presents to the local community'. Nevertheless, the majority of people on Ile à Morphil could hardly imagine that after 18 years there would come a time when no donor would provide them with (free) technologies for irrigation development. In this situation, the facilitators' choice to develop the competence of actors to jointly look at their own (inter) action as the subject of change was in line with what was going on in the project. As such, the use of AKIS and RAAKS was also in line with the facilitators' value of the right tof self-esteem and self-determination. However, certainly not all actors shared these values and continued to seek strategies to maintain the 'present-culture'.

However, the facilitators' decision to make use of a *social organisational perspective only* was not in full correspondenceherence with the larger context. From the beginning, the facilitators were aware of the poor economic potential of irrigation in the area due to its isolated character and biophysical circumstances. Because of the use of AKIS and RAAKS, they implicitly considered the constraining geographical and physical aspects as environmental factors framing their actions but not as area of intervention by itself.

This leads us to the question whether the facilitation praxis has been effective or not. Over the first three months of the intervention, the participants of the workshops increasingly identified themselves as actors making up the SAED/IAM irrigation system. During meals and drinks, participants began to joke and call each other 'strong' or 'weak' actors, and the term 'synergy' was used at least ten times a day. When they visited neighbouring farmer groups, the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system showed a clear 'we' feeling. Moreover, the facilitators observed a sense of satisfaction when the majority of the actors realised that a focus on their own behaviour,

interest, roles and expertise as constraining factors impeding irrigation development helped them to look for improvements they could manage themselves without too much external assistance. The evaluation at the end of the series of workshops showed (at least in words) an increased mutual respect among actors and a better understanding about each others' future partners, relationships, roles and competence (see box 5.6).

Box 5.6: *Selected learning points formulated by the participants at the end of the first series of workshops.*

Workshop 1
- I have seen that the performance of the system depends on the complementarity and the differentiation of the actors (farmer)
- I have been able to tell how I work and receive feedback from others on my work (extension worker)

Workshop 2
- This workshop helped me to understand the importance of synergy among actors
- I improved my analytical competence (Senegalese facilitator)
- Improved facilitation skills (Senegalese facilitator)
- I know more about the (present and future) roles of the GIE, Unions and Federation (farmer)
- Making contact with leaders more easily (farmer)
- Improved leadership skills (farmer leader)
- Competence in identifying new partners (farmer)
- "L'avenir est prometteur d'espoir" (~ the future is a source of hope)

Workshop 3
- The contract I have developed with the farmers (rice trader)
- Clear idea about the training needs of the actors
- Consensus made by Federation on credit and input supply
- The contact with CNCAS and in particular the information about the "banque mutuelle de crédit" (~ bank for saving and credit) (farmer)

(Source: Groot & Bakker, 1994b,c)

I remained involved as a facilitator for another 1.5 years, and I was able to observe a number of changes. I noticed that some actors kept their commitment, really tried to take up new roles, and strove to develop the required competencies. Others kept hiding themselves behind the statement "nous sommes pauvres, il faut nous aider" (~ we are poor, you need to help us'). Some examples of remarkable change are portrayed below:
- The members of the training division and the village extension workers made a significant shift from being teachers of technical messages to being facilitators of participatory processes in which they were supported through a series of training and backstopping partly by myself, partly by a Senegalese NGO. Some of them became well qualified and were quickly hired by other projects in the environment.
- The SAED/IAM irrigation project, PIP and PROGONA formed a platform and met each other regularly to harmonise their development approaches and to pool resources. The collaboration between the SAED project and PROGONA improved. They shared human resources and participated in some of each other's meetings and training programmes. However, PIP remained an outsider and continued to carry out their own policies without any adaptation to those of the other projects.
- Realising the (future) need for knowledge about financial, administrative, legal and political issues, the members of Federation made an interesting move after the above-described workshops. They appointed a technical adviser, who happened to be a cousin of the president of

the Federation and who had been the mayor of a village in Mauritania. This technical adviser actively participated in activities such as negotiations at the Dutch Embassy, the formulation of Terms of Reference of forthcoming consultancy missions and in the discussions about (farmer) co-management of the future project. However, the facilitators had expected that, with thehaving gained insight in the future roles and required competencies, some of the farmer leaders would give up their position in favour of the new, educated, young farmers. None of the farmer leaders did so and 'the old guard' remained in power. Some of them, however, brought ininvolved a close relative (e.g., son or cousin) to assist them in their future task (Groot, 1995c).

- The self-managed tasks such as the 'joint-fact-finding' visits appeared to imply much more than filling information gaps and looking for feedback. It enabled the actors to develop shared information and skills for collaboration. It also helped them to learn skills to develop collaborative networks and to interact with other systems. An interesting example illustrating actors' collaboration competence is the activity on groundnut production. In this 'research and development' project activity, for the first time farmers took up the responsibility for the purchase of the seeds, distribution of seeds, the cashing in of the farmers' money of farmers, the selection of farmers to experiment with the new crop as well as the collection of the harvest. In this program, farmers became real partners in the collaborating with input suppliers, traders, and the project management. According to the farmers and project management, the whole operation was successful. The number of farmers growing groundnuts and the area under cultivation increased rapidly.

- Improved collective competence in conflict management was observable during a serious conflict on the distribution of project funds for human capacity building. At that particular moment, the senior project staff found that consequences of farmer participation were to their detriment. Farmer capacity building was given priority at the expense of sending project staff members abroad for training. The staff members used their newly designed roles and action plans to show their contribution to the desired change of the system. In the end, both project co-ordination and farmers realised it was important not to loose the loyalty of the senior staff on the way and agreed to allocate extra funds to capacity building activities for these staff members as well (Groot & Bakker, 1994b). If this conflict would have occurred at the beginning of the intervention, some of the actors involved would have walked away.

The above mentioned outcomes are all in line with the used theoretical and methodological perspective i.e. a social organisational point of view. Among the workshop participants, nobody criticised these so-called *'soft' outputs*. Nevertheless, these kinds of outputs do not communicate very well to those who did not experience the process themselves (e.g., DGIS headquarters, SAED headquarters in St. Louis). I assume tangible outcomes such as an increased intensity of the use of the PIVs or an increased farm income would have been more persuasiveconvinced, for these actors, concerning about the usefulness of participatory processes. In addition, I expect that without these types of tangible outcomes even the local actors would lose interest and drop out of the process of 'managed change.' To overcome this issue, facilitators require a combination of different (theoretical and methodological) perspectives, including those focussing on (micro) economics and biophysical aspects. After all, I have to admit that the facilitators' choice to use one single perspective smells of reductionism and contradicts a constructivist position.

5.6 Action 4, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the appreciation of praxis

This section describes the third and last action that is analysed in this chapterthesis. It explores the development of multiple monitoring and evaluation systems, and the used theoretical and methodological perspectives. In the last part of this section, I discuss the appreciation of the praxis for facilitation action 3.

5.6.1 Action 4

The last facilitation action I describe deals with the facilitators' effort to develop multiple monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Through encouraging an on-going process of action and reflection for corrective action, the facilitators (i.e. Amadou Demba Fall and myself) aimed to sustain the created momentum and to further improve the individual and collective actions that had started to emerge among the actors. I start by making explicit the facilitators' perception of the context in relation to M&E.

In the history of the project, many efforts were made to develop M&E systems, but most of them had failed. Discussions with project staff taught the facilitators that often M&E was used to "prove" accountability to higher authorities and experienced as an instrument to control and to punish. Not surprisingly, staff members and field workers tried to escape from any recording and reporting responsibility. The facilitators observed one exception to the generally negative attitude towards M&E. In recent years, the GIEs satisfactorily used self-evaluations to review seasonal agricultural practices in order to plan the next season and to improve self-performance. The facilitators decided to use this positive experience in their effort to develop M&E systems at various levels (village extension workers, project management, training division, technical assistants (CAs) and other actors of the SAED/IAM system). Because of the positive experience with self-evaluation at the GIE level, the facilitators focussed on those activities that enabled the actors to discover the benefits of M&E for themselves. They emphasised the development of self- and participatory M&E systems (see box 5.7).

Box 5.7: Facilitation activities to (further) develop self- and participatory M&E systems.

- Workshop for village extension workers in which they designed a framework for *self-M&E*. This framework enabled them to self-manage the M&E by making explicit the purpose of the M&E activities, the participants of the M&E, the methods and indicators for the M&E activities and the timing.

Workshop for village extension workers on *'participatory'* M&E methods to enable them to support farmers in M&E.

Workshop for project management and the CAs. The participants agreed on design principles for M&E at the level of the farmers, the training division, the CAs, the village extension workers and the project management. They decided on 1) the objective of the M&E and/or by whom it was to be defined, and 2), the type of M&E (self- M&E or participatory M&E). Moreover, the participants designed a M&E worksheet that they planned to use for their monthly M&E and planning.

Regularly supporting monitoring of the project staff in their M&E activities at the various levels to keep up motivation and provide feedback.

Two *multi-actor M&E workshops* to assess the implementation of the action plans in order to learn about strengths and weaknesses in their performance and to identify actions for improvement.

(Source: Groot, 1995 b,c; Groot, 1996)

Two timces, the facilitators organised a multi-actor M&E workshop, involving the participants who were also engaged in the facilitation action explored in 5.4.1 and 5.5.1. In these workshops, the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system jointly assessed the implementation of their action plans and learnt about the strengths and weaknesses in their performance, and to find ouexploredt new actions for improvement.

5.6.2 Theoretical and methodological perspective used
In this section, I discuss how the facilitators used M&E as a tool for self-improvement

M&E as a tool for self-improvement
At all the levels, the facilitators supported the application of M&E as a tool for self-improvement. From a methodological perspective, being aware of several difficulties persisting in M&E, the facilitators put much effort into discussing a number of generic questions that the participants needed to address before commencing M&E, irrespective of the unique circumstances of each particular case (Groot & Boon, 1992). The following key questions were deliberately discussed:
• What are the objectives of the M&E process?
• Who are the beneficiaries of the M&E process?
• Who should be involved in the M&E process, and what will everyone's contribution be?
• How will the M&E process be carried out, with what indicators and methods?
• When will the M&E process be carried out?

The results of the discussions underpinned the design of the participants' self- or participatory M&E systems. The participants developed tools to operationalise the M&E. Table 5.3 provides an example of a n M&E technical note to be used byfor the CaAs. for M&E. T The Ttool was jointly developed by the project management, the training division and the CAs.

Table 5.3: Technical note for planning, monitoring, and evaluation to be used by the CAs (developed by the project management, the training division, CAs) (Groot, 1995c).

Activity carried out	Preferred results	Beneficiaries	Indicators to be applied by technical assistants, training division, project management	Results obtained, based on use of the indicators	Intepreta-tion and apprecia-tion	New action
1.						
2.						
Etc.						

Moreover, the facilitators encouraged actors not only to appreciate the operational side of the action ('what has been done' and 'how'), but also to address the effectiveness of it ('what has been achieved' and 'are satisfied with the outcomes') and its justification ('why did we do it' and 'what were our assumptions').

5.6.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis
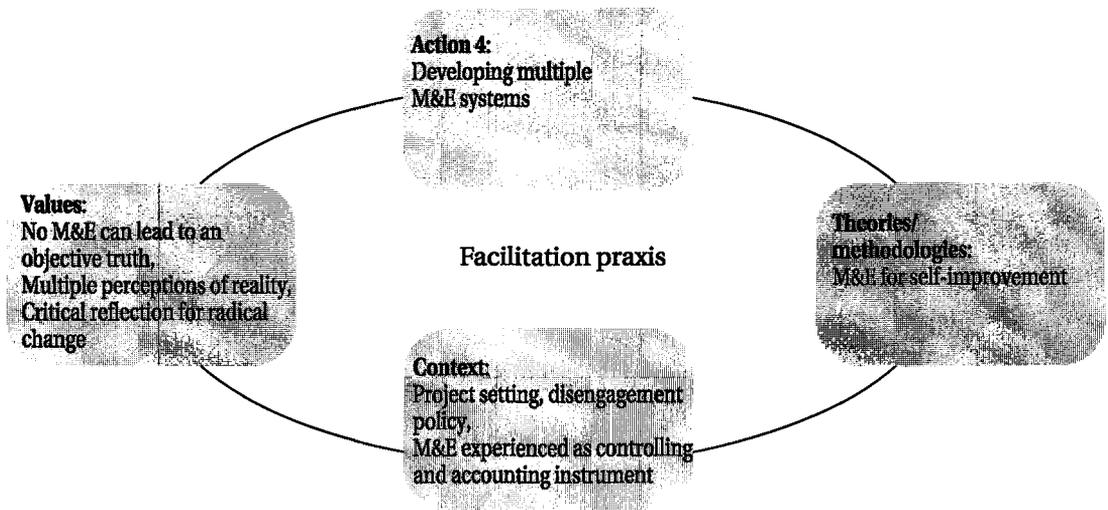
Figure 5.7: Facilitation praxis to develop multiple M&E systems.

To what degree doform the perceived context, the action, the used theoretical and methodological perspective used and the underlying values, form a coherent whole? The working context was not fully supportive of M&E. Although the previous workshops had contributed to a decrease in the blaming culture of blame that existed before, the majority of the village extension workers, of whom only two representatives had participated in the M&E workshop, started with a defensive attitude towards M&E. For them, it was hard to believe that (self-) M&E could be of any benefit. In addition, although I personally, I highly valued critical reflection by questioning my own uunderlying assumptions and objectives, o. Only a few other actors shared this valupreferencee.

To what extent has the facilitators' praxis been effective? Or, to what degree did the praxis result in an on-going process of action and reflection that improved individual and collective action?
- At the farmer field level, according to the farmers their self-evaluations were improved because of the enhanced facilitation skills of the village extension workers. The extension workers began tonow used PRA visualisation techniques such as 'seasonal diagramming' that helped farmers to better discover the strengths and constraints in their irrigation practices and to discuss the underlying reasons. The visual character of the diagram also encouraged a wider and active participation of the GIE members. The mapoutput itself served as a documented outcome of a shared experience and formed a basis for dialogue in in the next M&E session.
- At the level of the village extension workers, some village extension workers became very enthusiastic about self-M&E. They felt it helped them to make their actions more responsive to the farmer needs and it assisted them in the planning and management of their own activities.
- At the project level, the project management, the training division, and the CAs collectively designed a participatory M&E system, consistingmposing of multiple interlocking sub-M&E systems (Groot, 1995c). The main purpose of each sub-M&E system was to inform decision-making at the particular level for which it was designed. Only a minimum of M&E activity and reporting at field level would be carried out to inform decisions that had to be taken by project management or other levels. Soon it appeared that the more actors involved, the more complex

it became to design a participatory M&E system composed of multiple interlocking M&E subsystems. The facilitators (I in particular) made the error of starting too big and neglecting the process by underestimating the time and skills needed to build skills and confidence in participatory M&E.

- At the level of all the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system, the facilitators organised two workshops to sustain and improve the open communication and collaboration that had started to emerge among the actors during the first three months of our intervention (see facilitation actions 1-3). Both times, almost all participants who had been involved before came together to assess the implementation of the action plans. Lessons were drawn in terms of (changes) in roles, responsibilities, relationships, expertise, and in the end were translated into new actions. Concerning the M&E actions at this level, the facilitators had decided not to make use of indicators because they expected that this would bring in another level of complexity into a process that was already new and complicated for most of the actors. T. he use of indicators was only suggested to project staff (see table 5.3). Therefore, at the level of all actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system, the facilitators y suggested to focused the evaluation assessment on questions like such as "what did we want to achieve with this activity", "what has been achieved in terms of strengths and weaknesses" and why". However, the discussion tended to concentrate on whether an activity had been carried out or not?. The discussion had a superficial character and resulted often in *re*planning the same action. Moreover, the idea of mutual accountability did not work in the way I had expected. To me, actors were often too nice for each other when somebody had not kept his or her promise. Therefore, I started to question seriously the usefulness of the joint M&E sessions but the actors stressed they wanted to continue. They considered the action plans a tool for networking rather than for reflection. It served as a frame to interact on a regular basis and to discuss about each other's practices and other irrigation issues.

In the end, personally I was not satisfied with the facilitators' praxis that had aimed to increase actors' reflective capacity in order to improve their performance. Certainly, some progress was made. For instance, the village extension workers felt more free to ask critical questions about higher level staff performance and were willing to discuss the weaknesses in their own practices. However, being able and daring to question the *underlying personal reasons* such as motivations or interests, was still a bridge too far.

In conclusion, for the time being, this experience with participatory M&E left me without clear lessons about how to improve actors' reflective capacity. I was still puzzled about 'how to support actors who operate at different levels to jointly design M&E subsystems in such a way that these subsystems support each other. I kept on wondering why the actors of SAED/IAM irrigation system tended to assess their activities at the operational level only, rather than to evaluate the effect and impact of their performance. In addition, I asked myself whether 'soft systems' change through (critical) reflection on action and, if so, how such a change can be facilitated?

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[1] My thanks go to Sjoerd Bakker for his valuable comments on an earlier draft. Sjoerd Bakker (Dutch consultant), Samba Diallo, Idrissa Bouya, Amadou Demba Fall (project staff members), and myself facilitated the first three actions analysed in this thesis. The last action that is explored has been facilitated by Amadou Demba Fall and myself only.

[2] 1977-1982: First phase of the KIP- Kaskas project
    1983-1984: Second phase of the KIP-Kaskas project
    1985-1988: Third phase of the KIP-Kaskas project
    1989-1993: Fourth phase of the KIP- Kaskas project
    1993-1996: Transition phase of the (SAED/IAM project
    1996-1999: "Projet d'Appui aux Organisations Paysannes de l'Ile à Morphil" (PAOPIM)

Intermezzo I:
Preliminary insights for a grounded theory and methodological insights regarding the facilitation of participatory processes

This first intermezzo provides a synthesis of the findings that emerged from the exploration of the facilitation praxis in Senegal. As such, it discusses a number of lessons that form preliminary building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights regarding the facilitation of participatory processes addressing complex issues.

The use of Bawden's model to explore facilitation praxis to improve transparency and performance

Bawden's model is useful to make transparent what the facilitators in Senegal had undertaken and how the interrelation among their actions, perceptions, values, and theoretical and method-ological perspectives shaped the participatory process and the outcome achieved.

The use of the *coherence criterion* showed that all the actions presented can be characterised by an inconsistency in the facilitation praxis. For instance, the hierarchical culture among the actors of the SAED/IAM irrigation system was inconsistent with the facilitators' value to use partici-pation to increase local people's control over decisions that affect them. Likewise, the defensive and closed attitude of the actors was not coherent with the practice to support actors in developing self- and participatory M&E systems as mechanisms for (self) reflection and improvement. However, from a facilitation perspective, especially at the beginning of an inter-vention, inconsistency in praxis is often inevitable because the aim of a facilitation intervention is usually to act upon the context in order to bring about change. In retrospect, the inconsistency in the facilitation praxis caused tension that served as a *vital space* for change. However, in the facilitation of actors' reflexive capacity through M&E, the degree of tension might have been too large. This, of course, begs the questions of what is "too" large a gap, and how this might be determined in advance.

In some of the actions, the facilitators were not sufficiently aware of the inconsistency in their praxis. For instance, when they used only the social organisational perspective to diagnose the functioning of the SAED/IAM irrigation system, they experienced some limitations of the 'soft' outcomes of the process. Although the bio-physical and geographic constraints were recognised, the facilitators never considered suggesting also to include an economic, political and/or (bio)physical perspective in the participatory diagnosis. A deliberate use of Bawden's model in the search for consistency among the elements could have resulted in a combination of various perspectives. The use of a broader set of multiple integrated perspectives could have increased the effectiveness of their praxis.

In addition, the use of the *correspondence criterion* for assessing the effectiveness of the praxis can be helpful for discovering strengths and weaknesses, as well as for finding ways to overcome the weaknesses. The assessment of the facilitation praxis in Senegal leads to various preliminary findings for effective facilitation in terms of necessary actions and competencies. These findings form preliminary building blocks and are the basis for further elaboration of a grounded theory and methodological insights.

Bringing the system into existence

Designing a participatory process to define the system: At the onset of any intervention, the *first*

action a facilitator has to deal with is to start up the process by defining the system. More specifically, at the beginning of an intervention, facilitators need to design a participatory process in which a first set of actors define the soft (or human activity) system by identifying its purpose, its constituting actors and its boundaries. This facilitation action is frequently overlooked. Facilitators often accept a specific task for which others predetermine the purpose, the actors who are to be involved and the strategy to be used. The Senegal experience taught me that for facilitators it is important to consider 'the starting-up of a process' as a crucial praxis in itself, which requires careful decision-making about who could play which role, including their own. Retrospectively, I realise that in Senegal, the facilitators (and especially myself as mission leader), were so much involved in ' the getting started' that they ignored the importance of purposefully designing this step as a facilitation action.

The use of AKIS and RAAKS to define the system: The Senegal experience shows that the use of soft systems thinking and in particular the AKIS perspective and RAAKS can be useful to design the starting up of a participatory process. RAAKS provides windows and tools that can help facilitators and other actors to work out various options for system definitions, each with a particular set of objectives, actors, and boundaries. Depending on the facilitators' values, intentions and expectations about the relevance of such a process, they decide on whether or not to negotiate the involvement of stakeholders in the definition of the system and as such, in 'the starting-up of the process'.

The systemic character of defining the (soft) system through process management means that, in theory, the process of system definition can be considered an on-going interplay between problems, actors and boundaries. Changes in the choice of the issue at stake will lead to the involvement or disengagement of different actors as well as to different (administrative and physical) boundaries. Subsequently, the new actors might decide to reformulate the issue at stake, resulting again in newly identified actors and boundaries, a never-ending story.

Failure to include actors of higher authority: In the selection of the actors, the facilitators applied system thinking and the AKIS perspective in a rather narrow way. They predominantly engaged the actors who were locally available in the change process and failed to involve actors operating at higher decision-making levels such as policy actors. In system terms, the facilitators focussed on one single system only, without bringing about the necessary change within other related systems. The facilitators considered policy actors such as DGIS and SAED as conditions or contextual factors rather than as actors who were to be actively engaged in the participatory process. In the end, this failure seriously limited the sustainability of the outcomes achieved during the facilitation process.

Representation: When selecting the first set of actors for defining the system, facilitators need to bring up the issues of representation and the costs of participation. The relationship between the representatives who participate in a facilitated change process, and their constituencies, often is problematic (Edmunds & Wollenberg, 2001; Van Woerkum & Aarts, 1997). In the Senegal case, the behaviour of the leaders of the Federation and Unions confirms the idea that patterns of exclusion can be found in 'traditional' forms of governance (Ribot, 1996). The leaders of the farmer Unions and the Federation were not elected by the people they were assumed to represent. The way they kept information on the future of the project for themselves showed that they merely represented their own interests rather than that of other farmers. The facilitator should have emphasised more such aspects as 'frequent and broad consultation' and other mechanisms of accountability. In Senegal, representation was also problematic because representatives lacked the power to commit themselves to agreements or to bring about the necessary change among their constituency.

In addition to the issue of representation, there is also the issue of *costs of participation*. For some stakeholders the price of intensive or 'deep' participation i.e. of engaging in all stages of a given process, might be too high. They will exclude themselves if no alternative ways of involvement are designed. Facilitators have to realise that 'full' participation is neither possible nor practical. Thinking instead in terms of 'optimal' participation might help to focus closer attention on what makes sense for different contexts and purposes (Cornwall, 2001).

Designing a systemic path of inquiry

AKIS and RAAKS for designing a systemic path of inquiry: A second important facilitation action is the design of an inquiry path to guide participants through a process of finding out about what works and what does not work in order to improve a particular situation. In Senegal, the facilitators had chosen the AKIS perspective, focussing on social organisation, as the basis for the inquiry. The participatory use of the RAAKS windows and tools enabled the participants to regard themselves as actors, constituting the SAED/IAM irrigation system. More specifically, these windows and tools were helpful in guiding the participants through a process of finding out about themselves, their partners, relationships, roles and expertise, as well as about the system's emergent property i.e. the overall performance of the irrigation system. In terms of the outcome of the process, AKIS and RAAKS were quite useful in the design of the path of inquiry. The AKIS perspective provided the actors with a fresh point of view that broadened their range of options for improvement. It encouraged them to diagnose the way they (inter)acted in order to find out what improvements could be made. As such, the actors increasingly realised that irrigation management includes the management of themselves and not only the management of technologies and markets.

Narrow analytical focus: Nevertheless, the limitations of the facilitators' choice, to apply only one perspective, were felt immediately after the series of workshops and became even more visible at the end. To keep the momentum going, farmers but also other actors such as donors and ministries, need to see the so-called 'soft' improvements (e.g., improved relationships and expertise) translated in terms of more tangible outcomes (e.g., productivity, income, bio-diversity, prices). From a methodological perspective, the RAAKS tools provided a very specific social organisational focus. I now realise that such a focus has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that RAAKS tools provide sufficient hands and feet to guide actors through a diagnosis of the issue at stake. However, a disadvantage that I discovered is that, in the case of tools with a relatively narrow analytical focus, actors are more restricted, and cannot easily bring in their own perspectives. Later, I gained experience with methodologies such as 'open space' (Owen, 1997) that hardly provide any hands-on tools but, which encourage actors to determine the focus of analysis.

Required facilitation competencies: What does the design of a systemic path of inquiry require in terms of the competence of a facilitator? This case illustrates that a facilitator needs to be able to select relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives and to integrate these into an effective design. Especially at the start of a process that addresses an ill-defined problematic situation, facilitators need to avoid bringing in a too narrow perspective. The design needs to allow enough room for participants to incorporate their own perspectives. Tools with a specific focus can be intertwined with generic methods.

Moreover, a specific competence inherent in the use of system perspectives is the ability to assist actors in thinking and acting systemically, which for many actors, including facilitators, is difficult because they are used to reductionism. Various methods are available to foster systems thinking and practice such as RAAKS tools (Engel & Salomon, 1997), mind mapping and rich pictures (Lightfoot et al., 2001a).

Designing a favourable process to engage and commit actors
A process favourable to engage and commit actor needs careful design: There will be no effective participatory inquiry without a favourable process to engage and commit relevant stakeholders. The Senegal experience shows that such a process does not emerge by itself but needs to be carefully designed. In this case, the facilitators played a major design role. Guided by their values, they tried to develop conditions for an intense and trustful relationship among the actors. This included conditions such as the freedom to express ideas and concerns, self-organisation, to make free and informed choices, to participate voluntarily, to respect behavioural codes, and, of major importance, to accept and validate multiple realities. In order for these conditions to be developed, they designed a number of interlocking activities, methods and procedures that were interwoven with the analytical part of the design. More specifically, the author's project notebook, the daily facilitation team debriefing sessions in the period of 10-14 and 20-24 October 1994 and the participants' evaluations (Groot & Bakker, 1994a,b,c) show that the combination of various elements positively contributed to the creation of a favourable process. These process ingredients included the use of Senegalese facilitators, simultaneous translation, breaking up meetings to give some participants more time to make up their mind, the use of visualisation techniques, working, eating, drinking and dancing together, selecting appropriate working group compositions, assuring that relevant information was shared, bringing in examples, agreeing on the meaning of important concepts by using metaphors, elucidating reasons behind partici- pants' ideas and assuring the involvement of all participants.

AKIS and RAAKS do not sufficiently address conflicts: The application of the AKIS perspective and RAAKS revealed another limitation of these methods. They are specifically designed to bring disparate, conflicting positions into harmony through communication for the purposes of improved future concerted action. They assume that the principal barrier to effective collective action is poor communication among stakeholders. Although, they do not deny that differences in interests, perceptions, urgency, legitimacy and power can impede collective action, and to a certain degree even help to elucidate conflicts, they hardly provide operational insights as to how to manage conflict. In Senegal, to address power issues and other conflicts that emerged during the process, the facilitators had to make use of their common sense and creativity.

Depending on their values of the facilitators and their perceptions of the context, facilitators can decide to approach some stakeholders, strategically in order to enableing them to shift from passive stakeholders to participating actors. A facilitated participatory diagnosis like the one in Senegal is full of competing interests and power fightsstruggles. If special care is not taken, Ffacilitating consensus through negotiation can expose disadvantaged groups to greater manip- ulation and control by more powerful stakeholderss if no special attention is not paid to them. However, full transparency about such a strategy to other actors appears to be essential for keeping all other actorsthem a engagedon board.

Required facilitation competencies: To design a favourable process, facilitators need tothe be ability to choose the right method or procedure for a specific task (e.g., data collection through a semi-structured interview), and to use this method with rigour. In addition, they need to be able to combine a number of methods and put these in a particular sequence to create a purposeful frame. Consequently, facilitators have to be knowledgeable about the intrinsic character of a particular method or procedure in terms of outcome, analytical focus, and dynamics. They have to be able to construct the process and the analytical dimension of the participatory inquiry so that they inform and eenforce each other. Because it is difficult to document the relation between multiple causes and effects in any facilitation process, given the well-known problems of attribution, time-logs, and contextual dynamics (King, 2000; Patton, 19987), first of all facilitators need to begin by being able to apply a responsive approach to the flux of process.

Overall appreciation of the facilitation praxis in Senegal: Strengths and weaknesses

In coming to the end of exploring the facilitation praxis in Senegal, I would like to conclude with an overall appreciation. Before starting this appreciation, I have to acknowledge that it is difficult to find real evidence that the outcomes described are the results of the praxis analysed in this thesis. Moreover, the facilitators did not carry out a benchmark study before they started and their intervention can not be considered a 'project' that is discrete in time and place. The identification of the following strengths and weaknesses is based on the participants evaluations (Groot & Bakker 1994a,b,c) and on a personal value-laden appreciation.

Making visible differences and interdependencies: The design, composing of interlocking analytical and process dimensions, has been effective to a certain degree. The experience of undergoing a functional participatory process (Pretty et al., 1995) forced the actors (including ourselves) to discover both the richness and the risks of such a process. The actors became enriched by others' thinking and were surprised by the diversity in perceptions and the richness in ideas flowing from the unique reality of each actor. The exposure to non-conforming thoughts, talks, and practices triggered their reflection. Through the participatory process, the facilitators developed what Hamilton (2000) calls *empathy skills* (e.g., toleration of complexity, acceptance of failure, toleration of contradictory information, acceptance of multiple realities and uncovering perceptions and interests for reconstructing). In fact, the actors became aware that accepting differences could make a positive difference to their life. In this, the facilitators' role was to make visible these differences as well as the interdependencies among the actors.

Participation as a threat: Some actors sometimes considered the participatory process as a threat. For instance, the leaders of the Federation and Unions were not always happy with the effect of group pressure, face-to-face accountability, and the presence of a facilitator because it became more difficult for them to perform as autocratic leaders (Groot, 1995a,b). Moreover, some of the farmers, who did not participate in the workshops, were angry as they felt that most of the important decisions were taken by others (Authors project notebook).

Countervailing power: In addition to the empathy skills, the participatory process contributed to the improvement of actors' *transforming skills* (Hamiliton, 2000). The actors clearly improved their ability in fields such as open communication, listening, self-esteem, self-confidence, learning by doing, negotiating partnership and self-management (see 5.5.4). For instance, the members of the Federation not longer accepted consultancy missions without having participated in development of the Terms of Reference.

Lack of critical reflection: To me, one of the major weaknesses in the facilitation praxis was the failure to support critical reflection and action. Although important improvements had been realised in the social organisation of irrigation management as a result of the participatory diagnosis in joint fact finding activities and in the implementation of the action plans, the sustainability of these improvements has been less impressive. The facilitators attempted to maintain the momentum and encouraged the actors to continue their collaboration, not only in talking but also in action. The expected effect of self- and participatory M&E in supporting an on-going process of action, combined with reflection leading to corrective action, hardly emerged. To the extent that it did happen, it was because the actors were pushed by the facilitators and not because the actors themselves felt the need for it. Moreover, whenever reflection did take place it was at a superficial level. Critical thinking, including questioning (one's own) values, perceptions, interests, and practices, rarely took place. Or in terms of systems thinking, M&E as transforming feedback mechanisms were not very successful because they had no profound influence on the

system. The Senegal experience left me with the intention to further search for (operational) perspectives to acquire competence in the field of facilitation of critical thinking and acting.

Lack of shared ownership: Another weakness in the facilitation praxis was the failure to develop a broad, shared ownership of the process. In respect of the entire facilitation intervention, the (Dutch) facilitators were very influential. By taking part in 'bringing the system into being' and in 'designing the analytical path of inquiry and the process', they largely determined 'who' has been involved in the intervention and the 'why' and 'how'. However, the facilitators never pretended to be a neutral party. Instead, they sought credibility, and accountability to, the participants, by motivating their choices (box 1.1).

Box intermezzo 1.1: Facilitators' search for credibility and accountability.

Especially at the start of the process, the facilitators tended to favour farmer involvement over that of others. Whenever the facilitators felt farmers needed extra time for making up their mind, they interrupted the plenary sessions to give them that space. The number of farmers always was larger in joint activities when they were held with other actors. The facilitators tried always to explain the reasons behind these choices. None of the other actors ever objected to the facilitators' way of working.

(Source: Author's project notebook).

To some extent, the Dutch facilitators shared their power with three Senegalese facilitators by working closely with them. However, this was more for reasons of sustainability, to assure follow-up after the Dutch had left the area, than for the reason of sharing power. In the evening of each workshop day, the Dutch and Senegalese facilitators together reflected on each little step and drew lessons that informed the design of the next one (notes on the facilitation team debriefing sessions in the period of 10-14 and 20-24 October 1994). Whenever it was felt necessary, they organised a workshop for the Senegalese facilitators to fill in felt gaps in competence. However, within one year, two of the three 'well trained' Senegalese facilitators left the project because they were invited to join other agencies with a more certain future. The follow-up would have been more sustainable if some of the farmers also would have been trained in the facilitation of participatory processes.

However, the facilitators did not share the right to control the process with a larger group of actors. The participants of the workshops largely determined *who* should be involved in the process, but the facilitators decided *how* these actors have participated and *in what*. It fact, the whole intervention was a facilitator-driven process. When the leaders of the Federation and Unions refused to meet the management of the project without my personal presence, I realised that dependency on facilitators had got out of hand (Authors project notebook). This experience left me with the challenge to find theories, methodologies and mechanisms, and the required competence, to assure or at least increase (local) ownership of actors in subsequent facilitation experiences.

To conclude the exploration of the Senegal case, in table I.1, I summarise a number of observation points that I call critical because they decisively shaped the process and outcome. In line with 'grounded theory', these observation points are translated into criteria that could be used to assess the performance of a facilitator of participatory processes that address complex issues.

Table intermezzo I.1: Criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of facilitation praxis (Source: This thesis).

	Critical observation points	Possible criteria for assessment of facilitators' praxis
Context	Project setting, Policy actors regarded as contextual factors	Degree to which the facili-tators have been able to fully engage relevant actors at the higher decision-making levels
Values	Conflicting values between facilitators and other actors	Degree of transparency in facilitators' values and interests, Degree of questioning underlying values, including those of the facilitators
Theories/methodologies	Weaknesses in the facilitation because of the use of only one theoretical and method-ological perspective, Problem-solving focus	Appropriateness of choice of (multiple) theoretical /methodological perspectives, Appropriateness of problem-solving focus
Actions	Designing a participatory path that allows actors to jointly define the system of intervention, Building trust and inter-dependency for an effective interaction process, Multiple reasons for (participatory) monitoring and evaluation, Lack of learning about facilitation	Lack of shared ownership Degree of actor involvement in the definition of the system, Degree to which trust, respect and commitment have been achieved, Development and use of feedback mechanisms
Praxis	Intervention at local level mainly Inconsistency in praxis can provide vital space for change	Degree of system-wide change, Degree to which inconsis-tency is explored and made explicit, Degree to which correspon-dence is explored and made explicit

In the following two chapters, I explore a second facilitation experience in which I had the chance to elaborate my Senegal experience. This second experience, that took place in Kenya, enabled me to put some of the lessons from Senegal into practice and to deal with a number of the challenges that had emerged from the Senegal experience.

6 The Kenya case:
The theoretical and methodological foundations[1]

Two years after my experience in Senegal, at the end of 1998, I was invited by the International Support Group (ISG) to assist in the facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya. ISG is a decentralised and non-profit professional association registered in the Netherlands. ISG supports the coming together of a wide range of stakeholders to articulate visions and negotiate partnerships so that local communities can revitalise their social and natural environment. ISG is dedicated to providing support to local learning groups with members in France, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Peru, the Philippines, USA, Canada, and the Netherlands (http://www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/isg/isg.html). The facilitators were all members or associates of ISG[2]. However, in the course of the process, gradually the participants took over the role of the ISG facilitators.

The work of ISG in Kenya was part of a larger process that was designed to support the development of an ecologically sound agriculture in a policy context that was changing to support decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services in East Africa. I accepted this invitation with great interest because I expected it to be an opportunity to apply some of the lessons learnt in Senegal. I assumed I would be able to try out a more inclusive theoretical and methodological perspective, and to take up the challenge to facilitate system-wide change, critical thinking and to create shared ownership.

As in the previous case, the exploration of the Kenyan experience covers three parts. In this particular chapter, I provide a description of the theoretical and methodological perspectives that the facilitators used to support 'linked local learning' in Kenya. In the following chapter, I explore how the facilitators used these perspectives and the outcomes achieved. I also discuss the usefulness of these perspectives in relationship to the facilitators' values, the way they perceived the working context and their actions. The lessons of the Kenya experience are summarised in Intermezzo II and form new building blocks for a grounded theory on the facilitation of participatory processes.

This chapter does not provide a state of the art review of the theories and methodologies described hereafter. It rather makes explicit the theoretical and methodological foundations of the facilitation. The theoretical and methodological perspectives used in Kenya overlap to some extent with those underpinning the facilitation in Senegal. However, they were substantiated and enriched by the preliminary conclusions from that experience. New insights derived from other experiences also played a part, so I start this chapter by presenting some of the insights derived from personal experiences in facilitation that I developed in the period between my intervention in Senegal and Kenya.

6.1 New theoretical and methodological insights on facilitation gained in the period between my intervention in Senegal and Kenya

After my Senegal experience, I continued working in the field of facilitation of participatory processes to deal with issues that were considered complex because of the involvement of multiple interrelated actors and factors. Soft systems thinking and related methodologies continued to be an important component of my professional baggage.

Through my work in the Netherlands, I became exposed to *interactive policy making*. As a consultant for the advisory group DLV (see also chapter 8 and 9), I made use of approaches such as 'Interactive Policy Formulation' (Meesters et al., 1997), 'Open Plan Processes' (Verdaas et al., 1997), 'Dialogue' (Steenhuis & Meulenmeester, 1996) and 'Pegasus' (Ministry of Spatial Planning,

Environment and Government Housing, 1999). These different approaches focus on decision-making processes, involving diverse actors in fields such as 'technology development', 'spatial planning', 'water management' and 'designing infrastructure'. The experiences with these approaches substantiated and enriched my findings from Senegal especially where the following are concerned:

- The role of government in creating a conducive environment for actors to (inter)act in order to bring about more effective concerted action. In many cases this required a shift in the thinking and acting of policy makers (and other actors), from centralised towards decentralised policy development i.e. a shift from being responsible for implementation and content issues, towards facilitation of policy implementation through legislation, regulation or mediation (Wielinga, 2001);
- The importance of considering policy makers as key actors, who are to be involved right from the beginning of the facilitation process;
- The strategic (mis)use of 'participation' by (higher level) influential stakeholders, to make other stakeholders accept plans more efficiently and effectively.

In addition to my interest in these approaches to interactive policy formulation, I came across two theoretical concepts that captured my attention. The first concept was *learning*, the second *negotiation.*

In the period 1996-1997, when I supported a number of 'agricultural education institutes' (AOCs) in the development of curricula addressing 'participatory methodologies and processes', the notion of the *facilitation of learning* came into the picture as an alternative to teaching. The conventional educational approach, based on transferring the teacher's knowledge to students, did not meet the requirements for effective performance in a world whose main features are complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability. In such a world, people do not only need access to a great deal of factual information, but must also be able to use higher-order learning skills, cognitive flexibility and effective cognitive strategies, so as to translate their knowledge into effective action in the domain of existence (Muturana & Varela, 1987). In this perspective, education is no longer about rote memory and the reproduction of external knowledge, but about supporting the active construction of knowledge in which students, lecturers (here referred to as facilitators) and other actors are involved. This perspective implies a shift in thinking about students. They were no longer considered as 'learners-as- information processors', but as 'learners-as-thinkers and co-creators of knowledge for effective action'.

To be able to support the AOC lecturers in the facilitation of students' learning, I explored different learning theories. I discovered that there are many different kinds of learning theory. Each emphasises a different aspect of learning such as biological, psychological or social aspects, and each is therefore useful for different purposes. Especially those theories dealing with adult learning and those acknowledging experience or action as a basis for knowledge development attracted my attention. I quickly discovered the usefulness, for example of *Kolb's experiential learning cycle* for the design of a process that starts from where participants are i.e. a 'bothering' experience, that triggers self-directed learning. In addition, perspectives which treat learning as a process that emphasises social interaction among people, as well as the interaction between people and their biophysical environment, caught my attention. For instance, in *Bawden's learning systems theory* (1991), it is assumed that neither nature nor society can be understood independently of the other. Relevant parts of this theory will be elaborated in the paragraphs below because they form the theoretical underpinnings of the linked local learning perspective that was used by the ISG facilitators.

In the period between Senegal and Kenya, the concepts *negotiation, mediation*, and *conflict*

management also fascinated me. My interest was fed by some uncomfortable feelings I had begun to develop through personal experiences with the use of the learning concept and through listening to those of others. Many (including facilitation practitioners) presented learning as the new panacea to deal with the complex, uncertain and unpredictable issues people are facing today. Although intuitively I felt learning to be essential, it advocates a too rosy picture. Conflicts, competition and the resistance of people who out of blind self-interest, lack of awareness, or inability, refuse to adjust, were often neglected. So far, my personal experience was that reaching agreement through dialogue to achieve more effective (concerted) action is not always possible. It taught me that within participatory processes, conflicts are inevitable and sometimes even preferable as they can create space for learning and as such trigger change.

Both learning and negotiation theories formed the basic building blocks of the 'linked local learning' perspective used by ISG to support decentralisation in Kenya. Therefore, the insights derived from the relevant theories described below have been integrated into the major theoretical and methodological framework guiding the ISG facilitators in their praxis.

6.2 Linked local learning and its theoretical and methodological underpinnings

When ISG facilitators became involved in supporting the development of an ecologically sound agriculture in a changing policy context, they perceived the need for a perspective that: 1) linked actors at different decision-making levels; 2) linked the social with the natural environment; 3) acknowledged the issue of conflicting perceptions and interests; and 4) enabled actors to find their way forward through direct engagement with their everyday world. ISG members decided to apply a *linked local learning* perspective because they assumed it could address the four mentioned aspects. To make explicit the reasons and assumptions of the ISG facilitators when they decided to use this perspective (Author's project notebook), hereafter I briefly provide a description of how they perceived the context. Chapter 8 presents a more detailed discussion on the perceived context.

As in many other countries, in Kenya the policy shift towards decentralisation and privatisation of (agricultural) services implied that lower level public sector staff were asked to take up larger responsibilities and to form new partnerships with non-government institutions and farmer/community-based organisations. At the same time the on-going deterioration of natural resources was attracting high level attention. The prime responsibility for re-mediation was placed on community-based agro-ecosystem management. Local communities were expected to collaborate closely with local public extension workers, NGO staff, the private sector and neighbouring local communities, to jointly research options for ecologically sound agriculture, sustainable use of natural resources and equitable development. There were no 'blue prints' available since agro-ecosystem dynamics are contextual, and local histories and contexts play strong shaping roles in what is possible and considered desirable. There were some best practices on which to build, but local conditions and complexities required a high level of on-site (re)innovation (Lightfoot et al., 2001a). Therefore, ISG adopted a learning perspective to offer diverse actors the opportunity to learn their way gradually through experimentation, reflection, and negotiation. More specifically, the objectives of linked local learning are: 1) to strengthen the capacity of local institutions and other stakeholders to negotiate appropriate services for a sustainable social and natural environment; and 2) to develop appropriate environmental legislation and natural resource management plans (Lightfoot et al., 2001b).

Linked local learning is not a new methodology such as RAAKS or PRA. "For the sake of easy reading, the ISG members labelled the learning process that they facilitated in Kenya as 'linked local learning'. However, the essence of a learning process is that it is re-invented by new learners

all the time. Each learning group will find their own label for their learning process and thus take ownership over the process" (Alders, pers.com.).

The term *linked* refers to two inter-related notions. First, there is the idea of *linking actors at different decision-making levels*. In linked local learning, the learning that goes on at a local level is linked to district authorities and others, operating at the level of the non-government and private sector, but also with government and non-government officials and the private sector at national level. National level learning is shared with other countries within their regions and less intensively beyond them. Linked local learning involves the facilitation of what the facilitators called 'multi-actor learning processes' involving actors who operate at different social, administrative and cultural levels. In this thesis, a multi-actor process differs from the type of participatory process that was analysed in the Senegal case in the sense that the latter involved actors at only one decision-making level. Secondly, in linked local learning there is the notion of *linking people with their natural environment*. In 'linked local learning' actors are encouraged to look at their agro-ecosystem from a human or institutional perspective.

The term *local* in linked local learning means that the learning is driven by the local level with the farmer or local community as the prime mover. Community-based organisations direct the development of common visions on future ways to manage local agro-ecosystems. They identify the future roles for themselves and others in public and private sectors to support the realisation of these future visions.

Learning in linked local learning is taken rather broadly and not limited to cognitive or behavioural changes of the individual only. It also includes transformation of the mindsets and culture of groups, organisations, and other institutions. Moreover, learning reflects the link among reflection, understanding and (more effective) action necessary to cope with complex issues. Collective learning is key in linked local learning because ISG members believe that no single party, agency, organisation, or discipline holds the key to understanding current political, social and environmental change. Linked local learning emphasises a process of support to individuals, groups or networks in order to articulate a future vision and negotiate partnerships to realise their vision, that they might continuously innovating and adapting to the ever-changing world (see chapter 7 for more details). Theoretically and methodologically, linked local learning is influenced by insights from 'collaborative learning' (Daniels & Walker, 1996), 'soft or learning system thinking' (Checkland, 1989), and 'learning and critical learning systems' (Sriskandarajah et al., 1989; Bawden, 1986). Hereafter, these perspectives are discussed.

6.2.1 Learning systems and critical learning systems

In '*learning systems*' actors themselves learn how to *become* systems of inquiry, for which they can use soft systems methodologies (Sriskandarajah et al., 1989). In learning systems, the learning is experience-based or experiential (Kolb, 1984). Actors jointly learn how to learn their way forward through direct engagement with their everyday world. In a learning system, its constituting actors focus on the inter-relationships between themselves and their natural and socio-cultural environments.

In *critical learning systems*, the learning systems try to learn how to improve their own quality of learning through an on-going process of self-critique and subsequent 'systemic development'. In critical learning systems, the constituting actors critically look at their own thinking, values, perceptions, interests and practices, and consider them as subjects of change. In the critical learning process two activities are seen as essential (Woodhill, 1999). First, there is praxis or the interplay between theory, values, perception of the context, and practice. Actors are stimulated to recognise and critically question their own, and each others', theoretical assumptions, values, and the perceptions shaping their practice. Secondly, particular attention is given to 'meta-

learning' (learning about learning) and 'epistemic learning' (learning about what can be learnt and the beliefs and values that underlie learning) (Woodhill, 1999). As will be further discussed in the next chapter, in Kenya it was mainly the 'learning about learning' that was facilitated.

6.2.2 Experiential learning

As mentioned above, the (critical) learning systems theory heavily draws on *Kolb's experiential learning model* (figure 3 in chapter 3). Kolb considers learning to occur when people transform their everyday concrete experiences into knowledge which, in turn, is used to guide future actions to change the nature of the experience (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's learning cycle assumes a deliberate well-informed decision-making process. The learner has an experience that is problematic to him or her. He or she goes through a divergent process of data gathering by careful observation across a range of issues and by reflecting on the data. This is followed by a mental process of abstract conceptualisation, by creating generalisations and framing them in abstract concepts. Then the learner decides how the new conceptual understanding can be used to improve future practice and takes action through experimentation which leads to a new experience. Ultimately, the learner has to accommodate the outcome of the test with the reality of the original experience. The experiential learner believes that the way we see the world determines what we do to it. So, what we experience, how we perceive the experience and what meaning, values and theories we attribute to it, will determine the actions we take. Consequently, the learning is considered a dynamic iterative process, in which there is a flux between the observed experience and the mental abstractions used to make meaning out of it. Kolb's learning cycle highlights the synthesis between action and reflection and between the abstract and the concrete.

Experiential learning involves learning for being, as well as learning for knowing or doing. The best experience for learning is that which evokes feelings (Wilson & Morren, 1990). Kolb's learning cycle can be entered at any point but needs to be completed for rounded understanding to develop. Methodologically, Kolb's learning cycle has largely informed the design of the linked local learning process in Kenya. As the facilitators assumed that concrete experience and reflection are the main channels through which 'ordinary' people learn, and especially those in rural areas with limited access to schooling, ISG started the learning process by encouraging actors to reflect on their own experiences, followed by conceptualisation and the drawing conclusions for further action.

6.2.3 Negotiation and mediation

In addition to learning, linked local learning is also informed by negotiation theories. In previous experiences in the field of natural resource management, ISG members had discovered limitations to facilitation in conflict situations. This experience made them search for alternatives that explicitly addressed conflicting interests, perceptions, and values. Promising theories and approaches included *negotiation* and *mediation* (Pruitt & Carneval, 1993), *collaborative conflict management* (Daniels & Walker, 1996) and *alternative dispute resolution (ADR)* (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). They realised that the facilitation of agro-ecological, social or political change can also be understood as a mediating process in which multiple actors negotiate different, and often competing, interests, values and perceptions in order to collectively agree (or disagree) on actions for improvement (Daniels & Walker, 1996). Negotiation and learning are by no means mutually exclusive as conflict can trigger learning. In fact, a negotiation is increasingly recognised as a learning process in itself (e.g., Upreti, 2001; Ramirez, 2001; Van Woerkum, 1997).

Thus, linked local learning is theoretically and methodologically informed by negotiation theories, and in particular by mediation and ADR strategies (Daniels & Walker, 1996). Pruitt & Carneval (1993) define negotiation as a systematic discussion between two or more parties aimed at resolving (seemingly) incompatible goals. Parties will only participate in negotiation when it is

seen as the best alternative to what they could expect to obtain 'away from the bargaining table' (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987). Negotiation is a form of joint decision making. In joint decision making, the decisions are taken by the actors (or in negotiation terminology 'disputants') themselves. Joint decision making is one out a series of three strategies that Pruitt and Carneval (1993) distinguish for dealing with social conflicts. The other two include: 1) third–party decision making, in which the decisions are made by the third party and not by the stakeholders themselves; and 2) separate action (including retreat, struggle, tacit co-ordination) in which parties do not collaborate at all. Numerous factors influence why disputants will opt for one over another, depending on the nature of conflict, the stage of the negotiation, and the attributes of the stakeholders (Ramirez, 2001). In Kenya, the joint decision making strategy, and in particular, the mediation of strategic interest gained much attention.

Mediation is a special type of negotiation in which a third party helps the disputants to come to an agreement. The third party or mediator can not make binding decisions about the issue at stake. In mediation, the parties retain the right to accept or reject any suggestion made by the mediator. The moment actors in a participatory process start negotiating, the facilitator becomes a mediator playing a crucial role in deciding what tactic to apply. Pruitt and Carneval (1993) distinguish four basic tactics among which a mediator can choose: 1) problem-solving or *integrative negotiation* to discover a win-win solution that satisfies all parties; 2) compensation, which involves efforts to persuade parties into agreements by promising them rewards or benefits; 3) pressure, which involves forcing parties into agreements; and 4) inaction, to let the parties solve the issue on their own. (Personally, I think it is questionable to consider 'inaction' as a form of decision-making because it fits better in the 'separate action strategy'). The decision for one strategy over another depends on the mediators' perception of the common ground among the parties and whether the situation favours a search for a win-win situation, and their concern for the aspirations of the parties. "Mediators are likely to apply an integrative mediation style when they have a high concern for the parties' aspirations and perceive that the likelihood of a win-win agreement is high. Mediators are predicted to employ compensation to entice the parties into concessions and agreements when they have a high concern for parties' aspirations and perceive that the chance to achieve a win-win agreement is low"(Pruitt & Carneval, 1993:173).

If the aim is partnership development, win–win processes are the most favourable as they aim to satisfy all parties. Consequently, accepting the importance of partnership development in linked local learning, the ISG members purposefully looked for win-win situations to facilitate. Methodologically they made use of Pruitt & Carneval (1993: 157) who describe a number of ways to construct win-win agreements including 'cost cutting', 'bridging', 'logrolling' and 'solving underlying concerns'. 'Cost cutting' is used in the case of diverging interests when successful goal achievement by one party(ies) is likely to impose cost on the other parties. 'Cost cutting' implies giving one party(ies) what it wants while cutting other parties' costs. In 'bridging', all parties achieve their major goals through 'expanding the pie' or 'alternation'. In 'logrolling', each party concedes on issues that are of low priority to itself and high priority to the other party(ies). 'Solving underlying concerns' includes making explicit goals, values, perceptions, positions and / or mandate.

In integrative mediations, each type of win-win agreement requires a different set of problem-solving tactics, and different refocusing or *reframing questions* for the mediator (see table 6.1).

Here, I can briefly mention that in the Kenya experience, the facilitators as mediators predominantly used the tactic 'solving underlying concerns' by making explicit the actors' underlying interests, values, perceptions and mandate. They differentiated between positions (non-negotiable) and interests (that can be broken down into parts, in the search for shared interests) (Ramirez, pers. com.).

Table 6.1: Reframing questions for mediators to facilitate win-win agreements (Adapted from Pruitt & Carneval, 1993; Daniels & Walker, 1996).

Negotiation tactics for win-win agreements	Reframing questions for mediators
Bridging/expanding the pie	How can both parties get what they are demanding? How can the critical resources be expanded?
Logrolling	What are issues of higher and lower priority to the parties?
Solving underlying concerns	What are the parties' goals? How can parties satisfy each other's goals? What are the underlying concerns behind the proposals? What are the parties' priorities among these underlying concerns? How can all parties' high priority concerns be served? What risks and costs does one proposal pose to the other parties? How can these costs and risks be mitigated? How can the goals and values of some parties goals better served? Can value disputes be transformed into interest disputes? What are super-ordinate goals all parties would want to achieve?

In order to justify the facilitators' methodological choices in the mediation, a final comment is necessary on the social context within which negotiation takes place. Recent developments in negotiation research attribute great importance to the social context in shaping the negotiation process and its outcome (Ramirez, 2001). Several authors stress the importance of addressing relational features as part of the preparation of the negotiation (Warner & Jones, 1998). Others suggest that issues such as partnership, power, trust, co-ordination, and information exchange become an important subject of the negotiation itself (Ramirez, 2001; Pruitt & Carneval, 1993). Face-to-face contact, communication and negotiation are considered useful strategies to improve moderately negative relationships as they can have several beneficial effects such as contributing to understanding the other parties' motives and sensitivities, combating stereotypes, and discovering interdependency.

In addition, there is evidence that simply devising an agreement about how to behave is not enough to improve poor relationships. Parties involved in the contract may not trust each other enough to uphold the contract. Moreover, a contract tends to deal with current issues in the relationship, and these often change over time. Lessons drawn from the contrasting fields of marital therapy, but also from natural resource management, show the importance of focussing on building parties' capacity in negotiation to enable them to fruitfully negotiate new issues as they arise in future (Warner & Jones, 1998; Pruitt & Carneval, 1993). Based on these insights, the facilitators of the linked local learning process emphasised actors' capacity building in negotiation as well as in mediation.

6.2.4 Collaborative learning

Linked local learning has been informed also by ideas about *collaborative learning*. Daniels and Walker (1996) describe collaborative learning as a hybrid between 'system thinking' and 'alternative dispute resolution'. It is designed to address the complexity and controversy inherent in public land management by combining elements of soft system methodology and ADR strategies. Until now, most of the collaborative learning processes that have been documented are based on experience in the United States. Collaborative learning deals with parties' strategic behaviour by incorporating designed methods to promote integrative negotiation. It encourages the development of a view of a situation as a set of inter-related systems. However, collaborative

learning has one dimension that goes beyond soft systems thinking and methodology and Alternative Dispute Resolution, that is referred to as communication competence. Collaborative learning emphasises a number of inter-related communication skill areas including: 1) listening; 2) questioning; 3) feedback; 4) modelling; 5) social cognition; 6) dialogue; and 7) collaborative argument (Daniels & Walker, 1996). These competencies constitute a collaborative communication system that is more comprehensive and instructive than the communication models in soft systems methodologies or alternative dispute resolution strategies alone (Walker & Daniels, 1997). In collaborative learning, stakeholders are encouraged to think differently about a conflict through 'role reversal', 'mirroring', 'future orientation', and 'a process of reframing' i.e. redefining the conflict or problem as a desired and feasible change. Rather than focussing on solutions, it emphasises progress or improvement. Collaborative learning is considered an iterative process with nine phases (Walker & Daniels, 1997). The initial stages emphasise common understanding of the situation (e.g., imagining the best and worst possible futures, making use of system maps). In the middle stages, stakeholders focus on (each other's) concerns and interests regarding the specific situation. Out of these concerns, they identify situation improvements in the form of transformative models. In the latter stages, these proposed improvements or models are compared with reality through dialogue and negotiation among the actors, and move into implementation. In the next chapter, I further explore how the facilitators in the Kenya event applied some of the ingredients of collaborative learning in their (process) design.

6.3 Linked local learning and its methodological features

Linked local learning has no uniform or standardised methodology. Its users apply different phasing, methodologies, methods, or tools, but share the principles of local- driven learning processes, mutually linking people, and linking people with their natural environment. Linked local learning involves a process that is cyclic and iterative and is superimposed on on-going local action i.e. peoples' normal jobs and daily work. For each cycle, the learning process is driven by the use of appropriate tools and indicators that enable the actors to record and track progress
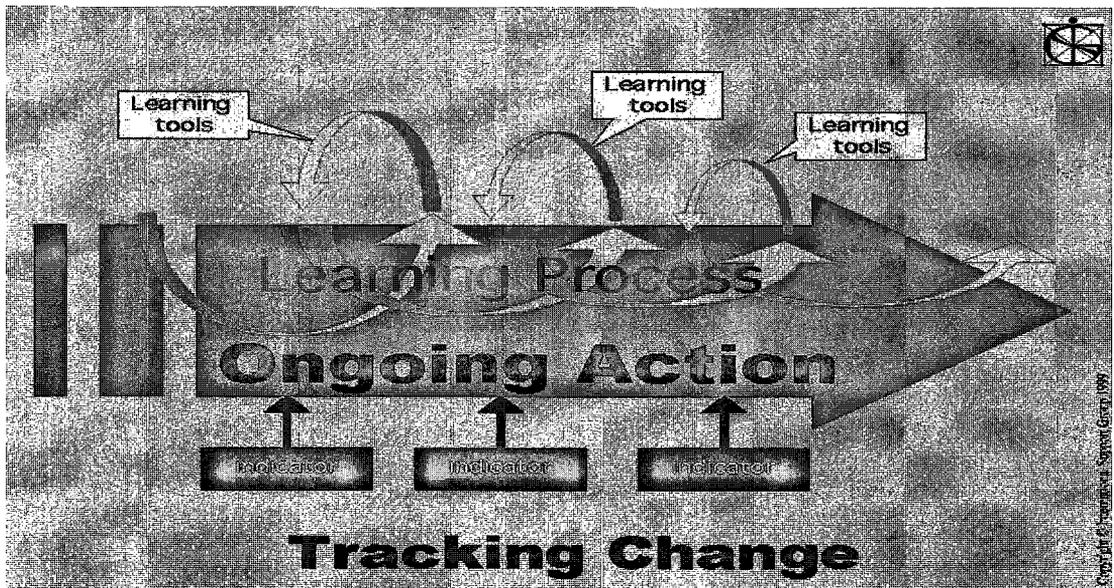
Figure 6.1: How local learning works (Lightfoot et al., 1999).

Table 6.2: A comparison of the theoretical and methodological perspectives underpinning the facilitation in Kenya and Senegal.

Kenya: Facilitation of linked local learning to support ecologically sound agriculture in the context of decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services	Senegal: Facilitation of the privatisation of the SAED/IAM irrigation project
Focus on (critical) learning systems, integrative negotiation and mediation and collaborative learning	Focus on (soft) systems thinking and practice
Supporting the learning about the coupled human (activity) and natural system, Methodologically, for this learning to happen, agro-ecosystem analysis and RAAKS tools were interwoven	Supporting a participatory diagnosis on the social organisational aspects of the SAED/IAM irrigation system, Methodologically, RAAKS has been applied by the actors to jointly diagnose the way they (inter)act in the SAED/IAM irrigation system
Explicit focus on negotiation and mediation	The processes often were perceived as being negotiations but the facilitation has not been purposefully designed as mediation
Linking the learning of actors across different cultural, sectoral and administrative levels	Focus on actors operating at the local level
Experiential learning cycle and some generic questions form the basis for the design of the learning process	The RAAKS methodology with its specific tools is used as basis for the design of the participatory diagnosis and action during the first three months of the intervention
Learning about learning, and the use of indicators to encourage on-going action-reflection cycles for more effective action	The facilitation of multiple M&E systems (which failed)

towards their future vision and to discuss that future, as illustrated in figure 6.2 (Lightfoot et al., 1999).

Some of the learning tools are derived from the RAAKS methodology (Engel & Salomon, 1997) (see 4.1 for a description and 7.5.2 for examples), interwoven with agro-ecosystem analysis tools (Lightfoot & Noble, 1993; Conway, 1987) (see 7.5.2 for examples). The weaving together of both types of tools enabled the facilitators to support the actors in learning about coupled human and natural systems.

By way of overview, table 6.2 compares the theoretical and methodological perspectives used by the facilitators in Kenya and in Senegal.

In the next chapter, I explore the use and effectiveness of the theoretical and methodological perspectives applied in Kenya in a systemic way by relating them with the facilitation actions, the facilitators' values, and the way they perceived the Kenyan context.

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[1] I am grateful to Ricardo Ramirez and Clive Lightfoot, two co-facilitators, for their useful reaction to this chapter.

[2] The ISG facilitators were: C. Lightfoot, R. Ramirez, R. Noble, I. Bekalo and A. Groot.

7 The facilitation of 'linked local learning' in the context of agricultural decentralisation in Kenya[1]

This chapter further explores the facilitation praxis of a linked local learning process in Kenya that aimed to support ecologically sound agriculture as well as the decentralisation of agricultural services. As in the Senegal case, I use Bawden's model to systemically explore the facilitation actions in relation to the facilitators' values, the theories and methodologies applied, and the way the facilitators perceived the context.

I begin this chapter with a description of the perceived context. Then, the case study is split up into three facilitation actions. Each action is looked upon in terms of used theoretical and methodological perspectives, the facilitators' values, and how these values shaped their praxis. Next, each action is explored by applying the criteria 'consistency' and 'correspondence' (see chapter 3). Figure 7.1 summarises the structure of this chapter.

Kenyan Context as perceived by facilitators		
Values of the facilitators and how they shaped praxis		
Facilitation action 1: Bring multiple learning systems into existence	Facilitation action 2: Developing multi-actor ownership	Facilitation action 3: Supporting systemic learning about the institutional and biophysical aspects of agro-ecosystem management
How the theories and methodologies were used	How the theories and methodologies were used	How the theories and methodologies were used
Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, action 1, theories and methodologies and, values	Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, action 2, theories and methodologies and, values	Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, action 3, theories and methodologies and, values
Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)

INTERMEZZO II: Building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights on the facilitation of multi-actor processes

Figure 7.1: Structure of the case 'facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya'

The findings on (in)consistencies and (non)effectiveness in the facilitation praxis in Kenya are integrated with those that emerged from the praxis in Senegal. This synthesis, described in Intermezzo II, provides new building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights for the facilitation of participatory processes.

The choice of facilitation actions has been made after studying the case material in the light of the research questions. I selected three actions that I considered to be key because of their impact on the process and outcome. I begin by describing the way the facilitators perceived the context that formed their working environment and determined their perception of the issues at stake.

7.1 Perceived context

A need to operationalise the stated policies for decentralising agricultural services

The facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya took place in a policy context that is changing towards *decentralisation* and *privatisation*. More specifically, the (policy) context featured a growing concern about how to operationalise the decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services. This concern emerged from criticism of the performance of public agricultural services, and changes in beliefs about the role of the central government. Rather than being the implementor of a state-led process of development, the central state would become a facilitator supporting interactive processes in which coalitions of actors at local and higher levels implement their own developments. Through decentralisation and privatisation, the state aimed to lower public expenditures and to increase local influence on government, so that better targeted and more efficient services could be provided. One of the major consequences of these policy changes was that lower level public sector staff were asked to take up larger responsibilities and to form new partnerships with NGOs, private institutions, and farmer/community based organisations.

At the time of ISG's intervention (1998), decentralisation in Kenya was still a policy on paper and far from being operationalised. The general mood was one of stagnation and slow change. The Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged the gap between the discourse on decentralisation and the actions at the district level. It was busy preparing documentation for a World Bank Agricultural Investment Project (ASIP) that sought to promote the active participation of local people and institutions in agricultural development. Analysis by ISG of government documents on stakeholder consultation and participation showed that the Ministry had insufficient knowledge of current ideas about how to approach these processes. The difficulties in operationalising decentralisation processes were reinforced by constraining national policies, for example those which that required official permits to bring large groups of people together.

Privatisation was much further ahead, accompanied by liberalisation and a range of institutional reform measures. Many public enterprises had been privatised and the marketing of agricultural inputs and products, as well as of imports and exports, had been liberalised (ISG, 1999). The role of the central government was shifting towards regulation, facilitation, and the provision of public good services. On paper, this change would allow the private sector, NGOs and local communities to actively participate in policy formulation and decision making. However, over the previous years it had been observed that most stakeholders were not prepared to become actively involved and remained in a state of confusion, exploitation, poverty and lack of information (Kenya Working Group, 1999b).

Growing ecological concern

The natural environment was perceived also to be rapidly changing. The increasing demand for food and cash were subjecting the natural resources to serious degradation. A large number of institutes, organisations and producers had expressed their concern about the poor status of natural resources and were involved in an intensive search for more effective ways to deal with the on-going deterioration. Participatory community-based agro-ecosystem management appeared to be a promising approach. Kenyan farmers had been working for some time to develop organic farming and were looking to NGOs, and the private and public sector to support them. At the time of the facilitators' intervention, multi-stakeholder collaboration was still in its infancy. Among farmers, local communities and NGOs, there was a general sense of frustration with (past) government initiatives (box 7.1). Public extension and research had focussed almost exclusively on high-input agriculture and did not provide farmers and local communities with appropriate alternatives for ecologically-friendly agricultural development.

Box 7.1: Farmer perception on his relationship with extension staff.

During one of the multi-actor workshops, a farmer expressed his frustration by saying, "The extension staff has never been taught to 'listen' to farmers. Their attitude is I went to school and learned this, so listen to me".

(Source: Author's project notebook on the Nyeri workshop)

Local and international NGOs tended to give more priority to a sustainable use of natural resources and usually worked more closely with the local population. The collaboration between the public sector and NGOs as well as among NGOs themselves was marked by competition and lack of mutual trust (Kenya Working Group, 1999). Experiences in integrating local communities and public and private organisations were few and tended to be restricted to donor-funded training.

Poorly developed relationships among public and private actors within and across different decision-making levels

To the facilitators, the shift in thinking about policy formulation and agro-ecosystem management seemed to demand fundamental changes in partnership and in the competence of diverse stakeholders at various decision-making levels. They observed that actors who had very little experience in working together were suddenly asked to collaborate. Those who were used to being told what to do were asked to actively participate in finding out about complex multi-faceted issues and to search for improvement. Building viable inter-institutional partnerships is hard and slow work and the facilitators noticed that the dominant project mode of working provided little time and resources for achieving partnership. Actors were given too little time to get to know each other and to understand each others' perceptions of agro-ecosystems and their management (Lightfoot et al., 2001b), while capacity building for joint decision-making and concerted action were almost neglected. There was little room in current projects for learning how to change. Most of the reflections on experience were externally-based, captured through formal evaluations which exclude 'insiders' from the learning process. As local people and organisations had little capacity and responsibility for evaluation, valuable lessons were not learned.

To ISG's knowledge at that time, the processes of creating a farmer demand for services and of forming viable partnerships rarely had been subjects of formal study. There were a few best practices on which to build but these needed to be adapted to locally-specific conditions and re-invented by (local) people. Capacity to reinvent and innovate were seen by ISG as essential to partnership building and community progress in agro-ecosystem management. Based on this perception, ISG members proposed a *linked local learning perspective* in order to provide communities, local government, and agricultural service providers with opportunities to learn their own way through better partnerships and better management of agro-ecosystems (Lightfoot et al., 2001a).

The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) had heard about ISG's experiences with learning groups in Ghana, the Philippines and Peru and was interested, for a number of reasons. DANIDA was dissatisfied with the impact of its investments in the decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural support services. Neither the hope for 'demand-pull' on service providers by farmers, nor new partnerships between local authorities, producer organisations, NGOs and the private sector, were materialising. In addition, DANIDA's ambitions that agriculture should be ecologically sound, and that the services reached small holders and the resource poor, remained largely unfulfilled. A learning approach, that sought to grasp opportu-

nities during ongoing implementation in a transparent and reflective fashion, drew DANIDA's attention. It decided to fund ISG to explore the interest in learning approaches to decentralisation of agricultural services. If interest were to emerge, then DANIDA would look at a next step, to support the continuation of the linked local learning process. However, due to changing leadership at the DANIDA headquarters in Copenhagen, DANIDA never did so (Lightfoot, pers.com.).

By way of summary, when in May 1998 ISG was asked to step in, the facilitators perceived the context as one characterised by:
- A need to operationalise the stated policies for decentralising agricultural services, a need felt and expressed by a large number of actors.
- Poorly developed relationships among public and private actors within and between different decision-making levels, as well as poor capacity to build these partnerships.
- A need for (capacity for) creating a farmers' demand for services.
- A growing concern for developing (capacity to support) ecologically-sound agriculture.
- A non-project context and no funding guaranteed.

7.2 Values of the facilitators and how they shaped praxis

Multi-actor ownership: ISG considers multi-actor ownership, implying that actors themselves control the learning process and the resources to realise it, as a crucial asset to be developed straight from the beginning of the intervention. Actions such as the exploration of actors' interests in linked local learning as a mandate-seeking event for further ISG intervention, as well as the formation of the Kenyan multi-actor core and working groups, and the support offered by ISG in defining their learning (see 7.3.1), should all be seen as aiming to contribute to developing multi-actor ownership. ISG facilitators believe that multi-ownership is an effective way to contribute to equity and poverty reduction.

Environmental concern: ISG members share a concern towards the on-going degradation of the natural environment as a result of human behaviour. They are sensitive for calls to support ecologically sound agriculture. They take the natural environment as dynamic, unpredictable, uncertain and, in part, inherently unknowable. However, they believe that it is possible to learn more about the environment and manage it for the better through observation, reflection, and experimentation by a range of actors. ISG members believe that agro-ecosystem management has a lot to do with the management of people acting upon an ecosystem, rather than with managing markets or technologies only. People's perception, intentions, and interaction are considered decisive factors for the management of natural resources. People are considered intentional. They have goals that can not be predicted as they change over time through (social) interaction. It is more useful to understand people's reasons, rather than causes for their behaviour. Consequently, ISG aims to facilitate social interaction to (de)construct reasons for destructive actions and to construct new intentions to achieve a desired change.

Agency: In addition, people are assumed to have 'agency', or 'the capacity of an actor to realise at least part of the intended actions through (strategic) interactions in a network of social relationships' (Long & Long, 1992). ISG strives to improve such a capacity. By developing the actors' competence in learning about learning, ISG facilitators believe that people can be helped to be reflexive i.e. self-reflective about their world and their practices. Reflexivity is considered to contribute to the becoming (more) effective change agents.

7.3 Action 1, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and an assessment of the praxis

7.3.1 Action 1

Facilitation action 1 dealt with bringing multiple (critical) learning systems into being. I learnt from the Senegal experience that it is important to pay attention to the onset of an intervention as it highly shapes the 'why', 'who', 'what' and 'how' of the entire facilitation process. This section shows how the facilitation of the start of the linked local learning process in Kenya differed significantly from the way it began in Senegal.

Usually, visits by foreign expatriates raise project expectations. However, when two ISG facilitators came to Kenya in May 1998, they had no project, no funds, and no 'blue-print' for what to do. What they had to share was experience with learning approaches which they thought might be useful for discovering how to cope with complex issues such as decentralisation and ecologically sound agriculture. Moreover, ISG did not intervene in an existing (DANIDA) project, which made the 'with whom', 'why' and 'how and what to begin' of their intervention, very open questions. Their own professional network in Kenya formed the basis for approaching people to talk with and to check their interest in the use of learning approaches. Some of the contacts were working in ministries or NGOs, others were operating as private consultants. These people mentioned other persons and organisations who could be interested to join in and a 'snowball effect' was created. By the end of the visit, a wide range of actors, including leaders of farmer organisations at local and national level, policy makers, local authorities, national and international NGOs, researchers, extensionists, the private sector and educators, had been actively involved in brainstorming sessions (ISG, 1999). In these sessions, the actors were grouped into a national and international NGO group, a farmer group, a government agencies group, a research and training institutions group and a donor group. Each actor group gave many different reasons for why they might be interested in linked local learning. Figure 7.2 shows, as an example, the interests expressed by national NGOs.

In general, the notion of 'linked local learning' appeared to be attractive to the actors because of its focus on: 1) linking actors across different social, sectoral and administrative levels; 2) negotiating responsive agricultural services; 3) providing possibilities to operationalise the national decentralisation policy; 4) dealing with conflicting advice; and 5) developing context-specific improvements. Out of the interested actors, *a core group* and a smaller *working group* were formed. These two groups represented a coalition of multiple organisations and individuals from the public and private sector, and the farmer community who previously had only rarely worked together. The core group consisted of interested and committed individuals from 19 organisations: Ministry of Agriculture (5), agricultural research institutes (2), university (1), international NGO (1), national NGOs (1), local NGO (4), international donor (1), farmer community i.e. farmer self- help group (1), national farmer union (3). Out of the 19 members, four were women (ISG, 1999a). The mission statement of the core group included: facilitating horizontal and vertical learning acrossing different administrative levels, developmenting of sustainable agriculture, and networking among stakeholders (Kenyan core group, 1998). A smaller task force or *working group* was mandated by the core group members to provide guidelines and recommendations on the way forward to ensure that 'local' learning would take place. Other tasks included pursuing specific activities and work plans in order to achieve this learning. The working group composed of individuals from 10 organisations i.e. Ministry of Agriculture (3), international NGO (1), national NGO (1), local NGO (2), agricultural research institute (1), farmer self-help group (1) and the national farmer union (1). Out of the 10 members, four were women (ISG, 1999a).
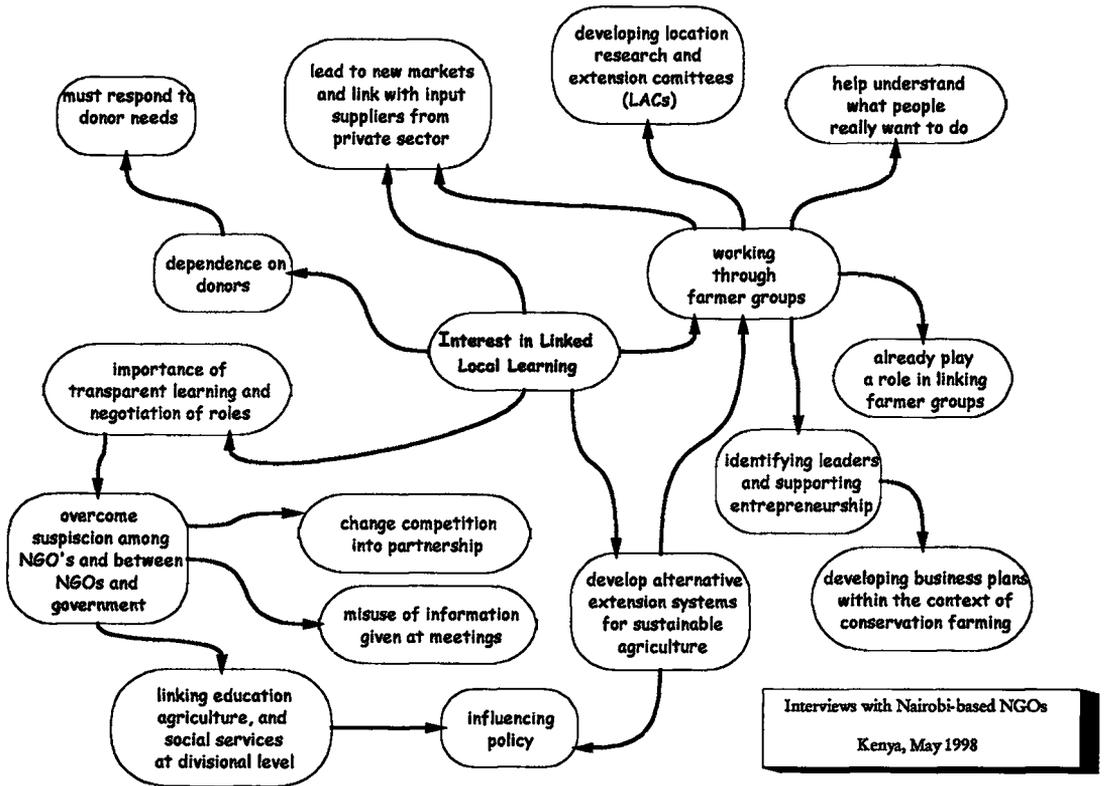
Figure 7.2: Interest in linked local learning expressed by NGOs in Kenya (ISG, 1999).

During the next four months, the groups regularly came together to discuss *with whom* they wanted to learn (table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Actors to be involved in linked local learning (ISG, 1998c). The number of 'X' refers to the desired degree of involvement.

With whom to learn and at what level	Local	District	National
Farmers CBOs (registered)	XXX	XX	X
Farmers' Organisations (co-ops, associations)	XXX	XXX	X
Extension Agents (private and government)	XXX	X	–
Researchers	XXX	XX	X
Policy makers	XXX	XXX	XXX
NGOs	XXX	X	X
Agri-business	XXX	XX	–
Institutions (schools, church, agricultural colleges)	XXX	XXX	–
Donors	XX	XX	XXX
Media	–	–	–

The working group also discussed 'what' they wanted to learn, 'why', 'how' and 'where', to cope with the challenges they were facing. Box 7.2 illustrates the outcome of the discussion.

Box 7.2: Some outcomes of the working group regarding the why, what, how of their learning process.

- The learning process should emanate from farmers as opposed to the present top-down approach.
- The learning process needs to be focussed on a specific issue like how we can work together to make a broader impact on agro-ecosystems.
- Communication is an integral part of learning and should be two-way.
- The first step is to learn how to learn then jointly share with a wider audience.
- The learning process involves identifying learning needs, partners and effective learning methodology.
- We need to do research on the sustainability of different learning processes for different levels.
- We need to carry out a stakeholder analysis to assess their learning needs.
- We need to identify and/or develop effective learning tools.
- We need to identify monitoring indicators for linked local learning to track change.
- We need to identify monitoring indicators for linked local learning to track change.

(Source: ISG 1998c)

Except for two meetings held in Kenya, e-mail contact was the way ISG facilitators supported the learning of both the working group and the core group. In particular, ISG facilitators provided feedback on the minutes of meetings and assisted in writing proposals to support future learning activities.

The working group and core group felt that to 'give hands and feet' to the notion of 'linked local learning', the process should be decentralised, with farmers taking the lead. The groups decided to continue their learning process together with communities, for whom agriculture is a part of every-day life, and from where the demands for services must come. Based on a number of criteria, they chose Nyeri district as the 'local' learning ground' (ISG, 1998c), where they decided to organise a multi-actor learning workshop. Funds were partly provided by the participants in this workshop and partly by DANIDA. The working group worked out guidelines for the first workshop in Nyeri. Locally, the organisation of the workshop was carried out by the Itemeni Farmers Self-Help Group. The co-ordinator of this farmer group was a core group member. The working group members and the Itemeini Farmers Self-Help Group together invited the partici-pants for the workshop, based on a number of preliminary objectives (see 7.4.1 for more details). At that moment, the working group invited ISG to step in again to facilitate the Nyeri workshop. Through this invitation, ISG received the mandate from multiple actors to foster learning among them.

7.3.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used
In this section, I discuss the use of the *learning system* and *integrative mediation* theory and *collaborative learning* to bringing multiple learning systems into being. In the mediation the facilitators applied the 'reframing' strategy.

Learning system theory, reframing and collaborative learning
In terms of learning system theory (Sriskandarajah et al., 1989), ISG's first facilitation activities were directed to bringing multiple soft or learning systems into existence. In this respect, the core group and the working group, and the networks that emerged as a result of the Nyeri workshop (see 7.5), can all be considered *learning* systems. The members did not only *learn together about agro-ecosystems*, but decided to look also at themselves and to learn about their own role in the issue at stake. By doing this, they gradually *became systems of learning*. The facilitators assisted

the actors in constructing the learning systems by mediating the negotiation about the system's objectives, boundaries, and the actors to be involved. In the mediation, the facilitators applied the generic *reframing questions* 'with whom to learn', 'what to learn about', 'why' and 'how'. The use of these questions was effective in dealing with the huge difference in actors' interests, perceptions, practices, and for addressing the (potential) conflicts within the core and working groups. These questions encouraged the actors to focus on 'wider (common) concerns' and distracted their attention from their day-to-day problems. To the extent the constituting actors learnt together about their way of learning, they share some characteristics of *critical learning systems* (see 7.5). However, the actors did hardly question each other's perceptions, assumptions and values.

The gatherings of the core and working group significantly contributed to developing the *communication competencies* referred to in the *collaborative learning approach* (Daniels & Walker, 1996). The members of the core and working group at the start hardly knew each other, were involved in different practices, and had different cultures. The facilitators made use of the collaborative learning approach when they emphasised 'getting to know each other', 'listening to each other' and 'asking questions to find out about the reasons for people's thinking and acting'.

The working and core group, but also the Livestock Stakeholders Self-help Association (LISSA) that emerged as a result of this workshop (see facilitation action 3 for more details), they all provided a mechanism for *linking multiple actors operating at different social, cultural and administrative levels*.

7.3.3   Assessment of the facilitation praxis
As in the Senegal case, I use the coherence and correspondence criteria to explore the facilitation praxis that aimed to bring multiple learning systems into existence (see figure 7.3). First, I look at the consistency in the praxis, then I assess the facilitation effort in relation to its aim to bring multiple learning systems into existence.

In retrospect, the linked local learning perspective, the actions and values were inconsistent with the *perceived* context, but consistent with the *desired* context. The idea of linking actors across

Action 1:
Bringing multiple learning systems into existence

Theories/methodologies:
Learning systems,
Collaborative learning,
Reframing

Facilitation praxis

Values:
Multi-actor ownership,
Social interaction and
reflexive, Capacity can
improve actors' agency

Context:
Poorly developed , relation-
ships among actors,
Increased ecological concern,
Non-project setting

Figure 7.3: Facilitation praxis to bring multiple learning systems into existence.

different decision-making levels has been a legitimate choice with respect to a context in which the actors had expressed the need for operationalisation of the decentralisation policy, and for making the agricultural services more responsive to farmer needs.

Intervening in a non-project setting is more in line with a learning perspective than working in the context of a project. ISG discovered that learning approaches can thrive in situations where the actors really want to gradually find out how to build capacity for re-inventing new ways of working together. A project setting framed by predetermined goals, time schedule, and budget can easily constrain people from taking up the arduous process of continuous, informed, adjustment. On the other hand, working in a project mode has advantages as well for a learning approach because a project has better abilities to support the learning in terms of financial resources. Without immediate tangible, 'hard' outcomes, learning is difficult to monitor or to measure in terms of impact, and as such it is difficult to justify the time that learning takes and the resources required to support the process. Consequently, a non-project setting without any guarantee of sources to help the emerging learning process grow can compromise the sustainability of this process.

In terms of *effectiveness*, the facilitation praxis achieved what the facilitators set out to do. The linked local learning perspective helped the facilitators to bring multiple inter-connected learning systems into existence in the form of the core group, the working group and the networks that emerged after the Nyeri workshop (see action 3). The constituting actors of these learning systems went (and still do) through a process of continuous action and reflection, to find out how they want to work together, in terms of relationships, practices and objectives. The learning perspective appeared to be useful to 'bind' actors with different interests, practices, language, and culture. At the start of ISG's intervention, when two facilitators visited diverse actors, they discovered a large variety of interests. Some farmer groups were concerned with the poor marketing opportunities for (ecological) agricultural products. District extension workers, NGOs, and research and training institutes wanted to improve partnerships, whereas representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and donors were eager to learn ways to put into practice the national decentralisation and privatisation policy. However, the facilitators found that all these actors also had something in common i.e. 'feeling uneasy with the current situation and aiming to make a difference'. The learning focus, and in particular the generic learning questions, appeared to be generic enough to supersede these differences and turned out to be a kind of 'binding driving force'. However, especially for practical people such as farmers, extension workers, or NGO field workers, the concept of learning was experienced as too abstract and brought about (negative) associations with their childhood. ISG faced difficulties to communicate the concept of learning (box 7.3).

Box 7.3: Difficulties in communicating the learning concept.

The facilitators introduced the Nyeri workshop to the participants by using the notion of 'learning about learning'. They used the reframing learning questions to enable participants to jointly find out 'with whom', 'why',' about what and how' they would like to learn. At the end of the day, they received many criticisms for being too academic. In fact, they were lucky that half of the participants had not left already.

(Source: Author's project notebook on the Nyeri workshop)

In retrospect, the only way to get the concept of learning across is for the participants to experience it. As soon as the farmer groups worked on the idea of how to demand services and

communicate future visions, as soon as the farmers presented their vision and demands and reflected on them, learning began to make sense (Lightfoot, pers.com.) (box 7.4).

Box 7.4: Understanding the concept of learning through experience of learning.

In an international workshop on Learning Approaches to Complex Institutional Change and Decentralisation (4-11 December 2000, Tune, Denmark), a Kenyan farmer, a private adviser and a NGO representative who had participated in the Nyeri workshop presented their story to show how they continued to use a learning approach within their own networks to (or to assist others to) articulate and negotiate a demand for service. Some referred to the approach as linked local learning, others labelled their experience 'collaborative learning'. None of them appeared to have difficulties in talking in terms of learning and learning processes

(Source: Author's linked local learning project notebook).

ISG's effort to link together committed individuals from grassroots, district, and national organisations up to the national level has been a challenging way to start in a context where decentralisation and privatisation are looked upon as rather top-down processes. Along the way, the actors, including the facilitators, realised that the people who were brought together in the new coalitions did not cover all 'absolute' stakeholders (e.g., permanent secretaries, directors, undersecretaries and even ministers and Members of Parliament). Only a good start had been made. Crucial to the initial process, has been the inclusion of farmer representatives in the working and core groups and their ability to pull down the learning process to the grassroots level and to make learning tangible. Probably, without the decentralised learning opportunity offered through the multi-actor workshop in Nyeri (and what emerged from it afterwards), the learning process initiated in the core and working groups would have suffered a soft death. Yet, from a facilitation point of view, the facilitators were left with the choice of starting a linked local learning process at the grass roots level and to pull it up towards the national level, or to start at the national level and pull it down to the lower level. In Uganda[2], by lack of sustainable interest at national level, ISG had started to develop multiple learning systems at the district level (ISG, 1999). First attempts to link these local learning systems with the national level failed, for two years. Only recently, as the national decentralisation and privatisation policy has come into its implementation phase, opportunities to link the different levels are increasingly taking shape. To conclude, whatever option is chosen, it seems to be crucial to assemble diverse actors representing community organisations, public or private sector agencies, each operating at different decision-making levels. It appears to be essential to commence with enthusiastic and motivated individuals rather than to look for committed institutions. It is also important to note that the farmer officials in the core and working groups were locally elected. In addition, it appears valuable that ISG was given the mandate for further intervention by a *multi*-actor coalition, which started to develop control over its own learning.

7.4 Action 2, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and an assessment of the praxis

7.4.1 Action 2
This section describes the facilitation practice that aimed to develop multi-actor ownership. The facilitators were guided by the principle that actors themselves should be in control of the learning process and the resources to realise it. The facilitators considered multi-actor ownership a crucial asset to be developed and sustained throughout the intervention. In this section, I make this effort more explicit as, according to my experience multi-actor ownership is essential for allowing a learning process to grow and to become sustained. However, multi-actor ownership of

participatory processes appears to be still more a matter of 'espoused theory' rather than 'theory in use'. Ownership of these processes tends to be drawn away from local people and groups to experts and outsiders. As such, development tends to become the mystique of the elite. In Kenya, ISG has attempted to purposefully facilitate multi-actor ownership in various ways.

Formation of a core and a working group

In May 1998, when ISG's work began, two members attended a meeting in which the core group was formed. During that gathering, the ISG members posed the challenge of how the participants wanted to move forward in exploring a learning approach. The formation of the core group was entirely managed by the Kenyan participants. A smaller task force i.e. the working group was mandated by the core group members to provide guidelines and recommendations on the way forward in ensuring that 'local' learning would take place. One of the members of the working group, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) was appointed by the group to act as convenor. It came to play an important role in assembling committed individuals from various organisations and in negotiating funds to support the linked local learning process. IIRR was chosen to play this role because: 1) it was trusted by the other participants; 2) it had convening capacities in the form of financial resources and communication infrastructure; and 3) supporting NGOs in partnership building was part of its policy.

Supporting the working group to obtain and control financial resources

ISG gave feedback to the working group on various proposals for (financial) resources that were submitted to DANIDA in order to realise desired learning events. The working group remained responsible for the actual negotiation. In some cases, the responsibility for financial resource mobilisation was decentralised to the grassroots level. When money became available for the Nyeri workshop, the Itemeini farmers Self-Help Group was given a sum by the working group for making all necessary workshop arrangements.

Facilitating 'learning about learning' and 'learning about facilitation'

From the beginning, the facilitators placed much effort in supporting the working and core group members to discover together 'with whom they wanted to learn', 'why', 'about what' and 'how'.
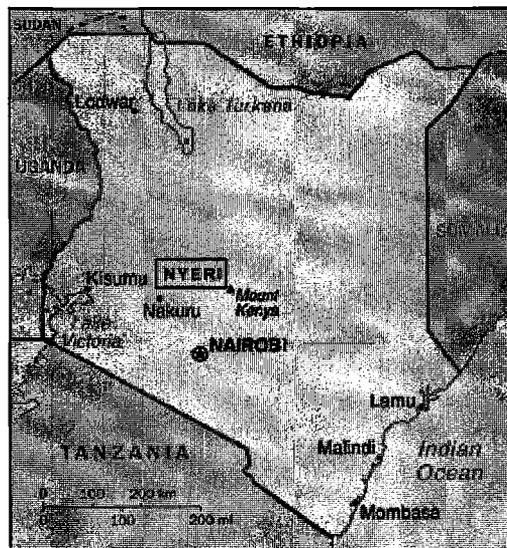
Figure 7.4: Location of Nyeri in Kenya

The use of these questions helped them to frame their own learning process (see box 7.2 and table 7.1 in 7.3.1). One of the outcomes was that the core group members decided to decentralise the learning to the district level and chose Nyeri as the district for holding a multi-actor workshop of 8 days. Figure 7.4 shows the location of Nyeri.

The working group formulated a learning frame that stated the group's initial response to the generic questions about learning. This learning frame formed the basis for the selection of the participants for the Nyeri workshop, carried out by the working group and the Itemeini farmers Self-Help Group (Kenyan working group, 1998). Box 7.5 shows the objectives of the Nyeri workshop as identified by the working group.

Box 7.5: Objectives for the Nyeri workshop as formulated by the working group.

- To develop a common understanding on linked local learning i.e. clarifying a common vision from the differing perspectives of each actor.
- To define learning needs i.e. discovering what to learn by analysing actors' strengths and weaknesses. Undertaking an analysis to clarify actors' roles and capacities versus learning needs.
- To identify learning partners; discovering with whom to form partnership by analysing needs.
- To develop indicators for tracking performance in decentralisation and privatisation roles and agro-ecosystem management practices.
- To set directions for future work.
- To gain skills in facilitating discovery learning processes.
- To identify ISG's role.
- To assist ISG in linking (local) learning processes at regional level

(Source: Kenyan Working Group, 1998)

The ISG facilitators used these objectives as a guide to designing the workshop.

At the start of the Nyeri workshop, the participants made these objectives more specific through articulating their expectations of the workshop (see box 7.6). In the workshop, the term stakeholder was used. No distinction was made between actors and stakeholders. The participants' learning objectives were decisive in reworking the design of the workshop. Only a limited amount of the material that had been prepared by the ISG facilitators in advance in fact was used in its original form.
The facilitators believed that the development of the actors' competence to regularly reflect on their own learning process was important to increase their control over their own learning process. Therefore, the actors were supported to become '(self-) reflective practitioners' (Argyris & Schön, 1996) able to continuously adapt their (collective) behaviour to new circumstances as result of learning about their learning. Regular reflections were facilitated to assist the participants in critically reviewing the steps they had taken to make progress in their learning. Blank forms were provided so participants could document their own (adapted) tools. This effort enabled the participants to co-produce the Nyeri Workshop Resource Kit and thus to assert ownership of their own learning.

A further contributing factor in the development of multi-actor ownership and control over their own learning, was the "handing over of the facilitation stick" to members of the working group. Every evening, ISG facilitators, and some working group members carefully reflected on the steps that had been taken so far, and used the 'lessons learned' to inform the design of the next day's programme. The reflection included feedback on each others' facilitation performance.

Box 7.6: *Participants' learning objectives, Nyeri workshop, Kenya, 1998 (Source: ISG, 1999)*

Stakeholders
- Striking a balance between all stakeholders
- Identify the role of each stakeholder
- Learning about my role as a stakeholder

Policy
- How to strengthen the linkage between farmer and policy makers
- Farmers to advise policy makers on their failures
- Letting community policy makers listen to each other

Monitoring and evaluation
- Identify ways of monitoring and evaluating linkage performance
- How to develop common indicators of success
- Visualise and be able to track change

Skills
- Be able to communicate effectively
- Have good skills to facilitate learning
- Empower local communities to initiate the process

Linkages
- Linkage of the producer with the market
- Establish the linkages that exist between the stakeholders
- Linkage between the stakeholder and the donor community
- Linking the market with organically produced products
- To develop a common vision of linking with the other stakeholders
- Learn how to break the barriers between various stakeholders

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7.4.2 Theoretical and methodological perspective used

In this section, I discuss the use of *learning systems* (Sriskandarajah et al., 1989) and *critical learning systems* theory (Bawden, 2000a) in the development of multi-actor ownership.

Learning systems and critical learning systems

The use of reframing strategies to assist actors to jointly define the learning systems in terms of 'what they want to learn about', 'with whom', 'why' and 'how' has been already discussed in 7.3.2. However, the same questions helped the actors to regard themselves as if they were a soft or learning system. In addition to their own practices, roles and relationships, the emergent property of the system also became the subject of inquiry. Especially in the working group a 'we feeling' emerged

Critical learning systems theory has been applied to the extent that the facilitators supported the actors in their idea that if one wants things to be done differently, one first need to learn how to think differently i.e. to think and act systemically. Learning how to think and act systemically required some insight into 'learning about learning' as well, and as such called for building competence in reflection on learning.

Both 'learning systems' and 'critical learning systems' appeared useful as concepts on which to base development of actors' ownership of the learning process. They helped in forming the learning coalitions such as the core and working groups and in focusing on 'learning about learning'. However, except in reference to SSM, neither theory provides much operational insight into how to bring about multi-actor ownership (at least not in the way the facilitators understood the two theories at that time). The facilitators used the following ways of working. They encouraged the actors to: 1) tell their stories in order to reveal their issues and the reasons why these issues mattered to them; 2) put their knowledge in the centre; 3) trigger their enthusiasm through future visioning; 4) reflect on and document their own way of learning; and 5) to develop competence in designing project proposals, including budgeting. Three specific examples are given below:
1. A farmer-led resource mapping exercise was facilitated to allow farmers to tell their own stories

about how they saw the past and current status of their natural resources, their agro-ecosystems and the way these were managed. By elucidating their concerns in a visual form, a basis was created that was accessible to the whole group, and enabled them together to articulate their future vision to revitalise their agro-ecosystem management.

2. A web diagram was used to record and track changes in agro-ecosystems resulting from changing management practices and partnerships. Farmers were asked to list indicators that were important to them for appreciating the impact of new management on the farm/agro-ecosystem. A range of tangible indicators were identified such as 'increased income', 'diversification of enterprises', 'increased production', 'less silted rivers' and 'the number of terraces'. Next, farmers indicated the units for measuring the change and recorded these on the web diagram.

3. After each step taken, the participants were encouraged to reflect, reinvent and document the reinvented tools, to make them their own.

It is noteworthy that tools such as the web diagram and resource map in themselves do not necessarily contribute to the development of multi-actor ownership. In the end, it is the facilitators' praxis, encompassing their values and intentions, that are are decisive in determining-ciding for what purpose and how a tool is used. It is the flexible facilitation of the tool and the process combined, that makes the difference.

7.4.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis

Concerning the consistency of the facilitation praxis that aimed to develop multi-actor ownership (figure 7.5), tension was most strikingly felt due to the apparent inconsistency between the financial and political context on the one side and the facilitation actions, values and perspectives on the other side.

The facilitators believed that actors' control over the learning process includes the entitlement to manage the financial resources to support this learning. Especially concerning this financial issue, they experienced a non-conducive policy context. In Kenya, actors at the district and local levels are still not entitled to make important decisions. Central government agencies responsible for national parks, forests, mining lands, water rights, and land ownership, control most decisions on legal entitlement to resource access and use. Financing and sources of revenue for the districts are still in the hands of Central Government. NGOs too have their roles defined at national level
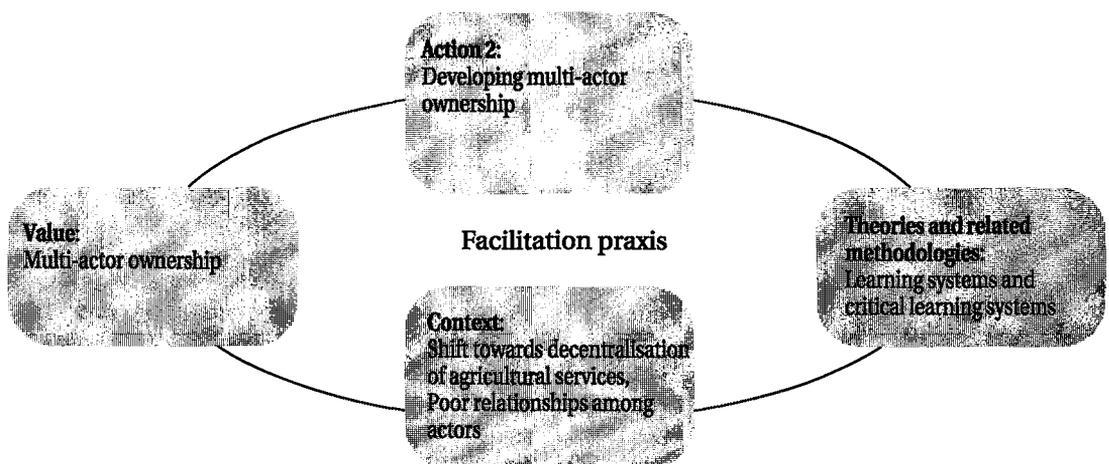
Figure 7.5: Facilitation praxis for developing multi-actor ownership.

and their financing (which is heavily dependent on donors), controlled at national level. ISG also has found district authorities unprepared to share the funds that were available with local NGOs and CBOs. Donors such as DANIDA operate at national level through their embassies. The unstable political situation in Kenya caused the Danish Embassy to cancel funds that had been promised to the core group to support the linked local learning process. This led to serious difficulties in pursuing the linked local learning process.

In addition, the existing legal framework in Kenya has not been conducive to the notion of informal inter-institutional or multi-actor learning coalitions such as the core group. This new type of institutions does not have the juridical status that can be recognised by donors or other funding agencies as being fundable. The IIRR as convenor faced (and still does) the difficulty of wearing two hats when negotiating funds. Donors were more willing to fund IIRR's 'own' activities than to provide funds to support the linked local learning process. All this posed (and still posses) a serious threat impeding the sustainability of the linked local learning processes in Kenya. Even at this moment, the working group members continue the struggle to put themselves on the agenda of DANIDA and of other donors. The working group (assisted by ISG) tried to actively involve policy actors in the learning processes. For example, DANIDA is a member of the core group. The policy context turned out to be an 'issue at stake' in itself and as such subject to change. An example of a modest (policy) change favouring the use of a learning approach to the management of complex change has been DANIDA's support to the a linked local learning workshop international workshop 'Learning Approaches to Complex Institutional Change and Decentralisation' (Tune, Denmark, 4-8 December, 2000)in 2000 in Tune, Denmark. In this workshop, a number of DANIDA development practitioners and policy makers became familiar with experiences in linked local learning in East Africa. Afterwards, The National Co-ordination Unit of DANIDA, Uganda wrote a report in which it recommended field visits after the workshop to areas where actors had experienced linked local learning, to further assess its potential to do things differently in conditions of crisis (National Co-ordination Unit, 2001).

In terms of effectiveness, the facilitation praxis has contributed significantly to the development of actors' control over their learning, especially through the acquired competence in learning about the way they learn. Their capacity to reinvent their own learning tools provided a good basis to initiate and facilitate similar learning processes in their own community or in a new context. Below some examples are provided.

- Actors' competence in reinventing their own learning tools helped them to facilitate a similar learning process elsewhere. The Nyeri farmers applied what they had been learning in the Nyeri workshop to a failing secondary school. They used their own tools to facilitate the learning about the past situation, the present and the desired future as well as the negotiation of the necessary partnership to realise this future. This led to a new set of partnerships that quickly reversed the failure (Lightfoot et al., 2001a,b).
- As a result of the Nyeri workshop, one farmer has formed LISSA, a multi-actor grassroots association to improve meat marketing and butchery services. The learners involved with LISSA are livestock farmers and pastoralists, local NGOs and CBOs concerned with livestock production, local processing plants, marketing groups and commodity exchanges, and consumers. LISSA focuses its learning on empowering farmers to manage change, fair trade practice, identifying new market opportunities, improving livestock production and management strategies, enhancing the natural resource base for quality production, and developing new technologies for quality meat processing (Lightfoot et al., 2001a,b). LISSA reinvented the tools that were used in the Nyeri workshop, to visualise its future vision in their marketing strategy (see figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6: LISSA's future in terms of necessary partnership (LISSA, 2000)

LISSA's effort is recognised by the local department of agriculture and livestock and the marketing, and slaughter services have improved (Kibue, 2002).

• Through reflective experimentation during the Nyeri workshop, some working group members developed good skills in facilitating multi-actor learning processes. After this workshop, some of them were invited by officials of higher authorities to facilitate linked local learning in Tanzania and in Uganda, which they did with satisfaction (Lightfoot, pers.com.).

• The coming together of the core and working group can be considered a significant accomplishment because there is often mistrust and lack of capacity across levels. However, the lack of assccess to financial resources has slowed-down the process of cross-level learning as the learners can fund only one face-to-face meeting a year.

7.5 Action 3, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and an assessment of the praxis

7.5.1 Action 3
The third action discussed in this case deals with supporting the actors to learn about a coupled human and natural systems. The facilitation action builds on an important insight derived from the Senegal case, in which I had experienced that the use of AKIS as the dominant frame for exploring the irrigation system, provided the actors with a fresh, but limited view. It helped them only to look at the way they were socially organised for irrigation development, but it did not help the actors to focus on technical or biophysical aspects of irrigation management. In Kenya, ISG took up the challenge to facilitate a learning process that captured the learning about the perceptions of a coupled human and the biophysical systems. The expected outcome of this learning would be the articulation of farmers' demand for services and the negotiation of their demand. The workshop held in Nyeri from September 17th to -27,[th] 1998, is used to illustrate the process.

A good mix of stakeholders were represented and, of the forty participants, one third were women. Leaders of farmer organisations, who were locally elected, dominated the group, making up almost the half of the participants. Of the remaining participants, 35% came from government (e.g., extension workers, researcher, district administrator), 12% from (inter)national NGOs and 8% from the private sector i.e. tea industry and credit supply. About 75% of the core group members participated in the workshop. In the workshop, the participants were taken through the learning trajectory illustrated in figure 7.7.

REFLECTION on
agro-ecosystem
management strategies and
partnership performance

VISIONING on future
agro-ecosystem
management

ACTION on
projects

NEGOTIA-
TING new
partnerships

PLANNING to
match farmer
demands with services
provided

Figure 7.7: The 'Nyeri learning cycle', capturing the learning about perception of the coupled natural and human systems (ISG, 1999).

The workshop began with a farmer-led visualisation of how their natural resources had been used in the past and how they were used in the present. Next, the farmers identified 'who' had brought about 'what' changes in the management of the natural resources and how these stake-holders were linked together. By doing this, a link was made between the natural and the human system. Then, they shifted from the present to the future by visualising a future that described more desirable ways of managing their natural resources.

On the basis of the identification of who had brought the changes in the past and who might bring changes to realise the future visions, the necessary partnerships were identified and negotiated. The negotiation was informed by jointly identified criteria for effective partnership, and by discussion of the organisational consequences of realising new partnerships among the service providers, including farmer organisations. By the end, actions for future activities were sketched out.

7.5.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used
In this section, I discuss the use of *learning system theory, experiential learning,* and *integrative mediation* to enable actors to learn about perceptions of the coupled natural and human systems.

Learning systems
The *learning system perspective* that was used by the facilitators induced a new way of looking at agro-ecosystem management. Often the market and 'hard' technologies are seen as driving forces for environmental change. The learning perspective brought in a new system of inquiry by including the actors' *own* interests, perceptions, values, and practices as the subject of learning and as a driver of change. The soft system perspective that underpins learning system theory led ISG facilitators to emphasise that the way people see the world determines what they do with respect to it, and that each individual perceives this world differently because of different interests, experiences, values, and positions. Several participants of the Nyeri workshop expressed their satisfaction about the facilitators' effort to encourage actors to accept that each person has the right to have his or her own perception. They said that it helped them not to get into needless arguments in the group work (Lightfoot pers.com.).

Integrative mediation

As future relations were highly valued by the participants, the mediators used the *reframing* technique of *solving underlying concerns* (see 6.2.3), by making explicit stakeholders' underlying interests, perceptions and mandate to identify win-win solutions satisfying to all parties involved (see box 7.7).

Box 7.7: Reframing technique used by the facilitators for making actors' underlying concerns explicit.

At the start of the workshop, farmers and NGOs attacked the government extension workers and policy makers for not providing the desired services. When the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture presented the objectives and mandate of his organisation, his view on farmer concerns, and the opportunities and constraints in addressing them in a context of decentralisation and liberalisation, he received sympathy and understanding from the participants. They realised that this person and his colleagues were in a very difficult position as well and that they had 'outdated' expectations of the government agencies. Moreover, when the representative of the Ministry talked about the intention of the Ministry to set up multi-actor consultations to operationalise decentralisation policies, the farmers discovered that in order for the Ministry to receive World Bank funds for the ASIP program, farmer involvement was required. So, interdependency was experienced, which created room for future collaboration.

(Source: ISG, 1999; Author's project notebook on the Nyeri workshop)

Through these kinds of mediation tactics, the facilitators promoted a dialogue (or better, multilogue), to encourage the sharing of perceptions, missions and mandates, rather than a debate in which actors looked after their own interests through argumentation. As such, they tried to develop actors' communication competence as referred to in collaborative learning (Daniels & Walker, 1996).

Experiential and collaborative learning

Kolb's experiential learning cycle was purposefully used to design a process conducive to adult learning. Figure 7.7 shows the Nyeri learning trajectory as a cyclic and iterative process that is superimposed on on-going local action i.e. peoples' normal jobs and daily work. Knowledge, for instance on partnerships, was generated through reflection on past and present practices for improved future actions. The participants were led through a cycle of learning that is typical for collaborative learning. The articulation of farmers' experience, and their reflection on it, was facilitated through an agro-ecosystem mapping exercise, allowing farmers to tell their own stories (see figure 7.8 for an example).

The mapping helped to reveal and visualise a representation of the farmers' situation that could be shared by all participants. It led to the identification of concerns, and the reasons why the agro-ecosystem had the attributes perceived by the visualisers (first stages of the collaborative learning cycle). Next, the past and the present situation formed the basis for drawing up a desired future situation (middle stages of the collaborative learning cycle). The future mapping exercise, in which other stakeholders prompted the farmers, assisted the farmers to identify the actions needed to realise the desired future and in articulating a demand for services. Then the farmers identified various criteria for negotiating partnership, by responding to the question 'what are the criteria on which we can negotiate a successful partnership' (see figure 7.9).

Next, the farmers identified the indicators they intended to use to track the changes in agro-ecosystem management performance in the future. The identified actions, the articulated
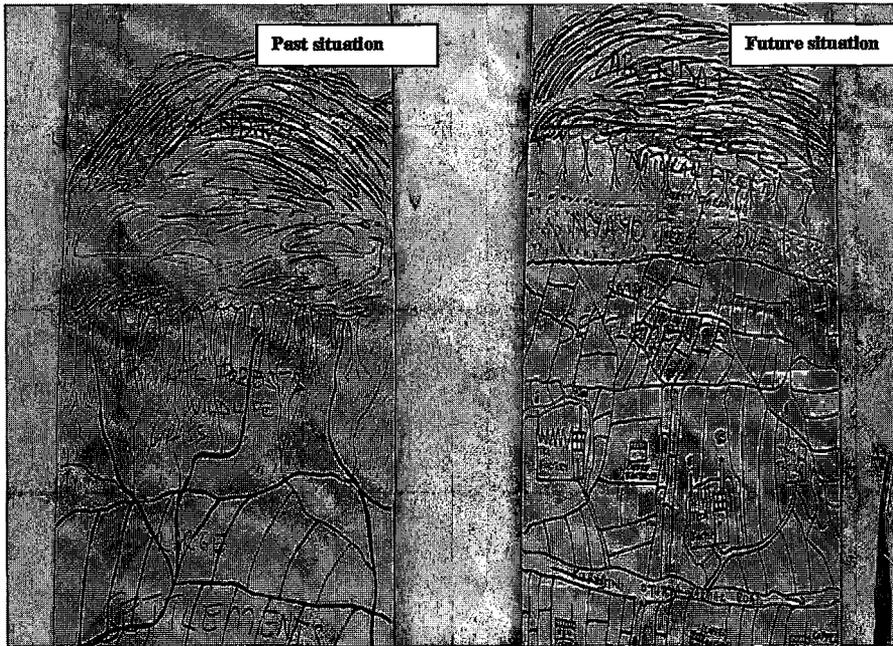
Figure 7.8: The past and the future situation of an agro-ecosystem as mapped out by farmers in the Nyeri workshop (ISG, 1999).
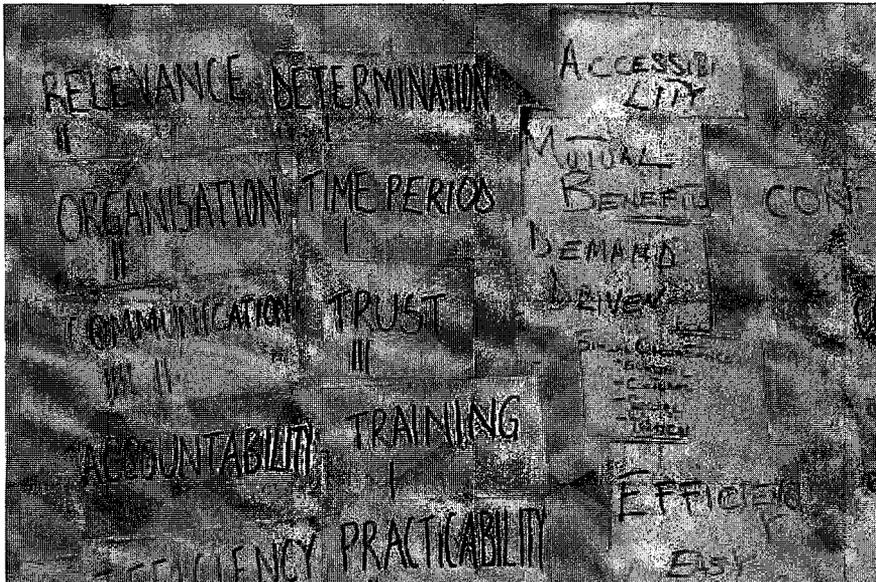
Figure 7.9: Identified criteria for negotiating partnership (source: ISG, 1999).

demands, the criteria for partnership negotiation, and the indicators for monitoring changes in agro-ecosystem management performance served as *transformative models*. During the workshop and afterwards, these models were adjusted to collective reality through negotiation (last stages of the collaborative learning cycle).

By way of summary, to operationalise the Nyeri experiential-/collaborative learning process, the facilitators organised a number of exercises that were grouped into the following four phases of a collaborative learning cycle:

Phase 1: What is happening to your our natural resources (past and present status)? What are your major concerns?
Who are involved and how? Where do they work form?
What are their your interests, opportunities, and constraints to address the concerns?

Phase2: What do you we see as the desirable way of managing your natural resources in the future? concerning What the changes will we will you have to make in resource management? and the actors wWho needs to be involved and how they are you linked together?

Phase 3: What are the consequences for service organisations, farmers, and policy makers?

Phase 4: What criteria will allow us you to agree and to monitor the impact of new management practices on natural resources and negotiated agreements among actors?

RAAKS and agro-ecosystem analysis integrated

Methodologically, in order to facilitate the learning about the coupled natural and human system, the facilitators drew together agro-ecosystem analysis tools and RAAKS tools. For instance, agro-ecosystem mapping was used to make visible the *perceived* status of natural resources and farming practices (see figure 7.814 in the previous section). As such, this tool assisted in learning about the perceptions of biophysical aspects of the agro-ecosystem (e.g., types of natural resources existing), as well as about the relationship between the biophysical and the human system (e.g., farm practices). The used network diagram was used as an example of an (adapted) RAAKS tool, which enhances participants' learning about the way they are socially organised to manage their natural resources (see figure 7.10).

Another tool, 'performance indicators', derived from agro-ecosystem analysis was introduced as a way for participants intended to be used for to monitoring changes caused by adapted management practices and partnership performance, but it did not work out very well. The participants did not want to spend time on the monitoring of activities that were not yet realised. However, two years later at the international workshop 'Learning Approaches to Complex Institutional Change and Decentralisation (Tune, Denmark, 4-8 December, 2000), when the participants had carried out various linked local learning activities, they expressed a need for monitoring tools (Author's linked local learning project notebook).

The two methodologies i.e. agro-ecosystem analysis and RAAKS, merged very well in purpose since they both are designed to support intensive interaction among actors, information gathering, sharing of (conflicting) perceptions of realities, and joint diagnosis.
The combined use of the two existing methodologies produced synergy, as both complementing ed each other in analytical focus. Yet, although none of the actors complained about it, tThe facilitators could have broadened the systemic character of the learning by, for instance, incorporating a methodology that focussed on marketing and/or politics as well. This raises sticky questions such as the to what extent to which facilitators must should insist upon the treatment of a certain issue although the actors seem to consider it less relevant. Or, to what extent facilitators must should be competent to continuously add new analytical perspectives to the integrated methodological design when there is a felt need for it.

Concerning the choice of methods and the way they were used in the facilitation of the workshop, three further remarks are worth mentioning. First, in the choice of methods the facilitators favoured visualisation tools to foster shared learning. Second, in response to criticisms that participatory methodologies such as RAAKS focus too much on appraisal and not on the
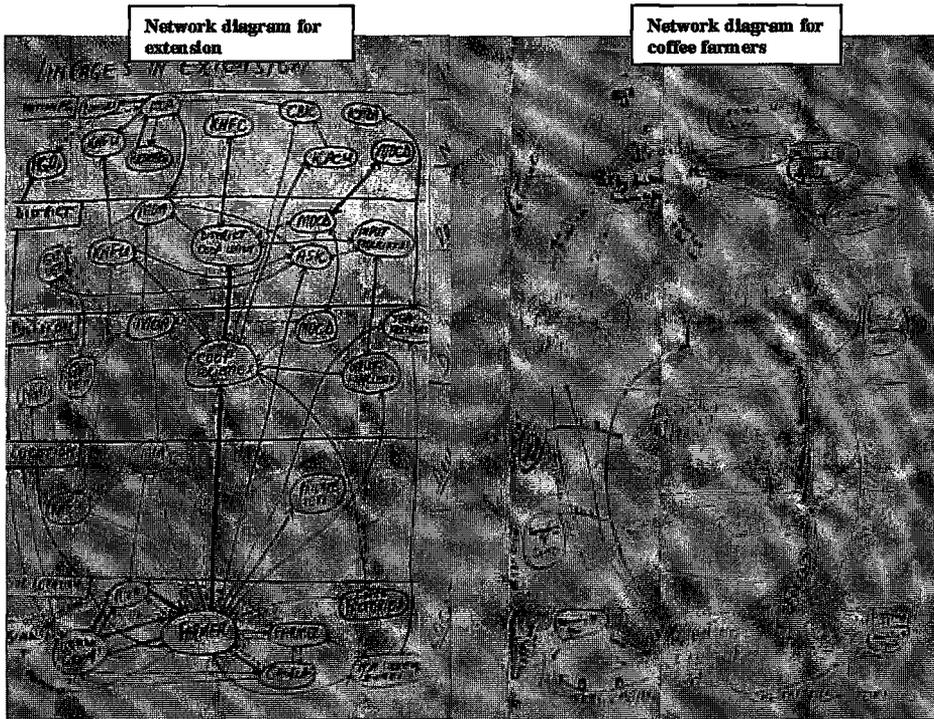
Figure 7.10: Two network diagrams (ISG, 1999)

management of desired change, the application of the methods was driven by the aim to support learning for action. The learning tools not only assisted the actors *in discovering what* changes are desired, but also *on practising the actual management* of these changes through negotiation on the spot. Consequently, some of the tools that were originally designed for appraisal were transformed into negotiation tools (see box 7.8).

Box 7.8: Transformation of appraisal tools into negotiation tools.

For a number of concerns (e.g., natural resources management, coffee marketing), the partici-pants had drawn network diagrams to explore the role of stakeholders and the relationship among them. These diagrams formed the basis for identifying criteria that make linkages work. These criteria have been used in and outside the conference workshop room to negotiate the provision of better services of among those actors being present.

(Source: Author's project notebook on the Nyeri workshop).

Third, the facilitators chose and used methods in such a way that they encouraged people to tell their own stories and to be listened to. This created a sense of being respected, not prejudged or pushed, which contributed positively to developing motivation and enthusiasm for future (concerted) action.

7.5.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis

In this section, I assess the facilitation praxis that aimed to support the actors' learning about perceptions of the coupled natural and human systems (figure 7.11).
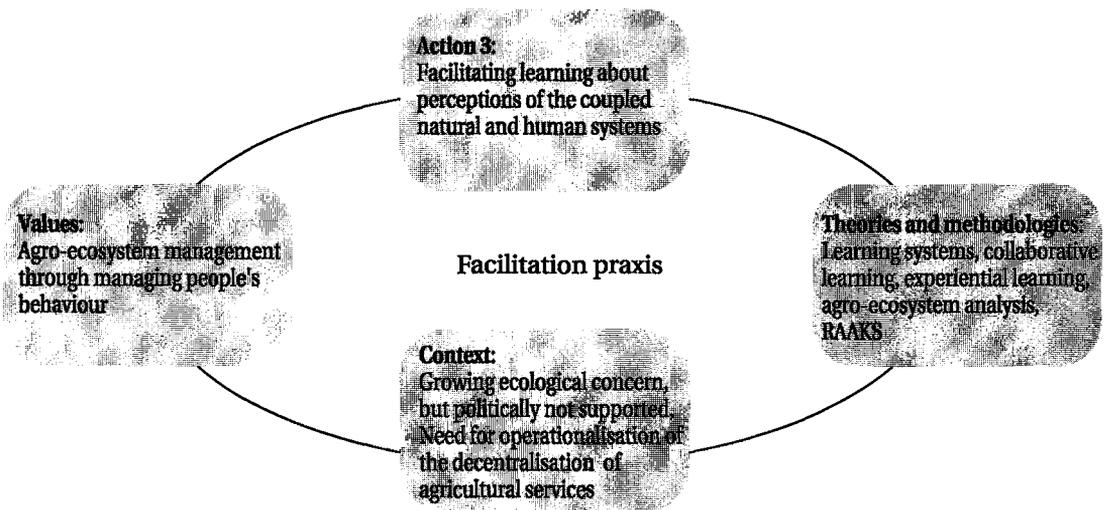
Figure 7.11: Facilitating learning about perceptions of the coupled natural and human systems.

From a consistency point of view, a critical look at the facilitation context, action, values, and the used theories applied and related methodologies, reveals again there is a tension between the policy context and the linked local learning perspective. From the beginning, this policy context was perceived as one that:

• Did not value highly the knowledge and experience of local people about their specific social and ecological context. If local groups developed plans to shape their own future they had little chance to get themit operationalised. The reasons identified by the workshop participants for their relative lack of power were partly attitudinal. Those in power assumed that local level actors were managerially incompetent. Another perceived reason was due to their assumed management incompetence as well as to the reluctance of donors and the national government to surrender influence. This situation is quite in contradiction with a linked local learning process encompassing a farmer-led diagnosis, visioning, and negotiationng of responsive agricultural services, and local community/local learning group control of funds (Lightfoot et al., 2001).

• Was not very conducive for the development of an ecologically sound agriculture. The majority of the domestic consumers did not appreciate the added value of ecologically produced food and were not willing and/or able to pay for it. During the workshop, the possibility of 'green labelling' of ecological products, by which the value that farmers had added to their product could be recognised in the market place, was discussed but it remained far from clear how it might be achieved. In Kenya, ecological agriculture and it was is not supported at institutional and political levels. The Kenyan political climate favours the free operation of markets and welcomes projects such as Sassakawa Global 2000 that heavily promotes agricultural production through the use of (standardised) packages, including high inputs of inorganic fertilisers and pesticides.

• Private, public, and donor support for multi-actor learning is very limited. Change in agro-ecosystem management through face-to-face negotiation for building trust, mutual under-standing, and equal partnership between rural communities and private and public sector organisations, has no priority. Changes in attitude and partnership are not seen as essential outputs.

The working group and the facilitators increasingly faced difficulties with respect to the due to such a non-conducive policy context which was early on identified as non-supportive of for linked local learning. The linking of policy makers with other actors through a learning process, within the core and working group, and the Nyeri workshop did not have the expected outcome. The (junior) policy maker of the Ministry of Agriculture who was a member of the core group, and who did participate in the Nyeri workshop, was not in the position to bring about the necessary changes within his own organisation. In addition, the other policy interests makers within the core group were represented every meeting by sent a different nother person. to replace them. To bring about changes to this policy context, the core group and the ISG facilitators adopted took up a strategy that included promoting confidence amongst the staff members of participating organisations about the value of learning approaches so in order that multi-actor meetings might be given higher priority. In addition, they placed emphasis on documenting the learning process and outcomes through reports (e.g., ISG, 1999b), articles (Lightfoot et al., 2001a; Lightfoot et al., 2001b), and a CDd-roms (e.g., ISG, 1999), and by sharing the learning process and outcome at the Neuchâtel meeting of November 13-17, 2000 in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, where international donors discussed about agricultural extension.

Kolb's experiential learning cycle proved to not be fully appropriate for dealing with complex situations such as in Kenya. Kolb's learning cycle assumes people to go through a deliberate, well informed, decision-making process. The limitations of this assumption were revealed in is was certainly not the case in the Nyeri workshop. Kolb's learning cycle was an effective way to *start* the process, based on i.e. actors' daily life experience. However, not everything could be known in a the short time available. Information gaps and uncertainty are typical of complex situations. Facilitation can help to overcome some information gaps, but there will always be new information that is missing as complex dynamics unfold. In this case, the participants did not go through the full experiential learning cycle. They were not able to design the testing of new ideas because some actors, and/or information about them, were still lacking.

Has the facilitation praxis been effective in promoting learning about the the coupled natural and human systems, to creating a farmers' demand for services, and negotiating with service providers? To answer this question, I present a number of learning outcomes achieved during and after the Nyeri workshop (ISG, 1999a,b; ISG 2001a,b; Lightfoot & Dolberg, in preparation/Proceedings Tune workshop). These documented outcomes show that progress has been made in changing attitudes, realising the necessity of partnerships, and developing partnership formation competence, including the self-confidence to make use of it, as the following examples illustrate: .
- During the workshop, farmers negotiated the development of a certification system for ecological agricultural products.
- The emergence of LISSA (see previous seacction 7.4.3 for more details). All actors constituting this learning system benefit, from producer to consumer.
- Two Kenyan local farmer networks, Kissi Network for Ecological Agricultural Development (KNEAD) and the Nyeri Ecological Farmers Self-Help Group, have been formed to learn and promote ecologically sound forms of agriculture in their districts. An attempt was made by the Nyeri Ecological Farmers Self-Help Group, basically all small holders, to form an umbrella organisation for farmer groups, so as to be able to approach the District Council as one voice. This ambition has not been achieved largely because of in-fighting with other farmer unions who claimed the same mandate and who were not represented in the Nyeri workshop.
- Individuals have used a similar learning process, with their own reinvented tools to deal with crisis within their own communities in Kenya (see previous section 7.4.3 for more details).
- The outcomes of the Nyeri workshop enabled a five working group members good number of actors to participate in the international workshop 'Learning Approaches to Complex

Institutional Change and Decentralisation' ,(Tune, Deanmark, (4-8 December, 2000) which allowed them to share their experience with international donors such as the World Bank, DANIDA, Swiss Development Co-operation (SDC) and the German Enterprise for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) (Lightfoot & Dolberg, in preparation).

Another issue I would like to highlight here is the difficulty the facilitators faced with respect to the large diversity in actors' interests. The non-project setting allowed bringing together individuals and representatives of a range of organisations and institutions who had never met before and who initially, had very little in common, to meet they had never met before and, initially, had very little in common (ISG, 1999b). Except from general feelings such as 'things need to be done differently' or 'we are destroying our ecological environment', there was no question of a specific or tangible shared concern among the participants. Coffee growing farmers were concerned about the marketing of coffee. Other farmers wanted to change their way of farming towards a more ecologically-friendly system. Some extension and NGO staff aimed to develop skills in facilitating learning approaches, expecting such skills to improve their position in the consultancy market. The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to learn about operational strategies for decentralised policy formulation. The search for interdependency, as recommended in the negotiation perspective, did not bring us very far. To the facilitators' surprise, however abstract and vague the concept of learning might have been initially, it was the notion of 'learning' about an issue (e.g., coffee marketing, facilitation of learning, multi-stakeholder collaboration), that brought the participants together during the workshop and motivated some to continuing collaboration afterwards. Yet, in order to encourage and keep up the motivation for learning, it proved very important to relate learning to something tangible i.e. coffee marketing. In fact, for the design of the learning path the facilitators continuously balanced between 'the concrete' (addressing specific concerns), and 'the vague' (addressing visioning, learning, learning about learning). Kolb's learning cycle proved to be a useful model to address the concrete. Kolb's learning cycle proved however, to be less appropriate for addressing 'the vague' i.e. visioning, the learning about learning, and the questioning of values and assumptions.

I would like to conclude this section with a few of the comments made by the participants during evaluation sessions. Their remarks show that by the end of the workshop, the linked local learning process had just 'started to begin' (see box 7.9).

Box 7.9: Remarks made during the participants' evaluation in the Nyeri workshop.

"The workshop was an eye opener to the actors where new partnerships were created and as well some were felt could be done without. Therefore, such other workshops should be held involving the absolute stakeholders (e.g., permanent secretaries, directors, under secretaries and even Members of Parliament), because officers in the middle can not tell their bosses the truth for fear of being retrenched, transferred or demoted" (farmer).

"This workshop was one of his kind, because we have never had one where various stakeholders were brought together to talk and analyse the problems facing them. From this exercise, it was found that most linkages do exist but in most cases are too weak, hence new ways were sought to strengthen these linkages and also how to enter into new partnership for sustainability" (government official).

(Source: ISG, 1999b).

In April 2002, I was sent a document in which LISSA's chairperson discussed how the members continued to use a linked local learning perspective to deal with economic liberalisation in livestock production (box 7.10).

Box 7.10: LISSA's use of a linked local learning perspective, two years after the Nyeri workshop.

"Our learning process is a powerful rethinking tool that transforms our problems into challenges. It demonstrates the mutual benefit of communication and information exchange both vertically to higher levels of government and industry and horizontally to peers in livestock raising and meat processing. For the members learning is a contact sport of continuous engagement through multi-stakeholder meetings individual communication and information exchange. Together we push for more favourable policies and legislation for the livestock industry, for increased livestock trade volume, for better pricing mechanisms and for fair trade practices among stakeholders"

(Source: Kibue, 2002).

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[1] Many thanks go to Clive Lightfoot, one of the co-facilitators, for his useful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter

[2] Over the same period that ISG facilitated a linked local learning process in Kenya, it assisted similar processes in Uganda and Tanzania.

Intermezzo II:
Further development of theoretical and methodological insights for the facilitation of multi-actor learning processes

In this section, I describe the major findings of the Kenyan case by linking the insights from the three facilitation actions. By looking at the overall consistency and correspondence of the entire praxis, some of the earlier findings will be consolidated and some new ones will emerge. At the end of this section, I make a comparison between the facilitation of a linked local learning processes in Kenya and the facilitation of a participatory problem-solving process in Senegal. From the comparison, some patterns in facilitation emerge, leading to more comprehensive insights for a preliminary grounded theory on facilitation. The comparison also generates in various criteria that can be used to assess the performance of facilitators of multi-actor learning processes.

By exploring the consistency and correspondence of facilitation praxis, transparency and performance improves

The Kenyan experience confirms the insight derived from the Senegal case study that Bawden's model of praxis is a useful instrument for making transparent the interrelationship among the facilitators' perception of the context, their values, the theoretical and methodological perspectives they used and their actions, and how these shape praxis. By reflection on the coherence among the four elements constituting praxis, facilitators are challenged to pay particular attention to facilitation at the policy level. The refelction also reveals various characteristics of the policy environment in which a linked local learning perspective could be effective.

The inconsistency between the Kenyan policy context on the one hand, and the linked local learning perspective and values on the other, has slowed the evolution of the learning process:
- Actors in position of authority (government, donors) appear to have little trust in the capacity of local actors to manage their own natural resources. Local communities are not entitled to make decisive management decisions and/or to manage the financial resources to operationalise them.
- Among actors in positions of authority, learning processes appear to lack credibility. Senior staff members rarely participate in learning workshops but send their junior officers, who do not have the mandate to operationalise change processes .
- The present legal framework does not recognise the newly formed multi-actor coalitions, such as the core group, as fundable entities. This has complicated the submission to donors of proposals for follow-up activities and consequently the sustainability of the learning process.
- Donors appear to be, in general, unwilling to engage in multi-actor action-learning and are not willing to become active learning partners other than in the context of their own projects. Donors seem reluctant to commit to a process that is slow, where the immediate outcomes are usually not tangible, and the focus is on changing understanding, attitudes, and partnerships.

However, the facilitation actions that were specifically targeted at the policy level have started to pay off. For instance, in Tanzania, DANIDA is supporting a multi-actor learning coalition at the national level to further develop a linked local learning process in two pilot districts. The first outcomes are observable in terms of changes toward agro-ecosystem practices and agricultural services that are more responsive to farmers' needs (TMLC, 2001). The international workshop 'Learning Approaches to Complex Institutional Change and Decentralisation', Tune, Denmark (4-11 December, 2000), convinced the representatives of the World Bank and of the Ugandan National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS) that it was worth experimenting with a linked local learning perspective to operationalise the policy of decentralising and privatising the national extension service. In 2001, Kenyan facilitators i.e. working group members, assisted

various Ugandan facilitators in starting up a multi-actor learning process within the NAADS programme in eight districts in Uganda.

Monitoring the learning process: Actions such as documenting the learning process and sharing it with a wider public are necessary to bring about a more conducive policy environment for multi-actor learning. In the international workshop 'Learning Approaches to Complex Institutional Change and Decentralisation', Tune, Denmark (4-8 December, 2000), the ISG facilitators and participating working group members experienced the weaknesses of not (yet) having a good mechanism for tracking and assessing the learning. It appears that first actors need to have experienced some results of the learning process in order to work with monitoring tools. The use of indicators at an initial stage of the process, as what the facilitators tried to achieve in the Nyeri workshop, does not have a real meaning for the actors.

Developing accountability: In relation to the monitoring, the facilitators learnt that more emphasis has to be placed on the facilitation of the developingment of transparent accounting. However, if no donor is willing to provide funds, because of lack of trust in a process of which the outcomes are uncertain and unpredictable, no real-life experience and thus no learning on financial management and accountability will occur.

Getting started by bringing multiple (critical) learning systems into being

The experience in Kenya confirmed my understanding that 'the getting started' stages of a parti-cipatory process are very important as they decisively shape the 'with whom', the 'why' and the 'how' of the process and, as such, its outcomes. The Kenya case reveals five new insights with respect to 'getting started'.

Multiple actors situated at different social, sectoral and administrative levels: First, in Kenya, the facilitators deliberately chose to facilitate the formation of multiple-actor learning coalition in the form of the core group who would further drive the linked local learning. *Multiple* refers to the idea that the coalition consists of multiple actors situated at different multiple social, cultural and administrative levels but who all had a stake in core activities of interest, in this case, the decentralisation of agricultural services and ecological concerns. Through these coalitions, the actors and their learning are directly linked to the creation of favourable conditions for e.g., district officers to concentrate on meeting farmer demands for services, and national agencies to concentrate on the policy implications of new roles in agricultural service provision. The working group can be considered a learning subsystem that is nested in the larger system comprisinged by the core group. Both systems are inter-connected with the (wider) learning systems that emerged from the Nyeri workshop, such as LISSA and KNEAD. In Senegal, however, although multiple actors were brought together, these actors did not represent the range of decision-making levels that were necessary to fully support the privatisation process. Especially the actors with authority did not participate actively. Partly this was their intent, but also insufficient effort was made by the facilitators to get them a aboard.

Limited critical i.e. epistemic learning: Secondly, by applying some elements of a critical learning perspective, the facilitators encouraged the members of the working group and LISSA to look at themselves as if they were *critical learning systems.* They were encouraged to consider their way of learning as an essential factor in the outcome. The facilitation of 'learning about the learning' emphasised reflection on tools and procedures rather than on actors' values and attitudes, and the role of these attributes in shaping the learning experience.

Reframing: Thirdly, the reframing questions ('what', 'why', 'with whom' and how the actors

wanted to learn), which were taken as the entry point for the actors' definition of their own participatory learning process, stimulated them to open up towards a *wider common concern* and distracted their attention from their day-to-day problems. However, facilitators still need to find a more effective way to talk about learning, and 'learning about learning', because the abstract terminology can be a 'trap', or barrier toward effective communication competence.

Starting with champions: Fourthly, the Kenyan experience suggests that assembling committed, motivated and dedicated individuals or *champions* is an effective way to start (Lightfoot et al., 2001a). These champions proved to be vital to the process. The Senegal case revealed that 'deputised' representatives often do not satisfy the requirement for enthusiasm and representation. What does matter in *who* brings the different actors together *for what* purpose is that the champions who 'own' the issue at stake also control the budget, so that they can act on their own learning process and outcomes.

Convening institute: Fifthly, this Kenyan experience shows that for the well functioning of a multi-actor learning coalition at the national level, there is an important role for a convening institute. Such an institute requires legitimacy (in the form of a right to intervene), power (in the form of resources or authority), and some urgency (in the form of having accountability for outputs) (Ramírez, 2001).

Required competencies of facilitators
All together, in terms of facilitation competence, the starting up of a linked local learning process and the support of the emergence of critical learning systems comprising of multi-actors operating at different decision-making levels, requires:
• Skills in identifying, motivating and interacting with diverse stakeholders.
• Skills in designing a process that encourage actors to (further) develop multi-actor learning system(s) by mediating the negotiation about new actors, (bio)physical boundaries and objectives. For this to be realised, reframing abilities are key.
• Expertise to facilitate 'learning about learning'.

Designing a systemic learning path: analytical and process dimensions interwoven

The effectiveness of a facilitation praxis depends very much on the facilitators' competence in designing a purposeful learning pathway, including an analytical and a process dimension. By combining the experiential learning cycle, negotiation strategies, agro-ecosystem analysis and RAAKS, the process and analytical dimensions became interwoven. Below these dimensions are further discussed.

The analytical dimension
In both the Senegal and the Kenyan case, it has been evident that people are not homogeneous with respect to their environment. They have different rights, access, perceptions, interests, and experiences in relation to natural resources. Agro-ecosystem management is a process in which different actors learn through dialogue and negotiation to come to agreements about how they should manage interactions amongst themselves as well as the natural resources. From a facilitation point of view, this shows that the design needs to address people and their environment as two dimensions that are structurally coupled. In relation to this, I would like to consider four interlocking insights.

Design should address the biophysical and human systems as a coupled system: First, there is the issue whether a facilitator should start the learning from the basis of the resource or from the

people. In Senegal, the facilitators started the learning about the human dimension (and stopped there). In Kenya, the facilitators started from the natural resource i.e. the agro-ecosystem, but the relation with the human dimension was made immediately in terms of perceptions and interests. . The biophysical and human systems are a coupled system., a duality with the two dimensions in continual interplay.

Integrating multiple perspectives: Secondly, in order to address the learning about people and their natural resources as a duality, facilitators need to have the competence to compose a rich mixture of analytical elements that, combined with process ingredients, forms a purposeful learning pathway. This calls for (a team of) facilitator(s) with competence in multiple methodologies and theories that analytically complement each other and that match in purpose and assumptions. In Kenya, the integration of the theoretical perspectives 'critical learning systems', 'experiential learning', 'mediated negotiations', and 'collaborative learning' caused no noteworthy difficulties as there are no fundamental inconsistencies among them. Certainly, they enriched each other.

Learning about policies, institutions, agro-ecosystems and their management, and their inter-relationships: Thirdly, both cases show that agro-ecosystem management not only requires changes at the level of the farmers, but also at the level of institutions and policies in which farmers' pratices are embedded. From a facilitation point of view, it is important to enable actors to discover and better understand the link between farmers' practices and the institutional and policy levels, by taking all these levels, as well as their inter-relationship, as a subject of learning. Consequently, facilitators should not limit themselves to facilitating learning only at the grassroots level (or only at the policy level, Groot et al., 2002), to support learning across different decision-making levels. In the Kenyan case, the learning about and with the policy level was addressed by incorporating policy actors in the core and working group, and in the Nyeri workshop. However, for Kenya, it has to be acknowledged that so far the unstable political climate, the hiatus in executive government, and the lack of power of the enthusiastic policy participant has hindered progress. At the institutional level, on the contrary, significant progress has been made in terms of more responsive service provision to farmers by the private sector (Lightfoot et al., 2001a,b).

The process dimension

For the facilitation of linked local learning to be effective, the learning pathway not only needs a rich analytical focus, it needs a good mix of process elements as well. The Kenya case reveals various lessons with respect to the facilitation of a process conducive to multi-actor learning:

Multi-actor ownership: The development of multi-actor ownership of the learning process is an important insight for the facilitation of participatory processes, and one hardly explored in the literature. The Kenya case reveals various inter-related actions that positively contributed to an increase in the actors' control over their own learning and the resources needed to sustain the process: 1) the search by facilitators for a multi–actor mandate for intervention; 2) the formation of multi-actor learning systems; 3) the development of actors' competence in 'learning about their own learning'; 4) the (further) development of actors' competence in the facilitation of learning; and 5) the support of new partnerships between learning coalitions and funding agencies. It appeared that learning approaches can thrive only in situations where the learners empower the facilitators to assist them. Learning approaches cannot be imposed in a top-down fashion by project implementers (Lightfoot et al., 2001a).

Face-to-face communication: Direct communication among actors with multiple interests and perceptions has been crucial, as it was in Senegal. Through this type of direct interaction, the

following group dynamic ingredients have been brought into action, favouring a change in thinking: 1) confrontation with non-confirming views, as well as the introduction of new information; 2) development of psychological safety; 3) developing motivation and enthusiasm; 5) discovering interdependency; and 6) group pressure, development of a sense of responsibility and face-to-face accountability.

Strengthening actors' capacity to carry out a farmer-led visioning, demand articulation, negotiation and action planning: The building of participants' capacity in visioning, demand articulation, negotiation and planning, has been key for the outcome of the process. The improved capacity contributed to 'plans' of higher quality. The previous plans were a listing of projects or wishes with no reference to vision, goals, priorities, or a problem/opportunity analysis, and without reflection on other stakeholders' perceptions (Participants' evaluation, 27 September 1998).

Short action-reflection cycles: For addressing complex issues, the facilitation of short, iterative, action-reflection cycles appears more appropriate than the effort to take participants through Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The action should be closely related to people's daily life experience.

Overall assessment: Comparing the effectiveness of the facilitation praxis in Kenya with the facilitation praxis in Senegal

Caution is needed with respect to a comparison between the Kenyan and the Senegal case as different contexts and different facilitation teams were involved. However, as both cases address complex issues involving multiple interrelated actors and factors, a comparison is legitimate in order to discover any similarities and differences in patterns. Below, I briefly summarise the main differences between the facilitation of the Kenyan linked local learning processes and facilitation of participatory problem solving process in Senegal. Then, I draw preliminary conclusions about the effectiveness of both facilitation experiences. From the comparison of the cases, some new critical observation points emerge as well as various criteria for assessing facilitation performance. These observation points and criteria are presented at the end of this section.

By way of summary, analysis shows the following differences in facilitation praxis:
• In Kenya, the facilitation praxis placed more emphasis on learning to improve the actors' learning capacity whereas in Senegal the focus has been merely on helping actors in participatory problem-solving. In Kenya, in particular critical learning has been fostered, with emphasis on the 'learning about learning' for the purpose of competence and ownership building.
• In Senegal, the facilitation had a problem focus whereas in Kenya creative thinking was fostered by looking at the future.
• In Kenya, the facilitation praxis aimed to link actors across social, sectoral and administrative levels. In Senegal, the facilitation praxis focused predominantly on the local level.
• In Senegal, the facilitators started to assemble multiple actors at local level around a shared tangible concern i.e. future privatisation of the irrigation system. In Kenya, the facilitators started at national level to gather multiple actors operating at different levels, who did not share a specific concern. What bound these actors was a desire to do development differently, to make a difference.
• In Kenya, the facilitation praxis focussed on learning about the biophysical and the human dimensions in agro-ecosystem management as a duality, whereas in Senegal the emphasis was on diagnosing the social organisation of the SAED/IAM irrigation system.
• The issue of developing multi-actor ownership has received more attention in Kenya than in Senegal.

Table II.1 illustrates the specifics of both facilitation experiences for which I use a learning framework. The learning framework is developed by Maarleveld and Dangbégnon (1999), Groot and Maarleveld (2000), drawing on Parson and Clark (1995). The learning framework is applied in order to generate insights about the 'facilitation of learning'.

I consider the facilitation of a linked local learning process more effective for addressing complex issues such as decentralisation of agricultural services and natural resource management, than the facilitation of participatory problem-solving because:

- The facilitation of a linked local learning process fosters power-sharing through multi-actor ownership. It includes competence building in 'learning about learning' how to manage complex issues as well as the facilitation of such learning. Multi-actor ownership and the ability for meta-learning has positively contributed to the emergence of multi-actor networks who reinvent linked local learning to deal with complex issues in their own environment.
- The formation of multi-actor learning systems such as the core group, whose constituting actors operate at different sectoral, cultural and administrative levels, is likely to be more effective for building partnership and collective actions than approaching the various levels in parallel.
- The Kenyan experience shows that a non-project setting is likely to contribute more positively to forging lateral links among organisations and groups at each level and, between levels, than a project context as in Senegal. However, a non-project setting can impede the sustainability of the learning process, as it has limited ability to source the implementation of follow-up learning activities.
- Linking multiple analytical perspectives by linking the learning about the human and the natural system results in the development of more comprehensive knowledge about complex issues and supports the acting accordingly.
- In the Senegalese experience, the analytical design consisting of methods derived from RAAKS, PRA and PTD has been strong at analysing past and present situations. This design made the facilitators start from a focus on problems or *deficits*. In Kenya, the design purposely focussed on *desirability*. Future thinking better engages human imagination and enables actors to move out of the past into the possibilities of the future. Past fact can not be plugged into the future (Weisborn & Janoff, 1995).
- However fuzzy the concept of learning might be and however difficult to communicate at the start of a multi-actor learning process, it has potential to encourage actors to focus on wider common concerns and distracts peoples' attention from their day-to-day problems and conflicts.

From the comparison of the two cases, some new critical observation points emerge and consolidate earlier points that emerged from the Senegal case. The critical observation points are summarised in table II.2. These observation points are translated into criteria that could be used to assess the performance of a facilitator of multi-actor learning processes that aim to address complex issues.

Table II.1: Comparing the facilitation praxis of a multi-actor learning process in Kenya with the facilitation of a participatory problem-solving process in Senegal (Source: This thesis).

	Kenya: Facilitation of linked local learning among actors)	Senegal: Facilitation of participatory problem solving
Whose learning is facilitated?	Core and working group members i.e. multiple actors across different social, cultural and administrative levels, Participants in the Nyeri workshop, Kenyan facilitators and indirectly those people they have been facilitating e.g., in Uganda and Tanzania, Multi-actor coalitions at grassroots and district level that emerged from the Nyeri workshop (e.g., LISSA, KNEAD), ISG facilitators	Actors of SAED/ IAM project i.e. participants of workshops and other purposefully facilitated activities, Members of farming community who did not participate in the workshops who were consulted, Staff members of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, SAED/IAM facilitators, Dutch facilitators
What has been learnt? (and by whom?)	Better understanding of each others' concerns, interests, perceptions, practices, positions opportunities and constraints (participants of the Nyeri workshop, members of newly formed networks), The ability to vision a desired status of the natural resources, and to articulate and negotiate a demand for services (participants of the Nyeri workshop, members of newly formed networks), About what, who, why and how we want to learn or learning about learning (core group, participants of the Nyeri workshop, members of newly formed networks), Capacity to use reinvented learning to deal with complex and dynamic issues in actors' own environment (participants of the Nyeri workshop, members of newly formed networks), Ability to developing criteria for negotiating partnership for more responsive agricultural services, Competence in facilitating a linked local learning process (participants Nyeri workshop, ISG facilitators)	Better understanding of each others' concerns, perceptions, interests, practices, positions, opportunities and constraints (actors of the SAED/IAM system), Better understanding of the social organisation of the SAED/IAM irrigation system (actors of the SAED/IAM system), The capacity to better (collectively) solve problems, (Collective) negotiating capacity (actors of the SAED/IAM system), Competence in facilitating actors' learning about the way they were socially organised in the SAED/IAM irrigation system (Dutch and Senegalese facilitators)
How has the learning been facilitated?	Experiential learning/on going action reflection cycles to adjust relationships and agro-ecosystem management strategies, Indicators to trigger and track change in partnership performance and agro-ecosystem management, Integrated analytical design (agro-ecosystem analysis and RAAKS tools interwoven), Fostering 'learning about learning', Learning path that interwove process and analytical dimensions	Process and analytical design less intertwined, Analytical design focussing on the social organisation of irrigation management, (Effort to) Developing multiple participatory M&E systems to foster on-going action and reflection cycles

Context of the facilitation	Growing ecological concern, but politically not supported, Decentralisation of agricultural services, Non-project setting	Dependency culture due to 18 years of Dutch aid, Project setting On-going disengagement of donors demanding a shift towards privatisation of the SAED/IAM project, Poor economical potentials due to isolated character of the island, Slavery still exists
Why did the facilitation occur? (triggering (f)actors)	Values and interests of the ISG facilitators, ISG facilitators have been invited by the core group i.e. multi-actor mandate, Farmers experienced serious environmental degradation and coffee marketing problems, Farmers and core group members were in search for (capacity building for) innovations to deal with the environmental and economical crises as well as maintaining/improving their position on the market, DANIDA officer at ministry level was looking for alternative approaches to facilitate decentralisation	Values and interests of the Dutch facilitators, Dutch facilitators have been invited by WIR and project management, Farmers, farmer organisations, project staff experienced a thread because of the (forthcoming) privatisation but also opportunities to maintain and increase their status quo
'External' facilitation input in terms of time	One week for the inventory of interest in a learning approach to deal with complex issues Two weeks for the facilitation of the Nyeri workshop Regular e-mail contact One week for facilitating an international workshop on learning approaches to decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services in Tune (Denmark)	Three months to facilitate a series of workshops to learn about the social organisation of the SAED/IAM irrigation system in the light of the forthcoming privatisation Three times a four weeks stay to facilitate amongst other aspects, the development of participatory M&E systems and human capacity building in a participatory mode of working
Estimation costs (salary external facilitators, travelling and materials)	Approximately $47.000	Approximately $ 60.000
Outcome	Improved partnership among actors across different levels (especially between the farmers and the private sector), Improved capacity among farmers to develop a plan based on a vision and, to identify and negotiate the necessary partnership, Emergence of multi-actor coalitions at grassroots and district level (e.g., LISSA, KNEAD) continuing learning to negotiate more responsive services, Working group members and ISG facilitated (and still do) a linked local learning process in Tanzania and Uganda	Improved partnership among local actors, Service provided by the project and other local actors became more responsive to the need of the farmers, Improved skills in collective problem-solving, conflict resolution and action, Farmer leaders actively looked for assistance to improve the performance of the farmer organisations, Trained facilitators left project for other jobs
Main failures and limitations	Limited critical learning i.e. hardly no questioning of underlying values and assumptions, Non-conducive policy context, Lack of on-going reflection with the use of tangible indicators to track and appreciate change in partnership performance and agro-ecosystem management	Lack of purposefully facilitating 'higher' decision-making levels, Superficial M&E, Lack of critical learning i.e. hardly no questioning of underlying values and assumptions, Non-conducive policy context

Table II.2: ***Critical observation points and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the facilitation of multi-actor learning processes (Source: This thesis).***

	Critical observation points emerging from comparing the Kenyan and Senegal case	Possible criteria for assessing facilitators' praxis
Context	Non-project setting	Development of mechanisms and capacity for proposal design and request for funds to sustain learning
Values	Multi-actor ownership, Willingness to build 'local' facilitators' capacity to do what we ('external') facilitators do, Conflicting values between facilitators and actors at higher authority levels	Degree of facilitated learning about facilitation, Degree of transparency in facilitators' values and interests, Degree of questioning underlying values, including those of the facilitators, Degree of making explicit and discussing the difference in values and its possible consequences
Theories/ methodologies	Rich design for learning: integrated theoretical and methodological perspectives, Learning about human systems and natural systems as structured coupled systems	Degree of richness and effectiveness of the theoretical/methodological design, Degree to which the design supports the learning about the human and natural system as a coupled system, Degree to which the design favours the linking of actors operating at different decision-making levels
Actions	Developing a multi-actor mandate for facilitators' intervention, Building self-organising, learning and negotiation capacity of multiple actor coalitions, Reframing strategy to focus actors on 'wider common concerns', 'Learning about learning', Learning about facilitation, Tracking learning processes in terms of 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes	Degree to which the facilitators enabled actors to (further) develop mechanisms that ensure the accountability to other actors, Degree to which the search for 'wider common concerns' has been facilitated, Degree to which the actors control their own learning process, Degree to which feedback mechanisms are in use to track and evaluate the 'soft' and 'hard' changes in the agro-ecosystem and social organisational practices
Praxis	Linking the learning of different social, administrative and cultural levels, Inconsistency in praxis can trigger but if too much it can hinders learning	Degree to which actors across different decision-making levels and stakeholders are satisfied with the change made, Degree to which the inconsistency is explicitly addressed

As illustrated in the previous table II.1, the facilitation of a linked local learning process is significantly different from that of a participatory problem-solving process. Both require specific but different facilitation competence. In the next empirical case, the facilitation of the actors' learning to develop facilitation competence is explored. As such, the case helps me to draw conclusions about *meta-facilitation* that includes the effort to develop an institutional (working) environment that enables facilitators to sustain the learning.

8 The DLV case: The theoretical and methodological foundations[1]

My work as a facilitator of workshops within and outside the academic world made me appreciate the distinction between feeling confident in one's own knowledge and skills in facilitating complex change processes, and facilitating the facilitation of others. So far, the Senegal and Kenya case studies have predominantly provided insights into my performance as a facilitator who supports multiple actors to improve their collective decision-making and action. Chapters 8 and 9 aim to go one step further by exploring my performance as a meta- facilitator, assisting other facilitators in the management of complex change. As such, these chapters address facilitation as a meta-level competence by exploring the facilitation of facilitated participatory processes. As will become clear, it is to some extent a record of failure, but nonetheless richly rewarding in terms of lessons learnt. The analysis is predominantly based on my experience as a consultant facilitating the learning of DLV advisors about facilitation. DLV is the former Dutch Governmental Extension Service (1989-1994). At that time 'DLV' stood for "Dienst Landbouw Voorlichting". The abbreviation is still in use, but not spelled out anymore as the type of service being delivered is nowadays referred as an agricultural advisory service rather than extension. The advisers were engaged in supporting the learning processes of individuals and collectives in the fields of food production, multi-functionality of farm activities, nature preservation, and rural and urban relationships. The material and analysis presented in chapters 8 and 9 drawn on the author's project notebooks, workshop handouts, reader compiled for the workshops and participants' evaluation sessions (for more details see additional sources added to the list of references).

In the beginning of 1998, I was approached by DLV management to inquire whether I would be willing to train DLV advisers in project design and proposal writing. Because I was curious to find out whether my competence as a facilitator, heavily influenced by the participatory paradigm, could be useful in a Dutch commercial setting, I decided to take up the challenge. DLV's request was not formulated in terms of meta-facilitation of participatory processes. Initially, my job was to organise a training for DLV advisers to improve their competence in developing project proposals. At first glance, there is quite a difference between a training in developing project proposals and meta-facilitation. However, from the beginning, both the participants and I expressed a preference to apply a participatory perspective to the task. The project proposals, usually funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries (LNV), covered the communicative side of the management of natural resource systems. Within a short time, my work developed to include facilitation of the learning of DLV facilitators about designing and writing project proposals addressing the facilitation of interactive processes.

In timing, there was an overlap between this facilitation experience and the Kenyan one. In April 1998, I started working as a consultant for DLV for a number of weeks and was invited again the following year in 1999. In between, I co-facilitated the linked local learning process in Kenya discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

As in the previous cases, the exploration of this experience covers three parts. In this chapter, I describe the theoretical and methodological perspectives that the facilitator(s) used to support the learning of DLV. Chapter 9 addresses how the facilitators applied these perspectives and their usefulness in relationship to their values, actions and the way they perceived the working context, as well as the effectiveness of the entire intervention. The lessons drawn from this experience are summarised in Intermezzo III and form again new building blocks for a grounded theory on and methodological insights into the meta-facilitation of participatory (i.e. multi-actor) learning processes. Chapter 8 does not attempt to provide a state of the art of the theories

and methodologies described hereafter. It rather makes explicit the facilitators' theoretical and methodological mind-set at the time of the intervention. Again, these theoretical and methodological perspectives overlap to some extent with those underpinning the Senegal and Kenya experiences. However, they are substantiated and enriched by the preliminary conclusions drawn from these two cases.

8.1 'Objective-oriented planning' versus 'interactive designing'

Through out the intervention, I used the principle of 'multiple approaches for developing project proposals'. The selected approaches vary in the degree to which they acknowledge the non-linear character of complex change, its dynamics, uncertainties, and unpredictability. The choice of one approach over another highly depends on the perception of the issue at stake, and one's role in it. During the first workshop, two extremes on a continuum of design approaches were compared (Table 8.1): an *objective-oriented planning approach* and an *interactive (or participatory) approach*. For many, the term 'design' refers to a systematic and planned approach towards solving problems and is often associated with control and rationalism. Others prefer to look at 'design' as a creative process of discovery and collaborative learning within a network of stakeholders (Leeuwis, 1999). My notion of 'design' fits the latter.

Planners who perceive the issue at stake as a phenomenon that can be fully controlled will apply the first approach. They assume that through detailed analysis, the lacking information can be obtained and all solutions can be identified beforehand. A linear change trajectory is assumed and made explicit through a hierarchy of objectives. In the case that the issue at stake is perceived as non-linear, an interactive (or adaptive) design approach will be used to capture the dynamics, uncertainties, and unpredictabilities. I presented these two approaches as two ends of a spectrum and acknowledge that various intermediary types also could be considered. I introduced *interactive policy making* approaches such as 'Interactive Policy Formulation' (Meesters et al., 1997), 'Open Plan Processes' (Verdaas et al., 1997), 'Dialogue' (Steenhuis & Meulenmeester, 1996) and 'Pegasus' (Ministry of Spatial Planning, Environment and Government Housing, 1999), as examples of intermediary types.

8.2 Stakeholder analysis

Because of the relevance of soft systems thinking for the facilitation of participatory processes, as experienced in Senegal and Kenya, again in the DLV case I chose to apply this perspective (for a brief description on soft system theory and methodology see chapter 4). Considering the practical attitude of most of the advisers, I emphasised systems practice, through experimentation with system tools rather than discussing the theory behind the practice. I assumed the advisers would be less interested in theory than in practice. I decided to introduce the concept *stakeholder analysis* and its tools to broaden the thinking of the advisers because I had observed that the DLV advisers tended to approach (societal) issues from their own technical perspective only. The perceptions of other relevant stakeholders were often lacking. In the proposals of previous years, reference was made to the 'target group' and 'intermediary organisations', but these were hardly involved in the design.

Stakeholder analysis refers to a procedure or approach to gaining an understanding of a perceived human activity system by means of identifying the stakeholders and actors in that system, and assessing their respective interests, perceptions, and (power) relationships. By doing so, stakeholder analysis leads to improved understanding of the perceived system and helps to identify the actors who could or should be invited into the process. Especially for those situations characterised by compatibility problems among the objectives of multiple stakeholders, and/or

Table 8.1: Two approaches to project (proposal) planning compared (Adapted from Brinkerhoff & Ingle, 1989; Geldof, 1999).

Approaches to project design	Objective-oriented planning	Interactive design
Perception of (social and natural) environment	Ignoring non-linear dynamics, Major events can be predicted and controlled, Uncertainty is statistically describable	Accepting and addressing non-linear dynamics. However, locally or over a short period of time a situation can be perceived as linear, Space for uncertainties
Dominant view of human behaviour	Focus on consensus, disagreement or conflicts are ignored (form of simplicity)	Focus on consensus, Disagreement and conflict are acknowledged but are neither searched for nor ignored
Dominant view on vision and objectives	If visioning is used, only one vision is assumed, Vision determines the objectives (vision is ideal to be searched for), A linear change trajectory is assumed and made explicit through a hierarchy of objectives	Multiple visions and multiple hierarchies of objectives are assumed (everyone's values, knowledge etc. is unique and as such important to incorporate), Vision serves as binding force (strive for improvement, it is accepted that the ideal situation will never be reached)
Management style and tools	Central management, Focus on uniformity and standardisation (as a means for justice) "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"), Written proposals are used to directing the course of actions, Written reports for documentation and reporting	Decentralised and shared management Focus on identity and diversity The written proposal is used as reference material. What counts is the developed mutual understanding, accommodation of interest, and agreements the proposal is reflecting, Regular oral reporting is very important
Time perception	Mainly two moments are considered: the start and the end of the project	Every moment is appropriate for something/somebody
Involvement of actors	Distinction between designers (often strategically important actors) and implementing actors (often lay-people), Plans are predominantly developed in the office	Influential actors are also involved in implementation and lay people are involved in the design, Plans are interactively developed while working
Implementations	Step 1: developing *one* vision (or defining the problem situation), Step 2: vision determines the (quantifiable) goals *or* analysis of problem situation including a search for cases and effects, an inventory of stakeholders and their roles and interests, Step 3: Formulation of a hierarchy of objectives and measurements as the strategy to follow in order to solve the problem, Step 4: optimalisation of measurements/cost efficiency, Step 5: development of support, organising stakeholders in networks, Step 6: implementation, monitoring and evaluation	Step 1: making explicit all relevant visions, Step 2: defining multiple set of objectives. Focus not on the ideal situation but on improvements, Step 3: continuous dialogue about underlying values and assumptions, Step 4: discovering what works and what not through recurrent action and refection for corrective action

problems in balancing conflicting multiple objectives (trade-offs), stakeholder analysis is used to discover existing patterns of interaction to predict potential conflicts and to reveal if it might be necessary to deal with these conflicts. Grimble & Wellard (1996) put forward two specific purposes of stakeholder analysis. The first purpose is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and evaluation of policies and projects through the explicit consideration of: a) potential trade-offs between different objectives of one single stakeholder; and b) the conflicts between stakeholders' interests. The second purpose is to improve assessment of the distributional, social and political impacts of policies and projects, through highlighting the needs and interest of power-less people.

I made a distinction among three applications of stakeholder analysis: 1) project approach; 2) scenario approach; and 3) a participatory learning approach (Groot, 2000). These applications have been developed in the context of the International Course for Agricultural Research and Development (ICRA) in Wageningen, The Netherlands.

The *project (or strategic) application* is one in which stakeholder analysis is strategically used to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of a proposed project. A checklist is provided to identify risks for successful project implementation due to conflict between stakeholder interests and project interest. Based on these risks and assumptions the desired type of stakeholder participation in the various stages of the project cycle is identified as well as strategies for consensus building. This approach to stakeholder analysis is very much in the controlling mode of a donor or implementing agency interested in a successful implementation of a project (ODA, 1995). As such the strategic approach fits the objective-oriented design approach.

The *scenario application* deals with stakeholder analysis as a heuristic tool for analysing complex situations and predicting future situation and scenarios, by addressing both conflict of interests between stakeholders and trade-offs between objectives. The aim is improving understanding of (natural resource) problems, structural change and policy issues rather than facilitating design, implementation and evaluation of proposed projects to guarantee its success. Rather than taking a proposed project as the starting point, this approach takes an agreed problem situation. By unpacking not only the different interests of multiple stakeholders and actors, including those of donors and policy makers, but also the objectives of one single stakeholder, in this approach the heart of problems and reasons behind stakeholders' behaviour become more transparent. Researchers or development project staff using this approach also take up a relatively outsider's role to analyse the complex system to develop various scenarios for improvement and to predict consequences (Grimble & Wellard, 1996).

Those who apply stakeholder analysis tools for convening dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders use *a participatory learning application*. This approach focuses on participatory learning to improve effective collective action on the system. Subsequently, the analysis of stake-holders' interests, perceptions, relationships, knowledge, and practices is carried out by the actors themselves and supported by facilitators. The actors use the tools to develop better under-standing of each others' interests, views, values and the way they are (or not) organised to deal with particular concerns as well as to develop commitment for collective actions for improvement (Engel & Salomon, 1997; Ramirez, 2001).

8.3 The model of 'five interlocking dimensions of a systemic transformation to sustainable change'

Both the Kenyan and Senegal experiences had taught me that in order to bring about sustainable change at the local level, facilitation also needs to address the institutional and policy level.

Therefore, to foster such a change among the DLV advisers, I applied the model of *five inter-locking dimensions of a systemic transformation to sustainable change* (in short 'the model of five dimensions') that helped me to make explicit the relationships between the advisers and their institutional and policy environment. The applied model was adapted from the work of Jiggins & Röling (1996). Box 8.1 shows the adapted version that underpinned my facilitation praxis in the DLV case. The five dimensions relate systemically to one another, in as much that a change in one aspect necessarily affects the others. In this case, I assumed that the learning of DLV staff about new design approaches (e.g., interactive designing) could only be sustainable if there was an existing supportive DLV management, a conducive institutional and policy network. Consequently, this model guided me not only to intervene at the level of the DLV advisers, but also at the level of DLV management, the institutional context and policy context in which the advisers were operating.

Box 8.1: Five interlocking dimensions of systemic facilitation to sustainable change (Groot, 1998b adapted from Jiggins & Röling , 1996)

- Practices of project/program managers (what are DLV project/program managers after, what are their practices, what are their preoccupations?)
- Learning of those practices (how do DLV project mangers learn, where do they get their information from on what issues, what's their attitude towards specific issues?)
- Conducive DLV management (to what extend is DLV's management conducive to the learning of the advisers?)
- Institutional frameworks (what are relevant potential partners, what kind of relationship would support the desired change?)
- Conducive policy frameworks (to what extent are current practices e.g., regulations, procedures and attitude conducive to learning of the advisors?) ?)

(Source: Groot, 1998b adapted from Jiggins & Röling , 1996)

In addition, because I had observed that the DLV advisers were mainly focussing at the 'local' level (i.e. catchment area or farm), I encouraged also them to apply the model of five dimensions' so as to avoid intervention at one decision-making level only.

8.4 Organisational learning theories

To operationalise the first three dimensions of the above-described model, I decided to make use of organisational learning theories. In earlier consultancy work, I had applied *organisational learning theories* in Senegal (1995) and for the Dutch Development Organisation (SNV) as an adviser on knowledge management. I had gained good experience in the use of these theories to facilitate collective learning of groups within an organisation. So, I chose some of the concepts developed in 'organisational learning theories' offered by Senge et al. (1994), Argyris & Schön (1996) and Swieringa & Wierdsma (1990), in order to bring about change in the performance of individuals within DLV and of DLV as an organisation.

Senge defines learning in organisations as "the continuous testing of experience and the trans-formation of that experience into knowledge i.e. the capacity for effective action, accessible to the whole organisation, and relevant to its core purpose. A learning organisation is an organisation in which people continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire, where new patterns of thinking and action are nurtured, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990:3). In particular, I used a tool referred to as the *team learning wheel* (figure 8.2) (Senge et al., 1994: 60).
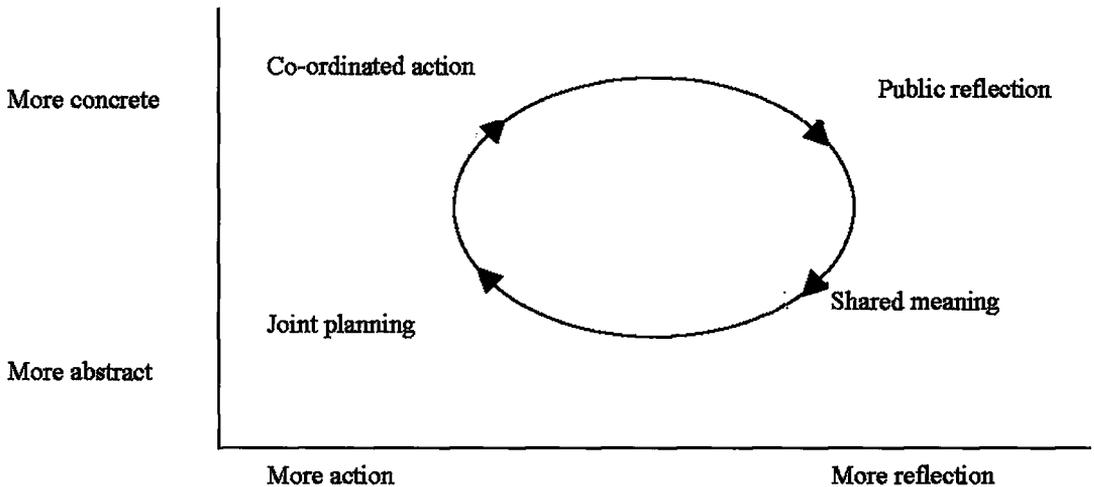
Figure 8.2: Team learning wheel (Senge et al., 1994: 60).

Based on Kolb's experiential learning (1984), the tool assumes that people learn in a cyclic fashion. They pass between action and reflection. In a public reflection stage, the members of the organisation talk about their mental models and beliefs, and challenge each other. Through joint reflection a common ground can be developed, which can result in the consideration of shared meaning in the form of standards and routines (Röling, pers. com.). From here, a shared vision and values could be refined. Then comes joint planning or joint designing and finally this could result into co-ordinated or joint action (Senge et al., 1994). As in the Senegal case, I tried to formalise the reflection part through M&E, for which I predominantly used the same theoretical and methodological insights (see chapter 7). However, as I assumed it was important for the actors to realise the implications of particular choices, I emphasised the starting phase and pitfalls in M&E. Before starting, amongst themselves, and probably with others, the actors should consider various issues, such as 'the purpose of M&E, the participants, the subject and the methods for M&E.

In addition to Senge's organisational learning theory, I intended to apply the concepts of *single*, *double* and *triple loop learning* (Argyris & Schön, 1996) to foster, *critical learning* among the actors involved. Single, double and triple loop learning are three different types of learning that can take place as collective processes in organisations. Each type refers to the degree of change brought about by the learning process (*ibid.*).
Single loop learning occurs when the intervention brings about changes in people's existing practices without significantly changing their vision, objectives, norms, or values. Changes of behaviour are at the level of 'more of the same, but better'.
In *double loop learning*, changes take place not only in existing practices, but also in underlying insights and principles. It strives to achieve collective knowledge and understanding by learning about the assumptions and goals behind established routines.
Triple loop learning occurs when essential underlying principles are questioned to the extent that it includes (re)designing the norms and protocols that govern single and double loop learning. The learners inquire into previous organisational learning experiences, to discover what they did that facilitated or inhibited single and double loop learning for improving their organisational learning.

One loop is not more important than another. In some situations, single loop learning suffices (e.g., changing procedures). In other situations, double loop learning is required (e.g., fundamental change in structure or objectives of the organisation or change in underlying theories), or even triple learning (e.g., radical transition in underlying paradigm).

8.5 Kolb's learning styles

Although the Kenyan case revealed its limitations, again I used the experiential learning cycle for the design of a tailor-made learning trajectory. However, this time I paid more attention to Kolb's learning *styles* (1984, 1985) (see box 8.2). Kolb (1984) distinguishes four learning styles formed by a combination of four different modes of learning: 1) active experimentation (or doing); 2) concrete experience (or feeling); 3) reflecting observation (or watching); and 4) abstract conceptualisation (or thinking).

Box 8.2: Individual learning styles (Kolb, 1984)

Converging: People with this learning style learn best through the combination of abstract
                 conceptualisation and active experimentation
Diverging: People with this learning style learn best through the combination of a concrete
                 experience and reflective observation
Assimulative: Combines abstract conceptualisations and reflective observation
Accommodating: Combines concrete experience with active experimentation

(Source: Kolb, 1984)

Experience shows that people usually prefer a specific learning style. Insight into participants' preferred learning style(s) increases uunderstanding why people sometimes learn little. It also assists the participants and facilitators in finding out how to improve the effectiveness of participants' learning through collaboration with people with different learning styles and on how to offer opportunities for learning through the use of a range of methods and different entry points.

Planning and learning (or more appropriately, designing and learning) come together, in the work of some planning theorists, who argue that a planning process should be designed as a learning process (De Geus, 1988). Planning in organisations can be considered an institutional learning process through the change of the mental models of decision-makers (*ibid.*). Planning as a learning process means involving relevant stakeholders, encouraging communication among them and making their perceptions and visions explicit. It also involves reflection on one's own actions (Verbeeten, 2000).

In the following chapter, I systemically explore the use and effectiveness of the aforementioned theoretical and methodological perspectives by relating them to my facilitation actions, my values, the perceived context and by looking at the overall effectiveness of my facilitation to improve DLV's competence in (interactive) project design.

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[1] The first year of the facilitation intervention, I worked merely alone. The second year, I worked closely with two DLV facilitatorsemployees.

9 The meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes

The present chapter further explores the meta-facilitation of DLV's facilitated multi-actor learning processes. As in the two previous cases, I use Bawden's model to explore the facilitation actions in relation to the values, the theories and methodologies used, and the way the context was perceived. I begin this chapter with a description of the facilitation context, as I perceived it. Then, I describe the facilitators' values and how they shaped praxis. Next, I describe the facilitation practice that is split up into two sets of actions. Both sets are discussed in terms of how the theoretical and methodological perspectives are used and the outcome. At the end, the overall praxis is assessed for which I apply the 'consistency' and 'correspondence' criteria (see chapter 3). Figure 9.1 summarises the structure of this chapter.

Context as perceived by the facilitators	
Values of the facilitators and how they shaped praxis	
Action 1: Supporting the learning of DLV advisers about interactive design and embedding this learning in a conducive institutional frame work	**Action 2:** Supporting actors' critical learning
How the **theories and methodologies** were used	How the **theories and methodologies** were used
Consistency-seeking: Coherence among the perceived context, actions, theories and methodologies and, values	**Consistency-seeking:** Coherence among the perceived context, actions, theories and methodologies and, values
Effectiveness: Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)	**Effectiveness:** Linking praxis with reality (correspondence)

↓

INTERMEZZO III: Building blocks
for a **grounded theory** and
methodological insights on the meta-
facilitation of multi-actor learning
processes

Figure 9.1: Structure of the case 'meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes'.

The findings on (in)consistencies and (non)effectiveness in the facilitation praxis provide the building blocks for a grounded theory on the meta-facilitation of multi-actor processes addressing complex issues.

The choice of the two sets of facilitation actions was made after studying the case material in the light of the research questions. For the first set of actions, I decided to combine three interrelated activities because they fitted the same objective i.e. to support and sustain the learning of DLV advisers about interactive design. The second set of actions explores the facilitation effort to support critical learning among various actors at different decision-making levels. Hereafter, I discuss the perceived context that formed the working environment and the way the facilitators (i.e. predominantly myself) perceived the issue at stake.

9.1 Perceived context

As part of my job preparation, I tried to find out more about the working context. To this end, I analysed DLV and its environment. I perceived the facilitation context as complex because it

featured a number of interlocking rapidly changing processes involving multiple actors across different social and administrative levels. The processes that especially caught my eye were:
- The changing role of agriculture in Dutch society.
- The rapid shift in thinking about the role of government and in particular that of LNV in supporting agricultural extension.
- The significant changes within DLV as an organisation, in terms of activities, culture and competencies, in a relatively short period.
- The changes in relationships between DLV and other actors operating in the field of agricultural and rural development.

To better appreciate this complexity, I decided to go back a few years in the history of DLV. In 1998, DLV found itself in a far-reaching process of privatisation, gradually detaching from LNV. Since the middle of the 1980s, LNV increasingly considered knowledge transfer and thus agricultural extension a responsibility to be taken over by the private sector (Tacken, 1998). In 1986, LNV[1] introduced a financial mechanism to gradually privatise agricultural extension.

So, from being a fully government-supported extension service up to 1986, within ten years, DLV had been able to transform itself into a commercial advisory firm. The privatisation process involved fundamental changes inside the organisation. Within a few years only, new knowledge sectors, activities, clients, geographical markets, goals, culture, strategies, instruments and competence of staff characterised the organisation (*ibid.*). Financial profit became more decisive than normative considerations. The privatisation of DLV had important consequences for the relationship with other actors operating in the field of agricultural and rural development. DLV no longer shared the same motives and goals, and was no longer complementary to other actors. Its role was no longer based on agreement only but on financial considerations as well (*ibid.*). Consequently, DLV had begun to regard organisations providing (or able to provide) similar services to agricultural entrepreneurs as competitors.

At the time of my intervention in 1998, 80% of DLV's exploitation costs came from paying customers and 20% through LNV-programs. This 20% public funding was a last remainder of the previously dominating role of LNV. In 1996, LNV decided that the subsidies for DLV to cover its exploitation deficiency would be linked to extension programs that DLV was supposed to carry out at the request of LNV. As such, LNV became a permanent contractor of DLV services with a guaranteed budget (Wielinga, 2001). The extension themes for which project proposals could be submitted were defined by LNV's 'Directorate for Science and Knowledge transfer' (LNV/DWK) in which the Information and Knowledge Centres for agriculture (IKC/L) and nature preservation (IKC/N), that both fell under the responsibility of LNV, had an assisting role. The IKCs were responsible for assessing the proposals submitted by DLV. At the time of the facilitation intervention, the privileged position of DLV with respect to a guaranteed budget was about to end. It was decided that as from 2001, any call for proposals by LNV would be subject to an open tendering procedure in which any interested agency could participate.

To be able to compete in tendering, DLV management recognised the need to improve the competence of the DLV advisers in developing project proposals. Therefore, in the first place DLV management asked me to facilitate a training to increase the competence of DLV advisers in project proposal development. The proposals were to meet the tender specifications for the types of communication programs eligible for LNV subsidies. Of special interest were those proposals that aimed to: 1) provide information to specific target groups in order to improve their understanding and support of LNV policy; 2) facilitate policy formulation on public good issues; 3) increase (collective) problem—solving, self-steering and self-managing capacity; and 4) increase innovative capacity of agricultural entrepreneurs.

I accepted the assignment because I was interested in the Dutch approaches to participatory design of policy formulation, that I assumed could enrich DLV's competence for dealing with LNV-funded projects of types 2 and 3. These interactive design approaches had emerged as a result of the changing role of agriculture in Dutch society and were designed to enable a range of actors to participate in agricultural and rural development. I assumed that in some cases DLV could take up a (new) role as (a) facilitator of multi-actor natural resource interactions, and (b) that DLV could assist agricultural entrepreneurs to perform more effectively in these interactions. Option (a) would require competence in the facilitation of interactive processes with particular attention to design issues. Option (b) demands understanding of interactive processes.

9.2 Values of the facilitator and the way they shaped praxis

Multiple perceptions of reality: The belief in multiple perceptions of reality was a dominant value that made me emphasise the use of the soft system perspectives and interactive approaches to the design, monitoring and evaluation of projects that address complex issues.

Genuine participation as democratic right: I considered genuine participation a means for more effective decision-making and action. I also felt that actors had the right to participate in efforts that influenced their situation. In the cases in which I considered participation a relevant perspective but where the necessary conditions did not exist, the conditions became subject to further investigation or negotiation.

People's development through learning in a safe environment: For me, the concept of learning has a strong normative basis. I considered learning to be good and essential for individuals, organisations, and networks to cope with their dynamic and competitive environment. I considered learner-directed learning much more effective than teacher- or expert-directed teaching. I assumed that facilitating actors' learning requires a safe environment including a relationship of confidence between the 'learners' and the facilitator (box 9.1).

Box 9.1: Ethical practice and trust between participants and facilitator.

During a dinner after the first workshop, I told the participants that I was writing a Ph.D. dissertation about the facilitation of participatory processes addressing complex issues. One person (holding a Ph.D. herself) replied "so, we will form one of the chapters of your dissertation". I felt embarrassed, because I had not told the participants about my interest and I felt I should have done so (Source: Author's project notebook, 1998).

At the course of my intervention, I was asked by the organisation 'Social Economic Extension' (SEV) to facilitate a similar learning trajectory as that for DLV. SEV was working in similar fields and was in the same position as DLV with respect to LNV funding. I knew that for some people, SEV was one of DLV's competitors. I decided to discuss this request with DLV management to check their point of view. I knew that, even unconsciously e.g., by using examples, there would be an exchange of 'inside' information. I think I would have lost my contractor's confidence if I had not consulted DLV.

(Source: Author's project notebook, 1998).

Transparency about the facilitator's interests and how information about the process and its outcomes is used is essential for ethical practice and the creation of trust between the participants and facilitator, which in turn, is essential for learning to occur.

9.3 First set of actions, the theoretical and methodological perspectives used, and the assessment of the praxis

9.3.1 First set of actions

This section explores the first set of actions that aimed to support the learning of DLV advisers about the interactive design of projects and to embed this learning in a conducive institutional framework. The facilitation actions were carried out within and across different inter-related decision-making levels (i.e. DLV advisers, DLV management, other consultant agencies and, the IKCs and LNV). The actions were undertaken over a period of two years. The first year, I facilitated most of the actions on my own. In the second year, the actions were carried out in collaboration with two DLV employees.

Competence building of individual DLV advisers

I started with an inventory of learning needs and styles among four potential participants and later on with all 16 participating DLV advisers, because I wanted to ensure that the learning that I expected to emerge would provide them with knowledge and skills for more effective action in current and future situations. These learning needs became the basis for the content and the methodology of my intervention (box 9.2).

Box 9.2: Learning needs and styles of DLV advisers.

- A few DLV advisers, especially those working in traditional sectors such as arable and dairy farming, saw themselves as experts advising agricultural entrepreneurs on social-economical, technical and institutional factors to improve farming. Others working in new fields such as multi-functionality of farm activities, nature conservation, and rural and urban relationships, regarded themselves as facilitators deliberately managing the interaction among different players for collective decision-making and action.
- Most of the interviewees mentioned that it was important to consider networking with LNV and other potential partners (outside as well as inside DLV) as part of the design process. A typical statement was "we see each other too much as competitors".
- The proposal should meet the description of the type of communication programs eligible for LNV subsidies.
- The diagnosis of problematic issues deserved attention. A limitation in current practice was that often the analysis was carried out from a DLV perspective only, without considering the views of other stakeholders. Another difficulty mentioned was the translation of abstract (LNV) themes into operational projects.
- There was a felt need to become more process-oriented and not only product focussed.
- Better justification of the approach, project activities and methods and more creativity.
- Most of the participants preferred concreteness over abstractness and action over reflection; however, especially some of the program managers were very much in favour of (critical) observing and thinking.

(Source: Author's project notebook 1998; Groot & Röling, 1998a; Groot, 1998b)

For 1998, it was agreed that workshops would be interspersed with face-to-face coaching over the period that the advisers were in charge of developing LNV- project proposals so as to enable them to learn in the 'real world'. Due the preferences of the majority of the DLV advisers (and my own expertise), I focused predominantly on issues relevant to the development of proposals for projects dealing with the facilitation of interactive processes. In these projects, DLV could play

the role of facilitator or could be another stakeholder. The issues I dealt with in my facilitation work in 1998 included:

- Choice of design approach in relation to the perceptions of the issue at stake, the environment of intervention, DLV's mandate and its core business.
- Diagnoses and (re)definitions of issues at stake, incorporating the perspectives of relevant stakeholders.
- Process versus product orientation (in terms of objectives, activities, project management, monitoring and evaluation).
- Networking for making the institutional and policy framework more conducive to interactive design and multi-actor learning.
- Internal DLV communication and management.

The majority of the participants turned out to have a preference for diverging and accommodating learning styles (see box 8.2, chapter 8). The implications were that new concepts, approaches, and methodologies needed to be intermixed with practice. Consequently, the workshops were made up of three elements: 1) skills and attitude development through experimenting with (systemic learning) approaches and tools in a classroom setting; 2) developing knowledge about concepts, approaches, models; and 3) consolidating knowledge, attitude and skills by experiencing the social dynamic of real-life designing. Moreover, I encouraged a number of processes such as 1) sharing of concepts, skills, and information; 2) self-management; and 3) active networking. The workshop sessions were subject to frequent participant evaluation, permitting regular adjustments.

In addition to the workshops, both in 1998 and 1999, whilst the DLV advisors were developing their LNV project proposals, I supported them individually in the form of face-to-face sessions during which the progress in their design process was discussed. More specifically, my role included questioning inconsistencies (e.g., between chosen design approach and practice of the designer); motivating them to act and think differently (i.e. more systemically and creatively); linking DLV advisers with other people; and acting as a resource person.

Developing an institutional environment conducive to interactive design: DLV management

Soon after I started, it became increasingly evident that major changes in the competence of the DLV advisers towards interactive designing would be effective and sustainable only if supported by changes in DLV management, or DLV management needed be involved in the learning experience as well if the advisers' learning was to be supported. Therefore, the participants and the facilitator agreed to invite DLV management for a session to discuss the consequences of an interactive approach I facilitated the session with the help of the DLV advisers, who identified the issues to be discussed and presented them to DLV management (Box 9.3, next page).

In the discussion with three directors of DLV management, it was agreed that the following issues would be taken up for further elaboration and discussion (Groot, 1998a):

- The development of a flexible structure that on the one hand would allow DLV to carry on its core business (i.e. advising agricultural entrepreneurs), and on the other, to meet the needs for the facilitation of interactive processes to deal with broader societal issues. The appointment of a fourth director for dealing with crosscutting issues, who has clear responsibilities and authority, would be an interesting option to explore.
- The design of project and program proposals would receive more attention in terms of time, support and job acquisition/human resource management.
- The improvement of internal and external communication. Arrangements would be decided at the next meeting with program managers.

Box 9.3: Statements presented to DLV management by DLV advisers.

If DLV wants to compete for LNV communication programs focussing on interactive policy formulation, including facilitating multi-stakeholder negotiation and decision-making, facilitating capacity building of multi-stakeholders in conflict resolution, problem-solving and collective action then:
- There is need for continuous building of competence in interactive ways of working (need for facilitators of process).
- The focus should be no longer at project but on programme level.
- There is need for a management structure to cross cut the traditional sectors (e.g., arable farming, dairy farming, pig farming, horses, horticulture, mushrooms) and farm management sectors (horticulture, greenhouse horticulture and arable farming, livestock).
1. There is need to consider the design of proposals as a specific task that requires time, money and support.
2. There is need to improve the internal and external communication. We need to agree on:
   - How to organise the contact with LNV/DWK and the IKCs.
   - Networking should be considered a task in itself and should be paid for as such.
3. We should no longer consider other consultancy agencies as competitors but also as potential partners in projects. For this to be realised, we need to actively network with them.
4. In two years time, who will be our business partners?

(Source: Groot, 1998a)

In addition to this specific workshop, during the entire intervention regular feedback was provided to the management with respect to the progress made.

Developing an institutional and policy environment conducive to interactive design: The policy level

What counted for the DLV management counted also for policy actors such as the IKCs. For DLV advisers' learning about interactive design to be effective and sustainable, their learning needed to be integrated with that of their policy partners.

The IKCs had an important role in the formulation of policy themes for which projects could be developed, and were responsible for the assessment of the project proposals submitted. The relationship between DLV and the IKCs was subject of frequent discussion because the majority of advisers considered it problematic. The themes for which proposals could be developed were very abstract or vague and the assessment of the proposals was not always transparent or consistent and depended on personal interpretation and interpersonal relationships. Even more important was the feeling that the institutional relationship was based on distrust. The DLV advisers felt that the IKCs suspected them of trying to take advantages of DLV's current privileged position. Suggestions made by DLV, such as questioning the effectiveness of *one-year* projects to

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Box 9.4: Visual metaphors of the IKCs and DLV: How do we see each other?

The DLV managers portrayed the IKCs as owls on books, thereby illustrating their (formal) knowledge but also emphasised their importance because of their decision-making power concerning the allocation of LNV funds. DLV was perceived as a block of concrete with elastic bands. These bands symbolised DLV's flexibility whenever the organisation felt a need for it. The block was full of 'positive people', with whom it was good to collaborate but also of 'negative persons'. Both organisations were surrounded by fog as their future was considered a puzzle.

(Source: Groot, 1998a)

Table 9.1: Agreements between DLV and IKCs on how to collaborate during project design and implementation (Groot, 1998a).

Project phases	Relational agreements	Agreements on content	Procedural agreements
First exploration of themes and issues at stake	First deliberation between IKC co-ordination and DLV program manager (especially in case of IKC/N), Further dialogue between people operating at the 'working-floor', Building and maintaining a wider network consisting of relevant stakeholders	Program focus: A program consists of multiple projects in a balanced way, Joint translation of policy themes into communication programs, Search for surprises	Choice for continuous process, First prepare a ? A4 outline of the project, discuss it and then elaborate
Detailed diagnosis of issue at stake	Regular dialogue between people operating at the 'working-floor', Be clear about tasks, roles and responsibilities	Be clear about what one has to offer	Contracts covering multiple years are possible, Be clear about starting and ending date of the project, Design of project can be considered part of the project?[2] Follow the principles of project -based management
Project implementation, monitoring and evaluation	Be clear about tasks, roles and responsibilities for funding, for design and for implementation	Project design = dialogue + plan	Frequency for deliberation will be mentioned in the project design, There is need for deliberation on program and project level, Monitoring and evaluation: a platform working group is working on a M&E design

address complex processes, were perceived as an attempt to take advances on LNV subsidies, to which DLV had no right in the light of the impending termination of the subsidy arrangement. To improve the relationship, it was agreed that I would facilitate a meeting between DLV and the IKCs. The agenda for this meeting was determined by DLV advisers and included an exchange of mutual perceptions (box 9.4), mutual expectations, and a discussion about communication procedures during the design and implementation of projects (Table 9.1).

More specifically my role was to: 1) invite the participants; 2) design the process; 3) encourage self-management; 4) facilitate the discussion; and 5) write a report on the process and results of the dialogue. The session ended in an open exchange of mutually perceived strengths and weakness and expectations concerning competence, roles, and collaboration.

At the end of the workshop, the evaluation by the participants showed that a good foundation had been laid for an improved collaboration (Groot, 1998a).

Developing an institutional environment conducive to interactive design: The 'conculegues' of DLV

In the second year, the focus of the facilitation intervention was rather narrow. The learning needs of DLV advisers were based on the criteria the IKCs applied to assess the LNV project proposals. I organised a workshop through which I aimed to kill two birds with one stone. It was designed in such a way that it would contribute to improving the relationship among various actors (i.e. consultancy firms) operating in the field of agricultural and rural development, as well as to learning about new creative methods that could be used in interactive communication projects. This second objective stemmed from IKCs dissatisfaction with respect to the choice of communication methods in the project proposals. The IKCs evaluated these methods as being too conventional. Therefore, I was asked to focus on alternative communication methods. The first objective of the workshop came from my side. The issue of "conculega's" has been brought up many times. "Conculega's" is a nonofficial Dutch term that combines two existing terms "concurrenten" (competitors) and "collega's" (colleagues). Since the beginning of the privatisation of agricultural extension, consultancy firms such as the 'centre for agriculture and environment' (CLM), 'Nieuwlanden', ' institute for agricultural education and the agro/food sector' (STOAS), 'Dutch agrarian youth contact' (NAJK) and DLV considered each other competitors. Nevertheless, they all realised that tendering and the use of an interactive perspective in projects would require that each regarded the other as a potential project partner as well. Therefore, in agreement with DLV management and DLV advisers, I decided to combine the urge for more creativity with active networking among potential project partners. I used my own network to invite representatives of seven different organisations to the workshop. Each organisation was asked to facilitate a short session that would enable the other participants to experience the real-life dynamics of a new creative (communication) method. After the workshop, a drinks- party was organised.

9.3.2 The theoretical and methodological perspectives used

This section explores how the facilitators used the notions of 'learning styles', 'experiential learning', 'multiple approaches to project design', 'stakeholder analysis', the model of five dimensions' and 'organisational learning' to support the learning of DLV advisers and to embed this learning in a conducive institutional framework.

The majority of the DLV advisers showed a combination of a diverging and an accommodating learning style. They were very much focussed on a quick identification of *the* problem and *the* solution. They liked doing things rather than theorising. In line with these preferred styles, I introduced new approaches and methods only briefly to the advisers and encouraged them to experiment with the new ideas in a classroom setting or to apply them directly to a real-life situation, which they did.

Although the Kenyan case revealed its limitations, Again I used the Kolb's experiential learning cycle learning to organise the learning process and again the Kenyan case revealed its limitations. The actual process of designing a LNV project corresponded with a 'real world' situation through which the advisers 'learnt their way through' in order to take appropriate actions and to create improvements in them. I used the workshops and the coaching to foster a (collective) reflection on the usefulness of the new approaches and tools, leading to 'generalisations' and new ideas for new (experimental) actions. The next year, a new experience was reflected on as 1) the project situation had changed; and 2) the adviser him/herself had changed and/or the relationship between both had changed. This new situation became the trigger for another round of learning. In retrospect, I realised that I had favoured some elements of Kolb's learning cycle over others, as I supported action more than reflection.

The characteristics and conditions for an interactive approach to projects in comparison to those

of 'objective-oriented project planning' were deliberately discussed. In the end, most advisers felt most comfortable with intermediary design approaches. Next, to broaden the participants' thinking and practice I encouraged them to experiment with stakeholder analysis tools. Some DLV advisers applied the stakeholder analysis tools and/or the model to systemically explore the issue at stake (Brinks et al., 1998). Others proposed the use of these tools as one of the first project activities in which a first set of stakeholders would negotiate about other possible stakeholders that were to participate as well as to formulate together the objective of the project (Van der Wagt, 1998).

Concerning the use of 'the model of five dimensions', first, I made visible that in the case of DLV, I used the model to find out about the relevant decision-making levels at which to intervene. Then, I encouraged the advisers to apply the model themselves in diagnosing an issue at stake in order to support them to expand their thinking and acting beyond the local level.

Especially in the session with DLV and the IKCs, I used Senge's 'team learning wheel' to design a collective learning path. I started a collective reflection on how each actor perceived the other. This was followed by a collective reflection on the current design process and the development of common understanding of the process. The session ended up in agreements for improved future collaboration (see table 12). Subsequently, DLV hasd reflected on few of the actual co-ordinated actions taken with the IKCs but the actions have not been reflected on jointly with the IKCs. As such, I used only part of Senge's team wheel and had no chance to go through the team learning wheel for a second time.

9.3.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis

At the start of the intervention and in the course of it, I observed and faced difficulties in my praxis (figure 9.2) due to the inconsistency between the 'interactive perspective to project design'
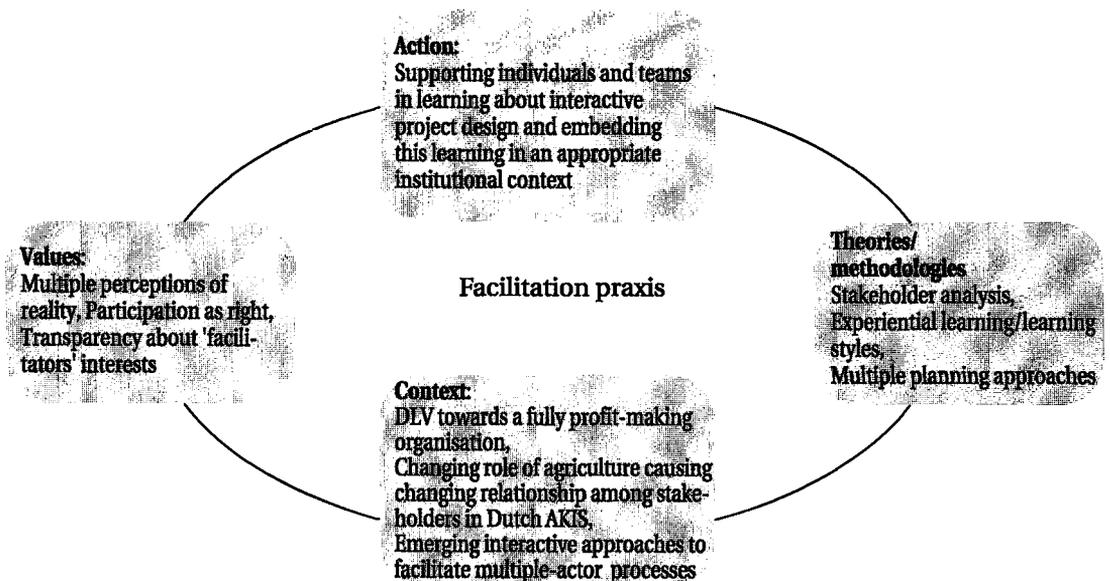
Figure 9.2: Facilitation praxis to increase the competence of DLV advisers on (interactive) project design.

(to be) used and the institutional and policy context in which the DLV advisers were operating. At that time, the management structure, based on traditional sectors, was not fully supportive of the task of dealing with crosscutting issues such as multi-functional land use and rural-urban relationships. However, the tension caused by the inconsistency triggered the learning of the DLV advisors and that of DLV management.

I experienced another tension in the paradox between the 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use' (Argyris, 1992) of the policy actors. In talking, LNV and IKCs officers recognised the importance of interactive approaches to deal with complex societal issues, but their procedures and instruments for project design and implementation were still very much in line with the conventional linear mode of planning (e.g., hierarchy of clear-cut measurable objectives, fixed budgets, clear distinction between planning and implementation). Here again, the search for consistency in my own praxis made me decide to facilitate the learning of IKCs in order to contribute to the development of an institutional working context for DLV advisers that would support them in the application of interactive approaches.

I also encountered difficulties because of an inconsistency between my own values regarding the concept of 'participation' and that of some people within DLV. From the beginning, I realised that some DLV participants mainly looked upon interactive approaches as an interesting option from a financial point of view. To some others within DLV and for me, an interactive approach to projects was a way to achieve more democratic and legitimate action. (I remember however, that during the first contacts with DLV management and the advisers, I also had recommended the interactive approach to projects for strategic reasons as I expected it to open-up new markets).
In responding to the difference in valuing participation, I tried to be as inclusive as possible in the sense that I always brought forward a number of options regarding approaches or tools, fitting different values. However, I experienced it as difficult to effectively support those advisors who favoured interactive approaches for business reasons only to achieve their predetermined objectives. I simply was not very able to go along with their thinking. On the contrary, I could much better assist those advisers who applied the principle of multiple perceptions of reality and highly valued the involvement of diverse stakeholders in visioning, diagnosing, decision-making and action, and were able to think outside their repertoire of standard ideas. I realised that the first group was just making a choice amongst different approaches consistent with their own perception of the issue at stake, their own values, their own competence and the institutional environment they and their clients were working in. In brief, their 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use' were consistent with their perception of reality. Nevertheless, I felt that the effectiveness of my support was greater for those with whom I shared the same values and perceptions.

A final dilemma I want to mention is related to a difference in perception between me and the advisers concerning my role as facilitator of their learning versus my role as their adviser. Personally, I preferred a role as facilitator of learning, but I sensed that the advisers were not really looking for somebody to help them through a self-discovery process. Being advisers themselves, they expected me to be the expert providing clear-cut solutions to their problems. I felt I had to first show my expertise as adviser, providing answers, solutions and ideas that made sense to them. Then, after I had built some confidence and respect, I could take up the role of facilitator of learning processes. For me, it became a balancing act between advising and facilitating learning.

Has my facilitation of facilitation been effective? Did it fit the demands of the situation? For DLV, indisputably the most important criterion for assessing my praxis was the percentage of proposals that were finally approved (box 9.5). No real comparison can be made with the years before because assessments were less rigorous at that time.

Box 9.5: % Submitted project proposals that were approved by IKCs in the first year of the intervention.

The first year, in the first assessment round, the IKCs approved 30 out of the 38 submitted proposals. In a second round 5 out of the remaining 8 were positively assessed. Finally, in a third round all the submitted proposals were approved .

(Source: Pers. com. Van Boheemen).

For myself, the degree of involvement of the advisors in the workshops and their reactions during the face-to face coaching and afterwards provided good feedback on the usefulness of my work (box 9.6). The advisers showed particular interest in those workshops that aimed to bring about change towards a more conducive institutional context.

Box 9.6: Assessment of my praxis

A few years after my intervention, I received an invitation to organise a workshop on similar design issues from a person working at the Centre for Expertise[3] who participated as a DLV program-manager during the time of my intervention.

(Source: Author's project notebook 1998).

Considering the few gatherings we had together (six workshops of four hours, and each adviser was coached two times), I was quite satisfied with the progress made at the individual adviser level. I observed that the majority of the advisers had developed the skills and confidence to use new methods and approaches, and were more ready to incorporate the multiple realities of stake-holders operating at different decision-making levels, for example in the form of multi-actor project committees. The participant evaluations of the workshops showed that to bring about this achievement, it was important that: 1) the facilitation was learner-centred in content and style; 2) the advisers were continuously encouraged to experiment with new things in 'real-life' settings; 3) advisers could share and discuss information with peers and other actors; and 4) the advisers were supported by their management.

Realising that change towards a more participatory way of working usually involves conflicts as it interferes with the *status quo*, I was satisfied with the change in the institutional context (box 9.7).

Box 9.7: DLV's institutional change towards a matrix organisation

In 1999, DLV became a matrix organisation. The management structure was no longer line or sector based. Instead, its three directors were responsible for the following crosscutting issues 'commercialisation', 'public account' and 'human resource management'.

(Source: Author's project notebook, 1998).

It is hard to provide clear evidence that the workshop with DLV management made any positive contribution to this change. Probably it can be considered one out of a large set of triggers that encouraged DLV to make a move.

I was also satisfied with another change achieved at the institutional level in the form of the agreements between the IKCs and DLV to improve the interaction during the design process as well as the implementation of the projects (box 9.8).

Box 9.8: Achieved changes in relationship between the IKCs and DLV.

In the workshop of 2 April 1998, it turned out that face-to-face contact between the policy makers of LNV and IKCs on the one side, and DLV on the other, has been experienced as important for the design and implementation of the projects. This face-to-face contact can improve mutual understanding and the efficiency in the design and implementation process.

(Source: DLV, 1998).

In general, my feelings about my performance during the second year were less exciting than in the first year. My intervention had narrowed along specific learning needs driven by the IKCs and LNVs criteria and demands. For myself, there was less room for intervening at the institutional and policy level. DLV management was quite satisfied with the fact that finally 24 out of the 29 submitted projects had been approved corresponding with 92% of the available budget. However, it was disappointing that the IKCs did recognise the improved quality of the project proposals, as they did not mention this explicitly in their assessment (Pers.com. Van Boheemen).

The workshop with other consultancy agencies was only partly effective as a way to improve the relationship among potential project partners. For sure, the participants were enthusiastic about it (box 9.9). Afterwards, there was a rich exchange of professional cards and a few contacts were made that remain intensive. As importantly, I felt that some of the stereotypes were left behind.

Box 9.9: Participants' appreciation of the workshop with other consultancy agencies agencies.

Afterwards, one of the participants told me "I now realise that in spite of the commercial image of DLV, some individuals are good to collaborate with".

(Source: Author's project notebook, 1999).

The participants stressed the importance of having this kind of sessions regularly. However, to my knowledge none of the participating organisations took up the responsibility to organise a similar event afterwards. After all, through this workshop I consolidated the Kenyan lesson that to bridge institutions one should look for 'champions' and start working at the technical/operational level to allow an appreciation of each other's expertise and concerns, and then to interactively seek complementarity and interdependency.

A more critical look makes me ask whether the change that some of the advisers had made towards interactive designing fitted the perceived reality they were operating in. First of all, I have to admit that the theories, approaches and methods that I used have been good at systemically exploring complex issues and designing an inclusive participatory process, but much weaker at managing real-life dynamics. Unfortunately, I had hardly any opportunity to assist the advisers in real-life management (box 9.10).

> **Box 9.10: Facilitating the advisers' learning in real-life interactive project implementation .**
>
> Only once, I assisted a project leader who had participated in the learning trajectory in the organisation of a workshop on 'interactive project management'. This workshop, in which some stakeholders of the project participated, aimed to clarify the implications for a participatory perspective to project and tried to create enthusiasm and commitment for it
>
> (Source: Author's project notebook, 1999).

In addition, although my intervention probably contributed to a more conducive institutional context concerning an interactive approach to projects, at the end of my intervention I still observed the difficulties that the DLV advisers faced when they tried to put an interactive perspective into practice. I remember the numerous discussions between IKC/L and a DLV advisor, who was in charge of the management of an interactive project, about the incorporation of a participatory diagnosis as one of the first project activities. Traditionally, diagnosis had never appeared as a project activity and as such never had been budgeted for, as it was carried out by the DLV advisers during the writing of the proposal. An additional budget for a diagnostic activity was difficult to accept for the IKC/L. In addition to this, the DLV advisors encountered difficulties in networking under the financial and time management constraints they were operating within. I had provided the advisers with new perspectives and tools that they had learnt to apply relatively quickly. However, the institutional environment shaping their performance did not change as rapidly as they did. The workshops with DLV management and with the IKCs had started something but 'the mills of government grind slowly'.

9.4 Second set of actions, the theoretical and methodological perspective used, and the assessment of the praxis

9.4.1 Second set of actions
The second set of actions is of a different kind than the ones described before. It concerns a cross-cutting issue in which DLV advisers, DLV management, the IKCs and LNV were all involved. In both years of my intervention, I tried to emphasise the use of monitoring and evaluation as a reflective mechanism to improve (critical) learning. I had observed that in the project proposals internal reflection was underexposed. The mid-term and final evaluations appeared to be predominantly aimed to satisfy LNV rather than to prompt internal learning. The IKCs did not yet exactly know what do with project monitoring and evaluation and had no specific requirements. While IKC/L was working on a 'procedure', DLV was told to continue experimenting with monitoring and evaluation. I discussed this issue with the advisers and DLV management and tried to convince them of the potential benefits of monitoring and evaluation. In addition to learning for more effective action, I expected that if DLV would be able to include suggestions for a solid monitoring and evaluation process, it would be an advantage in the tendering procedure. But, I stressed that if DLV wanted to take monitoring and evaluation seriously, it should use the coming years to experiment and build competence. This evidently would require part of the budget.

I checked the interest of LNV/DWK and IKC/L. They also felt it would be important to emphasise the role of monitoring and evaluation in projects and expressed interest in participating in a meeting with DLV to discuss the issue. I felt it was important to involve both LNV and the IKCs in the development of insights and competence in monitoring and evaluation as I considered it an opportunity for both to elaborate procedures and systems based on real-life experiences.

Moreover, I expected that working together on a specific task would probably be much more effective for strengthening relationships and creating conducive policies than just talking about it. I realised that DLV would be interested in monitoring and evaluation only if an additional budget would be available.

In the end, one policy maker from LNV/DWK, one person from IKC/L, two DLV advisers and two DLV program managers participated in the meeting. Two projects were presented as cases with which they could start experimenting with M&E. I presented a number of examples showing different types of M&E and their specific outcomes. Moreover, I facilitated the debate with the help of some key questions that I considered important for the organisations to address during the design of a M&E process (see chapter 5). The meeting went quite differently from what I had expected. The policy makers of IKC and LNV did not show the enthusiasm they had expressed when I had talked with them on the telephone. They were not against the idea that DLV would put more emphasis on M&E, but considered M&E to be a management tool to improve the efficiency of the organisation. This they considered to be a DLV affair and not theirs (box 9.11).

Box 9.11: Workshop on monitoring and evaluation.

One of the LNV policy makers reacted furiously when I referred to LNV as a possible actor in a participatory monitoring process of a project. Obviously, the person did not want to become involved in any other way than as the contractor.

(Source: Author's project notebook, 1999).

The policy makers even started wondering why they were participating in the meeting at all. The atmosphere was rather hostile and I was not able to turn this into more a collaborative mood. In spite of this, the facilitators (i.e. a DLV colleague and myself), continued to encourage the DLV advisers to include M&E activities, indicators, and process in their project proposals.

9.4.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives used
The facilitators tried to support and formalise learning through participatory M&E for which they predominantly used the same theoretical and methodological insights as in the Senegal case (see chapter 7). However, as they wanted the actors to realise the implications of particular choices in the development of a monitoring and evaluation system, they emphasised the starting phase and the common errors. The facilitators encouraged the actors to jointly decide on the purposes of the M&E, the participants in the M&E, the subject(s) of the M&E and the methods and indicators to be used. In some of the project proposals M&E appeared as separate subject.

In addition, personally, I tried to support *critical* learning to encourage the advisors to regularly question the objectives, assumptions, and values underlying actors' behaviour in the project. I intended to purposefully design double and triple loop learning to enable the advisers' critical learning. In the end, I decided not to do this, because I was afraid of losing their interest. This does not mean that double loop learning did not take place (see section 9.4.3).

9.4.3 Assessment of the facilitation praxis
The difficulties I faced in the workshop with LNV and IKC employees were predominantly caused by the inconsistency in my praxis (figure 9.3) between the institutional context on the one hand and the interactive perspective and my values on the other hand. During the meeting, I realised that the hostile behaviour of the policy makers had to do with distrust. The IKCs and LNV considered the discussion on M&E as a move by DLV to take advantage of its present privileged position at the cost of other consultant agencies. I did not dare to bring forward my own intuitive
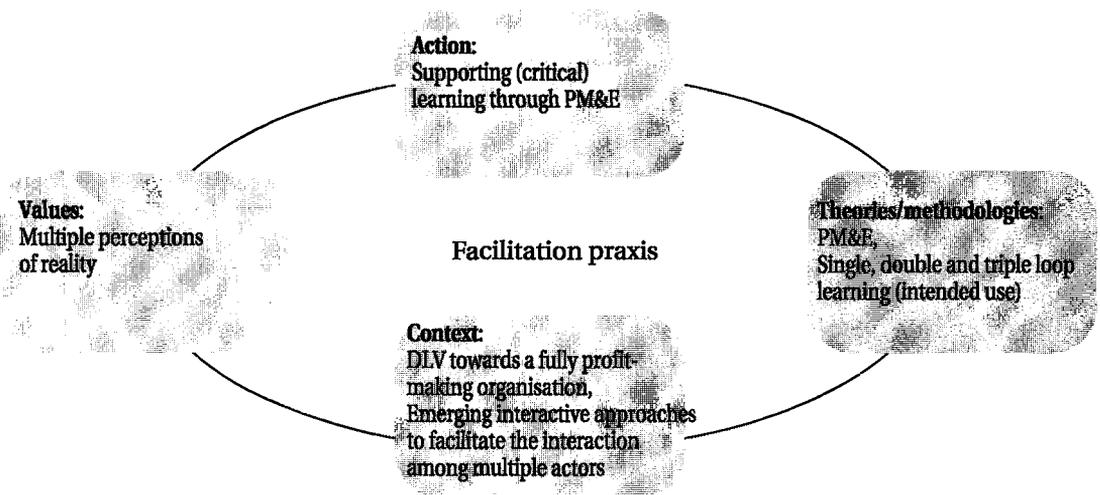
Figure 9.3: Facilitation praxis to support (critical) learning through PM&E.

perception of the grounds for distrust. While I was muddling through, I realised that the meeting had turned into a conflict. I recalled the lesson from negotiation theory that says 'make people talk in terms of interests and not in terms of positions' and 'turn positions into interests'. However, asking the participants for the reasons behind their perceptions of the value of M&E appeared not to be very helpful. The policy makers showed an independent and superior behaviour. They were the bosses and DLV was just one of their clients. Obviously, for them, all ideas about joint reflection for improved concerted action remained somewhere in the air.

Although this particular workshop has not contributed to the development of joint reflection for corrective (joint) action, the personal coaching and the other workshops, led to various proposals in 1999 featuring PM&E activities involving multiple ('local') stakeholders (Author's project notebook, 1999).

Critical learning through which actors critically questioned each other's objectives, assumptions, and values underlying their (learning) practice, hardly took place. In theory, the organisational learning perspectives and in particular the three learning loops (Argyris, 1992), are supposed to be appropriate to foster *critical* learning, to enable learners to break out of traps in their way of thinking and acting. But my practice turned out differently. During my intervention, I intended to go beyond single loop learning, but it rarely occurred. When I started talking in terms of learning during one of the first workshops, I felt the interest of the DLV advisers declining. Cynically, they told me about their experience with a consultant trying to transform DLV into a learning organisation. I was not able to communicate about the use of a learning perspective in a triggering way. This made me hesitant to explicitly introduce a learning perspective explicitly. In retrospect, this is unfortunate because I now increasingly realise that insights into one's own learning indeed can indeed improve one's both one's own learning, as well as the and the performance of a facilitator of the learning of others. For instance, I could have shown the advisers how I had used Kolb's experiential learning cycle or Senge's team learning wheel to design their learning process.

My failure to carefully design a path to enable a combination of single, double and triple loop to occur does not imply that critical learning did not take place at all. For instance, in the meeting with the advisers and DLV management, some of the underlying assumptions and the core business of the organisation were questioned. It was mainly afterwards that I made use of the

learning loops to reflect on my *own* praxis in order to explore what type of changes had occurred as a result of my facilitation. This enabled me to reveal the factors that inhibited the actors in the DLV case from engaging in critical learning. I discovered the following obstacles to double and triple loop learning at the individual and institutional level:

- Fear for the unknown and as such for future employment. For most of the DLV advisers, an interactive approach to project design implied the necessity to bring about significant changes in their way of thinking and acting. Moreover, many DLV advisers (including management), especially those in the traditional sectors (arable farming, dairy farming), have an agricultural background and have great sympathy with 'their' agriculture entrepreneurs. They were anxious not to lose the trust of these entrepreneurs as clients if DLV were seen to engage itself too enthusiastically in facilitating multi-actor processes.
- Significant differences in perceptions and perspectives can block learning. If learners are confronted with ideas they consider too extreme, they will turn away to protect themselves.
- Lack of trust among DLV, IKCs and LNV.
- Within government organisations people tend to pass responsibilities.
- In a profit-making and competitive environment, the preconditions for double and triple loop learning, such as room for experimentation and time for reflection, are scarce and not directly valued by the market. Mistakes and failures can have painful commercial consequences.

Of course, for some situations single loop learning suffices. But, as far I am concerned, the application of a participatory and systemic perspective to agricultural and rural development requires critical self-reflection on the current way of thinking and acting to bring about a change in paradigm.

From a *learning system* perspective, the actors in the DLV case learned more about systems than about *becoming* a learning system. The actors considered themselves learning systems only to some extent. For example, when the IKCs gradually found out that their own performance and procedure were not consistent with an interactive and systemic project perspective, they realised that this part of their (corporate) behaviour prohibited interactive development. From a *learning about learning* perspective, the ownership of the learning process was predominantly in the hands of the facilitators. The learning process was predominantly a demand-driven process based on the needs of the participants. Sometimes, the participants took responsibility for preparing and implementing learning activities. Only then were they supported in thinking about *how* to design the learning. I began to realise that a demand-driven process does not automatically lead to self-organising critical learning systems. I was considered the expert (or advisor); how I would meet their demands was my business. At first glance this might be strange for people who themselves are used to struggling to find the right methods and procedures to satisfy their clients. But, in fact, they were just copying the behaviour of their clients, who are used to treating the advisers like the advisers treated me.

To conclude, what does my limitation in facilitating the development of *critical learning* systems teach us about the meta-facilitation of critical learning? It appears that the facilitation of other facilitators to become critical learning systems requires the capacity to draw actors out of their blaming culture, room for experimentation, and a certain degree of maturity, both from the facilitators and the meta-facilitator. It also demands that meta-facilitators show a self-critical and reflective attitude themselves by periodically assessing their own learning, because it encourages similar attitudes and practices among others.

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[1] In the period 1945-1989, LNV was called L&V i.e. the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

[2] This issue remained unresolved

[3] In 2000, IKC/L and IKC/N were merged into the Centre of Expertise

Intermezzo III: Development of building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights on the meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes

Based on the DLV case, this third intermezzo discusses the building blocks for a grounded theory and methodological insights on the meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes that address complex issues.

Systemic thinking about meta-facilitation can improve the performance of meta- facilitators

In the DLV experience, the use of Bawden's model helped me to make explicit the roles of the meta-facilitators in assisting the learning of other facilitators i.e. DLV advisers. The model has been useful to clarify their values, and the theories and methodologies they used to interpret the context and to act upon it. The use of the coherence criterion helped me to develop insights into reasons for different applications of the concept of participation.

Looking at (in)consistency in the meta-facilitation praxis made me to realise that the DLV case consolidates earlier findings from the Senegal and Kenyan cases in showing that a difference in beliefs and so perceptions of the concept of participation between the (meta-)facilitators and other actors, complicates the process. For meta-facilitators of participatory processes, this insight implies that in their support of other facilitators, it is important that they assist them in learning about different perceptions of the participation concept, and the consequences for the facilitation process.

Almost at the end of my DLV intervention, I came across Habermas' notion of 'instrumental', 'strategic' and 'communicative action'. I consider it now a useful theoretical framework for meta-facilitators, to assist other facilitators in interpreting different perceptions regarding the concept of participation. In a reflection on Habermas' communicative rationality Brand (1990) suggests that:

• *Instrumental rationality* values actions in terms of their ability to achieve pre-set goals by manipulating others (things, people) as objects. One does something because it is a way of achieving one's goals.
• *Strategic rationality* shares with instrumental rationality a goal-oriented approach to action. However, people are viewed as strategic actors, rather than as objects, who need to be outwitted to achieve one's predetermined goals through others i.e. one seeks to influence the decisions and actions of others to maximise one's own interests.
• *Communicative rationality* gives rise to interaction in which the goals and plans of action of different actors are negotiated and co-ordinated through the use of language (or corresponding non-verbal expressions) oriented to reaching shared understanding (Habermas, 1984). In other words, action is taken through agreement and shared understanding. One does something because of a feeling of commitment and interdependency with others.

People's action rationale determines the way they interpret and apply the concept of participation. In the DLV case, some DLV advisers showed a strategic rationale, others a communicative rationale (box III.1). Their action rationale highly determined their choices of design approaches and methods.

Box III.1: Distinguishing different perceptions of the concept of participation by using Habermas' strategic and communicative action

In the DLV case, the notions 'strategic rationality' and 'communicative rationality' in retrospect helped me to recognise specific (conflicting) behaviours of actors, including that of myself. Some of the participants strategically used the concept of 'participation' and 'participatory approaches' in order to fulfil business interests. This included: 1) improving understanding to better manage project actors to attain the pre-set objectives; and 2) creating a better position in a competitive tendering procedure. To operationalise their strategic behaviour in project design, these participants applied 'the objective-oriented design approach' and 'the project approach to stakeholder analysis'. Others, including myself, preferred to use the interactive design and participatory learning as the basis for stakeholder analysis, as a way to operationalise stake-holders' right to influence their own situation. These preferences were based in a communicative rationale.

(Source: Author's project notebook , 1998).

Yet, people's action rationale is not a fixed characteristic but may change during the process. My own meta-facilitation practice shows that in one and the same process meta-facilitators can switch between strategic and communicative behaviour, depending on whom they interact with (box III.2).

Box III.2: Switching between strategic and communicative behaviour

At the start of my intervention, I made clear to DLV management and participants that, to me, interactive or participatory approaches were the most appropriate for dealing with the type of change processes in which DLV was involved. To argue this point, I used pragmatic and strategic reasons such as: 1) the issues at stake are so complex that one single stakeholder does not have the competence to deal with them; and 2) it could open new markets as DLV advisers could assist farmers to take better positions in natural resource negotiations, or DLV could act as facilitator in multi-actor (inter) actions. In my argumentation, I did not refer to the democratic rights or the empowerment of disadvantaged groups. However, in the workshops and face-to face sessions, I encouraged some DLV advisers to apply a participatory learning approach in order to enable stakeholders to influence their own situation.

(Source: Author's project notebook, 1998 and 1999).

It appears that people's (i.e. meta-facilitators', facilitators' and other actors') action rationale can be considered an emergent effect from the inter-relationships among them, rather than an individual property. I now realise that in a participatory process, meta-facilitators significantly influence other facilitators' action rationale. The same counts for facilitators who can shape other actors' rationale. Both meta-facilitators and facilitators can design a strategy that aims to encourage participants to switch from one action rationale to another.

As a meta-facilitator in the DLV experience, I did not address the issue of actors' action rationale in relation to the application of the participation concept. Nevertheless, this case still allows various insights to be drawn out: 1) the performance of meta- facilitators and facilitators in relation to their action rationale; and 2) how meta-facilitators and facilitators can encourage other actors to shift from one action rationale to another.

First, there are some conclusions to draw about the characteristics of strategic and commu-

nicative meta-facilitation and facilitation. Meta-facilitators and facilitators with a strategic orientation focus on the leading question *what strategy should we apply in order to achieve our objectives?* Related questions such as 'who should do what', 'when' and 'how' are less important to accomplish one's pre-set objectives. Accordingly, the leading question frames both the subjects of the debate and the actors to be involved in it. The changes that the process brings about are usually at the level of content, procedures, incentives, and responsibilities. Adaptations in objectives are possible, but only within predetermined and fixed boundaries. The final choice about 'who' should participate 'in what' is usually taken by the facilitator and some influential actors, for which tools such as stakeholder analysis, timeframes and budgets are strategically used. The process is subordinated to the content. Strategic meta-facilitators and facilitators predominantly use methods that analyse, inform, and persuade others about objectives and strategy (e.g., mass media, public hearings).

Facilitation and meta-facilitation based on a communicative rationale is guided by questions such as *what is the common ground on which concerted action can be built? And, what could be clarified or tested through further investigation and be the basis for shared learning?* Communicative meta-facilitators and facilitators emphasise process with special attention to ownership and interaction among actors. They assume that there is no single reality but multiple perceptions of reality. They favour the use of methods and approaches that demonstrate the uniqueness of individuals' perspectives and the rich picture created by bringing these differences together (e.g., dialogue, visualisation techniques, participatory approach to stakeholder analysis). All those expected to have different interests, opinions, experience or rights with regard to the issue at stake are considered relevant and are encouraged to participate. Actors' objectives and values are encouraged to become the subject of articulation and as such, subject to change. Communicative meta-facilitators and facilitators encourage participants to decide 'who should participate in what'.

These characteristics of strategic and communicative facilitation show that meta-facilitators need to assist facilitators to reflect on the role of the dominating action rationale in relation to their choices about 'who participates', 'in what', 'how' and 'why'.

Secondly, meta-facilitators need to support other facilitators in identifying participants' action rationale and, if considered preferable, in creating space for changing rationales. Promoting a shift in participants' action rationale requires that meta-facilitators help facilitators to develop the skills that go along with communicative and/or strategic facilitation, and to learn about effective strategies.

Operating in a strategic context, facilitators can decide on a strategy to influence participants to turn their strategic behaviour into a more communicative one. In the DLV case, in the first instance I went along with actors' strategic behaviour in order to gain the credibility and respect that allowed me to use methods that helped the actors to discover interdependencies, and the reasons behind each others' perceptions and behaviour. This made them more willing and capable to enter into a negotiation process and to search for shared understanding. If on the other hand, the facilitator initiates the process by insisting on the use of particular approaches and methods, she may create an ambience of mistrust and division, which can encourage communicative actors decide to switch towards more strategic action.

Getting started by bringing multiple nested (critical) learning systems into being

The DLV case allows me to draw some conclusions concerning the role of meta- facilitators in starting the process by bringing multiple nested (critical) learning systems into being.

Meta-facilitation needs to address the institutional/policy context in which the facilitators operate: An important finding of my experience with DLV is that in order to facilitate an effective learning process among facilitators, meta-facilitation should include the development of a supportive institutional and policy working environment. This case shows that for DLV advisers to effectively apply a participatory and systemic perspective to projects they require an institutional working context characterised by continuous interaction among actors who negotiate meanings, interests, practices, procedures, regulations and values.

Multiple nested subsystems: In the DLV case, the use of the 'model of five dimensions' helped me to bring 'multiple nested subsystems' into existence (see the discussion below for an examples). Figure III.1 shows the transformation of the model into 'multiple nested subsystems', visualising the interlocking aspect of various subsystems.
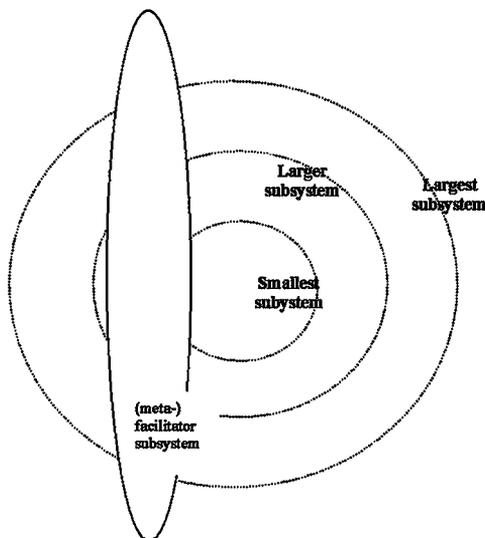
Figure III.1: Meta-facilitation across multiple nested subsystems.

The DLV advisers can be considered to constitute the smallest subsystem embedded in a larger subsystem formed by DLV management, that in turn is nested in higher institutional and policy subsystems. The practice but also the praxis of the advisers is framed by the larger subsystems such as DLV management, whose performance is shaped by the other consultant agencies, the IKCs and LNV, as these actors highly determine DLV 's objectives, time and financial frames. In turn, the advisers influence the praxis of larger subsystems by e.g., providing feedback on activities, management and policies. Each subsystem was distinct from others in terms of different units of actors with different learning needs due to different perceptions, roles, experience, or rights. Within a subsystem, actors also had different interests, experiences, perceptions and action rationales, but shared aspects such as being engaged in similar practices, history, culture, concepts, and language.

The meta-facilitators can be seen as a distinct subsystem. They focus their intervention on each of the subsystems that were brought into existence. However, the DLV experience shows the importance of facilitation *at the boundaries* of these subsystems. In fact, by deliberately intervening at the boundaries (e.g., in the form of the workshop with DLV and the IKCs), the meta-facilitators tried to make them less distinct.

Lack of critical learning: The meta-facilitation in the DLV case merely dealt with *learning about systems,* that enabled the participants to deal with problems in the external environment. Only to some extent did the facilitation result in learning to become critical learning systems of which the constituting actors show an inward reflection on their own behaviour in relation to the issue at stake. The facilitation did not result in the emergence of *critical learning systems* whose constituting actors critically question each other's values, assumptions and the way of learning. Personally, in this particular case I did not know how to break down the individual, organisational and institutional defensive mechanisms inhibiting critical learning, let alone to facilitate the learning of other facilitators about facilitating critical learning. This case taught me that facilitating critical learning among facilitators and other related actors not only requires a certain degree of maturity among both meta-facilitators and facilitators, it also needs an intensive engagement in a relatively longer process. Moreover, it demands that meta-facilitators show a self-critical and reflective attitude themselves, by encouraging the participants to assess the meta-facilitation.

Designing a systemic learning path to enable other facilitators to learn about designing a systemic learning path

In order for meta-facilitators to design a learning path that enables other facilitators to learn about designing learning paths, the following competencies appear to be effective (Author's project notebooks of 1998 and 1999; participant workshop evaluations; Groot, 1998 a,b):
• Use facilitators' preferred learning styles and needs as the basis for process design and to find out where to start in the learning cycle, in order to trigger motivation for learning. In the case of DLV, I could provide a few DLV advisers with a theoretical article to improve their performance in (interactive) project design, but the majority preferred to learn through engagement in real-life action, followed by a reflection afterwards. Yet, in short gatherings it appears very difficult to address the range of different learning styles. Often participants, especially the most dominant ones, are too impatient to wait until their needs are addressed in the way they prefer.
• Construct a design that incorporates multiple (integrated) theoretical perspectives and methodologies to enable actors' learning about multiple dimensions of the issues at stake, including the human, bio-physical, economic and political ones.
• Switch between strategic and communicative action and support facilitators in developing the same competence.
• Organise face-to-face communication (i.e. negotiation) within and across subsystems constituting mprised of actors with multiple interests and realities for breaking down stereotype thinking.
• Encourage facilitators to apply system thinking and practice to broaden their own and other actors' praxis for which concepts such as 'multiple nested subsystems' and stakeholder analysis can be used.
• Assist facilitators to develop the necessary skills (e.g., mediation skills) to enable them to facilitate interaction within and across various nested subsystems.
• Make transparent their own theoretical and methodological assumptions, perceptions and values underlying the design, so as to promote facilitators' learning about facilitation and to provide an evaluative basis for praxis.

Comparing the aforementioned actions of meta-facilitators with those of facilitators of multi-actor processes as identified in the Senegal and Kenyan cases, various similarities can be observed. Table III.1 below summarises the actions to be undertaken by both meta-facilitators and facilitators when designing a trajectory that favours systemic learning among actors.

Table III.1: Actions in the facilitation and the meta-facilitation of the design of a learning trajectory that favours systemic learning among actors (Source: This thesis).

Actions of facilitators to trigger systemic learning among participants	Actions of meta-facilitators to trigger systemic learning among facilitators and other participants
Base process design on actors' learning styles and needs	Design a trajectory to promote facilitators' learning about the role of learning styles and needs to trigger learning, Base such process on facilitators' learning styles, Make transparent their own praxis as to provide an evaluative basis for it
Base process design on the four modes of the experiential learning cycle to trigger actors' learning	Design a trajectory addressing 'feeling', 'observing', 'thinking' and 'acting' to trigger facilitators' learning about the experiential learning cycle, Make transparent their own praxis as to provide an evaluative basis for it
Organise face-to-face communication among actors within and across subsystems to break down stereotype thinking, build trust and mutual understanding, so as to mediate negotiation about perceptions, interests, (inter)actions, procedures and regulations	Design a trajectory to trigger learning about designing face-to-face communications among multiple actors. Such a design should allow learning-in-action about group dynamics, (mediated) negotiations and dealing with different action rationales, Make transparent their own praxis as to provide an evaluative basis for it
Incorporate multiple (integrated) theoretical perspectives and methodologies capturing multiple dimensions of life, including the human, bio-physical, economic and political ones, Encourage the use of system tools and models to broaden participants' views and help them consider multiple nested systems	Design a trajectory to trigger learning-in-action about integrating multiple theoretical and methodological systems perspectives and tools, Make transparent their own praxis as to provide an evaluative basis for it
Facilitate single, double and triple loop learning	Facilitate the facilitation of single, double and triple loop learning (failed)

Overall assessment of my meta-facilitation praxis

As in the previous two cases, I conclude the DLV case with an overall assessment of the facilitation praxis for which again I use the learning framework as shown below (tTable III.2). This time, the table aims to facilitate further learning about the meta-facilitation of systemic learning among actors. It provides insight into what has been learnt by the various actors and how as well as what triggered the learning outcomes.

Table III.2 shows that predominantly single loop learning has taken place. The accomplished changes predominantly occurred at the level of the content (e.g., knowing to apply the system tools) or at the level of regulations and procedures (e.g., agreements regarding communication between DLV and IKCs). Second loop learning did occasionally happen, for instance in the workshop with DLV management, when the implications of DLV as facilitator of multiple actor

Table III.2: Assessment of the meta-facilitation of DLV's learning about interactive project design (Source: This thesis).

	Meta-facilitation of DLV's learning about interactive project design
Whose learning is facilitated	Individual DLV advisers DLV management Policy makers of LNV and IKCs 'Conculueges' of DLV
What has been learnt and with what results	Applying the principle of multiple perspectives *(DLV advisors, DLV management, IKCs, LNV)*, Applying systems tools to approach problematic issues more broadly i.e. from multiple perspectives and considering multiple nested subsystems *(DLV advisors, some LNV policy makers)*, Applying (systems) tools to purposefully facilitate the learning of other actors to approach problem situations or challenges more broadly (*DLV advisors*), First year, in the end 100 % of submitted projects approved by IKCs. Second year 24 out of 29 projects approved, Improved institutional working context for DLV advisers (e.g., new management structure, adapted communication procedures within DLV and between DLV and the IKCs and LNV*(DLV advisers, DLV management and the IKCs)*, Improved relationship between DLV and the IKCs *(DLV advisers, DLV management and the IKCs)*
How has the learning been facilitated?	Experiential learning, learning styles, Application of system tools to put system thinking into practice
Perceived context of the facilitation	Commercial setting, involving public funds, Changing role of Dutch agriculture, Mistrust and competition among actors involved, On-going detachment of DLV from LNV
Why did the learning occur? (triggering (f)actors)	DLV experienced a lack in competence with respect to project design in the light of future tendering for LNV projects, Emergence of interactive approaches to policy formulation, Felt interdependency among actors, Curiosity of meta-facilitators
Main failures and limitations	Lack of critical learning The institutional and policy context of the DLV advisers did not change as rapidly as they did

(inter)action in terms of DLV's objectives, management structure, systems and especially clients were discussed. Triple loop learning or learning about single and double loop learning hardly occured. This confirms an earlier remark that in this case I performed more as an 'ordinary' facilitator than as a meta-facilitator. I could have made explicit to the DLV advisers how I used Kolb's learning styles to facilitate their learning about facilitating learning. Unfortunately, I did not do so because I expected their interest to decline. As in Kenya, I realised that 'learning' and 'learning about learning' are concepts that do not sell very well. Perhaps, I assumed that changes resulting from single loop learning pay back more quickly (not more) than those from double and triple loop learning, which I felt to be important for keeping DLV satisfied. Or, perhaps I too was operating under a strategic rationale based on commercial my own interest. Since facilitation of complex includes encouraging actors to look for new ways of thinking, acting, and learning, meta-facilitators need to support facilitators' learning about the facilitation of single, double and triple loop learning.

As in the previous two cases, the exploration of the DLV case helps me to identify a number of critical observation points for the meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes. These critical observation points are summarised in table III.3 (next page). Again, the observation points are translated into criteria that could be used to assess the performance of a meta-facilitator of multi-actor learning processes that aim to address complex issues.

Table III.3: Criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the praxis of meta-facilitators (Source: This thesis).

	Critical observation points	Possible criteria for assessment
Context	Commercial organisation, DLV experienced a lack in competence concerning interactive project design	
Values	Conflicting values between facilitator and actors	Degree of transparency in facilitators' values and interests, Degree of questioning underlying values, including those of the facilitators
Theories/methodologies	Facilitation of a combination of single, double and triple loop learning requires: 1) a certain degree of maturity of the meta-facilitator and facilitators; 2) an institutional environment that encourages experimentation and reflection; 3) a trajectory that favours the interaction of actors across different subsystems; and 4) longer involvement of the facilitator	Degree to which a combination of single, double and triple loop learning was facilitated If not, Degree to which single loop learning did suffice to tackle the issue at stake If not, Degree to which the design favoured a combination of single, double and triple loop learning
Actions	Altering individual and collective learning within and across multiple subsystems, Interface of multiple subsystems forms a conducive environment for learning,	Degree to which individual and collective learning within and across subsystems has taken place Degree to which (joint) feedback mechanisms are in use by the facilitators to track, assess and share 'soft' and 'hard' changes
Praxis	To be effective in their work, facilitators need a conducive institutional environment, Linking learning of facilitators with actors at different institutional levels, Making explicit and assessing the praxis of meta-facilitation	Degree to which a desired change has been achieved among the facilitators and in their wider institutional and policy environment, Degree to which the praxis of meta-facilitators have been assessed

Conclusions: A theory and methodological insights for the facilitation and meta-facilitation of multi-actor learning processes 1

This thesis has reviewed experiences with facilitating participatory processes that address complex issues and involve multiple interrelated factors and actors at different decision-making levels. It reveals that there is hardly any literature that systematically explores this practice. Although facilitation is often put forward as a key ingredient for sustainable and democratic change, in many ways, we are just beginning to learn about it (Cerf et al., 2000). Only recently have studies emerged that elucidate the complexity of facilitation of multi-actor learning processes (King, 2000; Buck, 2000).

In this dissertation, through systematic and systemic learning about my own experience with facilitation and meta-facilitation (i.e. facilitation of facilitators), I have tried to further open the black box of these professions. In particular, I aim to increase the transparency of how a facilitator's values, perceptions, and theoretical and methodological perspectives shape his or her actions and consequently the participatory process and its outcomes. By such transparency, I unmask facilitators' neutrality that is sometimes assumed (e.g., Schwarz, 1994). Through exploring the inconsistencies in and the effectiveness of, my own praxis, I also elucidate several theoretical and methodological key ingredients for making facilitation effective. In addition, drafts of chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10, and intermezzos I, II and III have been shared with co-facilitators and/or peers. Their comments have further enriched the exploration and analysis summarised in this chapter 10.

My focus on *multiple actors* who operate at *multiple* but *interrelated decision-making levels* makes the facilitation that is discussed in this book different from 'conventional' participatory extension that is usually oriented to one level only. In addition, 'meta-facilitation' comprises more that the usual 'training of trainers'. The former deliberately involves the development of an institutional environment that supports (potential) facilitators in their work.

In this chapter I address the research questions that have underpinned this study:
1. What have facilitators of participatory processes that address complex issues deliberately undertaken to achieve the desired change?
2. What were the theoretical and methodological perspectives and values of the facilitators in the cases? How have these dispositions influenced the process and outcome, and how effective was the facilitation in terms of desired changes?
3. What competencies do facilitators require to be effective in their work?
4. What are the principles and ingredients for the meta-facilitation of participatory processes addressing complex issues?

In answering these questions, I make explicit the actions that facilitators need to undertake to be effective in their work (10.1). Moreover, I formulate a theory and discuss several methodological insights for the facilitation (10.1) and meta-facilitation (10.4) of multi-actor processes that address complex issues. In this thesis, issues are referred to as 'complex' when they are characterised by multiple inter-related factors and actors across different but inter-connected administrative, discipline and/or social levels. These multitudinous interacting and changing people and things lead to the emergence of unpredictable outcomes and as such create a high level of complexity. For clarity reasons, the support of actors to learn about well-defined issues, for example 'how to make ceramic pots' or 'how to learn skating', is not addressed in this thesis.

In addition to answering the research questions, in section 10.3, I discuss two other issues that emerged out of this research. In 10.3.1, I present a set of criteria that can be used to assess facilitators' praxis. With this evaluative framework I address the critique on facilitators of participatory processes for the lack of any professional standards to be judged by. The evaluative framework aims to increase facilitators' accountability to the actors they work with. The criteria provide a first basis for negotiating quality of facilitation through which relevant parties can influence facilitators' performance. Moreover, these criteria can be used as a tool by facilitators for critical self-evaluation.

I conclude the chapter by critically reflecting on my own research as a learning process (10.5).

10.1 Effective facilitation actions for achieving a desired change and the theories and methodologies to be used (Research question 1 and 2)

The three case studies show two clusters of actions that the facilitators carried out and that appeared to be effective for achieving the desired transformations. First, there is a set of actions that aims *to bring multiple nested (critical) subsystems into being* and second, a cluster of actions *to design and implement a systemic learning path* in a *participatory* manner.

10.1.1 Action 1: Bringing multiple nested systems into existence and the theories and methodologies to be used

At the onset of any facilitated participatory intervention, facilitators are faced with the challenge to find out with whom to work, why and how. The case studies show that facilitators can increase the effectiveness of their intervention when they work with different sets of actors who operate at different inter-related administrative and social levels, but who are all involved in the same issue at stake. Or, in systems thinking terminology (see below), the facilitators started the intervention by purposefully facilitating the emergence of *multiple nested subsystems*. Such a set of interconnected subsystems can be brought into existence by supporting an, in theory, on-going interplay of defining and redefining the (human activity) systems' interrelated variables namely their objectives, boundaries, and constituting components i.e. actors. The concept of multiple nested subsystems is further explained below.

This insight emerged from a failure in facilitation practice in the Senegal case. This case shows the limitations of facilitation that focused at the *grassroots level* only. Although the practice was underpinned by systems thinking, the facilitators applied the systems concept in a narrow way because they focussed aton 'local' level actors only. Their failure to purposefully design a process that involved actors of higher authority diminished the sustainability of their intervention. Too often institutional and policy actors are considered as supporting or (more usual) constraining contextual factors (Stijns, 1999). These factors are believed to change towards a desired direction on the basis of recommendations emerging from grassroots level interventions. Often facilitators do not consider these institutional and policy factors *as actors* who need be encouraged to become fully engaged in the participatory process. Although the framing nature of the institutional and policy context is acknowledged (Broerse & Bunders, 1999), the facilitation intervention is performed in such a way that the 'local level actors' are considered to constitute a 'closed' system (figure 10.1). Such a practice appears frequently to occur in the field of development co-operation.

The converse case takes place as well. Some facilitation practices show a bias towards intervening at the national policy level only, without taking actors at the grassroots level into account (Groot et al., 2002). The conclusion that can be drawn is that for facilitation to be effective in supporting actors to cope with complex issues there is need to ascertain whether it is necessary to intervene
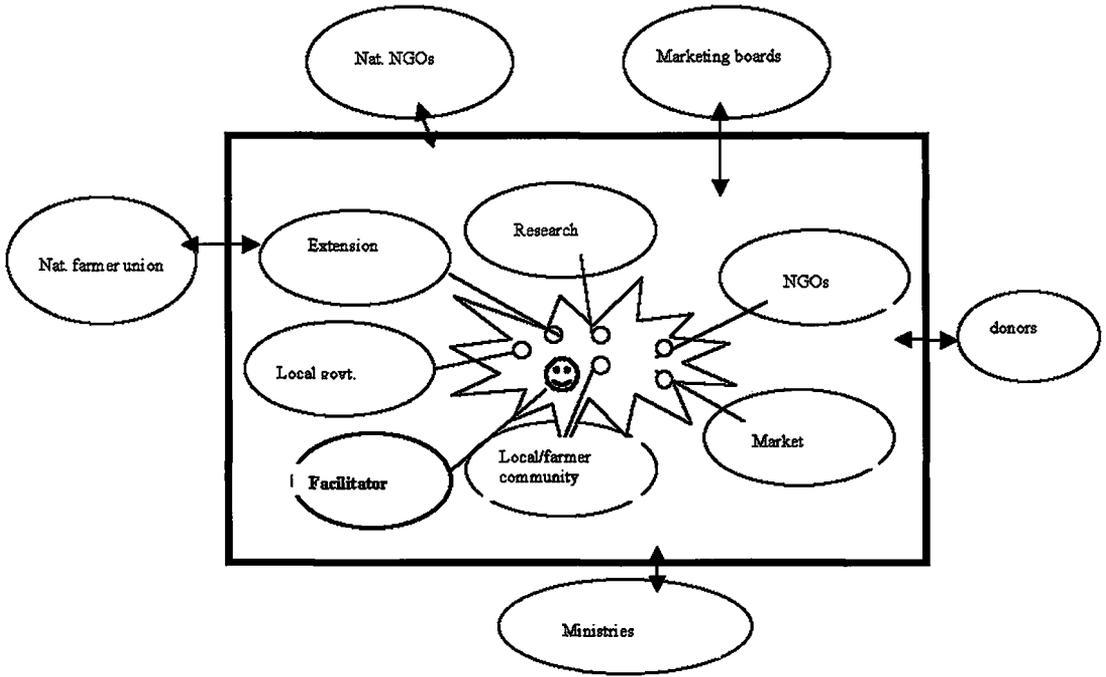
Figure 10.1: Mainstream facilitation praxis in the field of development co-operation: focus on local level actors within a framing policy and institutional context.

beyond the level at which the issue at stake emerged. Consequently, in a participatory intervention, one of the first facilitation actions to be undertaken is the design of an interactive process to identify all relevant actors who operate within one or across various decision-making levels. Or, in terms of system thinking, at the onset of a facilitation intervention, the facilitator needs to engage a first set of actors in a process to purposefully *bring* a *system,* or more often, *multiple nested subsystems into existence.*

For facilitators (and other actors) to improve understanding about and/or to act upon the complexity of interrelated organisations, groups and individuals, it is useful to apply the notion of 'multiple nested systems'. 'Multiple nested subsystems' comprise of smaller subsystems that are embedded in larger subsystems. Each subsystem clusters several actors who are considered to closely relate to each other. Each subsystem is distinct from others in terms of different units of actors with different needs due to different interests, perceptions, roles, experience, or rights. Within a subsystem, actors can also have different interests, experiences and perceptions, but usually share aspects such as being engaged in similar practices, history, culture, concepts, and language.

In the Senegal case, the smallest subsystem consisted of representatives operating at the village and/or project level (see figure 10.2). This smallest subsystem was embedded in larger ones comprising of the farming community, a research organisation, a forestry project, a local NGO and the local government. This larger subsystem in turn was embedded in an even larger subsystem constituting of policy actors such as the SAED, the Dutch Embassy and DGIS.
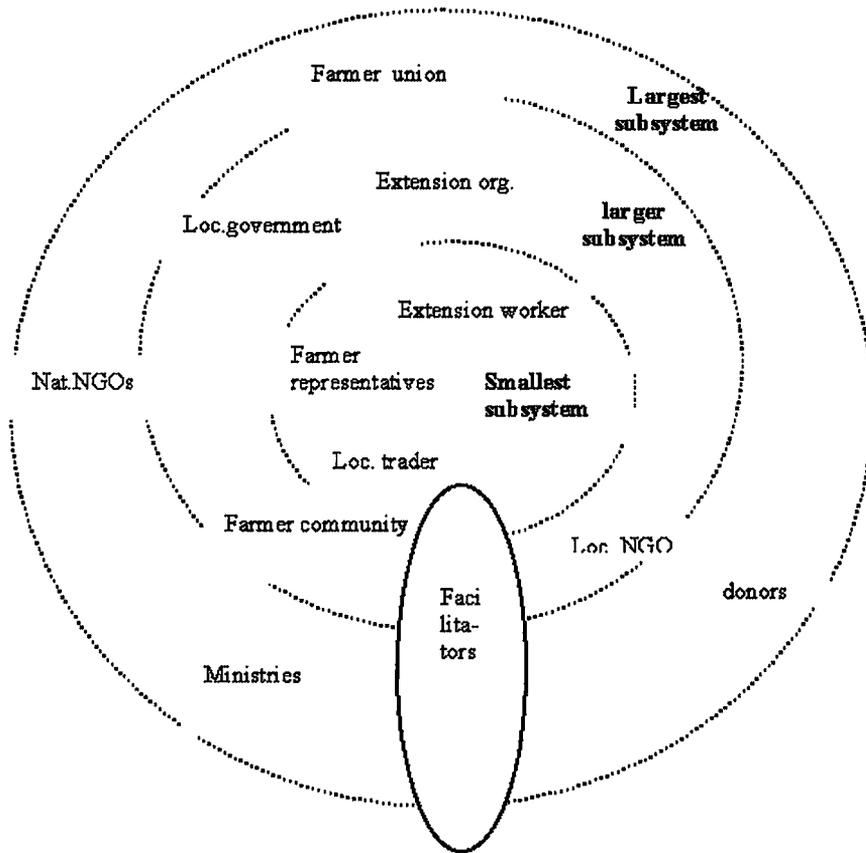
Figure 10.2: Facilitation of bringing multiple nested subsystems into existence (Example derived from the Senegal case).

The higher subsystems *framed* the practices of the smaller systems through regulations, prices, funds, and services. The smaller systems *influenced* the larger subsystems by means of feedback mechanisms such as voting, striking or buying. The facilitators who intervene across the different subsystems can be considered a distinct subsystem crosscutting the nested subsystems.

The concept of multiple nested subsystems is useful for facilitators because it helps them to design an inclusive participatory process that involves actors across multiple social, cultural, and administrative levels. The need for facilitation across different authority, cultural and adminis-trative levels to bring about sustainable and democratic change is recognised by other facilitation experts (e.g., King, 2000). Some refer to it as the need for system-wide change (Cerf, 2000). The concept of multiple nested subsystems assists facilitators also in design of tailor-made trajec-tories that meet specific learning needs of the (interacting) actors of different subsystems. In order to design tailor-made learning processes, a facilitator needs to realise (or find out) how each subsystem is different from others in terms of the actors' interests, perceptions, practices, learning needs, language and history. The Kenyan and DLV case studies show the importance of facilitation at the boundaries of multiple subsystems by managing direct interaction among actors of different subsystems.

Theories and methodologies for effectively creating multiple nested subsystems

Soft systems thinking and soft systems methodologies

The case studies demonstrate the usefulness of *soft systems thinking* for creating multiple nested systems (see chapter 6 for a detailed description on soft systems thinking). The use of soft systems thinking as the dominant perspective encourages facilitators to consider the creation of multiple subsystems as the subject of a negotiation process involving the relevant actors. Consequently, to make explicit the subsystems with which to engage, facilitators need to design a process in which participants define the various inter-connected subsystems by negotiating the actors, purposes and boundaries of the various subsystems. As soon as the various subsystems are made explicit, the facilitation of change within and at the boundaries of these systems can begin.

Soft systems methodologies such as *stakeholder analysis* (Grimble & Wellard, 1997) and *Rapid Rural Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (RAAKS)* (Engel & Salomon, 1997) can help to make the notion of multiple perceptions operational. They offer tools and process ingredients for a participatory (re)negotiation of system objectives, actors and boundaries. However, the cases show that these theories need some adaptation in relation to effective creation of multiple nested subsystems i.e. to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders and actors operating at all relevant decision-making levels.

Adaptations in soft systems methodologies to ensure the involvement of all actors across relevant social, discipline and administrative levels

Below, I discuss the several adaptations in current soft systems methodologies that are necessary to ensure the involvement of all actors across relevant social, discipline, and administrative levels. These adaptations are:

1. The need to transform systems tools into negotiation tools.
2. The need to make criteria for actor selection subject to negotiation.
3. The need to apply the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' to a) deal with the issue of representation; b), to design tailor-made processes for learning.

1. Soft systems methodologies are originally designed to achieve agreements among multiple actors in the relatively 'bounded' institutional settings of companies and business organisations. The Senegal case showed, however, that in more open and less definable settings 'defining a system' easily leads to conflicts. In these situations, facilitators become mediators of negotiations of the system's boundaries and purpose. To effectively mediate these negotiations they need to *transform system tools into negotiation tools* by emphasising the making explicit of parties' underlying reasons for their perceptions and practices. Such explicitness can be a basis to jointly negotiate actions and mechanisms for improvement. *Reframing techniques*, derived from negotiation theory (Schön & Rein, 1994), can be used by facilitators to encourage actors to look at their daily concerns in a different and broader way.

2. The *identification of stakeholders and actors* is an area that is underexposed in current studies on facilitation. Being recognised as a stakeholder or actor largely depends on people's willingness and capacity 'to make themselves noticed' and 'to have a voice', which in turn is the result of having attributes such as power, legitimacy and urgency in relation to the issue at stake (Ramirez, 2001). The use of the prevailing methods for stakeholder and actor identification (e.g., Engel & Salomon, 1997; ODA, 1985) risks excluding those stakeholders unable to make themselves visible.

   The Senegal and Kenyan cases show two different methods for stakeholder identification. Both methods introduce *a bias in the selection of actors*. In Senegal, the facilitators made use of the

'snowball' procedure. They talked with a first set of stakeholders that was identified by the project management, about the issue at stake and the facilitators asked them whom they considered the other main stakeholders to be and why. This second group of stakeholders was interviewed in a similar way to again identify new stakeholders (Grimble & Wellard, 1997). The facilitators repeated this procedure until nothing new turned up. I agree with Stijns (1999) that this method involves the risk of any bias introduced by the first actors talked to. In the Kenyan experience, the facilitators used their own professional network to identify a first set of actors. Obviously, this method also introduces a bias, though this time that of the facilitators. Yet, this method appeared to usefully identify the committed, motivated and dedicated 'champions' in the organisations and communities, and seemed to be an effective way to start a participatory learning process involving multiple actors across different cultural, social and administrative levels (Lightfoot et al., 2001a). Neither type of bias can be avoided completely, it can at best be reduced by making the risks explicit and *by negotiating the criteria used for the selection of actors*. In addition, facilitators should regard actor identification as an iterative process. In the course of the process, facilitators gain increasing understanding of existing power relationships and discover new stakeholders and actors who were (kept) invisible before.

3. Soft systems methodologies are predominantly applied within existing, and often arbitrary, system boundaries (King, 2000). They do not provide operational guidelines for multiple nested subsystems. Consequently, not only 'contextual actors' (e.g., policy makers) are likely to become excluded from the learning process, but also the constituencies of the 'representing actors' are hidden from view. The enrichment of soft systems theory and methodologies as described in chapter 4, 6 and 8), with the concept of multiple nested subsystems, can be interesting in order to address the *issue of representation*.

Since a facilitator usually begins working with actors who claim to represent others (such as local community members, employees of their organisations), problems of representivity can be made more transparent by bringing relevant subsystems into the (action) picture. The issue of misrepresentation in interactive decision-making is raised by many others (e.g., Edmunds & Wollenberg, 2001) and is one of the major challenges to effective facilitation. Misrepresentation tends to occur when those they are representing do not elect the representatives. In the Senegal case, the traditional farmer leaders who participated as representatives in the participatory process were appointed through traditional forms of institutions that were not accountable to their constituency. According to Ribot (1996) such a misrepresentation often occurs.

However, the Senegal and Kenyan cases illustrate that a participatory process can also be hindered because of *powerless representatives*. Often only junior staff are given the time to participate in interactive processes. These participants do not necessarily have the mandate and capacity needed to make commitments or negotiate agreements or to bring about a change in the perceptions, objectives, and strategies their own organisation.

In addition, the Senegal case showed that facilitation practice itself can bring about problematic representation issues. If only representatives are involved in the facilitation process, they can easily grow apart from their constituencies their understanding changes through exposure to others' perceptions and interests. In fact, because of the intensity of the interactive process, often the representatives tend to socialise more with other representatives than with their own constituency. Consequently, the 'represented' in the end do not own the agreements made by their 'representatives' and do not commit themselves to their implementation. The *learning of representatives had become dislocated*. In brief, the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' encourages facilitators to focus on 'representatives' and 'their

constituency' as a set of nested subsystems. The facilitator needs to intervene in both sub-systems to bring about sustainable change. Facilitating at the arbitrary boundaries of these two systems is of utmost importance to maintain or improve the relationship between the 'representatives' and their constituency (Edmunds & Wollenberg, 2001; Van Woerkum & Aarts, 1998).

An emerging theoretical insight: Linking the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' with Habermas' strategic and communicative rationalities

When I first presented the concept of multiple nested subsystems, I did not address the crucial question 'who defines the subsystems' i.e. 'who decides on their purpose, constituencies, and boundaries'? To address this question, I now link the idea of multiple nested subsystems with *Habermas' communicative and strategic action rationalities* (see intermezzo III for a detailed description). I distinguish 'strategic facilitators' whose actions are driven by a strategic rationality and 'communicative facilitators' who act on the basis of a communicative rationality. Strategic facilitators view people as strategic actors and seek to influence them to maximise their own interests and that of a few influential other actors. Communicative facilitators act on the basis of a communicative rationality. They strive for the type of interaction in which the goals and plans of action of different actors are negotiated and co-ordinated through use of language oriented to reaching shared understanding (Habermas, 1984).

Strategic facilitators often let themselves be directed by a few dominant actors in defining the (multiple) systems of intervention. Typically, they distinguish subsystems, set distinct boundaries around them, and sustain these boundaries during the entire intervention. The stakeholders in larger subsystems (usually comprising the more influential stakeholders) frame the learning of those belonging to smaller subsystems by setting objectives and by framing temporal and financial opportunities. Strategic facilitators who intervene in smaller subsystems can act strategically by directing the actors to join the projects proposed by stakeholders in larger subsystems. However, facilitators can also strategically intervene in smaller subsystems to develop actors' countervailing power towards larger systems.

Communicative facilitators use the definition of subsystems as a facilitated participatory action in itself. The boundaries between the subsystems are perceived as fuzzy. In fact, communicative facilitation is often explicitly directed to re-defining or breaking down boundaries by encouraging interaction among actors across different subsystems. 'Real life' complexity is not dealt with by isolating the learning in one subsystem from the learning in an adjacent subsystem. Communicative facilitators often act upon two (or more) subsystems simultaneously as a unified whole, as well as upon the boundaries of these subsystems.

10.1.2 Action 2: Participatory design and implementation of a systemic learning path and the theories and methodologies to be used

The second set of actions that proved to be essential for making facilitation effective involved the *participatory design and implementation of a systemic learning path*. Such a path should enable actors to (jointly) find out how to deal with the issue at stake and encompasses two interlocking dimensions i.e. a content and a process dimension. Both dimensions form a duality, they emerge from one another and complement each other (Ison & Russell, 2000). The theory developed below shapes content and process as a duality rather than as a dualism of two autonomous entities.

The three cases show that the design and its implementation cannot be standardised, but require a responsive and adaptive approach to cope with the dynamics and uncertainties characterising a participatory learning process. In this respect, Buck (2000) portrays facilitation as 'adaptive management'. The term 'adaptive management' was introduced by Holling and his colleagues in

the late 1970s. It is an approach that deals with "the unpredictable interactions between people and ecosystems as they evolve together" (Gunderson et al., 1995: 490 quoted by Stijns, 1999:124). Facilitation shares with 'adaptive management' its reliance on monitoring for responsiveness, and experimental probing, which in turn requires a capacity for critical learning about one's praxis. The Kenya case in particular shows that the learning capacity and multi-actor ownership are enhanced if design and implementation of the learning trajectory are subject to negotiation, experimentation, and continuous reflection amongst relevant actors.

Theories for the participatory design and implementation of an effective learning path

In this subsection, I discuss how an integration of 'soft systems thinking', 'learning' and 'negotiation' theories can be used in the participatory design and implementation of an effective learning path. The theory developed in this section inter-weaves multiple theoretical perspectives because the case studies reveal the importance of theoretical pluralism when it comes to effectively facilitating interactive processes to address today's complex issues, such as the interplay amongst ecological, human and other domains. Although theoretical (and methodological) pluralism easily creates confusion, it helps to avoid biases caused by the use of one single theory. Theoretical pluralism sustains diversity and can promotes participation and democracy (Sellamna, 1999).

Soft systems theory to facilitate actors (a) to learn about systems and (b) to become a learning system

This thesis confirms earlier insights that systemic thinking and practice are essential for dealing (better) with complex issues of both physical and social nature. Therefore, one of the key roles of facilitators is to enable actors to think and act more systemically. For this to happen, facilitators have to think and act systemically themselves by applying system principles and tools in several (successive) ways.

First, facilitators need to use system principles and methods from the onset of a learning process. For instance, systems tools (being adjusted as proposed in 10.1.2) are to be used to find out whom to invite to take part in the learning process and what concerns or challenges are to be addressed. Facilitators can use the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' to *design tailor-made learning processes* within the various subsystems and /or at the boundaries.

Then, for facilitators it is useful to use systems theory in the design of a learning trajectory to encourage actors to look at their concerns as if they were systems i.e. looking at the relationships among the parts and focussing on the whole rather than on isolated elements. With the use of systems theory and methodologies, the facilitators enabled the actors to *learn about systems* (i.e. human activity system, agro-ecosystem) but also to assist them in *becoming a system.*

The case studies show that the integration of applied system theories such as 'Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems' (AKIS) (Röling & Wagemaker 1998) and 'agro-ecosystems' (Conway, 1987; Lightfoot & Noble, 1993) form a rich perspective that is effective in facilitating *learning about* human and agro-eco*systems*, including the relationship between these systems. One of the challenges in future facilitation practice is to incorporate *a political–economic perspective* to encourage actors to learn also about the political-economic dimension of the issue at stake and its relationship with the perceptions of agro-eco and human systems. The 'model of five interlocking dimensions of systemic transformation to sustainable change' as described in chapter 8 (section 8.3) provides some help but still lacks a methodological dimension.

In the complex cases such as agro-ecosystem management where human behaviour and attitudes are considered the major driving forces, enabling actors to learn about systems

appeared not to be sufficient. Facilitators need to take systems thinking one step further by encouraging actors to consider themselves as the subjects of learning and, as such, to *become a soft or learning system*. This requires that facilitators encourage actors to consider their own perceptions, interests, and practices as factors shaping the issue at stake. The AKIS perspective, its operational tool 'Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems' (RAAKS) (Engel & Salomon, 1997) and 'stakeholder analysis' (Grimble & Wellard, 1997) are useful to enable actors to become a learning system.

The Senegal case shows that only the facilitation of 'becoming a learning system' is too limited for keeping actors fully engaged in the process. Complex issues not only involve multiple actors, but also multiple inter-related (bio)physical, political and economic factors. To deal with these dynamic (f)actors, actors need to be able to find out who and what factors are relevant to the issue at stake, to understand the role of these (f)actors and how the (f)actors relate to each other (Lightfoot et al., 2001a,b). Therefore, to enable people to deal with complex issues, facilitators need to intertwine the facilitation of (a) the learning *about* systems and (b) *becoming* a learning system.

To bring about a more radical change in human practice, facilitators can decide to take systems thinking again one step further by encouraging actors to *become a critical learning system* (Bawden, 2000; Bawden et al., 2000). Critical learning systems are comprised of reflective actors who regularly question their own and each other's perceptions, interests and values in relation to the issue at stake and from that, frame their actions. However, it appears that systems theory alone is inadequate to bring about such a fundamental change in the framing of action. A learning perspective needs to be added.

A systemic learning perspective for the facilitation of *critical* learning processes

The interventions that are described in this study are examples of open, living systems that respond to dynamic uncertainty through feedback (Dörner, 1996). Facilitating actors to become a learning system or a critical learning system requires the facilitation of (learning about) corrective and renewing mechanisms. The (soft) systems theories and methodologies described in chapter 4, 6 and 8, provide insufficient operational guidelines for purposefully facilitating the design and use of feedback loops. The addition of a learning perspective, because of its reflective and adaptive nature, provides a necessary feedback mechanism. In fact, learning can be considered people's feedback loop. More specifically, integrating soft systems theory with 'experiential learning', and 'organisational learning' appears to be useful for facilitators because:
- Experiential learning fosters reflective experimentation as a mode of (individual) learning.
- Organisational learning can foster critical and creative thinking and practice in the institutional (group) context.
- Experiential learning acknowledges context-specific experience as a source of learning and triggers adults to fully engage in the facilitated change processes.
- Both learning theories provide ways to build actors' (learning) capacity.

The combination of 'experiential' and 'organisational learning' is functional because the application of each theory individually shows particular weaknesses. The use of experiential learning in the facilitation of multiple action-reflection cycles is likely to bring about corrective action only, but not innovative performance. To promote learning beyond the daily routine, there is a need to integrate an organisational learning perspective. To foster critical learning among sets of actors, organisational learning theory distinguishes three different types of learning i.e. *single loop* and *double loop* and *triple loop learning*' (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Each type refers to the degree of change brought about by the learning process. Single loop learning or operational learning brings about changes in people's existing practices without significantly changing their

vision, objectives, or values. In double loop learning, changes take place not only in existing practices, but also in underlying insights and principles underpinning single loop learning. In triple learning, participants become aware of the processes by which single and double-loop learning occur (*ibid.*).

An integration of 'experiential learning', 'organisational learning' and (soft) 'system thinking' to address complex issues is advocated by some others (e.g., Cerf et al., 2000; King, 2000; Daniels & Walker, 1996). However, it is legitimate to question the appropriateness of both 'experiential learning' and 'organisational learning' for facilitating the learning of *multiple* actors i.e. multiple groups, organisations and networks, at different subsystems, since the theories were originally designed to foster respectively, individual and organisational learning. Actors in different subsystems are likely to differ much more from each other in terms of work, practices, culture, language, and history, than, for instance, the employees of the same organisation. The case studies, show however, that the integration of learning theories with the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' provides an interesting opportunity for the facilitation of system-wide change. To me, the key to 'experiential learning' is the acknowledgement that all learning is context-specific, it is situated. Real-life experience and real-world experimentation are important dynamics that favour learning to emerge as well as reflection and discovery. I consider these features very valuable for multi-actor learning as well. The Kenyan case shows that the varying degrees of change that single and double learning aim to bring about are also relevant for multi-actor change processes.

A negotiation based, systemic learning perspective for dealing with conflict and strategic behaviour

The systemic learning perspective, embracing dialogue, self-discovery, sharing, and agreement suggests a rosy picture that does not correspond with my experienced reality of facilitating multi-actor interactions. I agree with Glasbergen (1996) and Leeuwis (2000) that the use of a learning perspective does not exclude the more traditional analysis of change in terms of power struggles and conflicts. So, what to do if a mismatch of interests, perceptions and values occurs? The Kenyan case shows the usefulness of integrating a systemic learning perspective with a *negotiation perspective*, as it explicitly addresses conflicts and strategic behaviour. Especially, when facilitating at the boundaries of multiple subsystems where actors of different subsystems interact, facilitators become mediators enabling actors to negotiate different, and often competing, interests, values, perceptions, and procedures. More extreme than within a subsystem, the boundaries can be typified as arenas of (inter)action, because the actors involved usually attempt to create room for manoeuvre to pursue their own 'projects' (Long, 1992). Strategic action dominates actors' behaviour. They tend to treat each other on the basis of stereotyping and act because they want to win.

Mediated negotiation fits well with the systemic learning perspective. That conflicts can be a source of learning is increasingly recognised (e.g., by Ramirez, 2001; Upreti, 2001). Systems thinking and negotiation can enrich each other also from a methodological perspective. Tools that were originally designed for systemic learning can be transformed into negotiation tools to better articulate and visualise underlying reasons and perceptions. Conversely, the Kenyan case shows that generic learning questions can be helpful in mediating an integrative negotiation process. To bring about a win-win situation and to motivate and commit all actors, the facilitators used a meta learning perspective at the start of an intervention by using the questions 'about what', 'with whom', 'why' and 'how' to learn. These questions successfully served as reframing questions that encouraged actors to focus on 'wider common concerns' and distracted them from their day-to-day problems, interests, and positions.

In addition, 'integrative and 'distributive' negotiation styles (see chapter 6 for a detailed description) are very helpful for designing an appropriate mediation strategy. Integrative mediation better fits (the aim of bringing about) communicative action, whereas distributive mediation could be preferred by strategic facilitators. The integrative mediation style still needs further (participatory action) research to develop hands-on operational methods for the facilitation of change processes. To me, the numerous recommendations to achieve win-win situations (e.g., Pruitt & Carneval, 1993) do not adequately address those complex conflict situations in which a facilitator aims to move powerful strategic actors towards communicative and collaborative behaviour.

Some researchers recommend the application of 'negotiation' as a leading perspective for the organisation of participatory trajectories because actors are believed to act strategically in relation to existing and emerging conflicts of interests (Leeuwis, 2000). My own (world)view and experience is more similar to that of Uphoff who states that "humans are neither altruistic nor selfish, but have the capability to be both. Which type of behaviour emerges is dependent on the interactions between individuals and their social environment, and on the institutions and structures that govern them" (Uphoff, 1992: 341). Most actors have some degree of concern for others' welfare, especially as they expect to continue interacting in future (Ramirez, 2001). Thus to begin facilitation with a focus on potential conflict could very well lead to the unnecessary emergence of conflict. Moreover, such a pre-analytic assumption will certainly not positively influence the building of the trust and respect that appear to be essential for sustainable multi-actor interaction.

Two additional emerging theoretical insights for the participatory design and implementation of multi-actor learning

A stronger focus on facilitation of learning in action
The first emergent theoretical insight presented here deals with learning in the real world rather than in relatively safe workshop settings. From the Senegal and Kenyan cases, it can be seen that moving actors towards *self-organising systems* that take full responsibility over joint *actions* has been effective in improving their learning capacity. An important part of their collective learning took place through 'tangible action' in the 'real world' rather than through 'mental action' such as diagnoses or evaluation. Both experiential and organisational learning theories emphasise learning as a mental process and establish a dichotomy between the learner and his or her environment. It leaves the nature of the (action) world, and its relationship with the learner, unexplored. From a facilitation point of view, it is interesting to consider the *situated learning* perspective that locates learning in the process of co-participation and not in the head of individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated learning is more than learning by doing. "It is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (*ibid.*: 31). The focus of 'situated learning' is the relationship between the learning and the social situations in which the learning occurs. Rather than asking what cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, situated learning addresses the question 'what kind of social engagements provide the proper context for learning? Learning lies in participation in communities of practice that involves the whole person acting in the real world (*ibid.*). A comparison between the facilitation of 'situated learning' and that of 'experiential' and 'organisational learning' shows that each require different processes and skills. The facilitation of situated learning requires specific skills for designing a process that motivates stakeholders to become fully engaged. The mode of engagement in a participatory process becomes a critical requirement for learning to take place. Consequently, the facilitator will focus on developing interactive skills and motivation of the participants to *take up the identity of* a full practitioner in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). To me 'situated learning' is potentially interesting, but needs more (participatory action) research to establish how it could

be integrated with the negotiation based, systemic learning perspective and practice described in the previous subsections.

Stronger focus on the facilitation of monitoring and evaluating the learning processes
The second emergent theoretical insight deals with the lack of assessment of learning processes. Learning perspectives tend be stronger on facilitation of critical and creative behaviour than on monitoring and evaluation of the learning process. Too often learning is considered never to fail as its 'failures' serve simply to produce other opportunities for learning (Sellamna, 1999). The systemic learning that took place in the case studies progressed slowly, and the first achievements were of a 'soft' nature in the form of a change in understanding, relationships, attitude and (collective) behaviour. To keep relevant actors fully engaged over a longer time, there is a need to legitimate the financial and human resources invested by all involved. Therefore, the facilitation of jointly articulating, appreciating and sharing the learning process and its outcomes is very important. Such participatory monitoring and evaluation of the learning process requires learning instruments that enable joint observation and joint appreciation of change within defined human, environmental and political-economic systems, as well as in the relationship of these systems in interaction.

The cases show that more action research is needed on the facilitation of mechanisms for reflection about learning processes. In Senegal, the actors considered participatory monitoring and evaluation useful for social networking rather than for articulating and critically reflecting on change. The Kenyan case shows in particular that the use of indicators as instruments to regularly appreciate progress was considered a laborious exercise that actors quickly abandoned. In this respect, it is promising that alternative mechanisms for interactive monitoring and evaluation of participatory systemic learning processes are in the course of development (Guijt, forthcoming).

Methodology for the participatory design and implementation of an effective learning path

In this subsection, I discuss four methodological insights for the design and implementation of negotiation-based, systemic learning. These four methodological lessons concern:
1. Facilitating face-to-face interactions
2. Limitations in the use of Kolb's experiential learning cycle to organise a process for multi-actor learning
3. Facilitating beyond single loop learning
4. Choosing the right method for a specific task

Before discussing these methodological lessons, I want emphasise that for facilitators it is important to realise that *learning cannot be designed*, it can only be designed *for* (Wenger, 1998). Wenger distinguishes the *designed* and the *emergent* because the relation between facilitation and learning is not one of a simple linear cause and effect (*ibid: 264*). A design that favours negotiation based, systemic learning requires a rich mixture of content and process ingredients. Wenger (1998: 231) describes how a facilitator makes sure that: 1) the right people are at the right place in the right kind of relation to make something happen; and 2) some artifacts are in place (tools, plans, procedures, schedules, curricula). The design process itself does not follow a step by step phasing, but involves an iterative and responsive interplay of 'enabling it to happen' and 'facilitating the happening. From a system point of view, the design of a trajectory for learning and its implementation are seen as structurally coupled.

1. Facilitating face-to-face interactions
All cases show the importance of the facilitation of face-to-face interaction for multi-actor

learning to emerge. The facilitation of face-to-face interaction appears to be essential for: a) building mutual trust, felt interdependency, and commitment among actors; b) supporting the emergence of new institutions, but need c) careful mediation of multi-actor negotiations within and in particular across multiple subsystems.

Facilitating face-to-face interactions for building trust, felt interdependency, and commitment among actors

For multi-actor learning to happen, facilitators need to ensure that the right people are at the right place in the right kind of relation to make learning happen. However, what does the term 'right' mean? The cases analysed in this thesis show that a central feature of a design conducive to negotiation-based, systemic learning, is *face-to-face interaction* among multiple actors. Direct interaction enhances: 1) development of mutual understanding, trust and mutual respect; 2) discovery of each other's experiences, practices, perceptions, and interests; 3) development of shared meanings, concepts, language and interests (and values); and 4) networking and other forms of joint action. Face-to-face interactions act upon the (joint) 'feeling', 'thinking', 'being', and 'action/doing' side of learning, that are believed to be essential triggers for learning (Daniels & Walker, 1996). The dynamics that emerge from an interaction process can enhance mutual accountability and group pressure that, in turn, favour the influence of disadvantaged actors. At the basis of these interactions is the development of acceptance among the participants of a move away from the defence of individual perspectives and view points, towards willingness to listen to, and participate in, the evolution of more generally shared insights (Meppem & Gill, 1997). For this to happen, it is desirable that facilitators apply methods that enable actors to discover interdependencies as well as to experience that 'a difference can indeed make a positive difference'.

Facilitating face-to-face interaction for the emergence of new institutions

In addition to the creation of trust, interdependency, and commitment, the facilitation of inter-actions can be purposefully directed towards the development of new institutions. For instance, in the Kenyan case, the facilitators deliberately facilitated the transformation of multi-actor interaction into *a new institution* in the form of 'the core group'. The innovative character of this institution was its composition because it represented actors from the farming community and from private and public sector agencies, operating at national, district, and grassroots level. The Kenya case teaches us that (Lightfoot et al., 2001):
• Multi-actor coalitions are useful for overcoming the dichotomy between public and private and, between the grassroots and institutional and policy levels. However, the informal and amorphous nature of institutions such as the Kenyan core group jeopardises the sustainability of the learning process. These institutions are not legally recognised and as such not entitled to apply for, and manage public funds. Their challenge is to articulate, document, and share clearly their learning with others. Such transparency might help other (higher level) authorities, who did not participate in the coalitions, to gain trust in the capacity of these new institutions and to give up power.
• Facilitation of multi-actor coalitions includes building capacity to become a self-organising and self-steering learning system. This requires building competence in learning about their own learning, monitoring of the learning, and regional linking of several coalitions.
• Facilitation of multi-actor coalitions involves the facilitation of facilitators. It includes developing the competence of the coalition members in the facilitation of multi-actor learning processes within and across subsystems.
• To become a self-steering and self-organising system, one of its members needs to play the role of a convening party and take the lead in gathering relevant actors and negotiating with e.g.,

donors and ministries. To carry out the role, this actor needs a clear mandate from multiple actors as well as the resources.

Face-to-face interactions to achieve win-win situations

The Kenyan case study shows that in case of conflicts among actors, direct interaction helps the participants to put faces to policies and organisations, which in turn helps in questioning the stereotypes and prejudices that actors hold about each other. Sharing experiences and reasons for what actors are doing improves mutual understanding and helps to remove defensive blockages caused by lack of information. In particular, the facilitation of joint practices, including the self-management of these practices, is very helpful to reduce stigmatisation and to remove negative blockages that involve interests, values, and thus, emotions.

The literature tends to suggest that a shared problem and thus a joint problem definition, are necessary preconditions for building multi-actor learning. My experience with facilitating the interaction among actors from different subsystems is different. Rather than looking for *common* ground (i.e. a shared problem) and their stakes, first there is need to search for common *higher* ground (Daniels & Walker, 1996) for which 'reframing' techniques can be used. Often, actors at the interface differ too much from each other to have something 'concrete', such as 'a problem' in common. In the Kenyan case, all actors had different reasons for participating. Only at the higher level did they share the same goal (e.g., a better life for their children, sustainable and democratic development). For effective mediation across multiple subsystems, a facilitator needs not only to shift from common to higher ground, but from 'problems' to 'goals' as well.

Facilitation at the interface of multiple subsystems requires the involvement of actors who represent their subsystem and who can function as *champions* or *brokers* (Wenger, 1998), with a particular personality and competence to link their subsystem with other subsystems. For instance, the Kenyan working group members (see chapter 7) were open-minded, enthusiastic and driven by the wish to make a difference in agricultural development. They were important to bridge differences in language, concepts (e.g., the 'learning' concept), practices, and culture. Moreover, they were indispensable for the emergence of new properties such as experience, concepts, and practices that were shared among the subsystems involved. The job of social brokerage appeared to be complex. It required empathy and negotiation and facilitation capacity. In the Kenyan case, it was important that the facilitators supported the 'champions' to recognise one another as brokers and to encourage their collaboration. It also appeared to be useful to consider the 'champions' as (potential) facilitators and enable them to develop the necessary facilitation skills. In other situations, it was necessary to regard and treat champions as *negotiators* who bargain with their constituencies, but also with other champions. One of the actions of the facilitators in the Kenyan case was to support the 'champions' in developing negotiation capacity by enabling them to make explicit the negotiation process and its outcomes. By improving the negotiation capacity, it was expected that the accountability of representatives to their constituencies would be improved (Edmunds & Wollenberg, 2001). It appeared that, for a 'champion' to effectively perform as 'negotiator', she or he needs to have some space to negotiate. In the Senegal case, sometimes the members of the farmer organisations provided their representatives with too little room for manoeuvre and expected their 'representatives' to stick to pre-set objectives or ideas. From a methodological perspective, the facilitation of the relationship between negotiators and their constituencies is under-researched.

2. Limitations in the use of Kolb's experiential learning cycle to organise a process for multi-actor learning

The second methodological lesson deals with limitations in the use of Kolb's experiential learning

cycle to organise a process for multi-actor learning. Learning needs not only face-to-face gatherings, facilitators also need to organise a process in terms of programmes, procedures, schedules, and methods. This thesis shows the usefulness of pursuing cycles of experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation) (see Kolb's experiential learning cycle (figure 3.3, chapter 3) and its derivative, Senge's team learning wheel (figure 8.2, chapter 8). These models helped the facilitators to structure the learning and to decide what methods were to be used, when and for what purpose. Yet, the cases showed that the use of these models involves managerial risks and assumed a well-informed deliberate decision-making process, which is often not the case in complex change processes.

If facilitators use the experiential learning cycle or derivative models to organise a process for learning, they must overcome various bottlenecks (figure 10.3). First, actors have diverse frames of meaning and/or mental models and therefore observe and prefer different things. The cases show that to address this particular bottleneck, facilitators need to make explicit and value the diversity of perceptions, interests, and practice. Moreover, they need to enable actors to find out about interdependency and/or a common or higher ground.
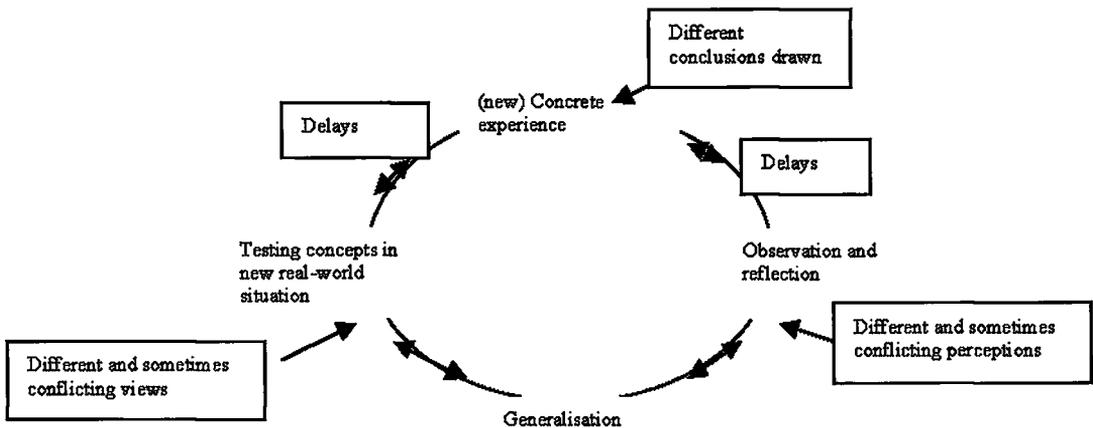
Figure 10.3: Managerial learning obstacles

A second managerial obstacle to learning is often caused by a delay between the design of experiments and their actual implementation. Additionally, there is often a delay between the action and its impact, which makes it difficult to observe and appreciate progress in learning. This has been the case in Kenya and seriously hindered the sustainability of the learning process. Isaacs and Senge (1994) suggest to use tools such as simulations to mitigate the limitation in learning caused by delay because they provide rapid systemic feedback to actions taken, and in a relatively low-risk setting. To some extent, the workshops as facilitated in Kenya are in a sense role-plays. The real engagement happens afterwards when the 'trained' actors take on their (new) competence to intervene in other, usually more urgent, situations (Ramirez, pers. com.).

As mentioned in 10.1.2, the use of the experiential learning cycle can easily lead to an over-emphasis of 'mental' learning activities such as diagnosing and designing. This tendency is reinforced by the lack of methods and procedures to guide participatory action in the real world. Most of the existing tools that have an action purpose are designed to *control* and *steer* (e.g., budgets, timeframes, logical frameworks). To enhance learning in participatory practice, there is

the need for the development of alternative methodologies that focus on experimentation, responding and adapting. In addition, for complex change processes the use of the experiential learning model showed another limitation. The model assumes participants to go through a deliberate, well-informed, decision-making process. In complex change processes, uncertainty is typical. Not everything can be known in a short time and not all stakeholders are involved. Facilitation can help to overcome some information gaps but there will always be new information that is missing. For addressing complex issues, the facilitation of *short iterative action-reflection cycles* appears more appropriate than the effort to take participants through a step by step decision-making process. All cases show the relevance of taking the people's daily life experience as the action component. And, reflection on learning can only start *after* actors have gained some first learning outcomes.

3. Facilitation beyond single loop learning
In this thesis, I have shown how facilitation can be employed to achieve different types of change. Each type requires a specific facilitation process. Change that is 'more of the same' is referred to as *single loop learning*. It involves encouraging actors to adapt their behaviour with respect to procedures and rules. However, the more diverse and dynamic the issue at stake, the less likely that 'a more of the same' approach will work, as with the cases in this thesis. Therefore, the cases required a more fundamental type of change that emerged by *combining single, double and triple loop learning*. Double loop learning needs single loop learning, because it involves the critical questioning of assumptions, objectives, and values that underpin the practices that are the subject of single loop learning. There is no triple loop learning without single and double loop learning as the first involves the learning about the variables that govern the two latter. The facilitation of single, double and triple loop is comparable to the facilitation of 'the learning about systems', 'the becoming of a learning system' and 'the becoming of a critical learning system'.

Increasingly, the facilitation of a combination of single, double and triple loop learning in order to enable actors to cope with complex change is recommended (Morecroft and Sterman, 1994; King, 2000; Cerf et al., 2000). Similar ideas are presented under the terms 'first and second-order change' (Ison & Russel, 2000), 'reproductive', 'communicative' and 'transformative' learning (Van der Veen, 2000) or 'co-operative', 'collaborative' and 'transformative learning' (Homan, 2001). They are proposed as processes capable of bringing about fundamental change in the fields of agricultural development and natural resource management. However, very little is known about the methodological aspects of the facilitation of such learning. Only a few conclusions can be drawn on the basis of this thesis because the facilitators were not able to use the three learning types together as a basis for design in any of the cases.

To bring about a combination of single, double, and triple loop learning, it appears to be essential for facilitators to enable actors to pursue multiple iterative learning cycles. From the literature and professional discourse, it appears that usually facilitators start by supporting actors to go through a first learning loop involving single loop learning. Such operational learning largely correspond to 'the learning about systems'. More specifically, the facilitation of single loop learning enables actors to1) negotiate the system's purpose, boundaries and actors; 2) learn about e.g., natural and financial resources; and 3) to learn, though superficially, about each other's technical/agro-ecosystem practices and social organisational/institutional practices. Moreover, facilitation of single loop learning is directed towards appreciating diversity, searching for interdependency, building trust and a shared experience and language. In this way, single loop learning brings about the necessary conditions for double and triple loop learning to emerge. However, often the contract of the facilitators is finished just at the end of the first learning cycle.

The facilitation of double loop learning requires particular effort as it addresses the awareness of the discrepancy between what people ought to do and what they actually do. It needs to support actors to discover and question the role of their perceptions, assumptions, and values in what they do and think. From the cases, five insights emerge in relation to this aspect:

1 *Time frame*: I learnt that for double loop learning to emerge, there is need for a second or even a third (experiential) learning loop and as such a relatively long involvement by facilitators (who are not necessarily the same as those who started the intervention). Especially the experimentation and reflection activities in these loops are important for double loop learning. The DLV case shows the difficulties of bringing about double loop learning. In a commercial and competitive world, one needs to be able to quickly grasp new opportunities. The struggle of survival restricts the opportunities to experiment because of the risk of failure.

2 *Beyond daily routine*: The facilitation of double loop learning also involves enabling actors to think and act beyond the daily routine. The Kenyan case reveals that a systems perspective in combination with a future orientation is more effective for the facilitation of creative thinking than a stepwise 'problem solving' approach. A systems perspective encourages actors to take a broader look at the issue at stake by considering the components in relationship to each other. 'Future visioning' or 'contributing to something larger than themselves' compels people into action. When people see the possibility of contributing to something larger than themselves, they operate differently. The emphasis shifts from focussing on 'why something can't be done' to 'how can we make this happen' (Holman, 1999). A shift towards future thinking makes participants feel alive with possibilities and excitement.

3 *Maturity to challenge*: To enhance double loop learning, there is need for a certain degree of maturity of the actors, including the facilitator, to challenge each other's behaviours, such as to face saving for oneself and others, trying to win, and appearing rational.

4 *Revealing the invisible*: The facilitation of double loop learning implies finding the right methods for making visible the invisible. Perceptions, assumptions, values and culture, though internalised in individuals, are very real in terms of consequences. The facilitation of double loop learning requires bringing out these implicit domains of action for further exploration and questioning. In Senegal and Kenya, we used maps and stories to make explicit actors' perceptions, values and (to some extent), assumptions. Yet, I have doubts about what we (i.e. facilitators) observed and heard for several reasons: 1) each tool filters, packages and organises people's knowledge; 2) the interpretation of the stories and maps are coloured by the perception, values and interest of those people who interpret (including the facilitator); and 3) it is difficult to find out what perceptions, values and assumptions really underlies an actor's story as there is a difference between what people say they do and what they actually do. From a methodological point of view, it is interesting to refer to Schön and Rein (1994) who call these invisible fields 'frames'. The strategies that they suggest for frame reflection and reconstruction seem to offer possibilities for the facilitation of double loop learning, but they need more participatory action research for full operationalisation. In addition, this thesis shows that Bawden's model of praxis (see figure 3.4 in chapter 3) can be useful also for making frames visible and for questioning underlying assumptions and perceptions. Exploring the consistency and correspondence in one's praxis enhances double loop learning.

5 *Linking actors of different subsystems*: Double loop learning can be fostered by bringing people together who do not belong to the same network or, in terms of systems, who belong to different subsystems. The deliberately created disorder serves as a source for new creative order. Growth appears from disequilibrium, rather than from balance (Wheatley, 1992). Out of random chaos, the facilitator helps participants to develop 'critical learning systems' i.e. self-organising groups of people who critically question each other's assumptions, values, and the process by which (single and double) learning occurs. Unlike equilibrium that forms a safe and secure environment for actors, non-equilibrium involves risk, fear, and uncertainty. Yet, such a threatening situation can also trigger double loop learning. According to Homan (2001), facili-

tators have a role to play to prevent people who are in a stage far from equilibrium from reverting to defensive routines or from shifting to a fantasy world. Such facilitation requires particular competence in order to deal with very emotional questions such as 'who am I', 'what am I after' and 'why'. Encouraging actors to engage in real-world experiments can be a helpful outlet for the emotions that are characteristic of double loop learning processes.

The facilitation of triple loop learning means enabling actors to critically look at the way they learn through single and double loop processes. This type of learning has not taken place in the study cases. In section 10.5 of this concluding chapter, I reflect on my own research as a learning process that can be regarded as triple loop learning.

4. Choosing the right method for a specific task

Methods are essential for designing a trajectory for negotiation-based, systemic learning. The case studies confirm earlier insights (e.g., Pretty at al., 1995) that it is important to apply a combination of different methods to support actors' learning about the interplay among ecological, human and other systems. Method choice is a matter of selecting the particular method that fits a specific task at hand. Therefore, it is essential for a facilitator to be able to bring into play a large range of methods, and to understand their specific intrinsic character, and how each contributes to the process and content of a learning trajectory. However, methods do not exist in a pure form: they are worth what their users are worth. For instance, the term '*partici-patory methods*' disguises the fact that methods used in participatory processes can be also used for conventional extractive data gathering. The values, profile, or the mood of the facilitator matter in how a method is applied as well as the kind of process the facilitator is engaged in.
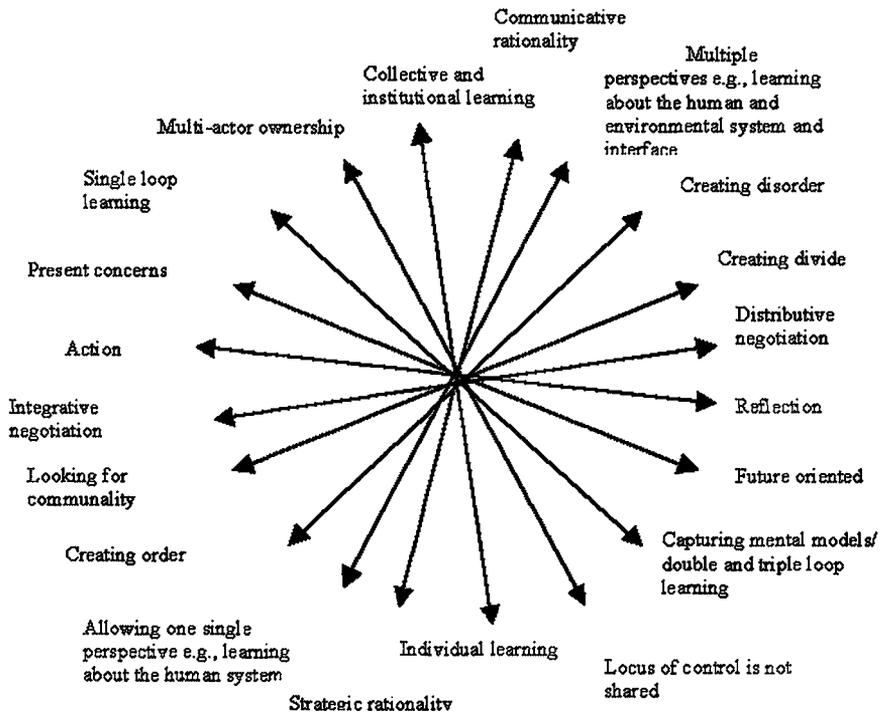

Figure 10.4: An illustration of the range of purposes that require method choices when facilitating negotiation based, systemic learning processes.

The case studies reveal a large number of specific tasks for which a method might be useful. However, each task has an 'antagonist' or a complemenatory task (figure 10.4) that, in turn, can be fulfilled with other specific methods. Therefore, the choice of a method turns out to be a balancing act between two extremes. For instance, facilitation is not only about creating disorder but purposefully interweaving moments of disorder with those of order. Choosing the right method for a specific task turns out to be 'adaptive juggling' (Ramirez, pers.com.) with the numerous variables that characterise a multi-actor learning process.

This figure might suggest that the choice of method is a rational choice in which all available alternatives are considered. Earlier in this chapter, I compare facilitation with 'adaptive management'. The facilitators operating in the case studies selected a particular method on the basis of bounded rationality (Lee, 1993). They tried to make a satisfactory choice rather then a perfect one. They knew that they were selecting from a limited set and that circumstances would dictate whether last minute adjustments or even a total change in method was required.

10.2 The values of the facilitators and the way they shaped their praxis

This section deals with the remaining part of research question 2, by addressing the issue of facilitators' values and how they shaped their praxis.

This study clearly illustrates how the facilitators' values shaped the way they perceived the issue at stake, their choice of theories and methodologies, and their actions. The values and beliefs of the facilitators in the case studies are in line with those typical for the social constructivist perspective, held by them all. From an ontological and epistemological point of view, each of the facilitators believed that each person creates her or his own construction of an issue at stake and of her or his role in it. Diverse participants such as policy makers, farmers, traders, extension workers, and researchers were all perceived as important contributors of information about their 'real world'. The facilitators considered each person as an intentional and learning agent, able to shape his or her future if given the opportunities to engage hands, heart, and head. The facilitators thus regarded their role as (co-) creating the (social, institutional and physical) conditions to improve participants' learning capacity. However, the facilitators believed also that relativism can easily lead to the risk-full thinking that 'everybody is right'. The belief that reality is social constructed does not necessarily means that each construct leads to effective action. Therefore, when considered relevant, the facilitators helped the actors to discover that for dealing with specific issues some constructs are more effective than others.

The facilitators' values also shaped the methodological design. For instance, at the start of the interventions they emphasised the value of diversity in the perceptions and practices of all relevant actors. In addition, the facilitators purposefully created multiple-actor arenas because they believed that, given the chance, people are more likely to co-operate than to fight. They regarded their role as creating conditions for this to emerge. They tried to design integrative and sometimes strategic mediation processes that would increase the influence of disadvantaged actors to better shape their future, including controlling the facilitation process itself.

These values and their concomitant consequences form a consistent whole, and appear to be effective in bringing about (critical) learning by multiple actors for system-wide change. However, in retrospect, the value content of the facilitators' praxis, except in the Kenyan experience, was never an explicit subject of discussion. The Senegal and DLV cases show that the lack of reflection about conflicting values between the facilitator and other actors hampered the effectiveness of facilitation. I now recognise that articulation of this difference in the course of the facilitation process is an important challenge for a facilitator to deal with.

10.3 Emerging insights for the facilitation of participatory processes

The formulation of a grounded theory and methodology for the facilitation of multi-actor learning processes, and the clarification of the values that go together with the described perspective, has led to the emergence of two new insights. The first deals with power. Power was not explicit in the original research questions but turned out to be a major issue in the facilitation experiences analysed in this thesis. The second insight addresses criteria that can be used for assessing facilitators' performance.

10.3.1 Strategic facilitation of power relationships

This subsection deals with power in two ways. It describes the power of facilitators and how they can share it by becoming more accountable to the actors with whom they are working. It also suggests ways for facilitators to deal with power issues strategically.

By elucidating the facilitators' influence in creating multiple nested subsystems and in the design of a learning path, this thesis supports King's statement that facilitation itself is a form of power (King, 2000: 272). Yet, I argue that for systemic learning to take place through discovery, sharing, agreements, and action, power needs to be shared among the participants. This study shows that in complex settings, power is usually not shared but is in the hands of a few influential actors (e.g., ministries, donors, facilitators). The existing inequalities among actors are not a purely technical matter, but are structural. If facilitators do not pay particular attention to power relations by increasing the decision-making power of disadvantaged actors, they risk that the latter continue to be disadvantaged or, worse still, are manipulated or controlled more skilfully by the more powerful actors. Therefore, in all the case studies presented (to varying degrees), facilitation has been shaped by the aim to bring about a shift in power relations. This appears to involve more than 'handing over the stick'[2], which is used by some facilitators to be sufficient for power sharing. The case studies show several ingredients to bring about structural change to the system of social relationships through which inequalities are reproduced are:

- Integrating a systemic learning perspective with strategic mediation theory and methodology (chapters 6, 7, intermezzo II, this chapter).
- Mediating multi-actor processes to negotiate the definitions of the system (chapter 7 and intermezzo II, this chapter).
- Building coalitions among actors within and outside organisations and communities to improve the countervailing power of disadvantaged stakeholders system (chapter 7 and intermezzo II, this chapter).
- Ensuring the formulation of correct procedures, changing the behaviour and attitudes of those who used to dominate, by providing extra time and space for disadvantaged actors to give them more chance to voice their views (chapter 5).
- Searching for a mandate from multiple actors as a condition for facilitators' intervention system (chapter 7 and intermezzo II).
- Developing actors' learning capacity to control their learning (chapter 6,7, intermezzo II).
- Enabling actors to control the financial resources for learning.
- Developing actors' facilitation capacity.

In table 10.1, I apply these ingredients as a screen for assessing my own facilitation praxis in the three cases described in the thesis in relation to the aim of bringing about structural change in power relationships.

Based on the score, I conclude that the facilitation praxis in Kenya was relatively the most effective in bringing about structural change in power relationships. I will highlight a few salient points about some of the criteria in the assessment. The core and working groups as multi-actor

Table 10.1: Self-assessment of our own facilitation praxis to bring about structural change in power relationships: a comparison among the cases.

Criteria/score 1-5*	Senegal case: Facilitation	Kenyan case: facilitation	DLV case: meta-facilitation
Integrating a systemic learning perspective with strategic mediation theory and methodology	1	4	2
Mediating a multi-actor process to negotiate the definitions of the system	2	4	2
Building strategic alliances	3	4	3
Ensuring that disadvantaged actors voice their views	4	4	2
Searching for a mandate of multiple actors as condition for facilitators' intervention	2	4	3
Developing actors' learning capacity	3	4	1
Multiple actor ownership through learning about facilitation	3	4	3
Multi-actor control over financial resources	1	4	1

* 1= poor praxis, 5 = good praxis

coalitions, which brought together representatives of grassroots communities and the public and private sector, have good potential for wielding countervailing power. They managed to improve responsiveness in agricultural services, especially those delivered by the private sector. In Kenya, the members of the multi-actor coalitions actively participated in the negotiation about 'who' was to participate in the process, 'why' and 'how'. In the Senegal and the DLV cases, however, only a few actors, especially the more influential, were involved in defining the system.

The deliberate facilitation efforts to improve other actors' learning and facilitation capacity contributed to an increase in actors' confidence and skills to apply similar linked local learning processes within and outside Kenya. This strengthens my conviction that the building of learning and facilitation capacity among actors across multiple disciplines and authority levels is very essential for achieving sustainable system-wide change. The use of negotiation based, systemic

learning and, in particular, a 'learning about learning' approach was helpful. Too often, the learning capacity of sets of multiple actors is treated inadequately in the literature about facilitation (Broerse & Bunders, 1999). In the Senegal case, the facilitators only supported a few members of the project's training section to improve their facilitation capacity. After they were well trained, they left the project to join other organisations with a more certain future. Thus, in Senegal the learning process was much more (external) facilitator-driven and less sustainable than in Kenya.

In Kenya, enabling multiple actors to financially control the facilitation processes was important for bringing about change in the power relationship between them and the facilitators. Facilitators had to look for a broad mandate before continuing their intervention. In both the Senegal and the DLV cases, management took the final decision to invite the facilitators but did consult other actors first.

10.3.2 Emerging criteria for effective facilitation

The second insight addresses the criteria that can be used for assessing facilitators' performance, or better, praxis. The appreciation of the facilitators' praxis at the end of each case study chapter allowed the emergence of a series of 'observation points'. These observation points emerge from participants' evaluations as well as from my own assessment. I call them 'critical observation points' because I consider them essential for the outcomes of the facilitation interventions described in this thesis. In turn, I transformed the observation points into criteria for assessing facilitators' performance. In this subsection, I aim to go one step further by synthesising the criteria that emerged from the separate cases (table 10.2).

I consider these criteria useful to assess facilitators' professional praxis and they form the basis of my self-assessment in table 10.1. However, they should only be used with caution because they emerged from only three facilitation experiences. A different context with different facilitators will certainly lead to the emergence of different criteria. Moreover, because an evaluation is a process of attributing value (Learn, 2000) that can be highly personal, the perspective of all relevant actors should be involved in assessing facilitators' praxis. Consequently, for facilitators and other actors to assess a *new* facilitation experience, the aforementioned criteria need to become enriched by those identified by the actors involved in that particular experience.

Much is known about the evaluation of facilitators (i.e. extension workers, community developers) who work with individuals and groups at the grassroots level mainly. Yet so far, formally very little is known about how to assess the performance of facilitators who aim to bring about multi-actor learning processes at different decision-making levels. As such, the evaluation criteria that have emerged from this thesis are just a beginning to increase facilitators' accountability to the actors with whom they are working and to improve the profession of facilitation as such. I conclude that there is great need for further research on participatory monitoring and evaluation of facilitators' praxis.

10.4 Meta-facilitation: Required competencies of meta-facilitators and facilitators and a perspective on the facilitation of facilitators (Research questions 3 and 4)

This section deals with the *meta-facilitation* of participatory multi-actor processes that address complex issues. The term 'meta-facilitation' or 'the facilitation of facilitators' is comparable to 'training of trainers' but differs from the latter in so far as meta- facilitation includes the deliberate development of an institutional environment that supports (potential) facilitators in their work. In this section, I address the challenge to (agricultural) education and training institutes to develop a 'new' type of agricultural/rural development professionals who are essentially *facilitators of systemic development* (Bawden et al., 2000). These 'new' professionals

Table 10.2: Possible criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of facilitation praxis (Source: This thesis).

	Criteria for assessment of facilitators' praxis addressing complex change
Context	Degree of transparency in facilitators' perception of the context to the actors with whom they work, Development of actors' capacity in designing proposals and requesting funds to sustain multi-actor learning
Values	Degree of transparency in facilitators' values and interests to the actors with whom they work, Degree of questioning by all actors of the underlying values, including those of the facilitators, Degree of ownership achieved by diverse actors over the facilitation process
Theories/ Methodologies	Appropriateness of choice for a problem-solving or future focus, Degree of pluralism/richness in theoretical/methodological design, Appropriateness of the (integrated use of) the chosen theories and methodologies (e.g., in terms of enabling learning about the human, bio-physical and economic-political dimensions of the issue at stake), Degree to which the design favours the learning of actors across multiple subsystems (e.g., reframing strategies, face-to-face interactions, learning in action), Degree to which the design favours a combination of single, double and triple loop learning
Actions	Degree of participation by diverse actors in the definition of the multiple subsystem definition, Degree of trust, mutual respect, and commitment achieved among actors, Development of feedback mechanisms by actors, Degree of participation of diverse actors in designing the learning trajectory, Degree of improvement in the capacity of diverse actors to learn, Degree of actors' facilitation capacity after having followed the learning trajectory, Degree to which the conditions for double loop learning are realised (trust, room for experimentation and reflection, multiple learning cycles), Quality of mechanisms installed to improve mutual accountability (including that of the facilitators towards the other actors), Degree to which feedback mechanisms are used by actors to track, appreciate and share 'soft' and 'hard' changes in the systems at stake (e.g., agro-ecosystem, human/institutional system, political system), Degree to which both individual and collective learning within and across the subsystems is addressed by the facilitators,
Praxis	Degree of system-wide change, Degree to which a desired change has been achieved within and across multiple subsystems (e.g., consider: 1) operational and more fundamental change; 2) individual, collective, institutional and cultural change; and 3) change in natural, human and political-economic system), Degree to which diverse actors own the facilitation process, Degree to which power relationships are structurally improved (consider e.g., multi-actor ownership, structural coalitions among disadvantaged stakeholders)

have to take up the challenge to leave their comfortable inward-looking disciplinary nests and to go beyond forcing together perspectives from what remain fragmented natural/ technical or social disciplines by developing new concepts, methodologies and language that are shared across disciplines. In the Wageningen university context, the 'new' professional would fall under

what has recently been labelled as 'beta/gamma' scientists. These 'beta/gamma' professionals have an (educational) background that addresses the duality i.e. a mutually perturbing structural relationship, between human/social and natural processes. For the lecturers of educational institutes, or preferably 'meta-facilitators' to be able to facilitate the learning of (potential) facilitators, the former require competencies similar to those of the latter.

In this section, first I highlight essential competencies that meta-facilitators should develop among facilitators in order to enable the latter to effectively support multi-actor learning processes. I also discuss the necessary competencies that meta-facilitators require fulfilling this task. In the second part of this section, I formulate a perspective on effective meta-facilitation.

Required competence of facilitators and meta-facilitators

The case studies reveal several competencies that facilitators need to manage multi-actor learning processes for system-wide change of which the following is a synthesis.
Both facilitators and meta-facilitators of multi-actor learning processes require the ability to:
• *On the premise of a communicative action rationality*, iterate between communicative and strategic behaviour (chapters 8, 9 and intermezzo III).
• Integrate multiple (theoretical and disciplinary) perspectives and methodologies, including soft system theory, experiential learning, organisational learning, situated learning and, negotiation and mediation (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and intermezzos I and II).
• Bring about a combination of single, double and triple loop learning. This requires a competence in depicting actors' practices, perceptions, assumptions and values or 'frames', so as to facilitate further comparing and critical questioning. It also encompasses the facilitation of creative thinking, future visioning and the management of disorder when actors of different subsystems meet (chapters 8, 9 and intermezzo III).
• Design and manage an interaction process, and capture benefits of its emerging dynamics in order to create an environment for learning (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and intermezzos I, II and III).
• Design and manage feedback mechanisms to track, document and share the learning process and its outcomes (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and intermezzos I, II and III).
• Assist actors to construct the purpose, components and boundaries of multiple nested subsystems (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and intermezzos I, II and III).
• Identify, motivate and link champions or 'brokers' and other relevant stakeholders and build their learning capacity (chapter 7 and intermezzo II).
• Develop multi-actor ownership (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and intermezzos I, II and III).
• Manage responsively, flexibly and adaptively (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and intermezzos I, II and III).
• Communicate with actors representing different cultures, and to visualise and document processes.
• Develop trustworthiness, credibility, and reflective behaviour.

These competencies might suggest that facilitators require background expertise in mainly the social sciences. Yet, the technical background (in agronomy and/or irrigation) of the facilitators of the case studies analysed in this thesis has certainly contributed positively to their efforts to respond and adapt quickly, to bring in relevant examples, to keep focussed, and as such to build credibility. Meta-facilitation must pay explicit attention to this hybrid character (Buck, 2000) which brings me back to the 'beta-gamma' professional.

The facilitators of the case studies can be seen as 'beta-gamma' professionals. In addition to the aforementioned competencies, the facilitators in the cases hold a specific set of beliefs that helped them to merge the two sciences. To further explore the contribution of our values and beliefs to our claim to competence, I make use of a comparison of the different scientific

paradigms. Miller (1985) in Röling (2000) distinguishes four paradigms formed by two axes: 'holism'-'reductionism' and 'positivism'-'constructivism' (figure 10.5).
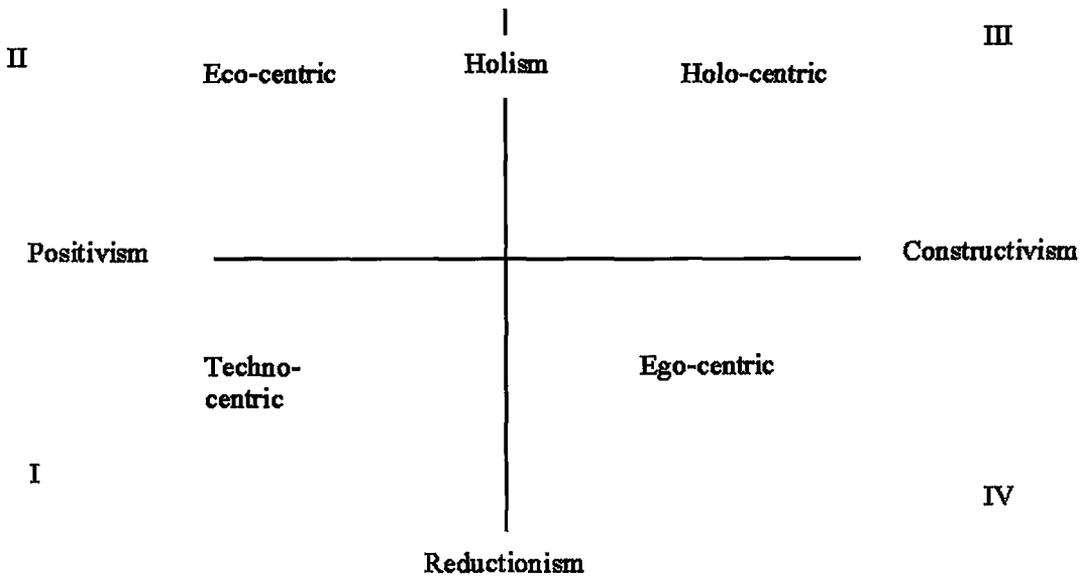
Figure 10.5: A typology of different scientific paradigms (Miller, 1985 in Röling, 2000)

Facilitators who follow the 'techno-centric paradigm' in quadrant I define problems relatively narrowly in technical or economic terms and will facilitate solutions as such. Solutions are to be developed by science and defined in technical or economic terms. Professionals operating in quadrant II, apply a hard system perspective through which to act upon human and natural systems. They consider actors merely as factors that can be socially engineered towards a desired end. Facilitators who operate in quadrant III hold a holistic and constructivist position. They consider people as sense making, intentional, and learning agents, whose perceptions, interests, and values highly shape the sustainability of agricultural production or natural resources. And they recognise that perceptions, goals and values are ambiguous, conflicting and constantly shifting, and seen differently by different actors. Therefore, they facilitate the *interactions* of multiple actors in order to collectively construct (shared) meaning for more effective (joint) action. Miller (1985) in (Röling, 2000) describes the fourth quadrant as 'prayer' and could be relevant for facilitators who consider spirituality as an essential ingredient in development, and for those who want to go beyond soft systems thinking. In the following, I consider the first three quadrants only.

The facilitators of the case studies analysed in this thesis, operated in quadrant III. Yet, as a part of their assignments, they worked with actors who operated initially in quadrant I and II. In retrospect, our facilitation enabled the actors to move to quadrant III, and to subsequently, on the premise of a holistic-constructivist perspective, iterate among quadrant I, II and III. To enable actors to shift from quadrant I to III, they need to be supported in learning 1) how to systemically think about and act upon issues; 2) to regard themselves as a soft or learning system; and 3), to regard themselves as a self-organising and critical learning system.

Facilitators in quadrant III need the competence to also operate in quadrant I and II. Theoretically and methodologically, this implies that based on the premise of a constructivist

position, facilitator needs to able to iterate between and/or integrate 'hard' and 'soft' systems thinking and practice, and to iterate between 'problem-solving' strategies and future-oriented learning approaches.

A critical and system-wide learning perspective on meta-facilitation

What do the aforementioned values, beliefs and competencies mean for the meta- facilitation and consequently for the educational institutions (e.g., universities, training institutes, human resource management divisions within organisations) that aim to support it? The experience with training in PRA and gender issues teaches us that a change of values and attitudes is amongst the most difficult to achieve. And, a discussion about values and attitudes easily ends up in an unproductive 'good-bad' discussion. Any institution that delivers specialists must address in their education the issue of *value-driven professional practice*. More specifically, the *building of capacity for praxis* and *critical thinking* is needed if facilitators are to focus on systemic (agricultural/rural) development in ethical and ecologically sound ways. This implies a radical shift for the majority of formal educational institutes and other organisations operating in the domain of sustainable agro-ecosystem and rural development. Currently, the competencies that scientists acquire at universities are often not directed at effective inter-disciplinary and intercultural collaborative interaction (Broerse & Bunders, 1999), nor at building capacity for praxis. Moreover, educational institutes and other organisations that support agro-ecosystem and rural development face the challenge of *becoming critical learning systems* themselves in order to evolve towards an institutional and cultural environment that enables the development of 'facilitators of systemic change' (Bawden et al., 2000).

The DLV case shows the importance of applying a system perspective, or in particular, a multiple nested subsystems perspective to meta-facilitation. This case teaches us that for professionals to effectively facilitate multi-actor learning processes for system-wide change, they need a supportive institutional and policy framework. Consequently, bringing about a change that develops 'new professionals' requires not only intervention at the individual level, but involves a change process at the institutional and policy levels as well. Bawden describes such a change process in relation to the curriculum reform at Hawkesbury College (University of Western Sydney, Australia). He points out that "while the organisation of the process of curriculum reform might be vested within a smaller group or committee, it is essential that it be a matter in which the entire faculty participates, together with representatives from a range of stakeholders including students and alumni, along with members of appropriate commercial organisations, public sector institutions, non-government organisations, and rural community groups"(Bawden, 2000). This statement supports the idea that the concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' is relevant for meta-facilitation as well.

To conclude this section on meta-facilitation, I contrast the characteristics in the education of discipline-based scientists and that of professional facilitators. Table 10.3 can be used to redesign a part of the mainstream-education towards a type that enables the education of *facilitators of systemic development* .

Discipline-based education remains important in order to develop scientists who are able to address well-defined problems. However, to deal with complex societal issues, a new type of professional, the so-called beta-gamma professional, is needed. Table 10.3 lists desired characteristics of the education of such beta-gamma professionals and suggests that there is need for change within educational institutions involved in agro-ecosystem/rural development. This will need to be not a change towards 'more of the same', but a shift encompassing competencies in (beta/gamma) praxis and facilitation.

Table 10.3: Characteristics of 'discipline-based education' and of the 'education for the development of beta-gamma professionals' (This thesis, Jiggins & Röling, 2000; Bawden, 2000).

	Education of discipline-based agro-eco-system/rural development professionals	Education of agro-ecosystem/rural professionals in facilitating negotiation based, systemic learning
Aim	Developing discipline-based scientists with a problem-solving focus	Developing professionals with competence in the management of societal /complex issues
Role of values and ethics	The normative-side of science is not considered; ethics and values are not seen as assets shaping scientists' practice	Each professional action is considered to be shaped by values, norms and interests, Focus on capacity for praxis
Learning focus	Learning *about* disciplinary understanding, Studying systems 'out there' or learning about natural *or* social systems, Single-loop learning	Learning about (how to operate in) human and natural systems and their interface, Learning to *become critical learning* systems (including a dimension of personal change, focus on praxis and competence development), Combination of single, double and triple loop learning
Curriculum	Systematic building block curricula, in a set sequence designed by the lecturers	Design of 'communities of practice'; participants learn how to learn to deal with 'real world issues' through their direct involvement in them, Participants largely decide on and organise their own learning curriculum
'Course' elements (examples)	Applications of hard systems thinking, Discipline-based theories and methodologies (e.g., agronomy, economics), Multi-disciplinary team work (but only either within social or natural disciplines)	Scientific paradigms (constructivism, postivism), Action rationales, Applications of hard and soft systems thinking and practice, Learning theories and methodologies, Negotiation /mediation theories and strategies, 'Participatory' methodologies, Facilitation praxis, Feedback and feed forward mechanisms, Power, Multi-actor dynamics, Inter/transdisciplinary team work across natural/social science cultures, Personal capacity building
Role of lecturers	Teachers as experts in 'propositional knowledge' and practical skills, whose qualifications to teach are based on their knowledge and skills	Teachers become facilitators of learners in experiential and situated learning, as well as experienced, knowledgeable and skilful resource people, Creating opportunities for learning in practice
Learning environment and sources	Mostly in the classroom and labs Manuals, lectures, experimental fields	Participants are immersed periodically in messy, real-world situations, Trials, experiences
Good performance assessed by	Assessment of students by lecturer through examination of theory and practice	Self- and peer-assessment focussing on capacity for praxis and progress in competencies, Assessment of facilitators by students

10. 5 Learning about my own learning

In the methodology chapter, I referred to my intention to consider this Ph.D. research as a learning process. In the final part of this thesis, as an exercise in triple loop learning, I want to conclude with a reflection on my own learning through this research process.

Has my research been a learning process?

In retrospect, I went through a true and painful learning process (as most other Ph.D. students). At the beginning, I had only several triggering experiences and concerns that helped me to formulate the research questions underpinning this study. I had no idea where and how it would end. What the ISG facilitators in the Kenyan case said to the participants, guided me as well: they said that there was no blue print approach to realise the preferred change. It was a matter of learning my way forward by pursuing *multiple short action-reflection cycles*. The results of my own action-reflection cycles are presented in Intermezzos I, II and III. The notion of context-specific and experience-based learning was relevant for my own research, as well as the notion of experimentation to trigger action for learning. During my research, I had the chance to experiment, on the basis of preliminary findings. The research practice fitted well with the chosen action research methodology. In addition, in order to build some participatory elements into my relatively 'extractive' research, I have incorporated the reaction of co-facilitators and peers into my findings and conclusions. Nonetheless, it appeared difficult to motivate all of them to look critically at the relevant chapters.

During my research, I discovered the tension between making explicit my entire learning process and the interests of readers. A reader is not interested in all the details of *my* learning. Consequently, what appears in this thesis is just a synthesis. A second constraint I experienced in my wish to pursue this research as a learning process deals with the fact it forced me to make explicit the theories and methodologies used by the facilitators at that particular time. When the time came for analysing the cases and writing the thesis, my knowledge about theories and methodologies had much improved. However, the research approach provided little room to build all this new knowledge into my own praxis, except in so far as this was incorporated in the reflection presented in intermezzo III.

(Discovery) Learning with the use of Bawden's model of praxis

I appreciate the use of Bawden's model of praxis as an analytical framework because it helped me to explore systemically those aspects of facilitation that I considered key for bringing about democratic and sustainable change. More important, it helped me to make explicit and explore the role of facilitators' values and how they shape the entire praxis and its outcome. Too often, the role of professional values is ignored, while the cases show that the impact of the facilitation is strongly shaped by the (conflicting) values of facilitators and other actors. The use of the notion of praxis created insight and change in my own professional value system. For instance, I realised that too often I had equated 'communicative action' with good behaviour and 'strategic action' with bad behaviour, which is poor professional behaviour in itself and contradicts the social constructivist perspective. Moreover, Bawden's model helped me to discover, that in my facilitation work, I gradually managed to use a more diverse and richer combination of different theoretical and methodological perspectives with which I was able to grasp a higher level of complexity than I could before. I consider this insight (not the practice itself) a useful learning outcome resulting from the use of Bawden's model to learn about my praxis.

At the beginning, I was confused when I applied the inconsistency criterion in order to find out the degree to which the facilitators' perception of the issue, their values, the theories and methodologies they used, and their actions formed a consistent whole. In most of the cases, I

discovered an inconsistency between the facilitators' perceptions of the issues, and their values, perspectives and actions. My work also revealedI also typicaldiscovered the tensionss that typically caused by an inconsistency between exist between the facilitators' perceptions, values and actions, on the one hand on the one hand and the larger context (correspondence criterion)on the other. (correspondence criterion). Then Then, I realised that these tensions are inherent in the very idea of intervention; intervention implies an aim to purposefully bring about a change. I wonder now, if learning could ever emerge without such tensions. HoweverOn the other hand, if the tensions are too big, participants and facilitators may revert to defensive routines or become very frustrated because they are not able to effectively use their developed capacity. I now see that facilitators need to estimate possible risks due to inconsistencies and lack of correspondence in the facilitation praxis and to discuss them with the participants.

To conclude, Bawden's model of praxis has been a helpful learning tool for single loop learning about my own *praxis* and for double and triple loop learning about my own facilitation *practice*. Therefore, I consider it an important tool to assist facilitators to become reflective practitioners. It can be used also in meta facilitation to support other (potential) facilitators to become critical learning practitioners.

Quality of my own research
In chapter 3, I listed several 'trustworthiness criteria' for quality assessment in constructivist research. I use these criteria here to judge the degree to which I have achieved rigour and quality in my own research (table 10.4).

Table 10.4: Judging rigour and quality in my own research.

Trustworthiness criteria	Score*
Intense engagement among various people for building trust and support and learning the particulars of the context	+/-
Triangulation by multiple sources, methods, investigators and disciplines	+/-
Participants and peer or colleague checking	+/-
Auditing trail: careful documentation of the conceptual development so that interested parties would be able to reconstruct the process by which I reached conclusions	+/-
Impact on stakeholders' capacity to know and act	+/-
Use of reflective journals or process diaries	+
Making explicit what the researcher brings to the study in terms of assumptions, experience and qualifications	+
Development of concepts grounded in the data	+
Relating concepts systematically (relationships are grounded in the data)	+
Systematic engagement in cycles of actions and reflection	+
Bringing broader conditions into the analysis	+/-
* Key: + more than adequately meets the criterion, +/- adequately meets the criterion, - does not adequately meet the criterion	

I will highlight a few salient points that emerge from table 10.4. In the research methodology chapter (chapter 3), I discussed how I juggled with my role as both consultant and researcher.

Active engagement by me with the actors in the case studies took place during the consultancies, but the case analysis and writing has been mostly my affair. Only the co-facilitators (4), a few peers (5) and other actors (4), including the two promoters, have been given the opportunity to react to my analysis. The same reservations count for the triangulation and impact criteria. Triangulation in terms of the involvement of multiple investigators was more often used in the consultancy work than in the research. The effect of my work as a consultant has been described in the cases. However, at this moment, I am the one who has benefited most from this research. Table 10.4 reflects the paradox between practising facilitation of participatory processes and doing research on it.

Final word on modesty and challenges

Facilitation of multi-actor learning processes within and across multiple subsystems is certainly not a panacea to deal with all our concerns. It suits especially those issues in which various actors with different perceptions and interests have a stake in how the issue is defined and dealt with. If the issue is highly acute, time-consuming facilitation processes as described in this thesis are not desirable. In addition, if at the start of a possible facilitation intervention no room seems to be available for stakeholder involvement in defining the systems' boundaries and purposes, it is unproductive to attempt to facilitate participatory learning processes. If the purpose of the system of intervention and its social/geographical boundaries are fixed before hand and considered non-negotiable, personally I would decide *not* to intervene as facilitator. Such a condition does not allow for a genuine multiple actor participatory process but is a social engineering project that is geared towards a pre-set outcome. The research of this thesis thus sharpens my perception of the boundaries around my preferred domain of action.

Finally, this study shows that facilitators are critical variables in the success of participatory interventions addressing complex issues, involving multiple interrelated factors and actors. Their values and interests strongly shape the interpretation of the issue at stake and its context, the choice of theoretical and methodological perspectives and how these are applied. As such, a facilitator's own frame of reference highly determines 'who' participates in 'what', 'how', 'when' and, very importantly, 'why'. Therefore, an important step for facilitators who are serious about participation is not to reach for the latest handbook on participatory techniques, but to clean up their own act by critically reflecting on their own assumptions, values, interests and practices. The uncritical application of 'participatory' methods in facilitation may 'get things done' but may also reinforce the very practices that in theory they were meant to change.

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[2] The slogan of PRA

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Personal comments

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Annex 1: Principal activities in the facilitation of a privatisation process of the SAED/IAM project in Senegal

Consultancy mission 1 (September, 1994 – December, 1994)
- Negotiating the objectives of the facilitation intervention and the approach to be used.
- Facilitating workshop 1

  Participants: SAED/IAM project staff members

  Objectives: To improve the (Dutch) facilitators' understanding about the SAED/IAM irrigation system and its actors,

  To test the appropriateness of the RAAKS methodology in relation to the issue at stake,

  To select Senegalese facilitators who could join the facilitation team.
- Facilitating of workshop 2

  Participants: (Irrigating) male and female farmers, young farmers, leaders of the farmer Unions, leaders of the farmer Federation, irrigating farmers from outside the project intervention area, traders, forestry project, NGO, SAED/IAM project staff and researchers of DRPD

  Objective: To jointly analyse the performance of the irrigation system in the light of the forthcoming disengagement in order to identify opportunities to (better) cope with the forthcoming disengagement of the donors.
- Facilitation of joint fact finding activities to the bank CNCA and to members of the GIEs
- Facilitation of workshop 3

  Participants: See workshop 2 but with more GIE members

  Objectives: To draw lessons from the joint fact finding activities,

  To further identify constraints and opportunities to improve the performance of the irrigation system in the light of the forthcoming disengagement.
- The facilitation of joint fact finding activities neighbouring farmer groups
- The facilitation of workshop 4

  Participants: Members of the training division and the CAs

  Objective: To develop understanding about the RAAKS methodology and the necessary skills to apply the methodology.
- The facilitation of workshop 5

  Participants: See workshop 3

  Objectives: To draw lessons from the joint fact finding activities,

  To develop action plans.
- The facilitation of workshop 6 ('concertation day')

  Participants: See workshop 3 plus representatives of the Dutch Embassy, the "Association des Jeunes" (youth organisation in Dakar), president of honor of the Federation, the National bank for credit and saving (CNCAS), local government and a national training institute

  Objectives: To shared information on the process and action plans,

  To negotiated support in order to operationalise the action plans.

Consultancy mission 2 (20 February– 4 April, 1995)
- The facilitation of interaction among the 'technical consultants on credit', the project staff, the farmer leaders and other farmers.
- The facilitation of interaction among the 'technical consultants on construction and maintenance', the project staff, the farmer leaders and other farmers.
- Providing feedback and support to the members of the project's training division.
- Providing further support to the participants of workshops 2, 3 and 5 on the implementation of the action plans.
- Facilitating a workshop on 'participatory processes and methods' for the members of the project's training division

Consultancy mission 3 (11 July- 16 August, 1995)
• Providing feedback and support to the members of the project's training division.
• Assisting the members of the project's training division in the facilitation of a workshop on 'participatory processes and methods' for the village extension workers.
• Facilitating a participatory evaluation of the action plans in which all participants of workshop 3 were involved.
• Facilitating the joint development of a participatory M&E system at various decision-making levels.

Consultancy mission 4 (24 October - 22 November, 1995)
• Providing feedback and further support to the members of the project's training division.
• Facilitating the interaction among the 'consultants on legal affairs', project staff, farmer leaders and other farmers.
• Facilitating a workshop on 'human resource management' for the project management and CAs.

Consultancy mission 5 (11 June 11-26 - 26 June, 1996)
• Providing feedback and further support to the members of the project's training division.
• Facilitating a participatory evaluation of the action plans in which all participants of workshop 3 were involved.

Summary

This thesis aims to demystify the facilitation of participatory processes in order to improve the performance of the facilitation professional. As our society is increasingly recognised as a pluralistic society, characterised by multiple actors with different interests, values and perceptions, participation has become a popular means of bringing about social and technical change. Across the globe, whether in agricultural development, poverty alleviation, natural resource management, health promotion or policy formulation, participation is often presented as the golden key to unlock the door to a more sustainable and democratic world. The task of ensuring that the golden key is used and the door is unlocked is, in general, placed in the hands of *facilitators* i.e. men or women responsible for the management of participatory processes. The work of facilitators is considered crucial for bringing about a desirable change. However, their role and influence is difficult to grasp and judge. In fact, the notion of facilitation is often 'depersonalised'. People refer to it in terms of incentives or all types of mechanisms that help to bring about a desired change. This study, however, acknowledges that facilitators are critical success variables and are people who bring along their own interests, perceptions, values, assumptions, and competencies that influence the participatory process and its outcomes. Through a critical analysis of facilitation experiences, this study aims to increase transparency on facilitators' actions, perceptions, values, theoretical and methodological perspectives, and how these can shape the participatory processes and outcomes in a particular context. Such a transparency helps to make explicitpre thecise facilitators' responsibilities and competencies of facilitators as wellnd to as to improve their accountability to the actors with whom they are working.

Chapter 1 presents two personal stories to clarify the concerns and challenges as underlying motives for this research. The first story shows facilitators who are pawns in a power play. It gives insight into the facilitators' choice of whose interests, perspectives, and values count most. The second describes the challenges that facilitators in this study face when working in complex and messy environments in which everything/body is connected to everything/body. The two experiences inform the following *research questions* that underpin this study:

1. What have facilitators of participatory processes that address complex issues deliberately undertaken to achieve the desired change?
2. What were the theoretical and methodological perspectives and values of the facilitators in the cases? How have these dispositions influenced the process and outcome, and how effective was the facilitation in terms of desired changes?
3. What competencies do facilitators require to be effective in their work?
4. What are the principles and ingredients for the meta-facilitation i.e. the facilitation of facilitators of participatory processes addressing complex issues?

To address these questions, this thesis explores three experiences in facilitation of participatory processes gained by teams of facilitators of which I had been a member. The first experience explores the facilitation of a privatisation process of the SAED/IAM irrigation project in Senegal. The second case study addresses the facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya to support decentralisation and privatisation of agricultural services. The last case study deals with the meta-facilitation of DLV's learning process. It explores the performance of meta-facilitators to support other facilitators i.e. DLV advisors. The participatory processes managed by the facilitators and meta-facilitators in the case studies address complex issues. These issues are referred to as 'complex' because they involved multiple factors and actors at multiple interrelated administrative, discipline and social levels. These multitudinous interacting and continuously changing people and things lead to the emergence of unpredictable outcomes and as such create a high level of uncertainty.

Chapter 2 discusses the emergence of the participatory paradigm and the critique on the professionals operating within this paradigm. The beliefs and assumptions of the participatory paradigm largely

influence the facilitators in the case studies. Moreover, in the case studies the facilitators try to overcome the main critique on participatory practice. For each of the fields in which the facilitators under study work i.e. 'rural poverty reduction', 'agricultural development', and 'environmental management, the emergence of the paradigm is discussed, including the dominant beliefs, assumptions, and competencies that characterise the operating professionals.

Chapter 3 clarifies the chosen research paradigm and methodologies. It highlights that this thesis is a reflective thesis for which the empirical basis is the experience in facilitation gained by teams of consultants of which I had beenhave been a member. The research process is conducted as though it were a learning process; insights are gained along the way. The research is undertaken from a constructivist perspective assuming that reality is socially constructed. In addition, chapter 3 discusses the chosen 'grounded theory approach' and 'action research'. These methodologies support the aims to: 1) conduct the research as a learning process for which the empirical basis was the experiences gained in consultancy missions; 2) develop a theory and methodological insights on facilitation; and 3) improve facilitation practice. Both methodologies fit the researcher's constructivist epistemology. The grounded theory approach to data analysis means that the conclusions of each chapter feed into the next one, with the exception of chapter 3.

Chapter 3 also introduces Bawden's model of *praxis* as a framework for analysing the performance of the facilitators in the case studies. Praxis is considered the property of individuals that emerges from the interaction of theories they hold, the actions that they practice, the values they assume and the contexts that they interpret of the world surrounding them. The use of the coherence and correspondence criteria are explained to explore the (in)consistencies and effectiveness of the facilitation praxis in the case studies.

Chapters 4, 5 and *intermezzo 1* explore the *experiences in Senegal* where a team of facilitators supported the privatisation of the SAED/IAM irrigation project. Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical and methodological foundations of this case study. It describes how and why the facilitators used 'soft systems thinking', Agricultural Knowledge and Information systems perspective (AKIS), its operational tool the 'Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge systems' (RAAKS), Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to support the privatisation process of the irrigation project. Chapter 5 further studies the Senegal case study. Bawden' s model of praxis is used to systemically explore the facilitation actions in relation to the facilitators' values, the theories and methodologies applied, and the way the facilitators perceived the context. In addition, each action is discussed in terms of (in)consistencies in praxis and its effectiveness. Intermezzo 1 synthesises the following insights derived from the Senegal case:

- The use of Bawden's notion of praxis to explore facilitation can improve its transparency and performance.
- Inconsistency in the facilitation praxis can trigger change.
- The design of a participatory process is an important facilitation action in which a first set of actors decides who should be involved in the process and for what purpose. Or, in system terminology, these actors bring the system (of intervention) into being by defining its constituting actors, purposes, and boundaries.
- AKIS and RAAKS are useful theoretical and methodological perspectives in defining the system. However, they fail to adequately address the issue of inclusiveness, representation, and power.
- The facilitators' focus on mainly grassroots level actors and factors and their failure to sufficiently involve relevant policy actors of higher decision-making levels hinder the sustainability of the process.
- The design of a path of inquiry is a second facilitation action. Facilitators need to avoid designing a path that is too narrow in analytical scope.
- A third important facilitation action deals with the design of a process favourable for fully engaging

and committing relevant actors.
• The facilitation of critical reflection failed.

These insights form crucial observation points because of the decisive way that they shape the participatory process and its outcomes. These points are translated into a preliminary set of criteria that can be used to assess the praxis of the facilitators.

Chapters 6, 7 and *intermezzo III* address the second case study i.e. the facilitation of a linked local learning process in Kenya to support ecologically sound agriculture and the decentralisation of agricultural services. Chapter 6 provides the theoretical and methodological foundations of the case. It describes the 'linked local learning' perspective and its theoretical and methodological underpinnings i.e. 'experiential learning', '(critical) learning systems', 'collaborative learning', 'negotiation', and 'mediation'. Chapter 7 further explores the Kenya case study by studying the facilitation actions in relation to the facilitators' values, the theories and methodologies applied, and the way the facilitators perceived the context. Each facilitation action is analysed in terms of (in)consistencies and effectiveness. Intermezzo II synthesises the following lessons:
• The Kenya case confirmed earlier insights that the use of Bawden's model of praxis to explore facilitation can improve its transparency and performance.
• The Kenya case confirmed the lesson drawn from the Senegal case that the facilitation of 'bringing the system into being' is an important action. However, the Kenya case adds new insights with respect to getting started such as:
  – Starting with multiple actors operating at different decision-making levels who jointly define multiple interrelated systems is effective for addressing the issue of decentralising agricultural services.
  – Assembling committed motivated and dedicated individuals or *champions* is an effective way to start.
  – Applying a combination of systems thinking, learning and negotiation theories is useful to enable participants to bring multiple systems into existence.
• An important facilitation action is the design of a trajectory that favours learning among multiple actors across multiple social, sectoral and administrative levels. Such a trajectory interweaves a process and analytical dimensions.
• The analytical dimension of the design should integrate multiple perspectives enabling actors to learn about policies, institutions, agro-ecosystems and their management, and their inter-relationships.
• Face-to-face communication, developing multi-actor ownership, visioning, strategic mediation, and learning in action are important ingredients that contribute to the emergence of a process favouring learning among actors across different decision-making levels.
• The facilitation of actors' 'learning about learning' and 'learning about facilitation' are important for facilitators to share their power with other actors/to develop multi-actor ownership.
• The facilitation of 'learning about learning' favours critical learning.
• Too much inconsistency in praxis hinders multi-actor learning.
• Linking the learning of actors across different decision-making levels is essential for articulating and negotiating a demand for agricultural services.

Again, these lessons are translated into criteria that can be used to assess facilitation praxis.

Chapters 8,9 and *intermezzo III* deal with the meta-facilitation of DLV's learning. They examine the role of the meta-facilitators in assisting other facilitators i.e. DLV advisers in applying a participatory perspective to projects. Chapter 8 describes 'different approaches to project planning', 'stakeholder analysis', 'Kolb's learning styles', and 'organisation learning theory' as the theories and methodologies used by the facilitators. Chapter 9 further explores the DLV case study by analysing the praxis of the

meta-facilitators. Intermezzo III synthesises the following insights:

- A systemic exploration of meta-facilitation praxis can improve the performance of meta-facilitators. Meta-facilitators can make use of the notion of 'praxis' to assess their own performance as well to support other facilitators in its use.
- Inconsistency in the praxis of meta-facilitators can trigger, but also impede the learning of the facilitators.
- Habermas' distinction among instrumental, strategic and communicative rationality provides a useful theoretical framework for meta-facilitators and facilitators. The framework can help them to: 1) understand different interpretations of the concept of participation; 2) get insight into how their own performance influences the action rationale of the participants; and 3) to find out how they can support participants to shift between strategic and communicative behaviour.
- Meta-facilitation needs to address the institutional environment in order to facilitate an effective learning process among facilitators.
- As for facilitators, for meta-facilitators it is also important to design a participatory process that enables the participants to bring multiple interrelated systems into being. For such a design the concept of "multiple nested subsystems' can be used.
- The concept of 'multiple nested subsystems' is useful to: 1) design an inclusive learning trajectory including relevant policy makers and institutional actors; and 2) design tailor-made learning trajectories for actors within and across various subsystems.
- The design of a systemic learning path to enable other facilitators to learn about designing a systemic learning path is an important meta-facilitation action.
- Face-to-face interaction favours learning among actors across multiple subsystems.
- The meta-facilitation (as well as facilitation) of critical learning requires a certain degree of maturity of both meta-facilitators and facilitators, an intensive engagement in a relatively longer process and meta-facilitators showing a self-critical and reflective attitude themselves.

These insights are translated into criteria that can be used to assess meta-facilitation praxis

The conclusions resulting from the three cases are merged and further developed in *chapter 10*. In line with the research questions, general conclusions are drawn with respect to the facilitation actions, the theories and methodologies to be used, facilitators' values and meta-facilitation. The general conclusion with respect to the role of facilitators is that there are two important clusters of actions for effective facilitation.

First, there is a set of actions that aims to bring multiple nested (critical) subsystems into being and second, a cluster of actions to design and implement a systemic learning path in a participatory manner. An important insight for the first set of actions is the notion of facilitation of system-wide change. Often facilitators can increase the effectiveness of their intervention if they involve multiple relevant actors who operate at different inter-related administrative, sectoral, and social levels (e.g., policy makers, private and government sector actors, farmers). Chapter 10 concludes that for facilitation to be effective in supporting actors to cope with complex issues there is need to ascertain whether it is necessary to intervene *beyond* the level at which the issue at stake emerged. Consequently, in a participatory intervention, one of the first facilitation actions to be undertaken is the design of an interactive process to purposefully bring a system, or more often, multiple nested subsystems, into existence. For this action to realise, facilitators can make use of an adapted version of soft systems theories and methodologies combined with learning, negotiation, and mediation theories as well as with Habermas' strategic and communicative rationalities.

The second set of actions i.e. to design and implement a systemic learning path needs to enable actors to 'learn about systems' (e.g., human activity, biophysical, political systems) and 'to become critical learning systems'. Critical learning systems are comprised of reflective actors who regularly question

their own and each other's perceptions, interests, and values and the way they shape their (joint) learning. To support the emergence of critical learning systems facilitators can use a combination of: 1) adapted systems theories; 2) organisational, experiential and situated learning theories; and 3) negotiation and mediation theories and strategies.

From a methodologically perspective, it is concluded that in order to design a trajectory that favours learning among actors across multiple levels it is important that facilitators: 1) enable face-to-face interaction at the boundaries of multiple subsystems; 2) overcome the limitations of Kolb's experiential learning cycle for process design; 3) foster learning beyond single loop learning; and 4) have the competence to chose the right method for a specific task.

The role of facilitators' values in the way they perceives the issue at stake, their choice of theories and methodologies, and their actions and as such the participatory processes and outcomes are clearly demonstrated in this thesis. It concludes that facilitators need to be more aware and transparent about their values. Especially in the case of differences in values between the facilitators and other actors, the articulation of this difference is an important challenge for a facilitator to deal with.

Chapter 10 also discusses two emerging insights into the facilitation of participatory processes. The first deals with 'power issues' and the second, with 'assessing facilitation praxis'. Although the issue of 'power' is not explicitly mentioned in the research questions, in the three case studies, the facilitators implicitly address power relationships that largely influence the process. This study concludes that if facilitators do not pay particular attention to power relations by increasing the decision-making power of disadvantaged actors, they risk that the latter continue to be disadvantaged or, worse still, are manipulated or controlled more skilfully by the more powerful actors. Chapter 10 discusses various facilitation ingredients that contribute to bring about structural change to the system of social relationships through which inequalities are reproduced.

Meta-facilitation is addressed in chapter 10 as well. The concluding chapter describes the competencies that meta-facilitators require for being effective in their support of facilitators to develop the necessary expertise. This thesis shows that meta-facilitation should not only address the learning of facilitators but also that of those actors who form their institutional working context. In this respect, chapter 10 pays particular attention to the role of educational institutes in the development of facilitators of systemic change who are in the Wageningen University context referred to as 'beta-gamma' professionals. Any institution that aims to deliver facilitators of systemic change must address in their education the issue of value-driven professional practice. More specifically, the building of capacity for praxis and critical thinking is needed if facilitators are to focus on systemic (agricultural/rural) development in ethical and ecologically sound ways. Moreover, educational institutes and other organisations that support agro-ecosystem and rural development face the challenge of 'becoming critical learning systems' themselves in order to evolve towards an institutional and cultural environment that enables the development of 'facilitators of systemic change'.

This thesis ends with a critical reflection on the research process, and challenges facilitators not to reach for the latest handbook on participatory techniques, but to clean up their own act by critically reflecting on their own assumptions, values, interests and practices in order to avoid reinforcing the very practices that in theory they were meant to change.

Samenvatting

Deze studie beoogt duidelijkheid te brengen over de facilitatie van participatieve processen om bij te dragen aan het verbeteren van het functioneren van de professional die verantwoordelijk is voor het managen van dergelijke processen. In onze steeds pluralistischer samenleving, gekenmerkt door vele actoren met verschillende belangen, waarden en opvattingen is participatie een gewild middel om sociale en technische veranderingen te bewerkstelligen. Of het nu gaat om agrarische ontwikkeling, armoedebestrijding, het beheren van natuurlijke hulpbronnen, gezondheidsbevordering of beleids- ontwikkeling, menigmaal wordt over de hele wereld participatie gezien als de sleutel om de deur naar een duurzame en democratische wereld te openen. Dat die sleutel goed gebruikt gaat worden, is de taak van *facilitatoren,* mannen en/of vrouwen die verantwoordelijk zijn voor het managen van het participatieve proces. Hun werk wordt gezien als essentieel om beoogde veranderingen te bereiken, maar de praktijk wijst uit dat hun rol en invloed moeilijk vast te stellen en te beoordelen zijn. Feitelijk wordt het begrip 'facilitatie' vaak 'gedepersonaliseerd'. Facilitatie wordt dan opgevat als een impuls om gewenste veranderingen te stimuleren. In deze studie echter wordt onderkend dat het om personen gaat die faciliteren. Personen met hun eigen belangen, percepties, waarden en vaardigheden waardoor het participatieve proces en zijn resultaten sterk beïnvloed worden. Facilitatoren worden in deze dissertatie gezien als belangrijke succesvariabelen in een participatief proces. Door een kritische analyse van ervaringen met facilitatie wordt getracht meer duidelijkheid te krijgen over de handelingen, percepties, waarden en theoretische en methodologische opvattingen van facilitatoren en hoe deze aspecten het participatieve proces beïnvloeden. Hierdoor wordt inzicht verkregen in de precieze taken van facilitatoren en de bijbehorende competenties waardoor ook het afleggen van verantwoording aan de andere actoren in het proces verbeterd wordt.

In *hoofdstuk 1* worden aan de hand van twee persoonlijke verhalen een aantal vragen en uitdagingen besproken die als onderliggende motieven voor deze studie fungeren. Het eerste verhaal laat de facilitator zien als pion in een krachtenveld. Het laat zien dat de facilitator moet uitmaken wiens belangen, opvattingen en waarden het zwaarst wegen. Het tweede verhaal beschrijft de uitdaging van facilitatoren om te werken in een complexe omgeving waarin alles en iedereen aan elkaar gerelateerd is. De twee persoonlijke verhalen resulteren in de volgende onderzoeksvragen die als basis voor deze studie dienen:
1. Wat hebben facilitators van participatieve processen bewust ondernomen om de beoogde verande- ringen te realiseren?
2. Wat waren de waarden, theoretische en methodologische perspectieven van de facilitatoren in de casestudies? Hoe hebben deze omstandigheden het participatieve proces en de resultaten beïnvloed en hoe effectief was de facilitatie in termen van de gewenste verandering?
3. Welke competenties hebben de facilitatoren nodig om effectief te zijn in hun werk?
4. Wat zijn de principes en benodigdheden van meta-facilitatie oftewel de ondersteuning van facilita- toren van participatieve processen?

Om deze vragen te beantwoorden analyseer ik drie ervaringen met facilitatie van participatieve processen door teams waarvan ik zelf deel uitmaakte. De eerste casestudie betreft de facilitatie van een privatiseringsproces van het SAED/IAM-irrigatieproject in Senegal. De tweede de facilitatie van een 'linked local learning'- proces in Kenia ter ondersteuning van decentralisering en privatisering van de agrarische dienstverlenende sector. De laatste omvat de meta-facilitatie van DLV's leerproces. Het functioneren van meta-facilitatoren in het ondersteunen van DLV-adviseurs wordt onderzocht. De door de facilitatoren en meta-facilitatoren geleide participatieve processen in de casestudies betreffen complexe vragen. 'Complex' omdat het gaat om vraagstukken waarbij meerdere actoren en factoren zijn betrokken op verschillende, maar onderling verbonden, besluitvormingsniveaus. De interacte- rende, diverse en continu veranderende betrokken personen en zaken maken de uitkomsten van de processen onvoorspelbaar, waardoor facilitatoren te maken hebben met veel onzekerheid.

In *hoofdstuk 2* wordt het participatieparadigma behandeld met de kritiek op de professional die binnen dit paradigma functioneert. De overtuigingen en opvattingen binnen het participatieparadigma beïnvloeden de facilitatoren in de casestudies sterk. Ook hebben zij geprobeerd de voornaamste kritiekpunten bij hun werk ter harte te nemen. Voor elk van de werkvelden waarin de bestudeerde facilitatoren werkzaam zijn (armoedebestrijding, agrarische ontwikkeling en management van de natuurlijke hulpbronnen) wordt de reikwijdte van het paradigma besproken in termen van heersende opvattingen, veronderstellingen en competenties van facilitatoren.

Hoofdstuk 3 verduidelijkt het gekozen onderzoeksparadigma en de onderzoeksmethodologieën. Het gaat hier om een reflectieve dissertatie met als empirische basis facilitatie-ervaringen opgedaan door teams van facilitatoren waarvan ik zelf lid ben geweest. Het onderzoeksproces is uitgevoerd als een leerproces: inzichten zijn gaandeweg verworven. Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd vanuit een constructivistisch perspectief waarbij verondersteld word dat realiteit en kennis sociaal geconstrueerd worden. Ook worden in hoofdstuk 3 de gekozen onderzoeksmethodologieën, 'grounded theory approach' en 'action research', besproken. Deze methodologieën passen bij de wens om: 1) het onderzoek uit te voeren als een leerproces met als empirische basis de facilitatie-ervaring opgedaan in consultancywerk; 2) een theorie en methodologische inzichten te ontwikkelen op het gebied van facilitatie; en 3) de beroepspraktijk van facilitatoren te verbeteren. Beide methodologieën sluiten aan bij het gekozen constructivistische onderzoeksparadigma. De gekozen 'grounded theory approach' brengt met zich mee dat de conclusies van elk hoofdstuk richtinggevend zijn voor het volgende (met uitzondering van hoofdstuk 3). In hoofdstuk 3 wordt tevens Bawden's model voor 'praxis' geïntroduceerd, dat gebruikt is als kader waarbinnen de drie facilitatie-ervaringen worden geanalyseerd. 'Praxis' wordt gezien als een menselijke eigenschap die gevormd wordt door de interactie tussen theorieën die mensen hanteren, de waarden die ze hebben, hun handelen en hun percepties van hun werkomgeving als onderdeel van een bredere leefomgeving. Het gebruik van coherentie- en correspondentiecriteria wordt toegelicht om de (in)consistentie en effectiviteit van facilitatie praxis (in de zin van Bawden) te behandelen.

Hoofdstukken 4 en *5* en *intermezzo I* analyseren de ervaring in Senegal waar een team van facilitatoren de privatisering van het SAED/IAM-irrigatieproject hebben ondersteund. In hoofdstuk 4 wordt de theoretische en methodologische basis van deze casestudie toegelicht. Er wordt beschreven hoe en waarom de facilitatoren in hun werk gebruik hebben gemaakt van het 'soft systems thinking', Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS) –perspectief en de bijbehorende methodologie 'Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS), participatieve monitoring en evaluatie (PM&E) en 'Participatory Rural Appraisal'. In hoofdstuk 5 wordt de casestudie verder uitgewerkt. Bawden's model voor praxis wordt gebruikt om het handelen van de facilitatoren systematisch te onderzoeken in verband met hun theorieën, methodologieën, waarden en percepties van de context. Elke facilitatiehandeling wordt besproken in termen van (in)consistentie en effectiviteit. In intermezzo I worden de volgende bevindingen uit de Senegal-case samengevat:
- Bawden's begrip 'praxis' is bruikbaar voor het analyseren van facilitatiepraktijken en draagt bij tot het transparant maken van de rol en invloed van facilitatoren en daarmee tot het verbeteren van hun functioneren.
- Inconsistentie in de praxis van facilitatoren kan verandering juist stimuleren.
- Het plan voor het begin van een participatief proces is een belangrijke maar vaak onderschatte stap van facilitatoren. Een eerste groep van participanten wordt gestimuleerd te bepalen wie er bij het proces betrokken worden en waarom. Of in termen van 'soft systems thinking': deze participanten creëren het (interventie)systeem door zijn actoren, doelen en grenzen vast te stellen.
- AKIS en RAAKS vormen bruikbare theoretische en methodologische perspectieven om het systeem te definiëren. Zij bieden echter onvoldoende houvast om knelpunten als vertegenwoordiging en machtsverhoudingen aan te pakken.
- Het instandhouden van het proces komt in het geding als facilitatoren zich vooral richten op het

lokale niveau en er niet in slagen beleidsactoren bij het proces te betrekken.
- Het ontwerpen van een inhoudelijk analytisch traject vormt een tweede type facilitatiehandelingen. In het begin van een participatief proces dienen facilitatoren te vermijden dat actoren een te nauw blikveld krijgen.
- Een derde type facilitatiehandelingen betreft het stimuleren van de betrokkenheid en het onderling vertrouwen tussen actoren.
- De facilitatie van kritische reflectie is mislukt.

Deze inzichten zijn vertaald in een aantal criteria die gebruikt kunnen worden om het functioneren van facilitatoren te evalueren.

De *hoofdstukken 6* en *7* en *intermezzo II* behandelen een facilitatie-ervaring met een participatief leerpoces waaraan actoren van verschillende besluitvormingsniveaus deelnemen. Doel van het project was het ondersteunen van duurzame landbouwontwikkeling en de decentralisatie van de agrarische dienstverlenende sector. In hoofdstuk 6 worden de theorieën en methodologieën behandeld die de facilitatoren in Kenia hebben gebruikt. Het 'linked local learning'-perspectief wordt beschreven inclusief de theoretische en methodologische uitgangspunten hiervan zoals het 'ervarend leren', 'kritische leersystemen', 'samenwerkend leren', 'onderhandelen' en 'bemiddelen'. In hoofdstuk 7 wordt de praxis van de facilitatoren besproken door hun handelingen te relateren aan de gebruikte theorieën en methodologieën, de waarden van de facilitatoren en hun perceptie van de context. Elke facilitatiehandeling wordt geanalyseerd in termen van (in)constistentie en effectiviteit. In intermezzo II wordt een aantal eerdere inzichten bevestigd en wordt een aantal nieuwe bevindingen opgesomd:
- De Kenia-casestudie bevestigt eerdere inzichten dat Bawden's model van praxis bruikbaar is om facilitatie-ervaringen te analyseren, het facilitatieproces verheldert en kan bijdragen tot het beter functioneren van facilitatoren.
- De Kenia-casestudie bevestigt dat het opzetten van het systeem in termen van participanten, doelen en grenzen als beginhandeling heel belangrijk is vanwege de invloed ervan op het verdere verloop van het proces. De casestudie levert ook een aantal nieuwe inzichten op, zoals:
- –bij facilitatie van complexe vraagstukken zoals decentralisatie van agrarische diensten is het effectief als facilitatoren actoren van verschillende besluitvormingsniveaus stimuleren om gezamenlijk niet één maar meerdere interventiesystemen te definiëren;
- –het blijkt effectief te zijn om een participatief proces te beginnen met gemotiveerde en betrokken individuen oftewel 'champions';
- –de theorieën van het 'systeemdenken', 'leren' en 'onderhandelen' helpen participanten meerdere samenhangende systemen te onderscheiden;
- Een belangrijke facilitatiehandeling betreft het ontwerpen en uitvoeren van een traject dat leren bevordert van actoren binnen hetzelfde besluitvormingsniveau en van actoren van verschillende niveaus. In zo'n proces zijn proces en inhoud onlosmakelijk verbonden.
- Om actoren te stimuleren te leren over meerdere inhoudelijke aspecten zoals het beleid, instituties, landbouw- of ecosystemen en de relatie tussen deze aspecten dient de inhoudelijke dimensie van het ontwerp verschillende perspectieven te integreren.
- Directe communicatie, het ontwikkelen van de capaciteit van actoren om het leertraject zelf te kunnen sturen, ' visioning', 'stategische bemiddeling' en 'leren in actie' zijn belangrijke instrumenten om het leren van actoren van verschillende besluitvormingsniveaus te bevorderen.
- De facilitatie van 'leren leren' en van 'leren faciliteren' is essentieel in de ontwikkeling van het vermogen van actoren het leerproces zelf te kunnen sturen.
- De facilitatie van 'leren leren' bevordert kritisch leren.
- Te veel inconsistentie in de facilitatiepraktijken kan het leren hinderen.

Deze inzichten worden aan het eind van intermezzo II vertaald in criteria die gebruikt kunnen worden om het functioneren van facilitatoren te beoordelen.

De *hoofdstukken 8* en *9* en *intermezzo III* behandelen de meta-facilitatie. In deze hoofdstukken wordt de ervaring van meta-facilitatoren bestudeerd bij het ondersteunen van DLV-facilitatoren op het gebied van het interactief ontwerpen van projecten. In hoofdstuk 8 worden de theorieën en methodologieën beschreven die de metafacilitatoren gebruikt hebben bij hun werk. In hoofdstuk 9 wordt een analyse gemaakt van de handelingen van de meta-facilitatoren, waarbij gelet is op de (in)consistentie van hun praxis en de effectiviteit ervan. Intermezzo III vat de bevindingen samen:

• Het gebruik van Bawden's model van praxis kan het functioneren van meta-facilitatoren verbeteren. Zowel facilitatoren als meta-facilitatoren kunnen het model gebruiken om zichzelf (te laten) evalueren.
• Inconsistentie in meta-facilitatie kan het leren zowel stimuleren als hinderen.
• Het onderscheid tussen strategische en communicatieve rationaliteit van Habermas levert een bruikbaar theoretisch kader voor facilitatoren en meta-facilitatoren. Hierdoor kunnen zij: 1) verschillen in interpretatie van het concept participatie beter begrijpen; 2) inzicht verkrijgen in hoe hun eigen handelen de rationaliteit van andere actoren beïnvloedt; 3) bepalen hoe zij participanten kunnen bewegen te wisselen tussen strategisch en communicatief handelen.
• Om het effectief leren van facilitatoren te bevorderen dient de meta-facilitatie zich ook te richten op het stimuleren van leerprocessen van institutionele actoren. Net als voor facilitatoren is het voor meta-facilitatoren belangrijk dat zij beginnen met het faciliteren van een participatief proces met als doel meerdere met elkaar samenhangende systemen te definiëren. Het concept 'multiple nested subsystems' kan hiervoor worden gebruikt.
• Het concept 'multiple nested subsystems' is bruikbaar voor: 1) het ontwerpen van een participatief proces waarbij alle relevante actoren worden betrokken, inclusief beleidsmakers en bestuurders; 2) het ontwerpen van verschillende leersystemen voor actoren binnen verschillende subsystemen en/of tussen die systemen.
• Een tweede set van handelingen voor meta-facilitatoren is het ontwerpen van een op het systeemdenken gebaseerd leertraject waarbij de facilitatoren op hun beurt gestimuleerd worden te leren over het ontwerpen van dergelijke trajecten.
• Directe interactie bevordert het leren tussen actoren van verschillende besluitvormingsniveaus.
• De meta-facilitatie (en facilitatie) van kritisch leren vraagt een zekere mate van rijping van zowel meta-facilitatoren als facilitatoren, een intensief betrokken zijn gedurende een tamelijk lang proces en zelfkritiek en een reflectieve houding van de meta-facilitatoren.

Deze inzichten zijn vertaald in criteria die gebruikt kunnen worden om het functioneren van meta-facilitatoren te evalueren.

De bevindingen van de drie casestudies worden in *hoofdstuk 10* bijeengebracht en verder ontwikkeld. Aan de hand van de onderzoeksvragen worden conclusies geformuleerd op het gebied van 1) facilitatie*handelingen*; 2) bruikbare *theorieën* en *methodologieën*; 3) de *waarden* van facilitatoren en 4) *meta-facilitatie*.

Er kunnen twee belangrijke groepen facilitatie*handelingen* worden onderscheiden waarvoor specifieke *theorieën* en *methodologieën* gebruikt kunnen worden. Ten eerste: er is een geheel van handelingen dat erop gericht is één of meerdere 'multiple nested subsystems' te creëren. Bij het uitvoeren van deze handelingen is het belangrijk dat facilitatoren zich richten op een brede aanpak. Te vaak worden alleen locale actoren of juist alleen de actoren op een hoger beleidsniveau in een participatief proces betrokken. Vaak kunnen facilitatoren de effectiviteit van hun optreden verhogen door actoren die op verschillende relevante, onderling samenhangende niveaus werkzaam zijn (beleidsmakers, bestuurders, belangengroepen), bij hun activiteiten te betrekken. In dit hoofdstuk wordt geconcludeerd dat om gewenste verandering in complexe situaties te stimuleren het voor facilitatoren belangrijk is om te bezien of het noodzakelijk is te interveniëren op een ander niveau dan waarop het vraagstuk naar voren kwam. Al met al dienen de eerste handelingen van facilitatoren gericht te zijn op

het ontwerpen van een participatief proces waarin participanten gestimuleerd worden een systeem van actoren, of vaker een 'multiple nested system' te creëren. Hierbij kunnen facilitatoren gebruik maken van een aangepaste vorm van het 'zachte systeemdenken' gecombineerd met theorieën en methodologieën op het gebied van 'leersystemen', 'onderhandelen' en 'bemiddelen'. Ook het onderscheid tussen communicatief en strategisch handelen van Habermas biedt een bruikbaar perspectief.

Een tweede verzameling van facilitatiehandelingen betreft het ontwerpen en uitvoeren van een traject waarin de participanten worden gestimuleerd om te leren over systemen (bijvoorbeeld menselijke activiteiten, biofysische en politieke systemen) en om zelf een kritisch leersysteem te worden. Kritische leersystemen bestaan uit reflectieve actoren die regelmatig hun eigen doelstellingen, percepties, waarden en die van anderen, maar ook de manier waarop deze aspecten hun leren beïnvloeden ter discussie stellen. Om het ontstaan van kritische leersystemen te bevorderen kunnen facilitatoren gebruik maken van: 1) een combinatie van aangepaste systeemtheorieën, 2) organisatie-leertheorieën, ervarend leren en 'situated learning', 3) onderhandelings- en bemiddelingstheorieën en –strategieën.

Vanuit methodologisch perspectief is gesteld dat om te bewerkstelligen dat actoren van verschillende subsystemen worden gestimuleerd te leren over systemen en om kritische leersystemen te worden, facilitatoren: 1) nadruk moeten leggen op de directe interactie tussen de actoren; 2) zich moeten richten op de grensvlakken van de verschillende subsystemen; 3) rekening moeten houden met de beperkingen die kleven aan het gebruik van Kolbs leercyclus om een leerproces te organiseren; 4) naast het enkelslag- leren ook het tweeslag-leren en het drieslag-leren moeten bevorderen.

De studie laat duidelijk zien dat de *waarden* van facilitatoren een grote invloed hebben op hun perceptie van het vraagstuk, de keuzen van de theorieën en methodologieën en hun handelen en daarmee op het hele participatieve proces en de uitkomsten ervan. De conclusie wordt getrokken dat facilitatoren zich hun waarden meer bewust moeten zijn en deze meer expliciet moeten maken. Met name als er verschillen bestaan tussen de waarden van de facilitator en die van de andere actoren is het een uitdaging voor de facilitator met deze verschillen om te gaan.

Naast de beantwoording van de onderzoeksvragen worden er in hoofdstuk 10 twee additionele inzichten besproken die uit de analyse naar voren zijn gekomen. Het ene betreft de machtsverhoudingen, het andere het evalueren van het functioneren van facilitatoren. Ofschoon de kwestie van machtsverhoudingen niet expliciet in de onderzoeksvragen aan de orde wordt gesteld, hebben de facilitatoren in de drie behandelde situaties de machtsverhoudingen wel impliciet beïnvloed. In deze studie wordt vastgesteld dat indien facilitatoren niet specifiek aandacht schenken aan de machtsver-houdingen door de besluitvormingscapaciteit van achtergestelde betrokkenen te vergroten het risico bestaat dat deze er nog meer op achteruitgaan doordat zij nog effectiever gemanipuleerd kunnen worden door invloedrijke actoren. In dit hoofdstuk wordt een aantal facilitatiemiddelen besproken waardoor ongelijkwaardige sociale relaties structureel kunnen worden veranderd in rechtvaardigere.

In hoofdstuk 10 wordt ook een aantal conclusies getrokken over meta-facilitatie. Er wordt een beschrijving gegeven van de competenties waarover meta-facilitatoren dienen te beschikken om facilitatoren effectief te kunnen ondersteunen. Het blijkt dat meta-facilitatoren zich niet alleen moeten richten op de facilitatoren, maar ook op de actoren die hun institutionele werkomgeving vormen. In dit opzicht wordt bijzondere aandacht besteed aan educatieve instellingen en met name aan de rol van het Wageningen Universiteit & Researchcentrum bij het opleiden van 'beta-gamma professionals' als facilitatoren van veranderingen op systeemniveau. Ook wordt vastgesteld dat elke educatieve instelling die ernaar streeft om facilitatoren van systeeminnovaties op te leiden, aandacht dient te schenken aan het vraagstuk van de waardengestuurde beroepspraktijk. Het ontwikkelen van

de capaciteit om te denken en te handelen in temen van 'praxis' maar ook het kritisch denken onder (potentiële) facilitatoren is essentieel als deze verondersteld worden te streven naar ethisch en ecologisch verantwoorde systeeminnovaties. Als consequentie voor educatieve instellingen geldt dat ook zij zich dienen te ontwikkelen tot kritische leersystemen.

Tot slot worden facilitatoren opgeroepen om het niet te zoeken in de nieuwste handboeken over 'participatieve' methoden en technieken. Zij worden uitgedaagd kritisch te reflecteren op hun eigen belangen, percepties, waarden en handelen om te verhinderen dat die bijdragen aan een praktijk die zij in theorie juist wilden veranderen.

Curriculum Vitae

Annemarie Groot was born in Alkmaar, The Netherlands, on April 29th, 1996. In 1980 she completed her secondary education at the Petrus Canisius College in Alkmaar. In 1987, she obtained her MSc in Tropical Agriculture at the Wageningen Agricultural University (the present Wageningen University). Her major subjects during her M.Sc. were Extension Science, Co-operations and Credit Systems in Developing Countries and Irrigation and Drinking Water Sanitation. During her university studies, she stayed one year in Kenya to conduct a socio-economic study on two irrigation systems. In Kenya, she also carried out an agronomic research on beans.

In 1996 and 1997, she combined her study at the Wageningen Agricultural University with work as a trainer for the Institute for Applied Extension (ITV). In 1988-1991, she worked as an agricultural extensionist for Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) in an integrated development programme (PEDI) in Kaya, Burkina Faso.

Between 1991 and 2001, she was employed as a researchers at the Group Communication and Innovation studies of the Wageningen University. Her research focussed on 'participatory' approaches and methodologies for the management of complex change. In this period, she facilitated several international courses for, amongst others, the International Agricultural Centre (IAC), the International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA), the German Foundation for International Development (DSA) at the International Agricultural Centre and the institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA). She also carried out a wide range of consultancy projects addressing the management of complex change processes in the area of extension, irrigation and natural resource management.

Since 1999, she is a member of the International Support Group (ISG) supporting the coming together of stakeholders to articulate visions and negotiate partnerships so that local communities can revitalise their social and natural environment. Since June 2001, she is working as a researcher on process management in the green space at the Department of Landscape & Planning of Alterra Green World Research.

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