

Actors, Politics and Narratives; Policy Change Processes in the Limpopo Department of Agriculture



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“Change in complex social systems can be triggered by very small details.”

Paolo Ficarelli, Wageningen October 2009, Wageningen

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
ARD	Agricultural Research and Development
CEAD	Centre for Environment, Agriculture and Development
CIS	Centre for International Cooperation
DFID	Department for International Development
ETC	Educational Training Consultants
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FLD	Farmer-Led Documentation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GPP	Global Partnership Programmes
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HAPID	HIV/AIDS and PID
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
IST	International Support Team
LDA	Limpopo Department of Agriculture
LISF	Local Innovation Support Funds
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOC	NGO committee
NSC	National Steering Committee
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PICO	People, Innovation and Change in Organisations
PID	Participatory Innovation Development
POG	Prolinnova Oversight Group
PPB	Participatory Plant Breeding
PPR	Project Review Process
Prolinnova	Promoting Local Innovation
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
PTT	Provincial Task Team
R&D	Research and Development
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

SUMMARY

During the 1980s critique grew on the conventional methods in agricultural research and development especially in the light of international development cooperation. In this conventional way of working, technologies were developed through on-station experiments, which were then subsequently being transferred to farmers in a top-down fashion. In response to the critique, the popularity of participatory approaches in agricultural development grew. Consequently, different projects and programmes were founded to promote participatory approaches in agricultural research and development. One of these programmes is Prolinnova. Prolinnova stands for 'PRoMoting Local INNOVAtion' and is an NGO-initiated programme. One of the central concepts that is used in the network is Participatory Innovation Development (PID) through which Prolinnova aims to promote participatory approaches and local innovation in rural development. The programme builds on a global learning network to promote local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management (NRM).

In recent years, the Prolinnova network is searching for ways through which her partners could potentially better influence policy processes in favour of PID. This means that formal policies and the executors of these policies will be stimulated to pay more attention to the participation of farmers and the value of local knowledge. In the light of this problem statement, research has been done for this thesis to a case in which such processes has taken place. From the documentation and analysis of this case study lessons were drawn from the past and used in the recommendation for current and future activities of Prolinnova.

For the research of this thesis is looked at a province from which the Department of Agriculture is part of the Prolinnova network, namely the Limpopo province in South Africa. By the end of the 1990s, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) started with processes to transform its institutional systems in order to improve the efficiency of its services to rural poor communities. Besides the institutional changes from within, the province started projects and programmes in agriculture in cooperation with donor countries. One of these projects was BASED (Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery), a bilateral project between the LDA and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). BASED started in 1998 and ended in 2005. The ultimate goal of BASED was to institutionalise the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) within the LDA. This case study has focused on how these processes were set in motion by BASED and how in the end, policy processes within the LDA took up their own life. The project has been of crucial importance for the developments that have taken place and have led to a situation in which the LDA (partly) accepts and applies participatory approaches such as PID.

In the set up of the case study, as well as the analysis of the results is made use of the policy process framework developed by Keeley and Scoones (1999). Their framework integrated three overlapping perspectives in order to come to an understanding of policy change processes. The three themes that are part of the framework are: politics and interests, actors and networks, and discourses and narratives. The framework has helped to identify the factors that have played an important role during the policy change processes within the LDA. These were subsequently used to draw lessons for the wider Prolinnova network of South Africa. In addition, is looked at the applicability of the model of Keeley and Scoones in the analysis of policy change processes.

In this thesis it is concluded that 1) The application of participatory ways of working strongly depend on the attitude of the practitioners in agricultural extension services. 2) To achieve change, someone needs to take up the leadership in terms of responsibility and as a stimulator to push for change. 3) The organisation of farmers is crucial in developing more demand-driven delivery services. 4) Managers need to be shown results if they are to be convinced of a new approach. 5) Hard work should be acknowledged and stimulated in order to keep people motivated and make their work an integral part of the organisation. 6) Farmers should be seen as joint investors (not only as receivers of benefits). And 7) To achieve changes in the extension delivery services the different stakeholders working in the scene have to continuously be brought together.

With regard to the theoretical framework of Keeley and Scoones it is concluded that, first, the framework does not show a process, which is both a strength and a weakness. Second, their theory fails to address the complexity of institutions of which policies are just one minor part. Third, though Keeley and Scoones highlight the importance of knowledge in policy processes, there seems to be little room for the practical translation of knowledge in their framework.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research is introduced by giving an explanation of the organisation for which this study has taken place and by giving some general background information to the case study. A description of the problem statement is formulated as well as the objectives of the research. This chapter ends by giving an outline of this thesis.

1.1 Introduction to the research project

Prolinnova stands for 'PROmoting Local INNOVAtion' and is an NGO-initiated programme conceived in 1999. The programme builds on 'a global learning network to promote local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management (NRM)' (www.prolinnova.net, visited 16/02/09). One of the central concepts that is used in the network is Participatory Innovation Development (PID) through which Prolinnova aims to promote participatory approaches and local innovation in rural development (Rai 2006; Adams and Fernando 2009). Prolinnova mainly focuses on small scale and resource poor farmers that live in the more risk-prone areas of the tropics (PROFIEET/Prolinnova 2004).

The programme is decentralised by means of 'country programmes' which consists of multi-stakeholder networks. Prolinnova is currently active in 16 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. ETC EcoCulture, a Netherlands-based NGO, facilitates the country programmes and further hosts the secretariat of Prolinnova. The research of this thesis is conducted for the secretariat of Prolinnova in line with its involvement with the country programmes of the network.

Over the past few years, the multi-stakeholder networks of the Prolinnova country programmes have tried to implement PID within their countries. In most of these countries, several institutional changes have taken place in order to work with participatory approaches in Agriculture Research and Development (ARD). In the coming years, these networks will focus their attention on, and further promote, these processes within existing organisations in their countries. One of the most important ways to achieve this is to encourage government agencies and other relevant organisations in the agricultural scene, to change their policies and/or promote (further) implementation of existing policies, in favour of PID. This means that formal policies (i.e. laws, rules and other official regulations) and the executors of these policies will be stimulated to pay more attention to the participation of farmers and the value of local knowledge. It is crucial to document stories of such processes well, so lessons can be learned from the past and used for current and future activities of Prolinnova country programmes (Gonsalves and Niangado 2006; Prolinnova 2006; Prolinnova 2007).

1.2 Problem description

The Prolinnova network is interested to find out ways in which the different country programmes could potentially better influence policy processes in favour of participatory approaches, especially PID. For the reliability and the potential use of recommendations with regard to the above-mentioned problem statement, this research has focused on a province within one of the Prolinnova country programmes, namely the Limpopo province in South Africa.

South Africa is situated in the most southern part of the African continent. Limpopo (formerly known as Province of the North) is one of the nine provinces and occupies the most northern part of the country. Limpopo is a very rural province and agriculture is a major contributor to the regional and national economy. The way agriculture is organised in the country as well as in the province, is very much shaped by the colonial background of the country and the era of racial segregation, or apartheid. One of the outcomes of this period are the deteriorated areas of the former 'homelands' (Botha *et al.* 2005; MacLeod *et al.* 2008). The majority of smallholder farmers of Limpopo reside within these areas.

These former homeland areas are characterised by problems such as poverty and food insecurity (Ramaru *et al.* 2004). After 1994, when the apartheid was abolished and the African National Congress (ANC) came to power, the government wanted to address these problems, even as the inequality of the past. However, it was realised by the provincial Department of Agriculture in Limpopo (the LDA) that they were not able to effectively address the problems of the smallholder farmers.

The provincial government started with processes to transform its institutional systems in order to improve the efficiency of its services to rural poor communities (Ramaru *et al.* 2007). Besides the institutional changes from within, the province started projects and programmes in agriculture in cooperation with donor countries. One of these projects was BASED (Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery), a bilateral project between the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) (Ramaru *et al.* 2007).

BASED started in 1998 and aimed to help the LDA in improving its extension services to smallholder farmers. The main central approach that they used to achieve this goal, was the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) (Ramaru *et al.* 2000). PEA is a learning approach that aims to support individuals as well as the self-organisation of communities in rural areas. It is an approach to development which stimulates processes of learning with and through the participation of farmers (Novafrica 2007).

BASED was divided into two phases; the first ran from 1998 to 2003, and the second and last phase was from 2003 to 2006. At the beginning of the project, a training programme was set up for 40 extension staff and specialists. The focus was mainly on developing the PEA approach and a training strategy. During the first phase, pilots were started in two regions with three communities as case studies. Experiments in the field and working with the farmer groups were periodically followed up by trainings and theoretical learning about the approach (Ramaru *et al.* 2000). The team of extension agents and consultants who were enrolled in the trainings went through an intensive learning process. At the end of the first phase, there were some positive results in the case study sites. These results concerned community empowerment, the training of extension agents, spreading of technical innovations through farmer experimentation, the functioning of community-based organisations etcetera (E-mail correspondence, Ficarelli 2009). This resulted in the start of new case study sites and more extension agents to be trained.

The process of the project was closely monitored through self-assessment workshops that were held each year from 1999 until the end of the project. In addition to the workshops, several project review processes (PPRs) were held. The first was held in 2002 which aimed to assess the overall project since its inception in 1998. From this assessment, the project started

with the second phase (2003 to 2006) which focused on the institutionalisation of PEA within the LDA. In 2005 another PPR was held. This assessment proved the great impact of the project at different levels in the province. At management level within the LDA it was decided to continue with institutionalising the approach within the Department. The external consultants of GTZ were now working towards an exit strategy and helping the LDA to manage the process independently and experimenting with the approach while taking full ownership of the process. In 2005 external funding from GTZ to the BASED project officially stopped. Several institutional changes were made within the LDA in order to continue with the PEA approach in its extension delivery services. In addition to that, an NGO with the name of Novafrica was established in 2004 to enhance the PEA concept and the dissemination of this approach within Limpopo and other provinces (Novafrica 2007; Ramaru *et al.* 2007; E-mail correspondence, Ficarelli 2009).

For the research of this thesis, a case study was carried out on the processes over the past few years in which the provincial Department of Agriculture in Limpopo, South Africa adjusted its policies in favour of participatory approaches. Departure point in the historical timeline for this case study has been the BASED project. The project has been of crucial importance for the developments that have taken place and have led to a situation in which the LDA (partly) accepts and applies participatory approaches, such as PID. It is interesting to find out which factors have played an important role in these processes so lessons can potentially be drawn for the wider Prolinnova network of South Africa.

1.3 Objectives

The focus of this thesis is the analysis of the policy processes in the past few years to ensure that insights are generated, not only for further studies but also to advise the Prolinnova team to identify possible entry points for policy-based interventions to promote PID. The document gives a description of the relevant factors that have played a role in the policy change processes in favour of participatory approaches within the LDA. These processes are analysed in order to fulfil the two main objectives of the research, namely to:

- Draw lessons from this analysis and therewith increase the knowledge for the wider Prolinnova network with regard to policy change processes, and to;
- Reflect upon the applicability of the framework developed by Keeley and Scoones (1999; IDS 2003) to come to an understanding of policy processes.

1.4 Outline of this thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In the following chapter, the theoretical framework that guided this research is discussed. The chapter gives an extensive explanation of the relevant concepts that are used in this report and explores the theoretical background on participatory approaches and policy processes. Chapter 3 gives the research questions and describes the methodology that is applied for the research. Chapter 4 explores the wider context of the case study to enable the reader to place this research in its own specific context. The chapter gives some general background information of the province and explains the Prolinnova programme internationally and of South Africa. Chapter 5 will discuss and analyse the results gained from the research. Chapter 6 will draw conclusions from the foregoing chapters and discusses the model of Keeley and Scoones in the analysis of policy change processes. This thesis ends with a concluding discussion on the lessons learnt from this documentation for the wider Prolinnova network. On the basis of these lessons, recommendations are made.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that guided this research and is used to analyse and discuss the results. It attempts to cover the essential theoretical ground of the most relevant concepts and approaches used for this report. Actor-oriented sociology has been an important guide in the methodology of the research as well as the way in which the gathered data is analysed. This chapter therefore starts with an explanation of the actor-oriented analysis, and how this relates to relevant concepts such as agency and structure. In the section that follows (2.2), the concept of policy is explored and an introduction is given to the two – for this research – relevant theories of policy processes. This chapter ends with section 2.3 which explains the concept of participatory approaches, as well as the main critique that currently exists within development literature.

2.1 Agency versus structures

In his book *The New Rules of Sociological Methods*, Giddens (1976) is one of the first to place the structuralist tradition and the interpretative tradition in sociology besides each other in analysing sociological topics. While the former originates from Durkheim's 'social facts' and focuses on collective realities, the latter may be traced from work of Schutz and Garfinkel, in which the focus is placed on agency and the motives of individuals (Calhoun *et al.* 2008). To synergise the two traditions in a theoretical sound explanation of social processes, Giddens later on developed his *theory of structuration*. In his attempt to connect the two, he makes use of several concepts; which will be further discussed below.

Agency and action are concerned with the activities of an agent. According to Giddens the notion of action strongly relates to temporality, accountability and rationalisation. Action does not exist of a series of loose acts combined together, but consists of 'the continuous flow of conduct'. He defines action as: 'a stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world' (Giddens in Calhoun *et al.* 2008: 232). Human actors are capable to reflect and monitor their own acts, which Giddens captures in the concept of *accountability*. With accountability he means 'the accounts that actors are able to offer of their conduct drawn upon the same stocks of knowledge as are drawn upon on the very production and reproduction of their action' (Giddens in Calhoun *et al.* 2008: 233). Closely related to the accountability for their acts, is the fact that human agents are able to rationalise about them. Rationalisation is an important characteristic of the behaviour of competent social agents. Reasons for action do not only appeal to existing standards or norms, but are embodied within the stream of conduct of the agent. Then, besides the conscious reasons of the agent, there are often unconscious processes that play a role in the acts of an agent. The concept of agency will be further explored later in this section.

For the concept of structuration, Giddens underlines the importance of the terms structure, system and structuration. With *structure*, Giddens refers to structuring properties; properties that provide the binding factor of time and space in social systems. The properties can be understood as rules and resources that implicate the reproduction of social systems through the interaction of actors. These rules and resources take shape in the form of knowledge of 'how things are to be done'. So, the structures form the patterns through which actors organise

social life. To study the structuration of a social system, is to study the ways in which that system is produced and reproduced in interaction.

In his theory, Giddens integrates the abovementioned concepts in one theory of social analysis; the structuration theory. This theory explains why action and structure are not necessarily opposing concepts, but actually two sides of the same coin. As Giddens puts it: ‘in social theory, the notions of action and structure *presuppose one another*’ (Giddens 1979: 49). To combine the concepts of agency and structure, he makes use of the idea of the *duality of structure*. With the duality of structure he explains that ‘structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute the systems’ (Giddens in Calhoun *et al.* 2008: 238). This is because structures form the actor as well as society, but these guiding structures and institutions ‘do not just work “behind the backs” of social actors’ (Giddens in Calhoun *et al.* 2008: 238); actors are knowledgeable and capable of dealing with structures in their own specific way. And therefore social change (and the way structures are formed) in social systems is possible through the action of these same actors. Structures can both be constraining *and* enabling. They provide the rules under which action occurs, and therewith limit the possible courses of action, but at the same time enable actors to create new ways of acting. According to Giddens it is one of the tasks of social scientists to analyse the conditions under which the structures of social systems are either enabling or constraining for actors.

Long and van der Ploeg argue (in Booth 1994) that the integration of structural and actor-oriented analysis of development processes cannot simply be integrated in a new theoretical framework as proposed by Giddens (and others later on), without reconstituting the concepts of ‘actor’ and ‘structure’ in a significant way. For theorisation about social change, they propose an *actor-oriented approach*, which we will now turn to.

Around 1977, the actor-oriented paradigm developed as an answer to the structural analysis in development processes (Long and Long 1992). This paradigm acknowledged the influence of outside forces, but found it unsatisfactory to fully base one’s analysis on the explanation of these structures only. Actor-oriented types of analysis therefore put more emphasis on the role of social actors and how they deal with existing structures and institutions in their own personal and specific ways. Actors are not passive recipients of outside forces, but – and here they agree with Giddens – are *knowledgeable* and *capable* to process information and strategise their activities. These characteristics of social actors are to be found in their explanation of the concept of agency:

... the notion of agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Within the limits of information, uncertainty and the other constraints (e.g. physical, normative or politico-economic) that exist, social actors are ‘knowledgeable’ and ‘capable’. They attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and monitor continuously their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviour and taking note of the various contingent circumstances (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 66).

Agency is related to the power of actors to be able ‘to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events’ (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 66). Actors are able to change ‘how things ought to be done’ through their relation with other actors.

Long and van der Ploeg note that the interpretation of agency differs by culture; it can even differ by segment of the same society. The notions of what agency is could highlight how interpersonal relations are managed and how control is exerted on other actors. With regard to

rural development, this means ‘analysing how differential conceptions of power, influence, knowledge and efficacy may shape the responses and strategies of the different actors’ (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 68). They furthermore note that agency can be attributed to social actors, but these do not necessarily need to be individuals. Social actors are those who can meaningfully be attributed with the qualities of agency (as highlighted above), such as churches, political parties, or organisations like Prolinnova.

Hence, agency helps to understand why actors react differently to the same kind of external forces or structures. Actors have their own modes of operation, or ‘projects’, which they constructed themselves on the basis of different criteria of interests, experiences and perspectives. To come to an understanding of why some actors act differently than others, or how these differential patterns of social behaviour come about, Long and van der Ploeg (1994) plea for a deconstruction of the notion of structure. First of all, as discussed previously, structures cannot be seen as an all encompassing explanation of why actors act and behave in certain ways. Then, at the same time, the actor-oriented methodology does not neglect the existence and potential influence of wider structural settings. Structures are produced and reproduced through the social relations and projects of actors, which explains why structures can change continuously, but also gives a point of reference for the origin and development of actors’ projects.

As becomes clear from the abovementioned, Long and van der Ploeg stress the centrality of structure, agency and heterogeneity (as the outcome of different projects) in the actor-oriented approach. An approach that should not be confused with action research or the design of intervention programmes, but can be useful as a theoretical and methodological approach to the understanding of social processes in agricultural and development processes. The actor-oriented types of analysis have had a major impact on how theorisation and research developed within the school of rural development sociology of Wageningen University (Long and Long 1992; Long and van der Ploeg 1994; Long 2001). To analyse a specific local situation, the actor-oriented approach is helpful to discover the internal dynamics of a local system.

2.2 Theories of policy processes

There is a vast amount of literature concerning the analysis of policy processes. Within this literature many different approaches and models are discussed in the search of a theoretical sound explanation of policy processes. In reviews¹ authors make – often – useful efforts to organise and categorise all these different models and approaches (either chronologically, according disciplines or otherwise). It has therefore been necessary to make deliberate choices of what literature to read and apply for this theoretical framework. The practical link of the research, which concerns the rural setting of a developing country, determined the criteria to narrow down literature possibilities. For the theoretical background of this research with regard to an explanation of what policy exactly is and how to perceive a policy process, is mainly looked at literature used and written by some of the leading development institutes, such as the Department for International Development (DFID), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). One of the major advantages of these writings, is the fact that

¹ Such as Bacchi 1999; Keeley and Scoones 1999; Sutton 1999; Pasteur 2001; Stone 2001 and Sabatier 2007.

they combine academic literature with experience from the field; the authors are concerned with how to 'practice' development.

2.2.1 Policy: a definition

While going through abovementioned reviews, it turned out that most of the authors find it difficult to define policy in one working definition. This is due to the fact that policy is something dynamic and not static. As a British civil servant said, cited in Keeley and Scoones (1999: 4): 'Policy is rather like the elephant – you know it when you see it but you cannot easily define it'. In the *Oxford dictionary* (2009) policy is described as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual'. But the concept of policy is not often easily captured like that. According to Keeley and Scoones, the traditional starting point to define policy is by the way that it is perceived in the linear model (which will be further discussed in section 2.2.2). Herein, policy is seen as the decisions that are taken by those who are responsible for a given policy area. These decisions take shape in formal statements according to which, will be acted upon by the bureaucracy. Keeley and Scoones² are keen to warn us not to perceive policy in such a linear fashion. Instead, they mention four other characteristics noted by other observers (like Smith 1976 and Hill 1997). Namely: policy generally consists of a broad course of action; it exists of a web of interrelated decisions; evolves over time, and; is inherently political. These characteristics do not emphasise on the idea of putting policy into practice. While Shankland (2000) in his report *Analysing policy for sustainable livelihoods*, puts more emphasis on seeing policy as something that is not only written on paper but is put in practice as well. He applies the following definition:

... the determination of a course of public (that is, government) action and to the process of putting it into practice. Indeed, the translation of policy into practice is itself an inseparable part of policy-making ... (Shankland 2000: 6).

Most contemporary policy analysts (such as Grindle and Thomas 1990; Keeley and Scoones 1999; Mayers 2003; Young 2009) agree with the idea that policy is part of the way it has been put in practice. For example, Mayers defines policies very straightforwardly, in his paper *Doing policy work*, for the IIED, by saying 'we define policies as "what organisations do"' (Mayers 2003: 1). Turning back again to Shankland's definition, there is another striking element to be found: he sees policy as something belonging to the government. While Young (2009) underlines that policy does not necessarily belongs exclusively to the government *only*, it can also concern an organisation or individual.

Besides this (mainly academic) discussion on how to define policy, the definition currently being used within the Prolinnova network is analysed here:

... policy can be perceived as the determination of a course of action, which: Is not only part of the government but other organisations as well; shapes the framework for decisions to be taken in the future; often has a preliminary defined purpose, with some kind of notion of the ideal situation, and; is something not only written on paper but is part of (daily) practice as well (Prolinnova 2010; see Annex 1).

The definition of policy that shall be used in this report integrates the definition used by Prolinnova with the abovementioned (prevailingly academic) considerations. Policy is perceived here as the determination of a course of action, which (Grindle and Thomas 1990; Keeley and Scoones 1999; Mayers 2003; Young 2009):

² In accordance with several other authors, such as Grindle and Thomas 1990, Blaikie and Soussan, Maetz 2009 and Young 2009.

- Is not only part of the government but other organisations or individuals as well;
- Is based on a web of interrelated decisions;
- Shapes the framework for decisions to be taken in the future;
- Often has a preliminary defined purpose, with some kind of notion of the ideal situation;
- Is something not only written on paper but is part of (daily) practice as well; and
- Evolves over time.

The third and the last points mentioned above, seemingly overlap, which is further discussed in the section on the critics on the linear model.

Even though policy is something not only attached to the rules and regulations of governments, in this report is mainly looked at the policy of a governmental institution (the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA)). Within the government, the formulation of policies can take the shape of, for example a white paper or budget speech, while its execution is generally translated into projects, programmes and so on. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

2.2.2 The linear model

As stated before, policy evolves over time. In order to come to an understanding of policy from the making to the implementation, one inevitably has to take a look at the whole process of policy change. The most well-known and traditionally used model to describe the policy process, is the linear or rational model. After the introduction of the linear model in the academic world, many new models have been developed by policy analysts. Yet, the original model is elaborated upon here, because it is very straightforward and is still very influential in theorising about policy processes.

Within the linear model, policy-making is seen as a problem-solving process. Decisions are made in a series of sequential phases (see Figure 1). These phases are (Sutton 1999):

1. Recognising and defining the nature of the issue to be dealt with
2. Identifying possible courses of action to deal with the issue
3. Weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each of these alternatives
4. Choosing the option which offers the best solution
5. Implementing the policy
6. Possibly evaluating the outcome

The model assumes that policymakers are able to consider all possible options; calculating all the social, political and economic costs and benefits of public policy. In addition, it is assumed that the policymakers approach the issues rationally, and make their decision after a balanced, objective and analytical consideration (Sutton 1999).

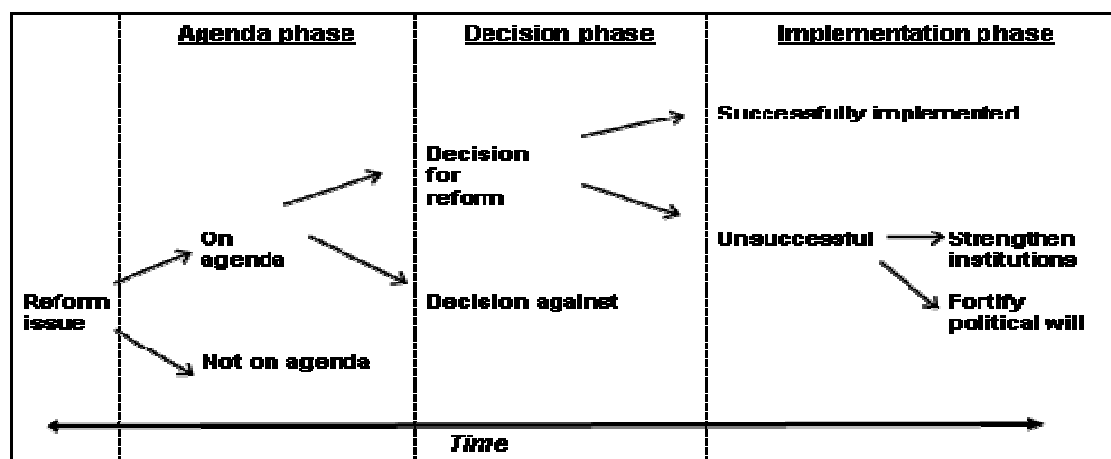


Figure 1: The linear model (Grindle and Thomas 1990: 1165)

At first sight, the model seems very straightforward and gives a clear insight into the policy process. Yet, the linear model has been criticised for many reasons. The main points of critique on the rational model are summarised by Sutton (1999) as follows:

- Within the linear model, failure of policies is often not sought for in the policy itself but rather blamed on political or managerial failure in implementing it.
- This model assumes that policymakers have access to full information concerning the problem, while they often do not have full access to all (available) information.
- Policymakers are wrongly assumed to be objective and neutral while they consider relevant information.
- Policymakers are expected to come up with the best policy option regarding the problem, but there are often more interests and factors at play than (only) finding the best solution.
- ‘Expert’ participation is essential in this problem-solving process, which leaves little room for ‘lay people’ to participate.
- Knowledge is considered to be neutral, apolitical and free of values, while it often is not.

Taking these points of critique in consideration, it becomes clear that the linear model can be used in understanding the policy process, but that it is too simple to use it in an analysis of the policy context that is influenced by many uncertain and variable factors. One of the consequences that followed from this critique, is the emergence of several new models from different approaches in policy analysis within the academic literature.³ Three important lessons can be learned from these newly developed models. The first is the increasing emphasis that has been put on the interplay between knowledge, power and the subjectivity of actors. The different interests, perspectives and power influences of actors have therefore become part of the analysis. The second lesson is the notion of perceiving policy as an ongoing process in which implementation – and maybe even impacts – are part of the whole. And the third is the general agreement that policy processes are ‘complex and messy’ (Juma and Clark 1995; Keeley and Scoones 1999; Sutton 1999; Maetz 2009).

³ Think for example of the incremental model (or ‘muddling through’), the knowledge utilisation school, policy paradigms and network approaches. Summaries of these models can be found in the literature reviews mentioned above.

2.2.3 The framework of Keeley and Scoones

Despite of the vast amount of critique with regard to the linear model, many policy debates still concern questions of which tools to apply in order to solve certain problems. Policymakers could never fully abandon the underlying idea of the rational model because this would imply a loss of faith that any policy reform could make a difference in an intended direction. One of the newly developed frameworks that seriously considered the lessons learnt from the critique on the linear model within the existing literature, and adequately combined this with experience in the field, is the policy framework⁴ of Keeley and Scoones. They have done considerable research on environmental policy processes in the field. Considered the relevance of the framework and the fact that they follow the same line of interest (environmental and sustainable developments in developing countries), the policy framework of Keeley and Scoones is used here as the theoretical background for the methodology of the research.

Keeley and Scoones developed the framework for the Environment Group of IDS after considerable scrutiny of all different kinds of themes, approaches and perspectives on the analysis of policy processes. The innovativeness of their work is to be found in the integration of three different but overlapping perspectives in policy analysis and their recognition of the liaison between policy and politics. The framework can be used as a model that offers concepts and insights for the policy process. As the Environment Group of IDS puts it: ‘However, this framework is perhaps best envisaged as a menu – a selection of prompts to ask useful questions of policy – rather than an all-encompassing conceptual map’ (IDS 2006: 9). Answering questions related to the three themes of the framework helps us come to an understanding of a specific policy process. The framework consists of the following three interconnected themes:

- Narratives and discourse;
- Actors and networks; and
- Politics and interests.

The framework is applied to the methodology of the research, and will be further explained in Chapter 3.

2.3 Participatory approaches in agricultural development

During the 1980s critique grew on the conventional method in agricultural research and development, which in the literature is also referred to as the ‘Transfer of Technology’ model. This model stands for the organisation in agricultural research and development in which new technologies are developed through on-station experiments, and these are then subsequently being transferred to farmers in a top-down fashion. The on-station solutions offered to farmers in this fashion – something that later on characterised the green revolution – were developed under standardised production conditions made possible by high capital investment (such as irrigation and the use of fertilisers). Smallholder farmers in ecologically fragile regions were unable to create similar conditions. This eventually led to the conclusion that agricultural research and extension organised in this way failed to address the problems faced by resource-poor farmers and therewith failed to improve the livelihoods of poor people in the rural areas of developing countries (Neubert 2000; Thompson *et al.* 2007; Reed 2008).

⁴ From here onwards, the words framework and model (referring to the work of Keeley and Scoones) are used interchangeably.

In response to this critique, the popularity of participatory approaches in agricultural development grew. The publication of the book *Farmer First* in 1989 by Chambers *et al.* has been of significant relevance of the development of the ‘participation era’. In this book it is argued that farmers should not be seen as the passive recipients of externally driven technology, but rather as active participants that should be placed in the centre of innovation processes. According to Thompson *et al.*, the idea of participatory approaches was to:

... help agricultural R&D [Research and Development] to respond to problems, needs and opportunities identified by local agents; identify and evaluate technology options that build on local knowledge and resources; ensure that technical innovations are appropriate for local socio-economic, cultural and political contexts; and promote wider sharing and use of agricultural innovations (Thompson et al. 2007: 40).

The strength of participatory approaches is to be found in the fact that they search for solutions to complex problems under real-life conditions. This, in addition, creates more appreciation of local technical knowledge in the search for local innovations in agriculture. Participatory approaches in agricultural research include farmers as end-users in the development and adaptation of innovations, which increases the likelihood that farmers are able and willing to implement and sustain adapted technologies or ways of working. The input of farmers is furthermore expected to contribute to policy in research and development that more effectively contributes to agricultural productivity and poverty alleviation (Thompson *et al.* 2007).

During the 1990s many development institutions, organisations and projects moved away from the top-down intervention methods and adopted the participatory way of working. Many different approaches within the mode of participation were developed since then.⁵ The term ‘participation’ was broadly used within agriculture and development and became vulnerable for many different interpretations. Together with its popularity, critique of the participatory approaches grew. The fact that the term was sometimes – too – easily used in the development world, has been one of the major critiques (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Reed 2008). Before these critiques will be further explored, it is therefore relevant to clarify what is meant with ‘participation’ in this report.

Within Prolinnova, the use of the term participation is mainly expressed through the main central concept of the network, namely: Participatory Innovation Development. PID is seen as the expansion of the forgoing approach, namely; Participatory Technology Development (PTD). PTD is an approach to research in which end-users are involved, who together with researchers, work on the development of new technology. Research within this approach is mainly based on natural sciences (Neubert 2000; Thompson *et al.* 2007). Prolinnova introduced the term PID to shift its focus from technology development *only*, to a broader perspective which included organisational and socio-cultural change. Within Prolinnova, PID is seen as an approach to research, extension, but above all, to development. It concerns the inclusion of relevant actors but especially emphasises the importance of including innovative farmers. Key entrance towards local development is searched for within the network through the development of local innovations. This concerns processes of joint experimentation in order to develop new and better ways of doing things. So PID is seen as a means to an end in development, in order to improve the livelihoods of local people, with the main focus on those

⁵ Think of Farmer-Action Research, Participatory Technology Developments, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Stakeholder Analysis, Community Based Natural Resource Management and the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (Thompson *et al.* 2007).

living in marginal areas (Rai 2006; Adams and Fernando 2009; Prolinnova 2009).⁶ But, as is written in a working paper recently published by Prolinnova, the way in which the term PID is used and applied throughout the network, can differ from place to place.⁷

As has been said above, critique of participatory approaches within literature has grown over the years. So, it is for example argued by several authors (like Neubert (2000), Thompson *et al.* (2007) or Reed (2008)) that participatory approaches fail to address the key challenges within agricultural research and development. Like Neubert, who poses the question of whether it is really effective to support the development of marginal groups in marginal regions; could it potentially not be more useful to seek for solutions in high potential areas in addressing issues such as the world food problem and the alleviation of poverty (Neubert 2000). This resonates well with the statement that participatory approaches fail to address dynamics of broader political economic contexts in which farmers operate. As is argued by Thompson *et al.* (2007), the success of participatory approaches is very much limited by the fact that the focus is on local challenges, and does not touch upon the influences related to higher governance scales.

Then, there is also the risk of losing credibility over decisions through the participation of different actors, because they may not have sufficient expertise on highly technical issues. In this context, participation processes are sometimes referred to as ‘talking shops’; many people who are brought together but with insufficient knowledge about the topic and very little decisive action (Bojorquez-Tapia *et al.* 2004 and Vedwan *et al.* 2008 in Reed 2008). The involvement of a variety of actors can therewith, instead of being the strength of participatory approaches become a weakness and become a concern to the credibility on the decisions that are taken. Moreover, bringing different actors together can be a time- and money consuming activity which can cause the processes to be very slow and too expensive (Neubert 2000).

A last point of critique mentioned by Neubert (2000) is the fact that participatory approaches in agricultural development often concern only locally useful solutions. It therefore becomes very difficult to tackle problems of marginal farmers on a larger scale. Neubert summarises his critique as follows: ‘as long as the problem of scaling-up has not been solved, even successful projects will not be cost-efficient’ (Neubert 2000: 10).

Thus, the participatory approaches can be seen as a good alternative to the conventional Transfer of Technology model in agricultural research and development. Yet, in current literature different issues are raised, which highlight the fact that participatory approaches are not the ultimate way of working either. However, Prolinnova sees participatory approaches as the main important way through which development in agriculture should be accomplished.

The concepts and theories discussed here, form the main theoretical background for the set up and design of the research, which is explored in the next chapter.

6 Those considered to be marginal, are the more resource poor farmers who have benefited the least from conventional practices in rural development and are highly dependent on local natural resources.

7 This is formulated in the working paper as follow: ‘The aim here is not to proclaim universal truths, but to search for a level of common understanding that is essential for good implementation of PROLINNOVA-related activities on the ground and for good functioning of the network at national and international level. We should be able to agree on some key principles, though network members may not agree on all details’ (Prolinnova 2009: 1).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used during the research. The first section gives an explanation about the research design and clarifies when and how secondary and primary data were gathered. In section 3.2 the research questions are given. The third section discusses the policy change model of Keeley and Scoones that was used as a guideline throughout the research. The section furthermore explains relevant concepts related to the model, which together formed the conceptual framework of this research. Section 3.4 discusses the fieldwork undertaken for the research, and why Limpopo was chosen as the field study site. Section 3.5 explains the methods that are used for the data collection. This chapter ends with an explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of the research.

3.1 Research design

The first activities regarding this research were undertaken in January 2009. Actual gathering of primary data at the field study site took place between 16th and 28 August in Limpopo. Primary data was collected mainly through semi-structured interviews with key informants in the Netherlands and in Limpopo, South Africa (see map in Figure 3). Secondary data was gathered before and after the fieldtrip. This was mainly done through the analysis of relevant documents and literature related to the topic. Besides the more formal interviews kept with key persons related to the research topic, there was contact with the team members of the Prolinnova network on a regular basis in order to gain a thorough understanding of the network and its activities. For the gathering of both the primary and secondary data, the research methods were guided by the policy change model of Keeley and Scoones, which is further explained in section 3.3.

3.2 Research questions

As formulated in Chapter 1, the main objective of the research was to be able to draw theoretical and practical lessons from the analysis of the policy change processes that have taken place within the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA). In order to achieve this objective, the following main research question was applied:

What have been the main factors that have influenced the policymaking processes within the LDA such that they are now able to work with participatory research and development approaches such as PID?

Subsequent to this main question the following sub-questions guided the research:

1. What can be learned from this documentation for the wider Prolinnova network in South Africa in relation to policy change processes in favour of the application of participatory approaches in agricultural research and development?
2. What is to be learned from the use of the policy change model of Keeley and Scoones as the guiding methodology of the research and in the analysis of the collected data?

3.3 Policy change framework by Keeley and Scoones

Information gathered during the literature review on policy processes (see Chapter 2) led to the choice of making use of the model of Keeley and Scoones. The model, together with its

related concepts, served as a guide for the questions to be asked in the interviews. Furthermore have the different parts of the model contributed to the way in which the analysis of the policy processes of the case study is done.

In the model (Figure 2), Keeley and Scoones integrated three overlapping perspectives on policy change processes. The following three themes cover their model:

- Politics and interests (what are the underlying power dynamics?)
- Actors and networks (who are involved and how are they connected?)
- Discourse and narratives (what is a 'policy narrative'? How is it framed through science, research etc?)

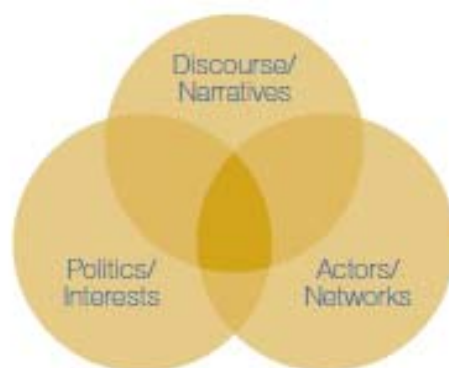


Figure 2: The policy process framework developed by Keeley and Scoones (IDS 2003).

Before elaborating on these three interrelated themes, it should be noted that Keeley and Scoones emphasise the central role that knowledge plays in the policy-making process. In order to understand how a certain policy comes to life, it is important to understand the role that knowledge plays during the process. Policy contests, they argue, are substantially 'contests about knowledge'. In their view, knowledge does not only come in *after* the signalling and formulation of problems in society; knowledge already determines *if* and *how* problems are signalled and formulated. The model of Keeley and Scoones is based on the assumption that policy change is inherently related to the establishment of certain types of knowledge. In order to gain a thorough understanding of the framework, the three themes will be further explained here.

3.3.1 Politics and interests

This theme of the framework concerns the political and bureaucratic context in which many different actors try to pursue their own political interests.⁸ By analysing the overall organisational structure of the policy process and the different interests, one can come to an understanding why certain knowledge prevails and influences the outcome of the policy process. Within this approach a difference is made between the political and the bureaucratic context, which shall shortly be discussed below (Keeley and Scoones 1999; Reij and Waters-Bayer 2001; IDS 2006).

⁸ Politics is described by Giddens (2003: 583) as: the means by which power is employed to influence the nature and content of governmental activities. The sphere of the 'political' includes the activities of those in government, but also the actions of many other groups and individuals. There are many ways in which people outside the governmental apparatus seek to influence it.

The political context is understood here as the context through which activities associated with governing a country or area are organised. So it concerns the current regime of the country (and/or a specific locality) and the way through which particular state agencies and societal actors compete for power and the allocation of resources (in terms of money and material) within the government. Different political contexts shape policy-making in fundamental ways. Actors within specific political contexts sometimes form policy communities that are ‘examples of tight and highly coherent policy networks where there is substantial agreement over key ‘policy principles’’ (Daugbjerg 1997, quoted in Keeley and Scoones 1999: 19). Knowledge, is not necessarily the prime mover within these networks, most importantly are the core values, beliefs and the political interests of individuals and the groups as such.

Political debates often happen under the guise of scientific and value-free language. However, Keeley and Scoones (1999) highlight that the language that is used is always interest-loaded and somehow political. Different authorities rule over the allocation of the available resources, while they have their own interests in how this is done. Close examination of how these authorities are defined and bring about their work, could also highlight the relationship between marginalised groups and elites. To come to an understanding of the political context, one could think of factors such as the degree of democracy, the degree of decentralisation and the geographical variations in the government structures. Getting insight into the historical context of the state formation is crucial in this matter.

The bureaucratic context involves the organisational structure that results in particular styles of managing policy issues, and therefore has an important role in shaping policy processes. The bureaucratic system often forms the link between national, provincial and local levels in which bureaucrats play an important role. While bureaucrats are seen in the linear model as the neutral executors of a certain policy, Keeley and Scoones emphasise on the fact that they often have their personal agenda. Bureaucrats, especially ‘street-level workers’ have their own interests and ideas and can have substantial ability to change policy outcomes into for them preferred directions.⁹ The capacity of a bureaucratic system has implications on the ability to facilitate the course of action prescribed by a policy. Each policy domain has different bureaucratic systems (ibid).

3.3.2 Policy discourses and narratives

A ‘discourse’ can be seen as a particular way of interpreting the truth. Within the political sphere, this often implies the use of certain categories and classifications. It concerns the language that is used. In a discourse analysis, one tries to attempt to uncover values and ideologies that underlie the words and categories used in the political sphere. Analysis of the ruling discourse can be accomplished by the description of ruling narratives. A policy narrative is described by Sutton as ‘a ‘story’, having a beginning, middle and an end, outlining a specific course of events which has gained the status of conventional wisdom within the development arena’ (Sutton 1999: 7). On the difference between discourse and narratives she mentions that:

Policy narratives are distinct from discourses, which refer to a wider set of values and a way of thinking. A narrative can be part of a discourse if it describes a specific ‘story’ which is in line with the broader set of values and priorities of a discourse (Sutton 1999: 7).

⁹ In his work, Lipsky (1980) gives further explanation on street-level bureaucrats and how these front-workers can have considerable influence on the policy process outcome.

Narratives often suit certain political interests and are easily communicated. By making use of this story-telling style, complex problems are simplified which makes it more easily to define courses of action. This brings forward specific solutions to the problem while marginalising other options. By means of these readily available ‘solutions’, narratives (and especially persisting narratives) can have long-lasting influence on the policy-making process (Keeley and Scoones 1999; Keeley 2001; Reij and Waters-Bayer 2001).

3.3.3 Actors and networks

Actors can be either individuals or organisations that are (more often than not) linked up with networks. Networks are defined here as a set of direct and indirect relationships and exchanges (interpersonal, inter-organisational and socio-technical) that usually transcend institutional domains and link together a variety of arenas. Networks are characterised by flows, content, span, density and multiplicity (Long 2001: 242). Within a network there often exists a shared vision about a certain topic. Through networks, narratives can be kept alive or newly (counter) narratives developed. Norms of what is good and what is bad get shape by the interaction between the actors of the network. Keeley (2001) underlines that by understanding the policy networks, one can more easily define why certain types of knowledge stay in place and where there is space in the policy arena for possible change. Structural analysis of the policy process highlights the aggregate pictures of interest groups and policy communities. Yet, by taking a look at the relationships between actors in a network, it becomes possible to analyse the micro level and see how agency and power of individuals can influence the policy-making process. Organisations eventually are aggregations of individuals; individuals who can exert their power and therewith influence others. To come to an understanding of how the interplay between actors and their networks can play an important role in the spread of knowledge during the policy process, Keeley and Scoones (1999) highlight the importance of actor-oriented approaches.

The model as described above, guided the research in the sense that the three parts of the framework illuminated what had to be discovered during the research *at least* in order to be able to find out which factors have played a relevant role during the policy change processes within the LDA in the past few years. See for an overview Table 1.

Table 1: Issues addressed during the research, based on the policy change framework of Keeley and Scoones (1999)

	Issue to be addressed	Research technique/tools
Politics and interests	Influence of actors on policy process within the LDA (people working at head office, extension agents and farmers); how 'democratic' is this process and can people participate	Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions Analysis of governmental documents Literature review
	Resources available for those who implemented the policy (the researchers, extension agents and others working for the LDA) and how they deal with specific policies; what are their own interests and what is their power to pursue these	Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews Analyse published documents of the project
	Official structure of the organisation of LDA	Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews Analyse published documents of the project
	Current policies with regard to participatory approaches in the LDA	Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews
Discourse and narratives	Analysis of use of specific words that are used with regard to the research question	Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews
	What are hot' issues; problems currently being addressed (especially with regard to participatory approaches)	Attending Provincial Skills Development Forum 2009 (August 2009) Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews
	What narratives have influenced policy-making in the past, and what narratives are currently believed in?	Literature review Analysis of governmental documents Semi-structured interviews
	Perceptions of groups of actors (such as the decision makers within the LDA, extension agents and the farmers) on participatory approaches, BASED and Prolinnova	Focus group discussions Semi-structured interviews
Actors and networks	Organisational structure of Prolinnova; who is involved in the network (locally, notionally and on the international level)	Institutional review Attending Prolinnova meetings Formal and informal interviews with the coordinators
	Which networks play a role in upholding current narratives and specific types of knowledges. And how are these networks established	Semi-structured interviews Literature review Analysis of governmental documents
	Actors involved during the BASED project	Semi-structured interviews Analyse published documents of the project
	Roles of different actors that positively/negatively influenced policy changes in favour of participatory approaches within the LDA	Semi-structured interviews
	Organisations working with the LDA with regard to PID implementation and participatory approaches	Semi-structured interviews Literature review Analysis of governmental documents

As becomes clear from the description of the model, to be able to analyse a policy process, attention needs to be paid to structures as well as the agency of actors. This corresponds with the actor-oriented approach (as discussed in Chapter 2), which has therefore determined the methodology applied for this research. The approach prescribes the importance of discussions with local actors in order to ‘discover’ the internal dynamics in a specific locality. The actors, who are part of the local situation, help alongside their stories and answers to identify social, political and economic processes relevant at the local level.

3.4 Methods of data collection

The first activities undertaken for this research were in January 2009 when an assignment was agreed upon between the researcher and ETC EcoCulture. The assignment was twofold. First, guidelines had to be written for the Prolinnova programme, and second, a MSc thesis for the chairgroup Rural Development Sociology had to be made of which the topic was related to the guidelines. The guidelines concerned the support of strengthening policy influence activities in the network. The request for someone to produce guidelines for Prolinnova originated from an international partners’ meeting of the network in Ghana in 2008. During this gathering it was concluded that there is an overall need within the Prolinnova network to increase the capacity of Prolinnova partners in policy dialogue and advocacy. This is because all country programmes are inevitably faced with the need to get involved in policy dialogue activities. The meeting was followed up by some e-mail correspondence between the Prolinnova secretariat and her partners. It was concluded from these e-mails that most country programmes preferred a specialised in-country meeting instead of an international workshop on policy influence activities. These in-country meetings were to be organised by the secretariat, who decided on their turn that guidelines were needed. These guidelines primarily had to be written for those who were going to keep the specialised meetings; the so-called backstoppers,¹⁰ but also had to be made ‘usable’ for the Prolinnova partners themselves. In sum, guidelines had to be developed to serve as a background note for capacity building in strategising and planning of policy influence activities within the Prolinnova programme.

The guidelines are made with the underlying idea that an applied policy analysis should lead to a design of intervention with appropriate policy influence activities for a specific situation and environment. This was based on the premise that an understanding of the policy process and one’s own position herein opens up possibilities to be engaged in policy work. To achieve this, the guidelines contain three sections, in which the following is discussed:

- Theoretical insights on policy processes;
- Information and tools to analyse past experiences in policy work, and;
- Tools to improve strategising and planning of policy influence activities.

To achieve this, an institutional review of the Prolinnova network and the organisation behind it had to be undertaken and a thorough enquiry was carried out in existing theories of policy processes. So, maybe not always exclusively, but certainly indirectly, the work done for the guidelines contributed to the research for this thesis. See Annex for the guidelines that were formulated for Prolinnova.

3.4.1 Case study

¹⁰ A term used within the Prolinnova network, referring to the person who helps a specific country programme by giving advice and support; this will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

The topic of this thesis is thus related to policy change processes with regard to activities undertaken within the Prolinnova network. Instead of examining *all* country programmes, it was decided to do a case study as the basis for the Msc thesis. This implied a qualitative research method that investigate one particular case from which generalised conclusions could potentially be drawn. Yin (1984) describes a case study as:

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 1984: 23).

Hence, one particular case had to be chosen. In Baxter (2008) 'a case' is described as 'a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context ... your unit of analysis' (Baxter 2008: 545). To pick out one of the country programmes, would have given a research topic too broad for the given time and capacity of the researcher. To prevent the pitfall of choosing a topic that is too broad, Yin (2003) proposes that the researcher should place boundaries to the research topic in order to be able to investigate it sufficiently within the researcher's capabilities. Therefore is chosen to look at the policy change processes within *one* organisation within *one* of the provinces in a country, in a given period of time.

3.4.2 Field site selection

Together with the secretariat of Prolinnova and in mutual agreement with the coordinators of the country programme, it was decided to focus the research on South Africa. There were three important reasons which made this country the best option for the research. First, the country programme of South Africa was interested to receive a student on PID matters and willing and able to help in the organisation of the research. Second, there was not the issue of a language barrier; almost all people speak English in South Africa. And third, the history of Limpopo offered a very interesting case with regard to the research question. The last reason relates to the fact that in this province the network of the Prolinnova country programme had been able to make some serious progress in terms of its organisation and results of undertaking activities in the past.

In Limpopo, the LDA turned out to be the most interesting and best suitable organisation for the research. The LDA is the main relevant actor within the province concerning agricultural research and development, and is a very important partner in the Prolinnova network of the province. Thanks to the contacts of Prolinnova within this organisation, and in collaboration with the local university, it was possible to carry out the research very effectively. The actual research in the province took place between 16 and 28 August 2009. Most of the interviews were held in the head office of the LDA, in the capital of Limpopo: Polokwane.¹¹ In addition to that, interviews were held at the local university (University of Limpopo) and a local office of the LDA (in Mutale municipality), and visits were organised to the two project sights of Prolinnova and two Colleges of Agriculture (see Figure 3: The map of Limpopo).

¹¹ Previously known as Pietersburg.

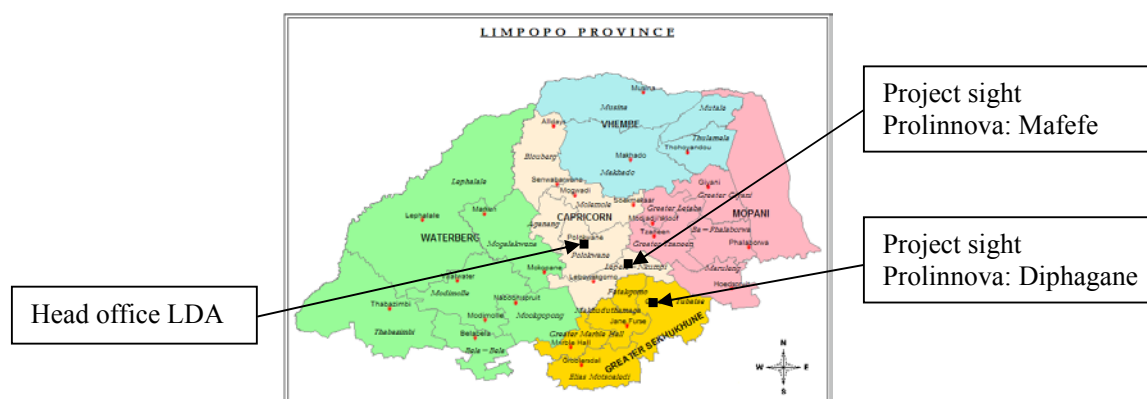


Figure 3: Limpopo Province, South Africa.

3.4.3 Primary data

To carry out the field research qualitative research methods are applied in order to gain understanding of the course of the processes over the years, and especially the view of the relevant actors with regard to these processes. It was relevant to find out *how* and *why* actors handled in their own specific ways. In order to collect the necessary data is made use of semi-structured interviews of key informants, focus group discussions and visits of the project sights.

According to Kumar, key informant interviews involve ‘interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject’ (Kumar 1989: 1). There are two things that characterise the key informant interview. First, only a small number of informants is selected to be interviewed, because they are most likely to possess relevant data with regard to the research topic. And second, key informant interviews are essentially qualitative interviews. These interviews should happen in an informal fashion with a comfortable atmosphere. It might occur that not all issues have been covered during the first session, which should lead to – when possible – a second interview session or any other way of correspondence (Kumar 1989). During the semi-structured interviews of key informants is made use of an interview guide; a written list of questions of topics that needed to be covered during the conversation. In some specific occasions instructions were included of particular things that had to be found out during an interview. According to Southwold (2002) there are four major advantages of this type of interviewing (of which only the last one mentioned was not to be the case during this research):

- I. The informant can express himself in his own terms.
- II. The interviewer can follow up any leads that arise during the interview.
- III. The data from interviews is comparable because the same topics have been covered with each informant.
- IV. The data can be analysed statistically if those interviewed had been selected using the principles of probability sampling.

The interview guide used during the interviews was formulated within the context of the model of Keeley and Scoones, as discussed in Section 3.3 and Table 1 (see Annex 3). The questions needed to be asked during the research were then further adjusted and adopted to the situation in Limpopo after extensive consultation with Mrs. Waters-Bayer (the country backstopper of South Africa) and Mr. Ramaru (who is very familiar with the research topic

thanks to his work experience within the LDA and the work he has done for Prolinnova). In addition to these exploratory conversations, several relevant documents published by Prolinnova and the LDA were studied in preparation of the interview guide.

During every interview it was tried to cover the three parts of the framework (actors/networks, politics/interests and discourses/narratives). Semi-structured interviews turned out to be a very useful way in trying to address the issues mentioned, because most actors were not able to say something about every issue. For example, an extension agent might not be aware of what specific discourses and narratives have led to decisions of which he is feeling the consequences. While on the other hand, a decision maker is able to tell what specific knowledge certain decisions are based upon, but maybe not willingly to tell about the underlying interests that have played a role during the time that these decisions were made. Therefore it was important to have a certain degree of flexibility during the interviews, in order to (fully) cover those issues that the interviewee knew of and was willingly to talk about. This flexibility in turn (which is not mentioned by Southwold (2002)), gives the respondent some 'freedom' to go ahead and talk about whatever he feels necessary to mention; there is no exact list that he has to adhere to.

Most of the interviews took place in Limpopo, but some of the key informants were interviewed in the Netherlands (before or after the field research); face-to-face, by Skype or through e-mail correspondence. The list of key informants who needed to be interviewed was composed in consultation with the secretariat of Prolinnova and partners in South Africa who were involved with the organisation of the research. For the list of interviewees, see Annex 2.

The two field trips organised to the project sights of Prolinnova in the province enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of the projects and provided an opportunity to see extension agents as well as the farmers themselves in their own working environment. After each field visit, a focus group discussion was organised together with the farmers and extension agents who were present. The criteria of selection were based on their involvement in the projects. A focus group discussion can be described as a form of group interviewing. The researcher organises this event in which a group of people are brought together who then discuss about a certain issue raised by the facilitator. The main purpose of the discussions was to learn more about the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of the respondents regarding their participation in agricultural research and development projects of the LDA. The focus group discussion is a useful research technique because some feelings or opinions are more likely to be expressed within such a group setting than during an individual interview. In addition to that, the group process can bring about emotional processes that are less likely to occur during a one-to-one conversation (USAID 1996; Gibbs 1997).

3.4.4 Secondary data

Secondary data for this research were compiled in preparation for the actual fieldwork in Limpopo, but it also formed for a large part complementary information to the primary data. Secondary data was mainly gathered through the reading and analysis of scientific, governmental and other institutional documents. This information was especially useful to gain hard facts and statistics with regard to the history of the application of participatory approaches by the LDA, which further enabled the researcher to place the case study within

the right context. To gain more, specific, knowledge on policy processes, a workshop¹² and a conference¹³ on policy influence activities were attended in addition to the literature review.

Broadly speaking, the secondary data covered the following main topics:

- I. Theories of policy processes;
- II. The organisation of Prolinnova (internationally and in South Africa);
- III. The organisation of the LDA;
- IV. Background information with regard to the BASED project and,
- V. The use of participatory approaches in agricultural research and development in South Africa and specifically Limpopo.

For the second issue mentioned (the organisation of Prolinnova, internationally and in South Africa), an institutional review was done. Therefore, the researcher worked for several months at the secretariat of Prolinnova (in ETC in Leusden, from January to October 2009). This enabled the researcher to be in contact with the coordinators of Prolinnova (working at the secretariat) on an almost daily basis and to join in relevant meetings held in the Netherlands. In addition to that, several informal interviews were held with the coordinators to gain a thorough understanding of the network.

An overview of all activities undertaken to perform this research is given in Annex 4.

3.4.5 Data analysis

All interviews that were carried out for this research have been recorded on tape. The information gained from these interviews, together with complementary data from the literature review, was used in order to make an overview of the chronological events and change moments within the LDA that contributed to the current situation in which participatory approaches are partly being accepted and practised by the organisation. All recorded conversations have been written out and coded alongside the categories as proposed in Table 1. To analyse the course of processes over time is especially drawn from the actor-oriented perspectives. In the explanation of what happened over the years, the stories and descriptions of the different actors have played a major role.

3.4.6 Strengths and limitations of the research

There have been several issues that constrained the research. First of all, the original plan was to write this thesis as the result of a literature study *only*, because of lack of financial resources on the side of the researcher. Even though the researcher very much agreed upon the usefulness of doing a case study and the field trip to South Africa, the time that the researcher was able to spend there was therefore limited. This implied several disadvantages. Firstly, there was hardly any time to meet informants in an informal setting. Apart from a few exceptions, all interviews were held in a relatively formal setting. Being in the field for such a short period of time furthermore limits the possibility for the researcher to 'win' the trust of informants, due to which people might be less willingly to share more confidential information. Plus, there were about two or three people with whom it would have been interesting to meet with and interview, but who were not present or able to meet during the

¹² Workshop on influencing and assisting national policy processes organised by RUAF Foundation (Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food security) in collaboration with Prolinnova.

¹³ A conference organised by Wageningen international, with the title 'Innovation dialogue - Being strategic in the face of complexity - Implications for global development capacities'.

time of the field trip. Yet, it should be said that the time spent in South Africa, was used extremely efficiently. Thanks to the excellent organisation of the Prolinnova partners in South Africa, the researcher was able to perform the research in a short period of time. Every day was planned in advance and filled up with research activities. The institutional links of Prolinnova with the LDA and other organisations furthermore contributed to the fact that many key informants were interviewed during the time in Limpopo. In some occasions it was even possible for the researcher to question an informant a second (or even third) time when additional information was needed. Furthermore, some of the key informants were in the Netherlands in the time of the research, so gathering of the primary data was not restricted to the two weeks of field research only.

Second, much of the primary data gathered through the interviews was based on what people remember of the specific period of time of the case study. Some of the facts and claims mentioned during the interviews could, and have been, verified through the analysis of published documents, but part of the used data is purely based on what people remembered. Yet, the primary data is mainly used to analyse the roles and perspectives of the different actors, so to a certain extent what the informants remembered and talked about highlights what has been relevant and important for them.

Third, the policy change model of Keeley and Scoones offers a combination of three analytical perspectives to improve the understanding of complex and dynamic processes of policy change *in general* and is therefore relatively abstract. The framework does not offer practical tools and insights to accurately apply this framework in a practical situation such as a case study. There are some published scientific writings in which this model is used to analyse case studies (think of Keeley and Scoones in 2003), these however give very little indication of what to do to put the framework in practice. This methodological step of developing a practical research guide out of a relatively abstract framework had to be done by the researcher herself in consultation of other literature, the supervisor from the university, the help of the Prolinnova secretariat and partners from South Africa. This last concern is elaborated further in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

LIMPOPO AND THE PROLINNOVA PROGRAMME

The first part of the chapter gives some general background information of South Africa and the Limpopo province. In addition to this, it elaborates on the use of participatory approaches and agricultural research and development in the country. The second part of this chapter concerns the Prolinnova programme. It gives an explanation of the international programme as well as the country programme of South Africa. A short history is given, as well as the way it is organised and operating at the moment; special attention is given to the situation in Limpopo.

4.1 Agriculture in South Africa

South Africa is situated in the most southern part of the African continent. The Kingdom of Lesotho is surrounded by South Africa, and Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe are neighbouring countries (see Figure 4). The first overseas settlers came from The Netherlands and established a colony in the country in 1652. The British arrived around 1795, which marked the beginning of decennia of rivalry between them, the French, German and Dutch¹⁴ settlers. After years of struggle over land and resources between the colonial settlers and the original inhabitants of the country, the Republic of South Africa was established in 1961. The country covers 1,221,000 square kilometres and is home to about 48,783,000 people. The population of South Africa consists of several different population groups with diverse ethnical backgrounds. Ethnical divisions have strongly influenced the history of the country which found its depth point in a period of official segregation of black and white, which is better known as the ‘apartheid’.

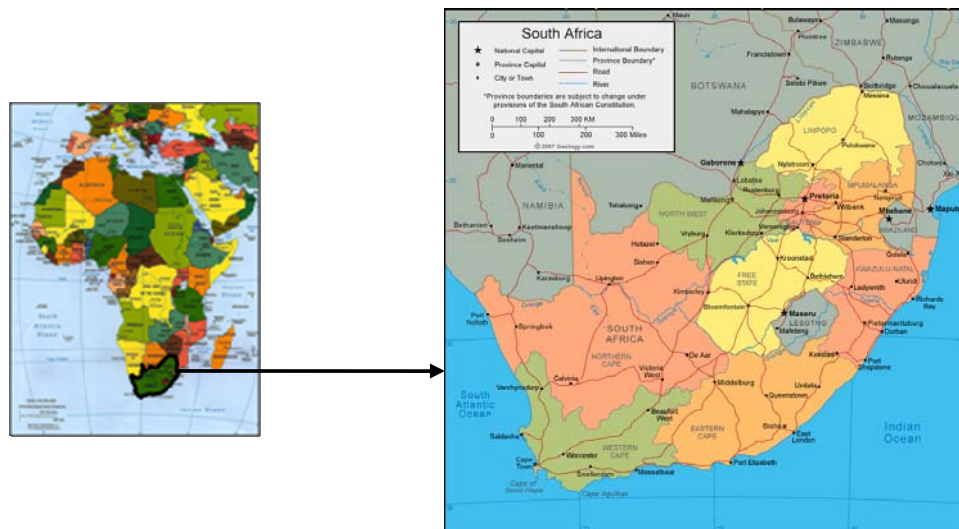


Figure 4: South Africa.

In 1948 the National Party had gained office and started the official institutionalisation of racial segregation in the country. The implementation of the apartheid, which is also referred

¹⁴ The Dutch were also known as the ‘Boers’ and later on as the ‘Afrikaners’.

to as the 'separate development' since the 1960s, had been made possible through the Population Registration Act. Due to this legislative measurement, all South Africans were classified as Bantu (the black Africans), coloured (those of different races), white or (a category that was added later on:) Asian. Every category or race of people had its own restrictions and rules, all were in favour of the whites and in against non-whites. The new racist laws had far-reaching consequences for the daily lives of the black people living in the country. In the urban areas there were many restrictions in the economical and residential sphere for the black people. In the rural areas they were increasingly being marginalised and disadvantaged through all kind of agrarian policies that guaranteed the prosperity of white farmers. Besides the support to white farmers through a system of all kind of subsidies, grants and extension services, it was made even easier for the white Africans to claim arable land (Encyclopedia Britannica 2010; van Leynseele, forthcoming).

The apartheid regime from 1948 to 1994 had far-reaching consequences for the way agriculture was organised in the country, the effects are still felt today. One of the consequences is the deteriorated areas of the former 'homelands'. These homelands were eight "national" units introduced in 1951 by the National Party. The homeland system had been set up so they could provide for cheap black labour for the key sectors of the economy. By 1970 the Bantu Homelands Citizen Act was passed, which made every black African a citizen of one of the homelands. It didn't take long before the African people were forced to resettle in one of the appointed areas. Land was seen as a common good in the homelands, something that changed only after the country's first democratic elections in April 1994 (Botha *et al.* 2005; Thornton 2009). After the apartheid was abolished, agricultural policies mainly focused on food security and poverty alleviation through land reform and the reallocation of commonage in the former homelands.

Currently, agriculture plays an important role in the economic stability and development of the country. Though it does not contribute significantly to the GDP (this percentage lowered from 5% in 1985 to 3.4% in 2003), activities in the agricultural sector are important multipliers for the economy. South Africa is one of the few countries in the world that is able to export agricultural products on a regular basis. Hence, the agricultural sector is good for sufficient provision of food in the country as well as in helping to generate foreign exchange earnings.

In 2007 8.5% of the labour force was employed in the agricultural sector (Statistics South Africa 2007). The people working in the agricultural sector are mainly low-paid unskilled labourers. According to Botha *et al.* (2005) the agricultural sector is changing from labour intensive production, to more highly advanced technologies and more capital intensive production.

4.2 Agriculture in Limpopo

Limpopo covers an area of about 12,460,000 ha which is divided into six districts (Figure 3, Chapter): Bohlabela, Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe and Waterberg. According to Macleod *et al.* (2008), Limpopo is arguably the poorest province in South Africa. The total population of Limpopo in 2002 was around 5,273,650. With the great majority of the people (89%) living in rural areas and 88% of the total land area used as farmland, agriculture is a predominant factor of the economy of the province.

The most limiting resource in agriculture is water. Large areas in the province are prone to severe droughts and agricultural activities of – especially smallholder – farmers are dependent on rain. Research and programmes of the government are often focused on trying to minimise the effects of drought on the crops of the farmers. This is done through massive irrigation schemes and the search for drought tolerant crops. According to the LDA (2009), irrigation is currently needed for about 137,000 ha (1.3% of the total farmland) of the province (Botha *et al.* 2005; Statistics South Africa 2006; LDA 2009).

Agriculture in Limpopo is divided into two different forms of farming systems; the smallholder black farmers and the large scale “commercial” (in the great majority white) farmers. Even though there are only about 5,000 commercial farmers, they occupy 70% of the farmland, with 303,000 smallholder farmers covering about 30%. Relatively few commercial farms are owned by black farmers. White farmers, who have been very much advantaged due to the previous apartheid regime in the country, generally own the best arable land of the province. They operate on large farms and make use of advanced production technologies. According to Macleod *et al.* (2008), significant contribution to economic activity in the province is mainly provided by the commercial farms. The smallholder farms are mostly located in the former homeland areas and are characterised by low external inputs and small size of farm holdings (Botha *et al.* 2005; LDA 2009). Most of the smallholder farms produce crops for subsistence, hence to partly meet the food needs of the household (FAO 2004).

From the mid-1990s major initiatives were undertaken by the government to help the previously disadvantaged black farmers. In the fight against unemployment rates and with the aim of poverty alleviation, land reform schemes were set up. With schemes such as the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) and the Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG) first attempts were done to undo the inequalities imposed from the past. Some of the better resourced black farmers could, later on, even apply for grants and subsidies to commercialise their farming activities. These farmers are also referred to as ‘emerging farmers’ (Hebinck 2005; Macleod *et al.* 2008).

It is against this background that we need to understand the Prolinnova initiative in Limpopo.

4.3 The Prolinnova programme

4.3.1 Prolinnova international

Prolinnova stands for ‘PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management’ (Wettasinha *et al.* 2008: 1). The word ‘promoting’ is seen as ‘advancing’ and ‘furthering’, that involves ‘providing assistance and contributing to the progress’ (2009a: 5). Prolinnova aims to promote local innovation by means of participatory approaches in rural development. By the recognition of indigenous knowledge and the capacity of farmers, scientific and local knowledge can be integrated in the search for local innovation in natural resource management. Through farmer-led initiatives Prolinnova partners search for site-appropriate innovations in order to increase food security and sustainable use of natural resources (Prolinnova 2007). The long-term aim of Prolinnova is to ‘institutionalise Prolinnova approaches within national programmes of research, development and education’ (Gonsalves and Niangado 2006: 35). See Box 1 for more specific objectives of Prolinnova.

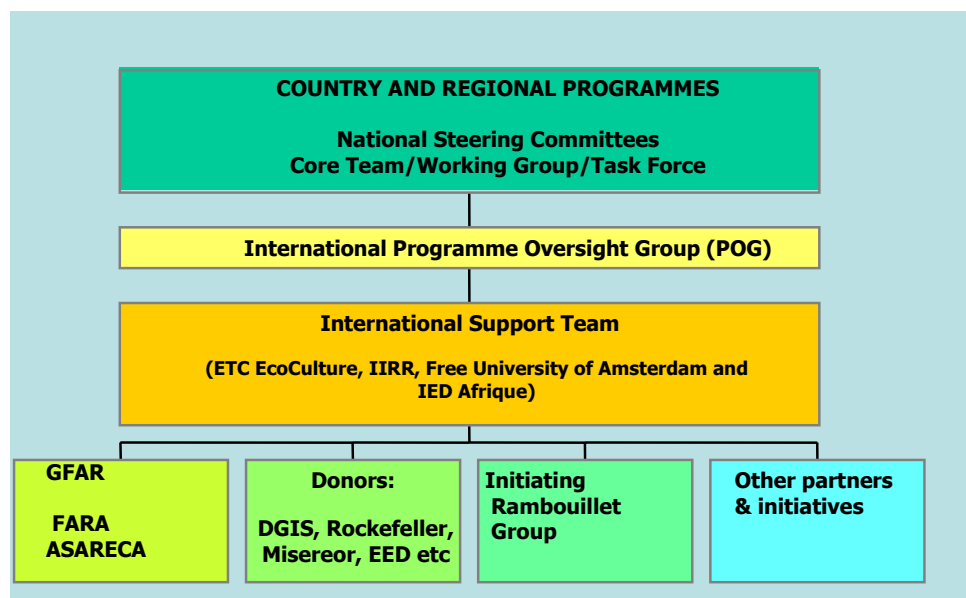
Box 1

Prolinnova seeks to:

- Demonstrate the effectiveness of farmer-led participatory innovation for sustainable development
- Build farmer-extension-researcher partnerships
- Enhance capacities of farmers, researchers and extension agents in participatory approaches
- Pilot decentralised funding and other mechanisms to promote local innovation
- Engage in national and regional policy dialogue to stimulate and enhance local innovation
- Set up platforms for reflection, analysis and learning about promoting local innovation
- Integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation and experimentation into research, extension and education institutions

Source: Prolinnova 2006.

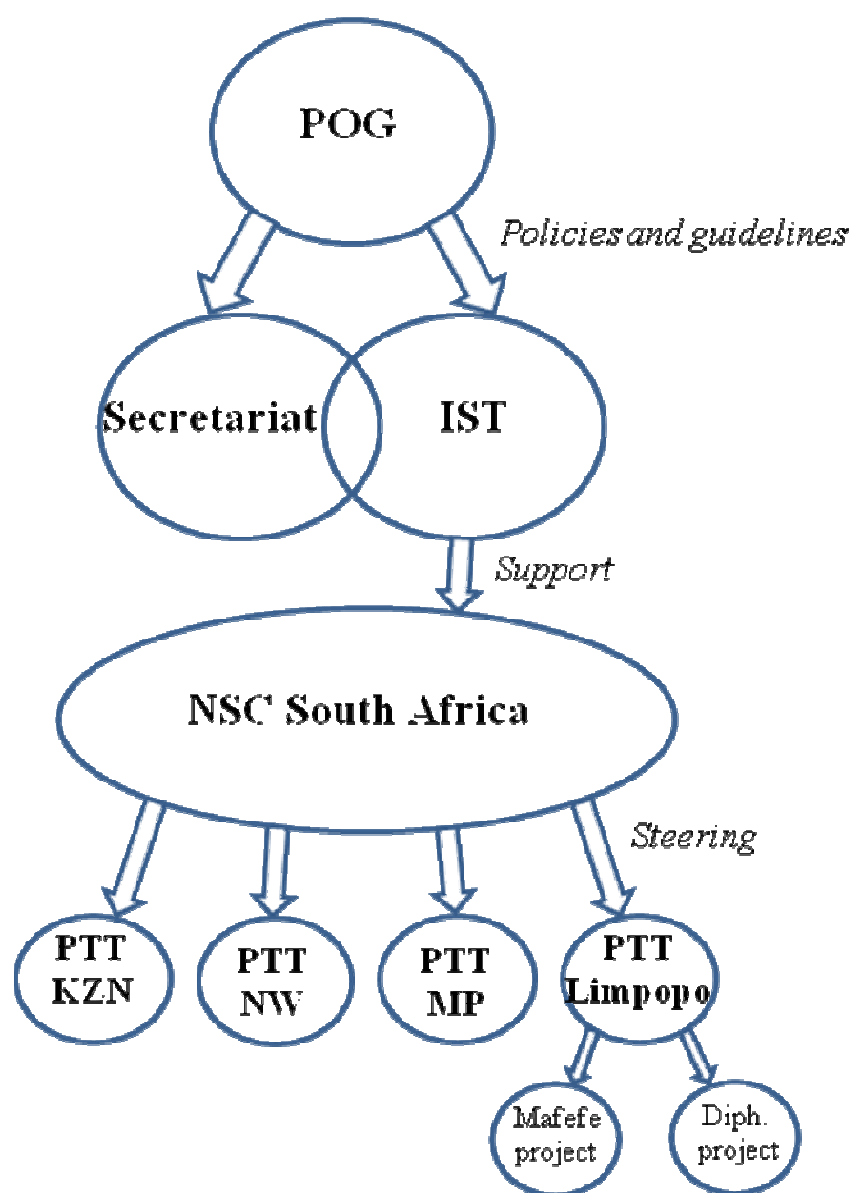
The origin of Prolinnova can be traced back to the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR). GFAR is a multitude-stakeholders initiative and serves as a global forum on agricultural research for development. As one of its first activities GFAR organised an international conference in Dresden in the year 2000 with the aim to search for new ways, approaches and priorities in agricultural research and development (Prolinnova 2007). During this conference, the Prolinnova concept was endorsed and ETC EcoCulture, a member of the initiating group of NGOs was asked to facilitate its implementation. Since then, ETC EcoCulture has been responsible for the organisational structure of Prolinnova and currently hosts the secretariat of the programme. Current core donors of Prolinnova are the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Rockefeller Foundation. There are several other donors who donate on a more project-based approach, which depends on the locality and activities involved. The organisational structure of Prolinnova comprises the secretariat, the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG), the International Support Team (IST), the National Steering Committees (NSCs) and the country programmes (see Figure 5 and 6) (Prolinnova 2007).



The Prolinnova programme is facilitated by the secretariat. The main governance mechanism of Prolinnova is the Prolinnova Oversight Group. The POG is part of the decentralised design of Prolinnova. The idea and its specific functions were elaborated by members of the country

programmes. The POG consists of four people from the country programmes, one person from the IST and three external experts. The POG has drawn up guidelines and policies for the overall Prolinnova programme and develops the strategies and principles of the programme (Gonsalves and Niangado 2006, Prolinnova 2007).

The Prolinnova programme is supported by the International Support Team. The IST currently consists of staff of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines, ETC EcoCulture, the Centre for International Cooperation (CIS) in the Netherlands and IED Afrique in Senegal. The IST provides support in 'international programme coordination, capacity building, networking, website management, documentation, publishing, international policy dialogue, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)' (Prolinnova 2007). The term that is used for the direct support that is given to the country programmes is 'backstopping'. The IST consists of the backstoppers that give this support to the country programmes. Each of the Prolinnova country programmes are officially appointed a backstopper. As a kind of advisor or coach, the backstopper maintains a close relationship with the country programme. The main task of the backstopper is to give advice and support in the planning and implementation of the programme. Other relevant tasks are related to the support in monitoring and evaluation activities, skills development, learning processes, mobilisation of funds etcetera.



The country programmes have been formed to decentralise the overall programme. The idea of the country programme is that it ‘promotes partnerships between farmers, extension agents, researchers and possibly other stakeholders (for example input suppliers, traders, universities, local government) to improve farming and natural resource management’ (Prolinnova guidelines No. 1 2008: 1). The multi-stakeholder group that joins forces to enable the country programme should aim to institutionalise this participatory way of interacting. The country programmes function autonomously but are supported by the Prolinnova IST. Some of the country programmes are part of a bigger regional programme because of organisational purposes (such as fundraising) (Prolinnova 2007; Adams and Fernando 2009).¹⁵ Besides the

¹⁵ At the moment there are two regional programmes operational, i.e. the Andes (with initiatives from Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador) and West Africa (within a Prolinnova type programme under the name PROFEIS - Promoting Farmer Experimentation and Innovation in the Sahel, which includes for now, Senegal and Mali (Personal Communication with Van Veldhuizen 19/03/09, Prolinnova 2007, 2006 annual report & programme report 2004-2006).

country and regional programmes there are five cross-country activities and projects focused on a certain theme related to Prolinnova activities:

- I. The Local Innovation Support Funds (LISF), an action research sub-programme that pilots locally managed ARD funds for farmers can finance their own research and learning activities.
- II. Farmer-Led Documentation (FLD), a sub programme that enables farmers to document their own innovations with the intention to share it with others and influence policy-making.
- III. HIV/AIDS and PID (HAPID), explores the implications of HIV/AIDS on PID activities and the potential of the PID approach in supporting HIV/AIDS effected communities.
- IV. PID and climate change adaptation, which explores the relevance of the PID approach in facilitating climate change adaptation efforts.
- V. Curriculum development, a separate programme that searches for ways to integrate the PID approach into the curriculum of education and training institutes in agriculture and natural resource management.

Every country programme has its own National Steering Committee. The constitution of the NSCs varies per country, but generally consists of representatives of NGOs, governmental organisations, extension and research organisations, and farmer groups. The NSC defines the policy and activities of the country programme and coordinates the mobilisation of resources (Adams and Fernando 2009). Depending on the organisational structure of the country programme, every NSC has a core team or a national working group that is responsible for the implementation and the overall management of the country programme. An NGO takes up responsibility to host the secretariat of the country programme and NSC and appoints a country coordinator (Adams and Fernando 2009).

4.3.2 Prolinnova South Africa

The country programme of South Africa was launched in 2004. From 2005 onwards, the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) has been the facilitating NGO of the country programme. INR is based in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and is an organisation that deals with the wise use of natural resources. This organisation hosts the secretariat and country coordinator of the programme. The NSC consists of representatives of five organisations (see Table 3). The main task of the NSC is to provide direction in the decisions to be taken. This concerns the activities that need to be organised, and how the funds are being spent in the country programme. In addition, they safeguard the effectiveness of the country programme; this is related to monitoring and evaluation activities (Prolinnova 2006).

In South Africa, Prolinnova activities started in 2004 and were mainly concerned with raising awareness, capacity building and networking with the different actors. One of the most important ways to do this, is through the identification and documentation of local innovations in the country. This was initiated through a series of workshops in KwaZulu-Natal province. The local innovations were photographed and the most interesting ones compiled into a catalogue that was published during a national workshop in February 2005. In the years that followed, Prolinnova South Africa became also active in Mpumalanga, North West and Limpopo provinces. This led to the decision of the NSC to change the institutional setup of the country programme. Besides the already existing NSC, provincial task teams (PTTs) were formed in the four provinces. This allowed more flexibility in the planning and implementation of activities at the local level. A provincial task teams consists of at least one representative of an NGO and one representative of the government. Table 3 gives an

overview of the six organisations that currently form the provincial task team in Limpopo; further explanation on each of the organisations will be given in the following chapter (Results and analysis).

In the past few years, Prolinnova South Africa has managed to work on capacity building, sharing of experiences, networking between different organisations and the inclusion of Prolinnova concepts and approaches into courses in a number of universities. In addition, evidence on PID and Local Innovation is documented as well as lessons learnt from implementing joint experimentation. For the coming years the country programme is aiming to expand its network, increase the possibilities for sharing and learning, and try to encourage different organisations continue working with smallholder farmers using participatory approaches. This would imply a focus on smallholder farmers rather than focusing on big monoculture agricultural projects.

4.3.3 Limpopo

The coordinator of Prolinnova South Africa had some personal contacts within the University of Limpopo and the LDA. She approached them in 2005 and was able to inspire them towards Prolinnova activities in the province (Leusden, 17th of September 2009). At the end of 2005, the first PID learning and sharing workshop was held in the province. This workshop was attended by a group of 32 participants which constituted of farmers, practitioners from local NGOs, the University of Limpopo and a total of 11 officials of the LDA (Prolinnova South Africa 2005). In addition, the provincial task team (see Table 2) was able to organise three more PID workshops in the years that followed.

Table 2: Members of the South African NSC and Limpopo provincial task team

National Steering Committee South Africa (NSC)	Provincial task team Limpopo
Agricultural Research Council (ARC)	Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA)
Institute of Natural Resources (INR)	Madzivhandila College of Agriculture
Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA)	Mara Research Station
Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture	Tompoti Selekane College of Agriculture
University of Limpopo	Towomba Research Station
	University of Limpopo

Different parties that have been involved in Prolinnova activities in the past few years in Limpopo are shown in Table 3. People from these organisations became involved mainly through the already existing networks of Prolinnova partners in the province (E-mail correspondence, Ramaru 2010).

Table 3 Different parties with responsibilities

Parties	Responsibilities
Traditional leaders / local government	Custodians of the communal land, deciding on access and control over land resources
Traditional healers	Guide in the sustainable methods of harvesting and uses of some of the plants
LDA	Technical and facilitation support in the joint – experimentation process.
Farmers Diphagane	Owners of the project and therefore farmer – leader in the joint experimentation
Madzivhandila College	Soil analysis
Universities (UNIVEN and UL)	Analysis of the chemical composition of bio-pesticide and the identification of the plants.
Department of science and Technology	Guidance in the intellectual property of the bio-pesticide
LEDET	Facilitation of the conservation and ecological measures
ECOHOPE	Facilitation of the mobilisation of the farmers
Agricultural Research Council	Refinement of the research proposal and backstopping support in the implementation of the research projects
BIOWATCH (NGO)	Support farmers and link them with input suppliers
Local government – councillor	General support role for local economic development, helped farmers to get a permit letter from the Chief

They worked together to identify and document local innovations in the province. Through this process, farmers became involved because they were identified by Prolinnova partners as ‘local innovators’. By 2006, five of the innovations of these local innovators were taken forward through a PID process. This meant that the innovations were used as an entry point for joint experimentation or joint investigation. These experiments were then led by farmers, with support of the above mentioned organisations. These were able to provide input in terms of how the experimental design could be improved, but the farmers decided which treatments were used and the criteria for evaluation (E-mail correspondence, Letty, 2010).

Activities currently (August 2009) in the province include two sub-projects and workshops that are held on a regular basis. In these projects Prolinnova supports the organisations involved, so farmer led experimentation and research can take place. While the Mafefe project is being managed by the University of Limpopo, the LDA is responsible for the management of the Diphagane project (E-mail correspondence, Ramaru 2010). The Diphagane project consists of a garden maintained by six farmers (five women and one man). In this garden they mainly produce vegetables (such as beetroot, onions, spinach, cabbage and tomatoes). To control the pests in the garden, the farmers make use of a local method. They make a mixture of six plants, which they use as a bio-pesticide in their garden. For the project, joint experimentation takes place in order to determine the level of efficiency of the bio-pesticide at different concentrations. According to Rutazihana and Letty (2009), the findings of the project:

... will allow improvement of the crop production at community level, maximization of the use of the bio-pesticide as well as minimisation of production costs (reducing time for collecting

plants, preparation of the mixture, etc). Determination of the toxicity level to humans and the shelf life of the product will allow its safe use as well as its commercialization (Rutazihana and Letty 2009: 4).

In general terms, the organisations decide to work together with Prolinnova, through which it becomes possible for some of the employees, to spend working hours on Prolinnova activities. Workload and costs are shared by all parties involved. How this is accomplished, differs per organisation, and the way through which the involved people can integrate the activities in their work.

By the end of 2006 Prolinnova started to involve the LDA in the programme through the contact between the coordinator of Prolinnova South Africa with Mr. Ramaru. Mr. Ramaru had been the project manager of BASED within the department from 2002 – 2005. He had been involved with BASED from the beginning and as a researcher had gone through the training of the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) learning cycle (which will be further explained in Chapter 5). Mr. Ramaru, as a government representative, became a key person in the network of Prolinnova in the province. In September 2006 the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) division was established in the department of which he became the Manager (see Chapter 5). This division was created to support the use and implementation of indigenous practices in agricultural research and development in Limpopo. Currently (2009) the division has staff members (the manager, two researchers and two senior researchers). All of them are involved in the Diphagane project and other Prolinnova activities (E-mail correspondence, Ramaru 2010). Within the LDA, the IKS division and the Madzivhandila College of Agricultural are involved with the Diphagane project (see Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results and analysis of the data collected during the research. The chapter starts by giving a chronological overview of the development of BASED (see also Annex 7: Timeline developments BASED and Prolinnova). Special attention is given herein to the contribution of the project to the institutionalisation of the Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) in the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA). It further explains how this historical background on the one hand enabled the Prolinnova network to profile itself in the department. And, on the other hand how Prolinnova partners made use of this historical background tactfully, to attain their own goals. The second part of the chapter discusses the analysis of this chronological overview alongside the model of Keeley and Scoones. The different parts (politics/interests, discourse/narratives and actors/networks) are extensively discussed to illuminate the main factors that have influenced the policy change processes in the LDA in favour of participatory approaches, thanks to the BASED programme. This chapter is mainly based on the answers that were given during fieldwork interviews between August and October 2009. Additional information is used from academic literature, as well as documents from the relevant organisations.

5.1 The story of policy change set in motion by BASED

BASED officially started in 1998, after a two year period (from 1995–1997) of short-term consultancies by GTZ. The LDA took up the project after it was generally acknowledged that extension services of the government were not capable of meeting the needs of small scale farmers. Previous governments (before 1994) had primarily focused on white farmers. These white farmers generally farmed of large scale, with high-tech equipment and for commercial goals. Thus, around 1994 government institutions were simply not capable of addressing the agricultural extension needs of small (black) farmers and land reform beneficiaries (black inhabitants of South Africa, who had claimed land of white farmers after the abolishment of apartheid). BASED was launched by the LDA and the support of GTZ, with the intention to develop a new extension approach. Related to this main goal, BASED had four objectives:

- To develop the individual and collective capacity of rural people to select and disseminate options to improve their livelihoods by having access to suitable innovations.
- To establish representative and democratic community-based organisations capable of responding to community demands for agricultural extension services.
- To institutionalise PEA within the service delivery system of the LDA.
- To develop mechanisms for disseminating innovative components of the programme to other Departments and Provinces.

To achieve this, GTZ proposed to start to re-orient LDA's extension officers towards participatory methodologies. And, as described by Novafrica (2003: 3) 'the rationale was to bridge the communication gap between the LDA management, extension officers and rural communities'. At the start of BASED, it was clear that people centred development approaches were only going to have lasting effects if the shift in paradigm was to be internalised by its users. BASED therefore commenced by a joined-learning process with initial teams of extension officers and managers. These teams had to be trained alongside a learning cycle developed by BASED, existing of five phases (see Figure 7)

1. Initiating change
2. Searching for new ways
3. Planning and strengthening local organisational capacity
4. Experimenting, implementing actions and monitoring progress
5. Reflecting on lessons learnt and replanning

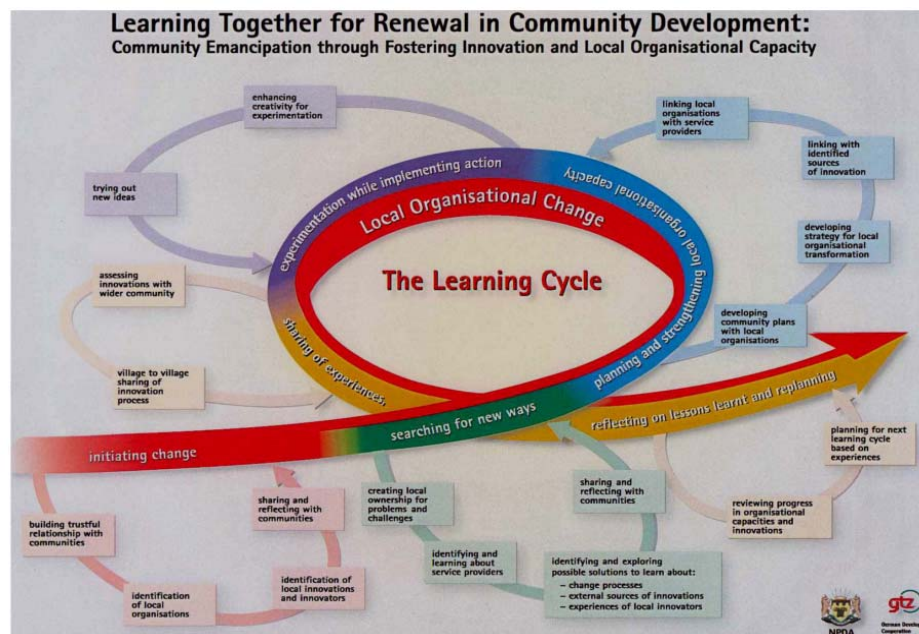


Figure 7: The learning cycle developed in Limpopo (Ramaru et al. 2007)

The cycle consisted of five training workshops (which took about 5-10 days each) which were all followed up by four to five months of field implementation (Wettasinha et al. 2008). The whole cycle requires approximately 15 months to complete. LDA's agricultural extension officers played a crucial role within this cycle and had to go through an intensive learning process. During these first trainings of extension officers, pilots were started in two regions with three communities as case studies (Ramaru et al. 2000). Experiments in the field and working with farmer groups were periodically followed up by trainings and theoretical learning about the PEA.

At the project level, the first phase of the project, from 1998 to 1999, was characterised by intensive learning and creating results on a local level. This had been a conscious choice of the coordinators of the project. In the words of one of the GTZ consultants:

Creating results on the local level was important in the first phase. Managers will start with paying attention to you when they see you have results. If you don't produce results, you don't count. Once we realised this was the situation, we said "forget about the management and ownership; let's produce results first and then we will take the process further." This was a conscious decision. Focus on results and on what PEA could offer ... the initial phase was very intense; within a short time, strong results had to be created (Anonymous, Wageningen, 19.10.09).

Results included community empowerment, spreading of technical innovations through farmers experimentations, functioning of umbrella organisations as the product of local organisational development and so on.

In 2000, LDA managers at different levels were exposed to concrete results that were achieved by BASED in the pilot sites. By 2001 LDA managers became convinced of the positive impact of the PEA on the ground and approved the large scale implementation of PEA. And, according to Novafrica (2007), this large scale implementation was set in motion through the appointment of a team of core facilitators. This team was given the task of training almost all remaining (600) extension officers, and give introduction trainings to all levels and units within the LDA (this concerned about 200 employees). Yet, according to one of the managers of the LDA who had been closely involved with this process, the involvement of the managers was ‘relatively late’:

The management system had to respond to some of those changes [referring to the system that had to change in order to support the extension agents that had gone through the PEA learning cycle]. In the beginning I was not necessarily involved on a day-to-day basis. So I had suggested that the managers, for every five days of training that were given to extension officers, one day of training should be given to the managers. But they responded very slowly to my request. I perhaps wasn't very insisting on it myself. I mean, I believed strongly in it, but I realised that I might have insisted more strongly. By the time they picked it up, it was relatively late. BASED had only two years to go by then (Anonymous, Limpopo, 19.8.09).

By 2003, emphasis in the BASED programme shifted from PEA implementation in the field to institutional changes to maintain PEA in the LDA. This last phase of the programme took place between 2003 and 2006. Besides the institutionalisation in the Department, this phase was characterised by the set up of the dissemination of PEA to other provinces in the country.

According to Ramaru (2007) by 2004 the LDA management had instructed that ‘PEA ... was the route we have chosen, therefore, the district had to take care of the process ... be in charge and take the leadership’. Another important sign of dedication from the management of LDA was the Budget Vote of MEC Agricultural, Mr. Magadzi. He stated that:

It is our intention Honourable Members, to scale up PEA ... despite the visible impact of this approach in enhancing service delivery, we still have to deal with trained officers whose commitment to implement PEA in their wards, villages remain one thing ... we do not expect to experience these problems henceforth as managers and officers are required to include PEA in the Performance Instrument for 2005/2006 (Budget Votes MEC for Agriculture, Limpopo, D. Magadzi).

BASED officially ended in 2006. The project had by then (Kganyago *et al.* 2005):

- Trained 377 extension officers in the five phases of the PEA learning cycle (from which 27 were chosen as core facilitators to train their colleagues).
- Implemented PEA in 211 villages.
- Established 529 agricultural and non-agricultural interest groups at community level.
- Established 63 umbrella organisations at village level.

Concrete changes that were established by the end of BASED, with the intention of supporting the institutionalisation of PEA in the LDA were (Novafrica 2007; Ramaru 2009; Zwane 2009):

- The development of a manual for the reorientation of extension and research personnel involved in PEA and participatory development approaches (PDA).
- Replacement of some of the PEA-trained extension officers at the Colleges of Agriculture, with the intention that they could train other extension agents in PEA.

- The establishment of Novafrica by the end of 2003. Novafrica was an NGO set up with the intention that it would become the custodian of PEA in and beyond Limpopo, the development of this NGO is further elaborated in Section 5.2.1.

Yet, according to Zwane, who published her dissertation in 2009, the BASED approach is still ‘in the process of being institutionalized within the Department of Agriculture’ (Zwane 2009: 21).

As explained in Chapter 4, Mr. Ramaru had been the project manager of BASED within the department from 2002 to 2005. He had been involved with BASED from the beginning and as a researcher had gone through the training of the PEA learning cycle. It is against this historical background, as well as Mr. Ramaru’s position as the manager of the IKS division, that he is able to spend working time on Prolinnova activities and require his staff members to do the same.

Figure 8 Shows the organisational structure of the LDA at the time the research took place. Though this was significantly different during the time that BASED was run in the province, BASED had the aim of changing the extension and delivery services of the LDA, and is therefore placed at the specific spot shown below. The research divisions are all placed at the head offices, while the research stations and Colleges of Agriculture are elsewhere in the province; see Figure 9.

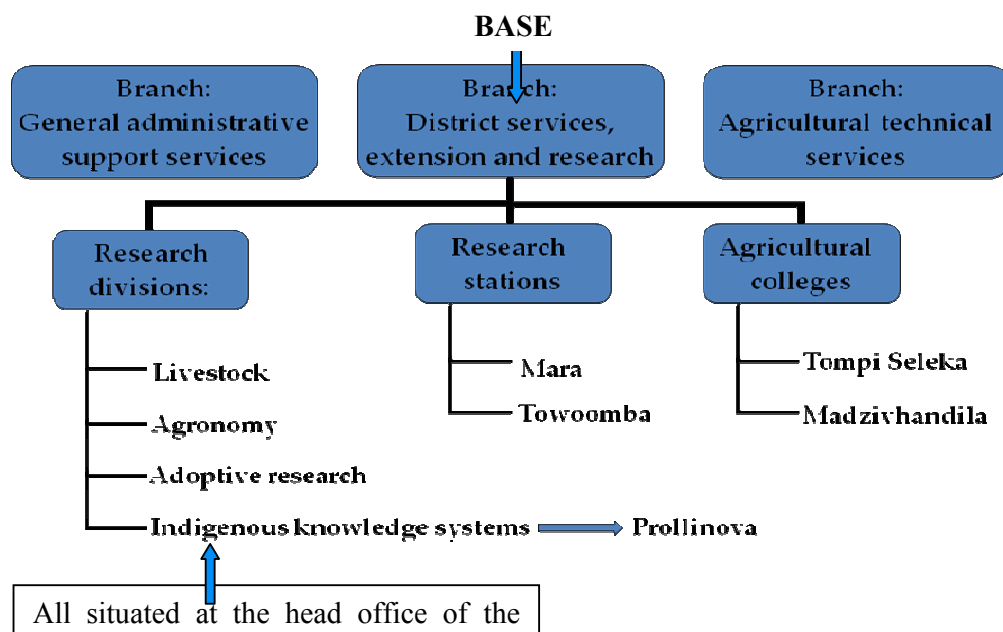


Figure 8: Structure of the LDA during time of research (August 2009)

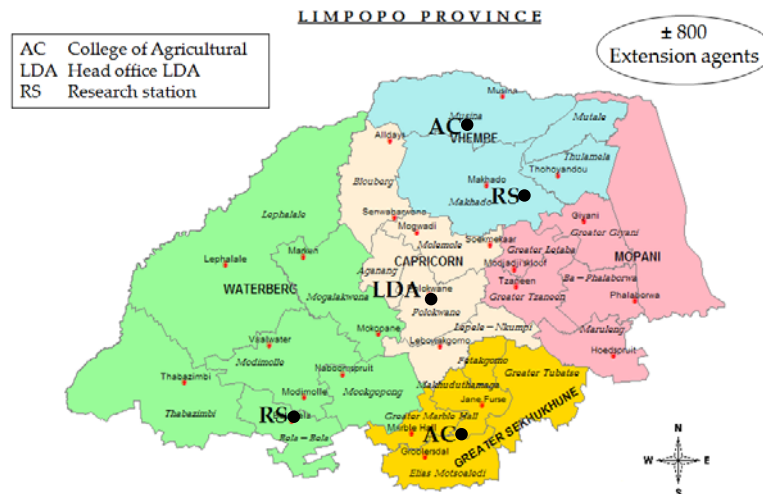


Figure 9: Limpopo province in which the head office, the research stations and the Colleges of Agriculture are shown

5.2 Results from the field in relation to the model of Keeley and Scoones

As explained in Chapter 3, the model is used in the analysis of the data in search for the relevant factors that have influenced the policy change processes in the LDA with regard to the use of participatory approaches in the delivery services. The different parts of the model have been ‘filled in’ alongside the gathered data by the author. By means of the utilisation of this model for the Limpopo case study, a systematic overview can be given of the relevant factors.

5.2.1 Politics of policy making

Politics in Limpopo

There is obscurity concerning the process of how and why it was decided that the project BASED was going to be run in Limpopo. The official booklet of the project ‘*A people centred development project*’, states that in 1994 the Limpopo provincial government (then the Northern province government) approached the German Development Cooperation (GTZ) for technical assistance to support small farmer development as part of the democratic government’s reform objectives (Novafrica 2007: 2). Indicating that it was the *provincial* government who decided they needed the help of GTZ and on their own initiative approached *them*. Then, on the other hand, managers of the LDA had a slightly different explanation. They explained that, after 1994 when apartheid was abolished, there were several (European) countries who offered development aid to South Africa. By then, South Africa had gone into a bilateral agreement with Germany with the intention of development cooperation. When internal critics about the extension services in South Africa became louder, it was decided on the national level that the system of extension services had to be changed. It was then ‘decided at the top’ (in consultation with GTZ) that BASED was to be piloted in Limpopo. And, according to one of the managers working at the LDA:

This is related in turn to the fact that the president has said that: “When we have succeeded in our development, we will see it when the poorest provinces have been developed; that will be our indicator. That our service deliveries have had their impact on their lives.” And Limpopo was, and still is, officially considered one of South Africa’s poorest provinces. So the progress of development had to be tested there (Limpopo, 19.8.09).

This very much relates to the fact that the democratically chosen leading party in the government at that time (the ANC) gained lots of support from Limpopo; 99% of the voters of this province voted for this party. The ANC had, and still has, a strong interest in demonstrating progress in the Limpopo province. And considered BASED a good opportunity to record this progress.

Against this background with regard to the different political interests that played a role, BASED was 'implemented' in the LDA. With the effect that BASED was a project that the responsible managers within the LDA had to cope with, even though they had not applied for it. This slowed down the start of BASED, because there were no feelings of ownership within the department (Wageningen, 19.10.09).

Changing governmental institutions

Another important political factor that influenced the project, was the continuous reorganisation of governmental institutions.¹⁶ According to one of the coordinators of BASED, this slowed down the starting process of the project. In the words of one of the coordinators of BASED:

The project was appraised by GTZ in 1995. Between 1995 and 1997, though, GTZ supported some short term consultancies. They introduced basic concepts of participatory extension approaches ... Yet, this initial training started with a Department that was completely different from the one I found at my arrival. Institutional fluidity, due to radical restructuring processes and management staff turn-over have been particularly intense up to 1999. This happened together with the administrative changes, which took place because of the establishment of a new Local Government in South Africa ... The managers were occupied by a fire brigade type of management and planning ... They did not pay too much attention to the project ... This created problems. In the end, nobody was interested in the project. They were busy with taking care of different politics and transformations (Anonymous e-mail correspondence, October 2009; Wageningen, 19.10.09).

The continuous changes in the organisational set up of the Department also caused (later on) problems in the institutionalisation of PEA. Namely, in 2007, an internal study at the LDA prescribed the organisation to become more 'municipality focused' (Connolly *et al.* 2006). This also meant the replacement of BASED-trained extension officers from the head office to the district and the municipalities of the province. This replacement affected the institutionalisation process because these trained officers were – at that time – part of the institutionalisation process at the head office.

The extension officers that were involved in the BASED project, played a crucial role in the development and institutionalisation of PEA in the LDA. This will be further discussed in section 5.2.3.

Novafrica

¹⁶ Connolly *et al.* (2006) state: 'Since 1994, the South African public sector has undergone a radical transformation and re-structuring process of its institutions to re-orient the service delivery systems towards the majority of citizens, who, during the past apartheid regime, did not have access to government services. In the frame of the initial Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and of the Batho Pele (people first) policy framework of the new National Government, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture has undergone numerous re-structuring and re-organisational phases to integrate into the formal agricultural sector smallholders on customary land, emerging commercial farmers and land reform beneficiaries through improved access to Departmental agricultural services.' (Connolly *et al.* 2006: 3).

At the end of the BASED project, German politics had changed. It was decided by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, around 2005, that PEA and BASED-like practices had to be disseminated to other provinces of South Africa. In the words of one of BASED coordinators: ‘We were not yet satisfied with the level of institutionalisation of PEA in Limpopo, but we were pushed to go to other provinces by GTZ. We had to disseminate.’ (Wageningen, 19.10.09). One of the ways to support this dissemination process was the establishment of Novafrika.

In 2003 the non-profit organisation Novafrika was established. This organisation was called to life with the intention that – as an organisation on its own; independent of the LDA – it should become the custodian of PEA. The organisation was supposed to take up the responsibility to train people and organisations in PEA (in terms of its underlying philosophy as well as practical know how). In addition to these tasks, the organisation was supposed to support the institutionalisation process in the LDA. Six years later, around August 2009, when this research took place, Novafrika did not seem to be very active anymore. During this research, when interviewees were asked about Novafrika, generally only ‘vague’ answers were given. Such as: ‘Novafrika had resource problems and limited capacity’ and ‘Novafrika had some internal problems...’. Seemingly it was uninteresting what actually had happened and why there seems to be a haze of mystery around (the ending of) this organisation. Yet, later on, it happened to be quite relevant how interests have played a role in the story of Novafrika and therewith indirectly influenced the policy change processes in the LDA.¹⁷

So, around 2002 it was decided by the coordinators of BASED together with the donor funding organisation of the project (GTZ) that an independent private organisation had to be established to support the set up of the organisation. Therefore, GTZ made investments in the organisation of about one million Euros and it was going to fund the organisation for four years. This made Novafrika financially very attractive. Besides this, Novafrika was attractive in terms of power; by gaining a position within this organisation, this could enable people to exert their power in a more effective way, then they were able to from their previous position. Then, in addition, there were interests in the intellectual property rights of PEA and related concepts. Interests in power, money and intellectual property rights with regard to the set-up of Novafrika eventually caused a split up in the team of coordinators of BASED.

Novafrika eventually influenced the policy change processes in two ways: I) it caused some serious internal problems in the management team of BASED. This eventually led to the fact that people left, while they played a relevant role in the institutionalisation in PEA in the LDA. And II), the organisation never became sufficiently equipped and viable to support the institutionalisation of PEA (not in the LDA, nor in any other organisation) in the long run.

In the words of one of the interviewees:

Novafrika is moribund or already dead. It was a great idea gone bad. It was an experiment that went rogue. Novafrika has been the only real BASED failure... Such is life in projects
(Anonymous e-mail correspondence, October 2009).

Change in leadership during institutionalisation

Alongside the recommendations that were made by the external consultants and the BASED Progress Review Committee (see Connelly *et al.* 2006 and Ngomane *et al.* 2006), it was

¹⁷ This became clear after having had some long conversations with several key informants and questioning about the subject by the researcher.

decided that there should be a post within the organisation for someone who could champion the institutionalisation process. Yet this post was never enlisted. Therefore someone had to take up the responsibility of executing these tasks. Eventually the director of District services, extension and research (see Chapter 4) had to incorporate the coordination of the institutionalisation within her existing job. She was appointed because of her role within the LDA as a manager and her experience with BASED.¹⁸ Hence, she had to do two functions in one. This turned out to be problematic and it slowed down the institutionalisation process of BASED. Eventually she left in 2005, in the middle of the institutionalisation process, leaving a gap behind in the coordination of the PEA integration in the department.

5.2.2 Discourse/narratives

Top-down service delivery

Before BASED started, there were two important discourses that influenced the organisation of the extension services, namely the top-down service delivery and the dependency syndrome. These are two ways of thinking that have been very influential in the organisation of the agricultural extension systems in South Africa, even up to recent times (Zwane 2009). The “top-down service delivery” is used by Zwane (2009) as a collective term for different types of extension systems. These systems all have one thing in common; they tend to be strongly hierarchical, where the farmer is at the bottom as the receiver of knowledge and technology (Chambers 1987; Zwane 2009). The types of systems belonging to this category, are among others, “Conventional approaches”, the “Training and Visit System” and the Transfer of Technology Systems. In her dissertation she refers to more types of systems, belonging to the top-down service delivery, but the three mentioned above are the ones that had mostly been referred to during the interviews of this case study. It is not the intention here to discuss extensively the influence of these approaches on the way agriculture is shaped currently in South Africa. The point here is, considering answers that were given by the time that this research took place, it became clear that many of the practises in the extension delivery services of the LDA, follow from an underlying philosophy in extension services which often strongly affiliates to these kinds of systems-thinking. As one of the extension agents explained on the question how the extension services looked like at the time BASED started: ‘We used to call it top-down. The communication was only one way; to the farmers ... Farmers were seen as the receivers of knowledge.’ (Limpopo, 21.8.09).

The dependency syndrome

The dependency syndrome is a term that refers to the dependent attitude of farmers towards the government. Botha *et al.* (2007: 71) (who wrote a report for the Department of Agriculture and the Research Water Commission of South Africa), state that the dependency syndrome is an aspect:

... which is related to the farmers. There are some farmers who are just too dependent on the government for help. They feel that they have the right to support and if they are not given this support they simply would not adopt a technology. These are farmers who in most cases love living on handouts and have been doing this as long as they can remember (Botha et al. 2007: 71).

The syndrome is seen as a negative attitude that characterises black farmers in South Africa. Even though the term is not often mentioned in official documents published by governmental institutions, it is a term that is generally referred to, as to indicate the attitude of farmers vis-à-vis the government. This is especially the case in relation to agricultural extension services.

¹⁸ She had been involved with BASED since 1998 and had chaired the internal advisory committee of BASED.

The way of working during the BASED project showed the extension agents, managers and decision makers of the LDA how farmers can be seen differently. At the same time, farmers were supported to act and become more 'independent'. As one of LDA's managers mentioned:

The farmers who were trained during BASED are also better able to articulate their problems because they now know what they need. Because this was partly the problem before BASED started. When you look at the districts that do not really have a strong BASED philosophy, you can tell that when you'll supply inputs unending without them taking ownership. Here you'll sort of perpetuate the syndrome of dependency, rather than them becoming independent (Anonymous, Limpopo, 19.8.10).

The narrative of BASED

The coordinators of the project (consultants of GTZ) had a very strong philosophy that underlay the project. They had a very clear message that they were trying to bring across to the department. They made use of a specific narrative, namely: in order to improve the service delivery system of the LDA for smallholder farmers, the farmers themselves have to take, and have to be given, a pro-active role in the system. To achieve this, the LDA should make use of the PEA in its extension framework. Through this approach, the focus is placed on strengthening rural people's capabilities to solve their own problems. An important element herein is the involvement of local organisations and leadership in the rural areas. Another very important element is the promotion of an equal partnership between farmers, researchers, extension agents and other service providers. Through this equal partnership, sharing of knowledge is stimulated and people can work together more easily to build an effective innovation system. In this innovation system, farmers should be given the opportunity to build on their own knowledge and experience through which experimentation and an action-learning mode can be developed and encouraged. This way of working, or to say, the institutionalisation of PEA in the extension system should lead to improvement of the LDA service delivery system to smallholder farmers. This eventually would help to improve the livelihood of smallholder farmers and other rural households, while at the same time enhance environmental friendly and sustainable ways of working in agriculture.

This narrative is part of a certain discourse that had been developed and promoted by the implementers of the BASED project. Certain relevant words and ways of thinking were used during the project, which have influenced people's perspectives, attitudes and acting. The discourse therewith indirectly influenced the decisions to be taken and policies with regard of participatory approaches. Some specific words or phrases that were used during BASED, were: 'ownership', 'engagement of farmers', 'mobilisation of farmers', 'farmer groups', 'umbrella organisations of farmer groups' and 'understanding the needs of the farmers'.

This was nicely summarised by one of the extension agents as follows:

Before BASED, we [the extension agents] were just bringing help to the people, but not getting anything from them. The PEA approach helped me to believe in engagement and interaction. In order to help a person, to talk to him and understand what he needs, how he can be helped. As an outsider, you think you know what the farmer needs, then you bring it, only to find out that it was irrelevant. That is the difference that the programme brought to me (Anonymous, Limpopo, 21.8.09).

Another extension agent also emphasised that BASED brought in the idea of mutual interests that should be there, to make the project or experiment (in a specific case study or pilot area) successful. Corporation with farmers considered from this perspective, expects from the

farmers active and maybe even financial engagement. This was formulated by one of the extension agents as follows:

When you are looking for solutions of the problems of the farmers, the farmers have to take part. If you pay them and then you leave, everything goes back, will return to the old situation ... farmers must also give, they must be met half way. They don't have to rely on the Department; they have to come with an input. Then the Department can help, but the farmers have to be engaged (Limpopo, 20.8.09).

As becomes clear from the statements of the extension agents, BASED has been able to develop a counter narrative to the transfer of technology and dependency syndrome narratives. The fact that the extension agents are still using this discourse, is a very strong indicator of the lasting impact of BASED, in relation to people's mindsets and attitudes.

This was also underlined by one of BASED coordinators, on the question whether he thought BASED had been successful, the GTZ consultant replied:

So the question to what extent it was a success, depends on how you define success. Is it the level of institutionalisation or is it the change in the minds of people? When it was the latter; then, yes, it was a success (Anonymous, Wageningen, 19.9.09).

Narrative of Prolinnova

Prolinnova became active in the Limpopo province in 2005, when BASED was already officially running towards an end. Prolinnova has a strong narrative with a clear message.

Central to Prolinnova's narrative is the capacity and creativity of farmers to innovate. There is a strong belief that farmers are perfectly able to think of their own solutions to their agricultural problems and eventually improve their own, and adopted innovations. Yet, this innovativeness of farmers is not always recognised by researchers and research centres. On the one hand, due to this lack of recognition, these (farmers') innovations are often not widely spread and sometimes even disappear. On the other hand, innovations of research centres often don't reach the (smallholder) farmers because they don't 'fit' in their working environment. One of the main causes of this 'misfit' is the fact that there is often a very big gap between the reality of researchers (who are often situated on research stations or centres) and the reality of smallholder farmers. This, in turn, is often caused by the underlying belief of researchers and governments (especially in developing countries) that farmers are the *receivers* of knowledge, technology and new innovations.

Thus, farmers are rarely recognised as equal partners in the search and development of solutions that fit their life world and working circumstances. Prolinnova, therefore *promotes local innovation* in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM. In terms of recognition (the acknowledgement to innovations from the farmers), but also to foster the innovations by means of research and dissemination to other farmers. To achieve this, farmers should be involved in every stage of research to innovations and should be recognised as equal partners in ARD. If farmers are given this pro-active, participatory role in ARD, there is a much greater likelihood that developed and disseminated innovations will fit the live world and capabilities of smallholder farmers. This eventually would lead to improvements in their livelihoods and more effective and sustainable NRM.

There are specific relevant words related to this narrative and commonly used in the Prolinnova network. Think of 'local innovation', 'PID' and 'joint experimenting' which are all part of the wider discourse. The narrative, together with the related discourse of Prolinnova form a counter narrative to the dependency syndrome. Farmers are appreciated in the

Prolinnova storyline as being active, innovative and as initiative-takers. According to the Prolinnova backstopper of South Africa, it has been (and still is) one of the main goals of Prolinnova South Africa:

To give the farmers a different face. Because there has been a very negative attitude towards black farmers; that they are lazy, cannot innovate by themselves and are awaiting for new technologies or resources to come to them (Anonymous, Leusden, 10.8.09).

At the same time, Prolinnova has a very strong counter argument to the top-down service delivery way of thinking, especially when it concerns subsistence farmers. Farmers are not at the bottom of the hierarchical system in which new technologies are posed upon them, but they are considered to be equal partners in agricultural extension systems. Herein, they search for better and new ways of working to improve their livelihoods, together with scientists, researchers, extension agents and other relevant parties, on an equal footing.

Taking this into consideration, it becomes clear how the discourse of Prolinnova smoothly links up with the narrative (as it was developed) by BASED. Especially with respect to the role of farmers – as active participants – the discourses have strong similarities.

Differences between both narratives

However, there are some minor differences in the two discourses that are worthwhile to discuss here, because that illuminates how Prolinnova is able to profile itself in the province and especially within the LDA. Due to these nuances in why and how the role of farmers is explained in the discourse of Prolinnova, other aspects are promoted and the network is able to push for its own perspective and specific agenda in the province. The three main differences between BASED and Prolinnova are I) the emphasis that Prolinnova puts on local and indigenous knowledge, II) the different backgrounds of both the programmes and III) the concepts they used.

While BASED might not have neglected the importance of indigenous knowledge,¹⁹ BASED had a total different approach to get PEA developed and institutionalised in the LDA than Prolinnova. Prolinnova makes use of local and indigenous knowledge, as the starting point, in order to promote their ultimate goal, namely to get PID institutionalised. As soon as Prolinnova becomes active in a certain area, workshops are given how to recognise and document indigenous knowledge. This is the starting point from where local Prolinnova partners begin with actual Prolinnova activities on the ground and promote Prolinnova ideals. That Prolinnova is able to raise awareness about indigenous knowledge and emphasises the importance of it, was also reflected in the answers that were given by the time this research took place. To the question: “what has been the contribution of Prolinnova to your work”? all interviewees (whom were asked this question; 11 in total) explained how Prolinnova helped them to better value and work with local knowledge. As one of the extension agents situated at the College of Agricultural explained:

Prolinnova gave us the idea that people have to go back to their own special indigenous mixings. Indigenous farms, goats; the traditional way. When Prolinnova got involved, people started to be active on this aspect. People are not shy anymore. People are able to control. They were afraid to lose what they know. When the sharing started, people came and talked about it. These things, Prolinnova helped to document (Anonymous, Limpopo, 22.8.09).

¹⁹ See for example the booklet of BASED, which states that ‘the extension officers encouraged farmers to draw upon their indigenous knowledge as the foundation for innovations’ (Novafrica 2007: 22).

Another difference between the two discourses can be found in the two main concepts that are used: Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) and Participatory Innovation Development (PID). This difference relates with the fact that both programmes have different backgrounds and different intentions with the concepts. GTZ has more than 20 years of experience with participatory development approaches and developed the PEA out of several projects in Zimbabwe in the 1990s. According to Hagmann *et al.* (1998), quoted in Ramaru *et al.* (2006), PEA ‘integrates elements of participatory technology development, participatory rural appraisal and social development approaches, such as action-learning and training for transformation’ (Ramaru *et al.* 2004). BASED was set up with the intention to change LDA’s extension framework. So PEA was at that time proposed by GTZ consultants as the way to establish that specific goal. PEA was then taken up by the project through which it could be (further) developed, tested and adapted in the specific setting of the LDA (Ramaru *et al.* 2004).

Prolinnova was a network that became active around 2004. By that time it was Participatory Technology Development (PTD) that Prolinnova promoted as the main approach to endorse innovations in ARD. PTD was later on replaced by PID to put more emphasis on the social aspects in innovation processes, but the end goal of the concept remained the same. How PID then is translated to specific local settings of Prolinnova partners, can differ, but the intention of the network is the same everywhere.

In sum, PEA and PID have strong similarities in the underlying philosophy and their eventual end goals, but PEA was primary focused on the extension framework of the LDA, while PID has a broader applicability.

5.2.3 Actors/Networks

Farmer organisations and umbrella organisations

As explained by Ramaru *et al.* (2004) the main important element running through the PEA learning cycle was to foster local organisational development. In this process local communities were encouraged to establish interest groups, farmer organisations and umbrella organisations. This was at the basis of the BASED project. So farmers became enabled to better articulate their needs and represent themselves vis-à-vis service providers and government authorities. As has been said above (in Section 5.1), BASED triggered the set up of about 529 agricultural and non-agricultural organisations and 63 umbrella organisations. By going through the PEA learning cycle, the trained extension officers have played an incredibly important role in the mobilisation of communities and the set up of these organisations. As the farmers became better organised, they were able to exert more influence on the extension agents and therewith almost extort the services they needed. Extension agents now became better aware of what the farmers needed and wanted. They had to find ways to meet the farmers’ needs and requests. From their position, they had to negotiate to solve the farmers’ problems, not only with researchers, but also with their managers. This eventually led to the uncovering of shortcomings in the institutional set up of the organisation of the LDA. In the words of one of the LDA managers:

And so the first part was more the organisation development part at the level of the farmers ... When the farmers were better organised and knew how to articulate themselves, you are not now talking anymore about one individual farmer asking for services, but it became groups; groups that could hardly be ignored by the extension agents. If you know you will be ignoring a 1000 people then you know that you will be in trouble. And I think this is seen all over the world; farmers can be a strong lobby group. So in a sense we have helped this group to become

a kind of a lobby group ... Eventually the extension agents knew that there were shortcomings, and for example need for institutional changes. This was the next level. We had to figure out how we were going to respond to these needs. And we had to develop our own capacity that is responsive to the new situation ... First of all this was on the side of the extension agents, but this was also on the side of the industries, from the universities and how to make sure in the end they do not confuse the farmer? So in this sense also the extension agents needed support in order to be able to organise all this. We would have to make some changes in the system ... The management system had to respond to some of those changes (Anonymous, Limpopo, 17.8.09).

So this allowed the farmer to take a more active role and potentially (indirectly) exert more influence on policy changes in the LDA. At least the management became aware of the farmers' needs and that they had to be taken serious.

Yet, during the institutionalisation process of PEA, many extension agents were transferred to other municipalities because the LDA became more 'municipality focused' (see 5.2.1). Besides the transfers to municipalities, some of the BASED trained extension agents were moved to the Colleges of Agriculture. The reason for this was part of the PEA institutionalisation tactic of the LDA (a topic which we will later return to). All along, almost all of the BASED trained extension officers had to leave the villages and municipalities they had become so familiar with during their BASED training period. The organisations they had helped to set up in the previous years, now had to continue without their support. In August 2009, four years later after BASED officially stopped, only very few of the organisations that were set up during BASED, were still operative. There are no official figures of how many of the farmer organisations still exist. However, all the extension agents that were interviewed for the research and had been involved in the BASED project (seven in total) confirmed that there were hardly any of the organisations left in the villages. Those which are still operative, are not as strong as they used to be. As one of the extension agents explained:

During the BASED project, the farmers became better organised. After the project stopped, the organisations did not continue in the same manner; if there is no one that is trying to collect these farmers' visions, if there is no one that is coordinating these activities, there is no way in which the farmers can operate in the same way. Initially, we were working together with them, bringing all these farmers together so that they could exchange experiences. There is no platform where they could do this, so they are struggling. It's not like before (Anonymous, Limpopo, 17.8.09).

However, the transfer of the extension officers also had a positive side. The BASED trained officers were so convinced about PEA and its underlying philosophy that their whole attitude and way of acting had changed. This way of working had become an integral part of them, independent of their position in the LDA, or any other organisation. Wherever they went, they could start new interesting things; equipped with the knowledge and experience they had gained through the PEA learning cycle. A good example of this, is Mr Ramaru. He had become the manager of the IKS division in the LDA and now closely collaborates together with his staff members with the Prolinnova programme.

PEA diplomas

The coordinators of BASED decided that it would be good to give a diploma to the extension officers that had gone through the PEA learning cycle. There were two main reasons for this. First, to reward the extension agents for their hard work.²⁰ And second, to make PEA an

²⁰ Not only the extension agents themselves but also their managers confirmed that they had worked very, very hard during the BASED project.

integral part of the organisational system of the LDA. It turned out that it was very difficult to establish this. Eventually it was decided that Novafrica should be the assigned institution to arrange the PEA trainings and diplomas. Eventually neither the coordinators of BASED nor Novafrica were able to reward the extension agents (who had gone through the PEA learning cycle) with an officially recognised diploma. As one of the coordinators remarked: 'People were tired and their commitment was not rewarded' (Anonymous, Wageningen, 19.10.09).'

Replacements to Colleges of Agriculture

Alongside the recommendations of external consultants (Connolly *et al.* 2006) (with regard to the integration of PEA into the service delivery system of the LDA) it was decided in 2007 by the LDA management that PEA trainings had to be given in the Colleges of Agriculture. Through this institutional change, PEA could be integrated in the curriculum of newly arrived extension officers at the LDA. The idea was that extension agents, who had gone through the PEA learning cycle, now could train other extension agents in the methodology of the PEA. Yet, by the time this research took place, it turned out that these assigned extension officers currently working at the Colleges of Agriculture, feel 'underutilised' and 'under equipped'. This is because of the following main reasons:

- The extension officers do not have access to sufficient resources to be able to do their work properly.²¹ For example, there is not sufficient money for transport with the consequence that they cannot visit the farmers, nor other extension agents.
- It is difficult for them to train extension agents who had not been involved in the BASED project, because they are not being acknowledged as teachers but more as equals. In addition, these untrained extension agents are sometimes difficult to convince with regard to the usefulness and advantages of PEA.
- They lack proper educational material to teach PEA at the Colleges.

²¹ This is also because of the current austerity measures; these are the financial measures of the South African government to reduce its costs.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part draws conclusions and discusses the theoretical as well as the practical applicability of the model of Keeley and Scoones in the analysis of policy change processes. The second part discusses the idea of participation versus the wider political economical systems.

6.1 Conclusions and discussion of the framework of Keeley and Scoones

For the research methodology and the analysis of the collected data, is made use of the policy process framework of Keeley and Scoones. Both authors have published different books and articles of the framework throughout the past few years. Some have been written a bit more practice oriented (for example Keeley 2001 and IDS 2006) than others (such as Keeley and Scoones 1999 and Keeley and Scoones 2003) which have been written from a more theoretical point of view. The overall aim of the publications (and the framework in particular) have one thing in common: to give insights and create understanding of policy change processes. I intend to reflect on the model in two ways. Firstly, from a more theoretical-conceptual point of view; to consider the analysed data from the field and currently available literature on the subject. Secondly, from a more practical point of view, to describe how useful the framework is for a researcher who is interested in analysing a policy process.

Some remarks can be made with regard to the underlying conceptualisation of the framework. To explain what entails a policy change process, Keeley and Scoones (1999) integrated three different perspectives available in contemporary development literature. From these perspectives it then becomes possible to eliminate different elements to be found in a policy process. Central in their theory is the relevance of knowledge, which more or less runs like a red line throughout policy processes. After having done a literature study and a case study for this research three main conclusions can be drawn from the theory of this framework: First, that the framework does not show a process, is both a strength and a weakness. After all the criticism on the Linear model (see Chapter 2) it did not seem very wise to try to capture a process in a timeline. Keeley and Scoones probably deliberately have chosen to illuminate just that what is to be found in a process, and not the process in itself. So this is on the one hand a strength because it is virtually impossible to capture such a process in a model. On the other hand the evolution or development of something that is *changing*, is now lacking in the model. For example Maetz (2009) integrates the idea of a process with those elements that are to be found when policy changes (see Figure 6). Maetz (2009) adequately combines these methodological issues by seeing policy as a way to solve ‘wicked’ problems. He calls it wicked problems, because it concerns societal issues of which it is difficult to make a problem statement; the search for solutions never stops; no solution is objectively ‘right’ or ‘wrong’; it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the solution; implemented solutions cannot be undone; there is no limit to the set of potential solutions; every problem is unique; other problems are entwined; many stakeholders are involved in; decision makers don't have the right to be wrong (Maetz 2009). According to Maetz, policy processes are complex and messy because they:

- Address ‘wicked problems’
- Involve different types of actors and their networks, each with their own interests

- Are influenced by experiences from the past
- Are shaped by discourses and narratives
- Have a highly political character

However, according to Maetz, even within the complex world called ‘policy processes’ it is possible to have a road map, for which he uses the following image:

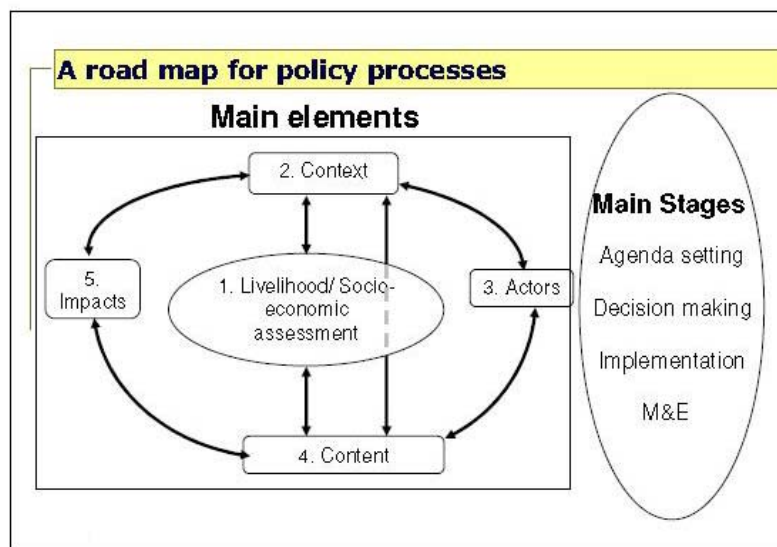


Figure 10: A road map for policy processes (Maetz 2009).

As can be seen in Figure 10 above, Maetz integrated the linear model with the characteristics of policy processes he discerned, as outlined above. With regards to the findings of this case study the theory seems to fall short in trying to address the situation as it was ‘in the beginning’ of the process in comparison with a later stage in the process.

Second, their theory fails to address the complexity of institutions of which policies are just one minor part. As Woodhill (2010) explains, it is the whole set of complex institutions, which enables a society to manage its affairs. The way policy translates itself into practice, depends very much on the set of specific rules and regulations of which social actors (such as street level workers) inevitably take part. This was also reflected in the Limpopo case study. Researchers and extension officers acted not only on basis on ruling policies, but alongside many other institutions (think of their educational background, loyalty to their colleagues and so on).

Third, though Keeley and Scoones highlight the importance of knowledge in policy processes, there seems to be little room for the practical translation of knowledge. Here one could think of evidence based research and results from the field. For example in the policy process model of Blaikie and Soussan (2001). Knowledge gets a prominent place in the policy life cycle. The Limpopo case study proved the relevant role of knowledge, but the model of Keeley and Scoones offered little room to explain the relevance of forms of knowledge, such as results from the field. In addition, the case study showed how knowledge can flow into different directions throughout time and how this affects the contests of knowledge. Institutionalisation by means of the adaptation of official regulations to integrate PEA in the Department was enforced by the presence of extension officers (and their stock of knowledge)

at the head office. Yet, when they moved to the Colleges of Agriculture, their input in the contests of knowledge in the place where decisions were made, vanished. Even though they started their own new ‘projects’ (see Chapter 2) at the Colleges of Agriculture, their knowledge was replaced and gained a new – less influential – position in the policy change process.

This case study shows us how different factors which influenced the policy change processes within the LDA (summarised in Annex 3) overlap and have mutually influenced each other. Like the extension agents (*actors*) who were replaced due to institutional changes in the bureaucratic system (*politics*) of the LDA. This meant a loss in upholding the message of BASED (*narratives*) at the head office, yet they currently attempt to work with their knowledge in their new positions. Their work, in turn, is revitalised and being stimulated by the activities and the narrative of Prolinnova. This interface of different factors is also to be seen in the developments surrounding Novafrica. GTZ had decided (*politics*) that PEA had to be disseminated to other provinces, but due to all the tensions regarding power, money and intellectual property rights (*interests*), people left (*actors*). Even though it were these people who played a role in upholding the narrative and discourse of BASED within the LDA; they were the people to create chances to ‘win’ the contests of knowledge in relevant policy change moments.

This illuminates how the factors influence each other and how one individual element is almost meaningless without the other; it is the middle of the model where things happen. If the right actors agree on a certain way of thinking and acting, wherein they find mutual interests in an enabling political environment; a certain policy is likely to change. However, what I find that is missing here, that the right actors should be there in the right *place* and the right moment in *time*. These are also practical issues with regards to the research, which we will now turn to.

The Keeley and Scoones framework has helped considerably in gaining understanding of how to perceive a policy process. This was especially relevant during the preparation of the fieldwork and, in addition, to analyse and process the gathered data. In preparation of the fieldwork it helped me to make me aware of potential factors that could have played a role in the case I researched. It further helped for the formulation of the interview questions. After having done the main fieldwork, I had gained considerably more practical insights which gave the whole framework more content for me.²² The ostensible simplicity of the model gained more value after having done the research.²³ In addition to the preparatory work before going to the field, the framework offered the tools to order and process the data. This can also be seen as a potential danger to lose data. Or to say, by means of applying the different perspectives of the model on the data, one might leave things out in the analysis because they don’t seem to ‘fit’ somewhere.

Though the model offered me some very important and relevant insights to be able to gather and analyse data regarding a policy change process, I felt some practical links – to do research – were missing. Considering the fact that each specific case of a policy change process is very complex and different from any other case, it is virtually impossible to become very ‘practical’. Yet, I do believe that some things, which I missed in their publications on the

²² This of course differs very much for each person, especially in relation to the level of experience. This note is to make the reader aware of the fact that this reflection on the model is written from the perspective of a university student; with relatively little practical or hands-on experience in policy processes.

²³ The strength and the weakness of this ‘simplicity’ is discussed further in the following section.

framework, could be elaborated upon for practitioners in the field who would like to apply their model. This could give some further support to those who are interested in analysing a specific case of a policy change process. Potential points of improvements to give their readers a bit more guidance towards a practical case, are:

1. Publish one document in which the framework is explained. Currently their work regarding the framework is more or less blurred over different publications. This makes it a bit complicated for the reader to 'capture' the relevant elements. It also seems (after having read their publications throughout the years) that their way of thinking with regard to the framework has changed. Or to say; they are probable by now able to improve their model. So it might be useful to publish a document with an updated version of the model wherein their theoretical underpinning as well as some practical hands-on tips are explained.²⁴
2. Give more practical examples of what policy exactly is. This helps to understand what it exactly is within an organisation that the policy change process is all about. For example, within a government institution, policy can be translated in a budget speech, or a green paper or in a white paper, but also strategies, norms and values, and projects and programmes can be part of a policy.
3. The model doesn't show a process. This is part of the strength of the model, but it is also a weakness. Policy is an on-going process and therefore very difficult to capture in one frame with the illusion of a beginning and an end. But in a change process, there is question of a *change* in time. At a certain moment X in time, a certain policy (on paper, in practice) was different from a later moment Y in time. It might therefore be good to explain to the reader, if you want to understand the *process*, you have to get an idea of how policy looked like in some moment in the past and how it is now (or how you would like to see it in the future).
4. Give, for each specific part of the framework, a set of possible questions and research methodologies that could be used in order to be able to come to an understanding of that specific part of the policy change process. Though Keeley (2001) gives several questions in his article *Influencing policy processes for sustainable livelihoods: strategies for change*, there are no clear set of questions for each part of the framework, and a clear link with the framework is missing.

6.2 Participation versus the wider political economical systems

There is an assumption within Prolinnova that the participatory approach is the panacea for results. There are several side notes to be made on this assumption. First of all, participation is a way to involve smallholder farmers, in a more equal way in innovation in agricultural and rural development in general. If large scale, commercial farms are involved, the approach of participation must get on a different level and must be applied differently as currently promoted by Prolinnova. Some of the decision makers within LDA share the opinion that participation is only really necessary for smallholder farmers. As soon as farmers specialize and start farming commercially, 'participation' is less necessary (Limpopo, 17.8.09). Whether they are right or not, this ventilates the opinion of the decision makers of the Department. Questionably is whether they really understood the philosophy behind participatory approaches in agricultural research and development. Furthermore, the decision makers in the Department first and foremost concentrate on the large scale commercial farmers (see the remarks of the Extension agents of the agricultural colleges).

²⁴ It might then also be relevant whether the aimed public are those who would like to exert influence on the process and those who are relatively more 'objective', like researchers.

Second, participation takes time. This is illuminated by the Limpopo case study and also emphasized by literature. On top of this, it is easier to deliver a package of technology (accomplished with scientific knowledge) than to start a long lasting process with farmers, in which they become empowered to help them search for innovative solutions themselves. This process of empowerment takes time by itself, and on the other hand, as one LDA's managers explained, one creates big lobby groups and it is questionable whether decision makers are in favour of opposition and emancipated lobby groups. It always seems easier to work with passive, silenced farmers.

The third issue is that participatory approaches seem to focus on the bottom up part of policy implementation. As one of the interviewees stated on this issue:

...In most cases yes, the top management wants to implement policies [in favour of participatory approaches]. But they have to be implemented on the local level. It is a synergy of top down and bottom up; it must be bottom up and top down. When they meet, they must be synergised (Limpopo, 26.8.09).

Success is limited if the approach is only one sided. As Thompson *et al.* (2007b) formulate it (see Chapter 2): 'participatory approaches fail to address the broader political economic contexts in which farmers operate; they do not touch upon higher governance scales.' As one of the interviewees suggested is to draw a line around the model, to visualise therewith the influence of the political economic system on policy change processes.

Participation of smallholder farmers seems to occur in the margins (or in the words of above cited interviewee: the bottom up part) of the policy making scene. With the consequence that there is hardly any influence in the levels of policy making in which the broader issues of rural development are discussed and decisions are taken. The boundaries of participation clash with capitalism and neo-liberalism as long as they are the dominant political theoretical frameworks. Improvement of the livelihood of smallholder farmers is searched for through PID, but within a wider political system in which social economical equity and ecological sustainability is not taken into account. 'Participation' has been of little influence within the political space of higher government levels; the top down part of the synergy!

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the lessons learnt from this documentation for the wider Prolinnova network. On the basis of these lessons, recommendations are made.

7.1 Lessons learnt

At the moment Prolinnova has a foothold within the LDA mainly through the Diphagane project, through which now PID is practiced. A long history has preceded this, in which the BASED project played a major role in the adjustment of policies in favour to make participatory approaches part and parcel of the working environment of the LDA. The most important factors that played a role in these processes and which have been elaborated upon in the previous chapters were:

- The political circumstances at the start of BASED;
- The continuously changing organisational setup of the LDA;
- The political interests surrounding the establishment of the NGO Novafrika;
- The pro-participatory framework of the Batho Pele principles;
- Change of leadership in a critical point in time;
- The two dominant discourses in current government thinking with regard to public thinking about farmers (top down delivery services and the dependency syndrome);
- The counter narratives to these abovementioned, of BASED and Prolinnova;
- The farmer organisations that were established during BASED;
- The diplomas that were never given to the extension agents which should have been given as a reward for their hard work; and
- The transfer of the extension agents to the Colleges of Agriculture.

Alongside the description of these factors, it became apparent that the policy change processes in the LDA, that were in favour of participatory approaches, did not occur smoothly or without hiccups. It has shown us the difficulty for an organisation to adopt a new approach, become acquainted with it and the struggle to make it an integral part of the organisation. From this research it became clear that for those who had become closely involved with BASED, policies (and therewith with the implementation on the work floor) in the LDA are still not adjusted to a satisfactory level that PEA is an integral part of the organisation. However, the experiences of the LDA with this participatory approach in agricultural extension services has given Prolinnova a very good entrance to promote PID and the opportunity to get a foothold within the organisation.

With regard to the wider Prolinnova network, several lessons can be drawn from this documentation, concerning policies in favour of participatory approaches:

1. The application of participatory ways of working strongly depends on the attitude of the practitioners in agricultural extension services.
2. To achieve change, someone needs to take up the leadership in terms of responsibility and as a stimulator to push for change.
3. The organisation of farmers is crucial in developing more demand-driven delivery services.
4. Managers need to be shown results if they are to be convinced of a new approach.

5. Hard work should be acknowledged and stimulated in order to keep people motivated and make the work integral part of the organisation.
6. Farmers should be seen as joint investors (not only as receivers of benefits).
7. To achieve changes in the extension delivery services the different stakeholders working in the scene have to be brought together.

1. That certain practitioners in ARD are working with participatory approaches often goes hand in hand with a certain ‘attitude’ they have towards farmers.

Most of the extension agents and researchers working for the LDA, that are now applying PEA, PID or likeminded approaches, do so because they have changed their attitude towards farmers. BASED has played an incredible role in this matter. The project enabled the extension agents and researchers to see by themselves the relevance and importance of ‘participation’ of farmers in their (daily) work. For most of them, a long and intense learning process has preceded this way of thinking. This process is different for each person, but a fact is, that the current system (and way of) thinking in public services in South Africa, creates an environment in which these processes are not particularly easy or stimulated. To go to the fields and work with the farmers as equals is not generally accepted as a normal way of working. So those who ‘dare’ to do so, often have to deal with resistance from their colleagues or bosses. However, when they become truly convinced of the need/ advantages of the participation of farmers, they seem to have gone through a lifetime change. No matter what their position in the organisation and the ruling policies, they tried to integrate participatory approaches in their work, wherever possible.

2. The role of someone who takes up the responsibility to push for change is crucial for policy change processes in an organisation.

This became apparent from the case study in two ways. First of all, this was the case with the main coordinator of BASED. He was the one who led the project throughout the years and mobilised so many people in the Department. Though it is of course always difficult how much credit a leader can be assigned to, considering the fact that he was working in a team. However it became clear from the research that changes in the organisation took place, because he had taken up the responsibility to bring them about. The importance of a leader became also apparent when no one was hired for the task to champion the institutionalisation process of PEA in the LDA. When the manager of District services, extension and research had to integrate this task in her (at that time) current job, it soon became clear that this was too much for one person. When she left the organisation, the LDA was not able to fill this post. This eventually meant that no one took up full responsibility to integrate this approach in the Department, causing the institutionalisation process to slow down.

3. The organisation of farmers is a relevant step in the process of giving them a voice and (potentially) representation in the decision making processes.

The organisation of farmers offers them a potential voice vis-à-vis the government in two ways. First, from the farmers to the government. As one of the managers said; ‘When the farmers become more organised, they can form a powerful lobby group.’ Through the formation of groups they can organise their representation in the Department better, so their problems and needs can be heard. And second, the organisation of farmers offers the (local) government (mostly being represented by an extension officer) an entrance to approach the farmers.

4. Showing results is important to convince policymakers.

As Keely and Scoones (1999) wrote ‘policy contests are substantially contests about knowledge’ (see Chapter 3). By generating results on the ground, evidence is created to subscribe and empower specific claims of knowledge (such as the relevance for farmers to participate in ARD). From this case study it became clear that the results on the ground were of great importance to convince the LDA managers of the positive impact of PEA. Only when results could be shown, the Department showed real interest in the approach. In addition, a wider range of people became familiar with this approach and became enthusiastic, which mobilised them to apply this approach in their work and promote it in the organisation.

5. A relevant aspect of making an approach an integral part of an organisation, is to reward those who use this new approach within their working processes (e.g. by means of an official recognition in the form of a diploma).

To make use of a new approach, automatically means that someone dissociates himself from his colleagues, because he (or she) starts to work differently than the others and different from which used to be the ‘normal’ working process before. This is not an easy process, and those who dare to do so, need to stay motivated. These people have to be, one way or the other, rewarded for their work.²⁵ This reward can take shape for example in the form of booking personal results in someone’s work, through the acknowledgment of farmers or by means of an official recognition by the organisation. For this latter to happen, an organisation often has to adapt the rules or regulations. Hereby it makes a participatory approach part of new ways of working. First, participants in the field are pushed to put the new approach into practice. And second, the organisation adjusts its policies, rules and regulations, in such a manner that the approach is officially being recognised as part of the organisation.

6. In order to stimulate a policy change process, it can be helpful to bring different stakeholders together, so they can join their forces.

From this case study it became clear that the BASED project sometimes functioned as a kind of bridge to link people with each other. Communication and interaction became possible and was stimulated through the project. This was not only the case amongst farmers and of farmers with other actors, but also between actors from different layers and parts of the LDA. In the contest of knowledge, it can potentially have a greater impact, if the same message is heard and repeated from different angles of the organisation.

7.2 Recommendations

This section discusses some recommendations based on the findings of this research. The first three recommendations primarily focus on the Prolinnova programme in Limpopo. They are meant as suggestions, but at the same time encouragements for local Prolinnova partners in the province. With these recommendations ideas are given through which Prolinnova partners can adjust their activities and potentially exert more influence on decision making processes within the Department in favour of participatory approaches. The last four recommendations are suggestions for the wider (international) Prolinnova network. Based on this case study, and the generalised lessons that are drawn from the results, some suggestions are done. They mainly focus on how Prolinnova partners in other provinces and/or country programmes could adjust their activities and therewith increase their influence on policy change processes working in ARD.

²⁵ Especially in the case of participatory approaches as explained in Sections 2.3 and 5.2.3, to make ‘participation’ work, considerable time, creativity, sensitivity and effort is needed; seemingly more than is the case with top-down delivery services or trends of technology ways of working.

After having done this case-study and extensively analysed the results. I would like to make the following three recommendations to the Prolinnova partners in Limpopo:

First, continue with bringing people together.

Figure 3 in Chapter 3 shows that there is a distance between the main institutions that are willingly to work with PID. As becomes apparent from the case study, the physical distance is only part of the communication gap that needs to be bridged. Communication is crucial to mobilise people and coordinate the work that is to be done. Hereby the PTT could encourage people to take an active role in the contest of knowledge and push for pro-participatory or PID likeminded approaches in ARD in the province. Bringing people together can be done by means of:

- The continuation of the existing projects, and when possible; start new projects. The projects create a necessity for the different parties involved, to meet with each other on a regular basis. But they are also the breeding place for positive results to be shown to the managers and other decision makers.
- Continue with the establishment of farmer organisations and/or interest groups. The organisation of farmers could lead to the appointment of representatives, who can then function as the communication channel through which the needs and wants of their group members can be heard (by Prolinnova, the LDA and/ or any other organisation). The farmer organisations could give the farmers a voice and the confidence to fight for their rights, such as those outlined in the Batho Pele principles.
- Continue organising workshops in the province. This keeps the momentum of PID going. These workshops are, besides crucial opportunities to learn, places where people meet other people who are likeminded and who want to work with participatory approaches. That Prolinnova is operative in the province is an incredible stimulus for the by BASED trained extension officers to continue practicing PEA. Maybe it would even be an idea to organise a special workshop or meeting for BASED trained extension agents. They have the skills and capacity to practice PID (or likewise) approaches in their work. Prolinnova could help and stimulate them in this process.
- Continue to organise exchange meetings with other Prolinnova partners in the country, but also involve international partners. Hereby policy makers can be shown positive results and effects of PID in other places and can talk with people in similar positions who are (already) convinced of ways of working as promoted by Prolinnova.

Second, appoint one person as the coordinator of the PTT of Limpopo.

One devoted person can take up the responsibility and the coordination of Prolinnova activities through which the influence on decision making and policy change processes can be increased. Idealistically this would be someone who can assure continuity and take up this task for a longer period of time.

Third, further research should be done to explore the opportunities of making PID a more integral part of organisations working in ARD in the province.

For this research to take place, I would strongly advise the organisation to seek for (further) collaboration with either the University of Limpopo or the University of Venda. Through the collaboration with the universities, Prolinnova can make use of their expertise, knowledge and experience to set up a good research. It would be a way to involve more local students in Prolinnova activities and it could strengthen the ties of Prolinnova with the universities. There

are with no doubt a myriad of interesting things which potentially could be researched. Yet, in my opinion there are three things that should prevail:

1. Find out what is left of the farmer and umbrella organisations that were set up during BASED. And try to find ways through which Prolinnova could contribute to revitalise them.
2. Try to find out how farmers could extort Batho Pele principles to be practiced. This could give them a louder voice vis-à-vis government officials and (local) government departments in general.
3. Try to identify more organisations that could be interested in collaborating with Prolinnova. And try to find new ways to intensify collaborations with existing alliances.

Before we turn to the recommendations for the wider Prolinnova network with regard to influencing policy processes, a general remark is to be placed here. From this documentation it became clear that -with the framework of Keely and Scoones in mind- Prolinnova is especially good in networking and letting their narrative being heard. Prolinnova has in general, as well as in the case of Limpopo, many partners and/or alliances with different organisations (ranging from NGOs to government departments). Through this network Prolinnova partners are able to spread a strong and clear message. Yet, it seems more difficult for the network to be influential in the politics/interests part of the policy life cycle. As a network, either on the international level or in local situations, it might be relevant to be aware of these comparatives. After having made this explicit, it could be decided whether it is tactful to focus on utilising the strengths of the network, or strengthening a weakness. With this in mind, and the outcome of this case study, I would like to make the following suggestions through which Prolinnova partners could increase their influence on policy processes:

First, try to make use of the available skills and capacities of people working in ARD.

Especially in relation to existing dynamics and heritages of previous projects in the area. Try to identify people who could make a useful contribution to Prolinnova activities. Prolinnova will probably not be the first in an area to promote participatory approaches. It might therefore be interesting to find out whom are acknowledged with PID or likewise approaches, and are willingly and capable to put PID into practice.

Second, stimulate and support farmers to organise themselves into farmer groups, interest groups, commodity groups, umbrella organisations and so on.

The organisation of farmers is a relevant step in the process of giving them a voice and (potentially) representation in the decision making processes. See point 3 in Section 7.1 for further explanation of this recommendation.

Third, strengthen your claim of knowledge and the message of your narrative.

This could be done by means of creating results on the ground and mobilising other stakeholders to spread the same message. In this sense, it might be interesting to seek alliances with parties whom their strengths are to be found in the politics and interests part of policy processes.

Fourth, appoint someone who can coordinate the policy influence activities.

This assures that someone is responsible for something to happen, and in addition can assure coherence in the activities (see recommendations of Prolinnova partners in Limpopo).

GLOSSARY

Actor

Actors are individuals and organisations that include a broad range of entities such as public sector departments, private companies and enterprises, NGOs, farmers' organizations, etc (FAO 2003).

Agency

The notion of agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion (Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 66).

Backstoppers

A term used within the Prolinnova network, referring to the person who helps a specific country programme by giving advice and support.

Discourse

A particular way of thinking and arguing which builds upon a system of values and priorities. A discourse often involves the political activity of naming and classifying (Sutton 1999).

Epistemic communities

Groups of technical experts or knowledge elites who share a common vision on specific issues.

Extension personnel

The work force doing mainly field work- specialising in crop production, animal production, animal health officials, resource utilisation, agricultural extension, it also include professional officers known as subject matter specialists (Zwane 2009: 30).

In this document also referred to as extension agents or extension officers.

Farmer

Collective term that includes small-scale crop farmers, pastoralists, forest users, artisanal fisher folk and other users of natural resources (Prolinnova 2009: 1).

Innovation

The process by which people in a given locality discover or develop new and better ways of doing things – using the locally available resources and on their own initiative, without the pressure or direct support from formal research or development agents.

Innovations

The outcomes of the abovementioned creative process, for example, farming techniques or ways or organising work that are new for that particular locality.

Institution

Established set of rules, norms and patterns of behaviour, which are also dynamic and continually being shaped and reshaped over time (Scoones 1998: 12, Giddens 1979).

Institutionalisation

A process in which a transformational type of change takes place that involves doing things differently to get new ideas and practices get accepted, used and become part of the norm of

an organisation (Birke, forthcoming). In this thesis, institutionalisation is seen as part of policy change processes.

Interface

A critical point of intersection between lifeworlds, social fields or levels of social organisation where social discontinuities, based upon discrepancies in values interests, knowledge and power, are most likely to be located (Long 2001: 243).

Indigenous knowledge

The knowledge that grows within a social group, incorporating learning from own experience over generations but also knowledge gained from other sources and fully internalised within local ways of thinking and doing

Narrative

A ‘story’, having a beginning, middle and end, outlining a specific course of events which has gained the status of conventional wisdom within the development arena’ (Sutton 1999: 7).

Network

Set of direct and indirect relationships and exchanges (interpersonal, inter-organisational and socio-technical). They usually transcend institutional domains and link together a variety of arenas. Networks are characterised by flows, content, span, density and multiplicity (Long 2001: 242).

Participatory Innovation Development

Processes of research and development, in which ‘farmers together with support agents investigate possible ways to improve the livelihoods of local people’, central to PID is joint experimentation (Prolinnova 2009: 3).

Politics

The means by which power is employed to influence the nature and content of governmental activities. The sphere of the ‘political’ includes the activities of those in government, but also the actions of many other groups and individuals. There are many ways in which people outside the governmental apparatus seek to influence it (Giddens 2003: 583).

Resources (not in terms of natural resources, but those available to decision-makers and those who have to implement the policy)

The practical means or instruments that actors have to realize their objectives. Resources are the “things over which they have control and in which they have some interest” (Coleman 1990: 28, quoted in Hermans and Thissen 2008: 809)

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is any individual, community, group or organisation with an interest in the outcome of a programme, either as a result of being affected by it positively or negatively, or by being able to influence the activity in a positive or negative way (DFID 2003: 4).

Structuration

Conditions governing the continuity of transformation structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems (Giddens 1979).

Structure

Rules and resources, organised as properties of social systems. Structure only exist as 'structural properties' (Giddens 1979).

System

Reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organised as regular social practices (Giddens 1979).

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