Keeping it Vague

Discourses and Practices of Participation in Rural Mozambique

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Table of Contents

i

Lists of tables, maps, and figures

iv

Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

This thesis describes how staff members of development projects and aid organisations use discourses of participatory development. This is juxtaposed with everyday practices of development interventions by the same organisations and projects in rural areas of Mozambique.

In the 1990s, participatory approaches became 'bon ton' in donor-funded efforts to achieve (rural) development. This coincided with the period in my life in which I lived and worked in Africa. My stay in Zambia was spent trying to make development interventions more interactive and participatory. In Mozambique, I had the chance to observe others trying to achieve the same goal. The core of my thesis is based on the fieldwork I carried out while being involved, to varying degrees, in five rural development projects in Mozambique.

The mainstreaming of participatory approaches and the worldwide embrace of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) that characterised the 1990s was soon followed by criticism and concern about these trends. In this chapter I will elaborate on this and justify this study by arguing that very little systematic analysis has been done of what actually takes place when participatory development discourses are translated into practice.

1.1 The agenda of the 1990s: participatory development

For most African countries, the donor community has played a key role in defining their development strategies. This has especially been the case since the mid-eighties, by which time almost all African countries had adopted structural adjustment programmes. The recipe was simple: cut budgets in line with the revenues, liberalise the economy, and open up borders. It was a matter of 'getting the market right'. Later, the Bretton Woods institutions of the IMF and the World Bank increasingly recognised that it was not that simple; besides the market, they had to 'get the institutions right' as well. That was one of the reasons that the agenda of 'good governance' became a focal point in the 1990s. This meant, amongst others, increased attention for decentralisation, democratically elected bodies, and an effective judicial system. Governments should implement 'pro-poor' and enabling policies and fight corruption (World Bank 2000). This should be combined with an active 'civil society', consisting, amongst others, of independent media, trade unions, and empowered communities, in order to provide the necessary checks and balances.

These ideas dovetailed nicely with participatory approaches that had been developed by practitioners working at the grassroots level, and which had their origin in more radical traditions such as action research. We can say that the work of Robert Chambers provided a bridge between the more neo-liberal good governance agenda and the (traditionally leftist) participatory action research approaches (Mohan and Stokke 2000). The title of the report, 'Mainstreaming Participation in Development', which Chambers co-authored for the World Bank, is a sign of the final bricks being laid in the construction of this bridge (Blackburn, Chambers et al. 2000).

During the 1990s, participation became widely accepted as a leading principle in development. Participation had become "an act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question" (Cleaver 2001, 36). Considerable changes took place in the approaches to the practice of development interventions in sub-Saharan Africa. Many donors and implementing agencies embraced the concepts and related methods of participatory approaches for interventions in rural development. Proposals for rural development projects were full of concepts such as participation, decentralization, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), empowerment, ownership, and community-based approaches. In the field of agricultural research and extension, Farmer-First terminology such as Farmer Participatory Research, Participatory Technology Development seemed obligatory. In the field of nature

conservation and ecotourism, the dominant trend became Community-Based Natural Resource Management. PRA in particular seemed to become an essential part of every project document and evolved from a method into an approach geared towards empowering rural inhabitants.

1.2 Increased concern over the discourse and practice of participation

Participatory practices were soon followed by criticism. This was logical enough since critical self-reflection is an inherent part of the approach, and much of the concern was voiced by practitioners themselves (Guijt and Cornwall 1995; Chambers 1997; Cornwall and Pratt 2000). Now and again the major proponent of PRA, Robert Chambers, warned against a divide between rhetoric and practice. For one thing, there was much concern over the incorrect use of PRA and the use of the term 'participatory' as a mere label. Extractive and top-down processes were being called participatory. The concepts were abused in order to attract donor money while the actual intentions were not at all empowering. For another, much attention was given to the continuous improvement of tools and techniques, while it soon emerged that the attitudes and behaviours of the facilitators using these techniques was much more important. Bad practices were attributed to practitioners not really being committed, not showing empathy, and having dominating or extractive behaviour. Although the self-reflective nature of the approach actively encourages a constant revisionism, the answers have been 'more of the same': more ABC (Attitudinal and Behavioural Change) and institutional reversals at all levels had to be further pursued.

More recently, there has been criticism of the very problems that are inherent in the approach itself, of the way it has been represented, of the contradictions and philosophical shortcomings embodied in the discourse. Whereas Biggs was writing about the "New Orthodoxy" (Biggs 1995), Cooke and Kothari described the "New Tyranny" of participation (Cooke and Kothari 2001). This last book was published while I was writing this thesis and confirmed many of my findings and thoughts. The book provides a more conceptual and ideological examination of the theory, methods, and practices of participatory development. The editors of the book wanted "to address how the discourse, and not just the practice, itself embodies the potential for an unjustified exercise of power" (Cooke and Kothari 2001, 4). The borderline between facilitation and manipulation is thin. The discourse of participatory development lends itself to a populist use and abuse. Participatory approaches have been presented as apolitical and as inherently 'good'. Different actors have many different definitions of participation, and the concept is easily used in a rhetorical way. Some have called participatory approaches naïve. Leeuwis (2000) states that the discourse has many dimensions of wishful thinking. It bases itself too much on the idea of communicative action (Habermas 1984) and pays too little attention to conflicts and political dimensions. These power dimensions can better be understood when one looks at participation from a perspective of negotiation (Leeuwis 2000). Many others have criticised the discourse for assuming that communities are homogenous, for simplifying or obscuring local complexities, and for not dealing with dimensions of power (Mosse 1994; Guijt and Shah 1998; Cleaver 2001; Kothari 2001; Johnson and Wilson 2000). This thesis builds on these latter critiques and has been inspired by the actor-oriented perspective (Long and Long 1992). Dealing with how policies and project documents are being translated in practice, this study shows how different actors have different agendas and how they actively frame the intervention.

1.3   The why and what of this study

Anthropologists and sociologists like myself have been increasingly involved in the formulation and implementation of development policies. This has resulted in the creation of the field of Development Anthropology, a social science whose aim it is to provide practical knowledge about the cultures in which we, as development practitioners, are working. More recently, there has been the call for an Anthropology of Development. This is concerned with "the practices, ideas and, if you like, the cosmologies of those who plan and practise 'development' projects" (Henkel and Stirrat 2001, 169). Along the same lines, Pottier has called for project ethnographies (Pottier 1993). I believe that such an Anthropology of Development has much to contribute to what Röling has called praxeology; a theory informing practices (Röling, pers.com. November 2001). Through a better understanding of development interventions, we may be able to improve practice. Or as Pottier puts it: "… project ethnographies, with a focus on understanding participatory processes, must also be regarded a major contribution to making planned intervention both more humane and more effective" (Pottier 1993, 32)

Participatory approaches entered the mainstream during the 1990s and were often presented as a new paradigm as it were, to 'end the history of development'. Ten years later, we are able to observe that in many cases participatory practice has not lived up to its expectations. Why not? The gaps between the policies of donors and development organisations, and the way their development projects turn out in the field are becoming evident. Several authors have called for critical analysis of participatory approaches (White 1996; Cleaver 2001, 53). Concerns have been raised, ranging from 'bad practices' to the 'tyranny of the discourse of participatory development'. Which of these concerns are relevant for the situation in Mozambique? Can we speak of gaps or incongruencies between rhetoric and practices and if so, how can we explain them? How do the different actors deal with these gaps? Project ethnographies can contribute to the improvement of development practice by answering such questions. So far, only a few studies have tackled these concerns in a systematic way. In the case of Mozambique, no such study exists.

The objective of this study is to describe the discourses and practices of participatory development initiatives in rural Mozambique, and to study and explain the possible gaps between them. With the discourses under study, I here refer to what has been written and said by influential proponents of participatory development, representatives of the donors, and government and project staff involved in the five projects covered in this study. In other words, I refer to multiple discourses on different 'levels'. I especially focus on what I call project discourses and project practices. In the final sections I also focus on the role of project staff and more specifically the role of project managers, who have to juggle to keep the different actors on board in an effort to implement a multi-actor participatory project. Keeping the discourse vague is one of the strategies that project managers are often compelled to employ to achieve this.

This study is not a discourse analysis in the sense of detailed description and analysis of dialogues such as those found in studies by for example te Molder (1995) and Edwards (1997). Neither is the study a typical Foucauldian study providing an 'archaeology' of participatory development. Rather, I have used discourse as a heuristic concept; it provided me with the spectacles to observe how development practitioners deal with both the language and the actions around participatory interventions. Discourse then means that language is not a neutral medium and that discourse in fact **is** social practice. In chapter four, I further elaborate these concepts and stress how discourse is interrelated with everyday practice.

1.4   Structure of this thesis

Chapter two delineates the work of four authors whom I have labelled as advocates of participatory development approaches, since they have been influential in setting the agenda for participatory development. I describe here the most important ideas of Orlando Fals Borda, Norman Uphoff, Niels Röling, and Robert Chambers, and what they have in common. Chapter three reviews the major criticisms of participatory development being voiced today. In the fourth chapter I elaborate on the concepts of discourse and practice, and their interrelation. At the end of this fourth chapter I present the research questions that are based on the theoretical reflections in chapters three and four. In chapter five, I explore methodological issues and explain my choices for the approach and methods that I have used for this study. I have called this process action-oriented (based on participant observation), contextual (putting it in the setting of rural Mozambique in the 1990s), inductive (being based on observations in the field), and analytical (trying to explain rather than to prescribe).

Chapter six then, gives a recent history of Mozambique, providing the context that is important for understanding the five case studies. The focus is on the countryside and on the policies and interventions directed towards rural development in the 1990s. In chapter seven, the case of the Community-Based Natural Resource Management project of the NGO Helvetas is described in detail. This is followed by the case of decentralised district planning in the province of Nampula in chapter eight. In chapter nine, I present three minor cases: the efforts of the Mozambican NGO ORAM in community land delimited in the district of Nicoadala; the story of the Local Development Committee in Sambassoca in Machaze district; and the story of a PRA in Morrumbala district that actually failed. In these three empirical chapters (seven, eight and nine), I describe the projects, the discourses used by the various representatives of these projects, and illustrate my accounts with episodes or critical incidents that I observed as project practices.

In chapter ten, I synthesize the project discourses and project practices, thereby drawing together the common themes emanating from the case studies in chapters seven, eight and nine. It highlights some of the incongruencies or gaps that I have observed between the discourses and practices. In chapter eleven I answer the research questions by delving deeper into the observations and the theory, and by further induction. This chapter describes how discourses are translated when they are put into practice and discusses critically the appropriateness of participatory approaches in the Mozambican context and in a general project context. Finally it looks at the specific role of project managers who are forced to juggle and muddle to keep the projects running. We then see that 'Keeping it Vague', initially perceived as 'bad practice', may in fact be a recommended strategy in certain stages of a project. Chapter twelve gives recommendations regarding possible ways forward with participatory development.

2 Visions and Theories for Participatory Rural Development

Since the 1970s participation and empowerment have been popular buzzwords in considering how to combat poverty and how to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of development interventions[1]. In this chapter, I discuss the work of some of the more influential writers that have promoted transformative participatory approaches. This provides important background information on the origins and actual philosophies and principles of participatory development. I selected four authors who have published extensively on experiences with, and new challenges for, the empowerment of the rural poor and for sustainable development: Orlando Fals Borda, Norman Uphoff, Robert Chambers, and Niels Röling. I consider these four to be important since they have stimulated many development practitioners in adopting (more) participatory or interactive approaches. That is also the reason why I refer to them in this thesis as 'advocates'; I regard them as influential ambassadors for participatory approaches in rural development. I will try to sketch the context in which these authors developed their arguments, and present their main concepts and ideas. I will also discuss what they have in common and where they differ. This chapter also devotes a special section to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) since all projects in this study used PRA as a method, and since PRA seems to have become almost synonymous with participatory development.

2.1 Orlando Fals Borda

The Colombian sociologist Fals Borda is probably the best-known proponent of Participatory Action Research (PAR). The development of the PAR approach should be seen in its specific context—Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. It was the time and place of the dependency theories, military dictatorships, and theology of liberalisation. Fals Borda was also inspired by the work of the Brazilian Paulo Freire on conscientisation and on the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (Freire 1970). Fals Borda stressed that PAR was initiated in the Third World and presents the philosophy as "an endogenous response to the developmentalist discourse dominated by rich and developed countries" (1988; 87). His book "Knowledge and People's Power" reflects on the experiences of PAR in Colombia, Mexico, and Nicaragua between 1972 and 1983. In Nicaragua PAR took place in the revolutionary spirit, just after the coming to power of the Sandinistas. The experiences with PAR in Colombia and Mexico were also part of a powerful wave of political activism by major peasant organisations and trade unions that provided the institutional framework for this to happen. The PAR approach was also used in Asia (Rahman 1985).

The acronym PAR was adopted by the participants of the 1st Action Research Symposium in 1977 in Cartagena. Fals Borda described PAR as: "a process which combines scientific research and political action to bring about a radical change in social and economic structures and foster people's power for the benefit of those who have been exploited" (1988; 85). Its purpose is: "to promote a coherent network of significant changes through praxis and enlightenment at the grassroots level so that the base group can wield the power which belongs to them in the defence of their class interests." (Fals Borda 1988, 77).

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[1] See, amongst others, Rahman 1993, on People's Self-Development; Friedman 1992, on Empowerment; Uphoff et al 1998 on Assisted Self-Reliance; Burkey 1993, on Self-reliant Participatory Rural Development; Cernea 1985, Putting People First; Cohen et al., 1978 on Participation at the local level; Oakley, 1995 on Participation, etc.

From this we can clearly see the political character this approach originally had; it embraced an ideological and philosophical commitment towards the emancipation and empowerment of the under-privileged and poor in society. The Fals Borda of 1998, in the proceedings of the 1997 congress—again in Cartagena—where he discussed the convergence of participatory approaches sounds rather less radical. Adopting a PAR approach is no longer about class struggle, but also implies an altruistic philosophy of life. Fals Borda refers to the "Quixotic ideal" of the "almost impossible task to transform capitalism by giving it not only a human face but also a change of heart" (Fals Borda 1998, 203).

Knowledge is seen as the key to empowerment. The objective of PAR is to foster a critical and reflective attitude on the part of the local people. There is also a need to merge scientific, outside knowledge with local knowledge; "combining academic and empirical rationalities appears indispensable to proceed from common sense to good sense". In the PAR philosophy, local people can and must systemise knowledge (1988; 76).

The role of the outsider/researcher/activist is not one of being a 'vanguard' as in classical revolutions. These outsiders should be catalytic and avoid paternalistic behaviour. They should be well trained in the understanding of praxis, critical skills, political vision, and the right attitudes (1988; 31). There is need for a "dialectical tension" that requires both sides to change attitudes. Outsiders should "overcome class attitude, the old vanguardism and spirit of the academy, the Cartesian rationality of science, converting themselves into organic co-operators with the working class" and community actors should "overcome their inferiority complex so that their knowledge can be fed into the process" (ibid). The approach assumes a mutual commitment between locals and outsiders to achieve social change. Local organisation is considered crucial, and these organised communities should eventually be able to carry on independently.

The typical methods used in PAR are informal and collective dialogue, recovery of history, and the study and understanding of folk culture. Games and story telling are also used for simulation and entertainment. Another intrinsic part of PAR praxis is the devolution of information, since "knowledge belongs to the investigated community" (ibid). This means that knowledge is not extracted but built up, and owned by the members of the target group in order to establish a process of conscientisation.

2.2   Norman Uphoff

Norman Uphoff is professor at Cornell University. He gained his overseas field experience mainly in Sri Lanka and Nepal. The most extensive experience was in the irrigation project Gal Oya in Sri Lanka. He has published on the topic of participation in rural development since the seventies. Later, he wrote about Local Institutional Development (Uphoff 1986) and Irrigation Management. In two books he co-edited recently, Reasons for Hope and Reasons for Success, he suggests that development interventions should adopt a learning process to achieve "assisted self-reliance".

Uphoff refers to an article published by Cohen and himself (Cohen and Uphoff 1980) as "probably the most widely-used framework for dealing with issues of participation in development" (Uphoff 2000, 1-2). The article says that although much was going on in terms of participation in rural development "the disturbing fact is that there is little agreement on what participation is or on its basic dimensions" (1980; 213). The article tries to provide an analytical framework to describe participatory development interventions. It remains rather broad since a wide array of types of 'involvement' is earmarked as participation in development. For example, the farmer receiving seed is also considered as a type of

participation. The article does not look into the different conceptions and meanings of participation. Instead it disaggregates the intervention into bits and pieces giving the what, who and how dimensions and context factors to describe a participatory intervention just as a biologist would dissect an organism. This gives the framework a rather mechanistic and static character, which is why it does not make possible the study of the dynamics, intricacies, and stories of such interventions.

In the article, Cohen and Uphoff consider participation as the involvement of local people in a project formulated by the outsider. The article concludes that "participation is….desirable to achieve the goals set by the development agencies and LDC governments". In other words, Cohen and Uphoff had a highly instrumental notion of participation, and saw participation very much 'as a means' (Nelson and Wright 1995). That the work of Uphoff has a strong interventionist (project-based) approach can also be derived from two companion volumes of Reasons for Hope (1997) and Reasons for Success (1998) that he co-edited with Krishna and Esman. Here the concepts of Assisted Self-Reliance and Learning Process are considered to be key for interventions directed at broad-based, sustainable rural development. Although the authors acknowledge that there is a contradiction in the term assisted self-reliance, the books do suggest that outside interventions play a key role in bringing about collective action. To achieve self-reliance there is a need for creative leadership, effective local organisation, and people's participation (Uphoff, Esman et al. 1998, 28). He proposes the Learning Process as against the blueprint approach. The books also focus attention on a range of project management issues such as staff training, information systems, monitoring and evaluation, and to the need for political support. This indicates that the books have been written mainly for project managers or development agencies.

In the recent works on social capital (Uphoff 2000; Uphoff and Wijayaratna 2000), the central idea is to understand the phenomenon of social capital "to be able to invest in it in order to increase the efficiency and probability of success for development initiatives". The writings of Uphoff express a strong interventionist belief that institutions for collective action can be moulded by, and /or invested in by outsiders. He believes that concerted action can be stimulated by creating institutions that allow people to overcome selfish behaviour.

2.3   Niels Röling

The work of Niels Röling, professor at Wageningen University, evolved from the classical 'Diffusion of Innovation' studies in the seventies, via his concept of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems in the eighties to Platforms for social learning in the nineties. He gave another face to extension in that agricultural extension is no longer seen as an instrument for disseminating technologies from researchers to farmers. Instead, his knowledge system implies a much more interactive model of generating innovations (Röling 1996). Currently, Röling is mainly concerned with collective cognitive processes (Röling 2002) that are required for a sustainable use of natural resources. More specifically, he is interested in the facilitation of social learning. The ideas of facilitating social learning are common in many of the recent writings of Röling under different headings such as platforms (Röling 1994), ecological knowledge systems (Röling and Jiggins 1998), Adaptive Management (Röling 1997) and Beta/Gamma Science (Röling 2000)

Röling is concerned with environmental problems and wants to contribute with a praxeology to a future that is ecologically more sustainable. A praxeology is a theory informing practice. He contends that current models and methods of economics, hard system thinking, and positivist science are ones that have caused mankind problems, and that using these same models and methods will not suffice to get us out of the ecological predicament. To this end,

he proposes new paradigms, new epistemologies, new ways of learning, new institutions, and new policies.

The challenges of achieving sustainable agriculture and natural resource management are complex and uncertain. For example, the concept of sustainability itself can be defined in many different ways by different people, and can therefore be contested. When we are dealing with issues such as natural resource management, it is likely that different actors will have different perceptions as to how these resources should be used. Because of this complexity, Röling proposes using system approaches. He uses the concept of soft systems that was developed by Checkland (Checkland 1981). Soft systems cannot be modelled in a predictive sense, but must be constructed interactively (Röling and Jiggins 1998). Hard phenomena are those that humans experience as being relatively constant and predictable while soft phenomena are difficult to explain according to laws and linear relationships (Woodhill and Röling 1998). Since it is highly uncertain how mankind will adapt to the environmental problems it has created, Röling chose the concept of soft systems.

For the same reason (the complexity and uncertainty we are dealing with), Röling states that positivist science alone is not capable of handling the issues around sustainability. Positivist science assumes that it can 'unveil' the truth objectively, and add to the 'store of knowledge'. Instead, Röling calls for the use of a constructivist epistemology, which explicitly recognises that realities are actively constructed by people. Still, people will have to come to collective action in order to agree on the way forward. Therefore, Röling uses the idea of social learning and the philosophy of communicative rationality borrowed from Habermas. This philosopher differentiates instrumental, strategic, and communicative rationality. Instrumental reasoning is based on simple cause-effect relationships and implies behaviour following predictions (if I do this, that will happen) to achieve certain goals. With strategic reasoning, an actor also tries to achieve certain goals but he or she takes into account other actors who similarly act in a strategic way. In the case of communicative action, actors try to reach agreement or consensus on a common definition of the situation as a basis for co-ordinating their activities (Habermas 1981 in: (Leeuwis 1993, 91).

In short, Röling proposes to form platforms or institutions through which the different stakeholders can define a situation, learn from each other, and agree on the actions to be taken. A constructivist epistemology is required since such a platform has to accommodate the different views of the different actors. Soft Systems Methodologies are used since the process has to be flexible and the outcome cannot be pre-defined. The process of social learning and of reaching agreements has to be based on communicative rationality. The outcomes of such a process of social learning will be social change, cultural transformation, and institutional development that will ensure that people take less and contribute more to 'the commons'. The key issues are that concerted action is necessary in order to resolve resource dilemmas. This is possible on the basis of social learning. The interdependence of multiple stakeholders is considered as a basic condition (Röling 2002).

The RAAKS method developed by his colleague Paul Engel and others is an example of a concrete methodology based on the thinking of Röling (Engel and Salomon 1997). Approaches to facilitate social learning are typically participatory in nature, involving discovery learning by groups of farmers or other stakeholders, where local people are regarded as experts (Röling and Jiggins 1998).

2.4   Robert Chambers

Robert Chambers works at the Institute of Development Studies of the University of Sussex and has extensive experience in the development field in Asia and Africa. In 1983, he

published an influential book entitled Rural Development. The subtitle "putting the last first" aimed to change perceptions of the rural poor. He proposed Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) as an alternative to survey-type methods in order to improve our understanding of rural poverty by making use of the knowledge and perceptions of the poor. The so-called normal professionalism is blamed for the failures of development, and in all of his books Chambers calls for radical reversals in behaviours and attitudes of development professionals, 'uppers' and outsiders. They should 'unlearn', sit down, listen, and hand over the stick. They should behave in a more altruistic way and 'disempower'(Chambers 1997). That is why his 1997 book bears the subtitle; "putting the first last".

One of the sources of inspiration for Chambers has been the Farmer First movement (Chambers, Pacey et al. 1989). In the nineteen eighties, several authors pointed out that formal agricultural research has often ignored a valuable asset of the farming community; its Indigenous Technical Knowledge. This was one of the reasons why several institutions involved in agricultural research such as ISNAR, ILEIA, ODI-AgREN, called for an increased involvement of farmers in the development of new technologies. In the meantime, the number of tools and techniques available for doing joint research with farmers expanded rapidly from the mid-eighties onwards. Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) emerged as a popular method for performing research with the farmers. There was a strong international drive to make agricultural research and extension more participatory (Biggs 1989; Haverkort, Kamp et al. 1991).

In 1992, Chambers published an article that distinguished PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) clearly from RRA (Chambers 1992). The basic difference was that RRA is an extractive research method while PRA can be better regarded as a process for empowering local people. PRA spread fast in the development business. In his 1997 book 'Whose Reality Counts?', Chambers depicts PRA as an important element in a new emerging development paradigm. His main point is his continued call for embracing errors and role reversals. Continued 'normal professionalism' is seen as a major problem; learning from errors by development practitioners has been too slow, and most development agencies continue to operate in a top-down manner. Again and again Chambers stressed that the attitudes and behaviour of the facilitator are more important than the skills in applying the methods. Tools and techniques becoming goals in themselves should be avoided. Attitudes and behaviour should change from a dominating role, inherited from the former top-down interventions, to a facilitating role. One has to be friendly, honest and respectful in order to establish good rapport. One has to be open and humble, to hand over the stick, enabling others. Facilitators have to be self-critical, learn from errors, try to improve, and take personal responsibility by using their best judgement. They have to be committed to equity and seek to empower the poor and the marginalised (Chambers 1997; Chambers 1999).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Since the work of Robert Chambers is intricately connected to the concept of PRA, I will go deeper into this 'growing family of methods and approaches'. PRA is an important phenomenon factor in this study since all projects described in chapters seven to nine used PRA.

Let me first explain how PRA evolved over time. In the early 1980s, professionals in rural and agricultural development expressed the need for more informal research methods. The book 'Rural Development' (1983) by Robert Chambers referred to above must be seen in that light. The book represents a move away from conventional studies using long questionnaires, accompanied by all the associated problems of validity and reliability. For me, the 1992 IDS discussion paper by Chambers was a seminal work in which the author made an important distinction between RRA and PRA. While being based on similar principles and techniques as RRA, PRA was a process or an approach geared towards empowerment, reserving RRA for rather extractive research purposes (Chambers 1992). Later, the editors of the "RRA

Notes" at IIED decided to rename the publication "PLA Notes". They argued that the notion PLA, Participatory Learning and Action, was better than PRA. It removed the 'rural' from the abbreviation since the approach was equally used in urban settings. Furthermore, 'appraisal' still implied the (extractive) research-mode while 'action' was in fact much more in line with what the aim should be; a transformative, emancipatory process aimed at empowerment. PLA did not become a common language, as was the case with PRA. Apparently, PRA had already been embraced by large parts of the community of donors and development agencies.

During the 1990s, PRA became a common approach in development interventions in countries all over the world and in many different sectors, in both rural and urban contexts. Much of the innovation in tools and techniques was developed in the Indian sub-continent, and publications such as the "PLA Notes" of IIED played a key role in spreading them. Chambers described PRA as a "growing family of methods and approaches to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor and evaluate" (1997; 102).

In PRA, members of staff of the outside intervening agency merely act as facilitators, and local people perform the analysis. Outsiders such as project staff may train a number of local people, who then act as (co-) facilitators. A typical PRA takes one or two weeks, and facilitators preferably remain in the area. In the books and manuals on PRA there are no clear rules or principles regarding who should participate, and in general all community members are welcome to participate. Several visual tools have been developed that allow the local people to map, list, rank, and illustrate in a way that allows sharing and analysis in groups of local people. These groups are encouraged to make diagrams on the ground and to use local materials to allow control, ownership, and creativity by local people. Where possible, local concepts and knowledge should be used. If necessary, some form of decision-making may take place by reaching an agreement via discussion or by some ranking or voting exercise.

The methods that are used for PRA have been very much based on ongoing practice and experience, and these methods are intended to be open-ended and continually evolving. Some basic principles of PRA, or yardsticks for 'good PRA practice', stand out (Chambers 1997):
- A good rapport has to be established, outsiders have to 'unlearn', relax, and listen to the poor;
- Outsiders learn from local people by having direct contact with them, and local people learn from their fellow locals;
- This learning should be iterative so that knowledge easily accumulates. Recipes should be avoided, flexibility is encouraged to make optimal learning possible;
- The use of tools and techniques should not be ends in themselves. It should be kept in mind that these should contribute to the goal of the participatory process; the empowerment of local people;
- 'Optimal ignorance' and appropriate imprecision in the use of the methods; care should be taken that only useful information is collected;
- Triangulation; information should be cross-checked using different sources and different ways of data-collection;
- Complexity and diversity should actively be sought after;
- Criticism should be handled in a constructive manner;
- Hand over the stick because local people can do it themselves, and they should learn from it. The outside facilitator should only initiate the process and then sit back. PRA should be an empowering rather than an extracting exercise;
- Sharing in different ways, sharing information, food, methods, time, experiences with local people and other organisations, countries, etc.

Throughout this thesis I may refer to both participatory development and PRA and at times interchange them. Since the 1990s PRA has become more than the *method par excellence* in participatory approaches—PRA has become an approach in itself (Chambers 1997).

2.5   The Advocates Compared

All four authors demonstrate several similarities. By drawing these together, we can distil some theoretical and normative principles of participatory development interventions. I will also highlight some differences.

What do these four authors have in common?

-    They all call for a radical change, for the need of something new. Chambers and Röling even talk about a new paradigm. All four want to break with current models, they propose an approach to development that is different from the mainstream, common, or previous methods of development interventions. This new avenue will require important attitudinal, behavioural, institutional, and educational changes.
-    They are also optimistic in that they all see a solution for the poverty or the ecological predicament; mankind can change for the better. They want to get away from the pessimism and scepticism that is rife in the development debate and that can, "in a self-fulfilling way contribute to paralysis and failure" (Hirschman in: Uphoff et al, 1998; vii).
-    For all of them, the intervention remains paramount. Even though the role of the outsider may be reduced to facilitation, outside intervention and the creation of new institutions is deemed necessary. It is assumed that effective and sustainable community-based organisations can be built through outside interventions.
-    The advocates are cautious in providing recipes for success. In fact, they want to move away from blueprint approaches, opting for flexible and open-ended learning processes.
-    All authors envisage the empowerment of the poor or the marginalized, brought about by building on their own capacities. They all stress the resourcefulness, skills, and knowledge of local people. Local knowledge can be married with formal scientific/outside knowledge and thereby both—or even better, the combination of the two—become more effective.
-    In relation to the previous point, they also adhere to a constructivist epistemology; the idea of multiple realities is embraced. The outsiders' perspective is just one perspective next to those of other actors such as local people. They also assert that local people are in the best position to define their own needs.
-    All agree that everyone is able and willing to engage in concerted action on the basis of mutual learning. This provides a third coordinating mechanism for change in addition to the mechanisms of hierarchical regulation (law and order) and the market.
-    The methods proposed involve models for joint learning and joint planning and are based on improved communication and facilitation. While the early proponents of PAR focussed on power differences, struggle and exploitation, current writings assume the possibility of achieving consensus. If attention is paid to conflicts at all, it is assumed that these can be resolved through dialogue and/or joint learning. It assumes that people resolve conflicts in a harmonious way, and that win-win situations are possible. In short, they are inspired by what Habermas would call 'communicative rationality'.
-    Agreement also exists on the role of the outsider; this role should be restricted to that of being a catalyst. Outside intervention is limited to facilitation. Therefore, the facilitators should have the right attitudes, behaviour, and skills to guide the process. They should be self-critical (thus learning), open and altruistic, and eventually make themselves dispensable. The authors call for unselfish and altruist behaviour (Uphoff 1992, 326; Chambers 1997; Fals Borda 1998, 233).

- The advocates are also concerned and aware of what can go wrong in the field. Cohen and Uphoff write "…with a lot of lip service, participation could become drained of substance…" (1980; 213). Chambers writes about bad practices (1997; 211) and about the risks of manuals, ruts, and routines in relation to the highly popular PRA. Most of these concerns are related to the attitudes and behaviour of the outsiders facilitating the process, and to the lack of responsive institutions.

There are of course some differences in philosophy among the four. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) of Fals Borda and his colleagues seems to be more radical and political. Especially in their early writings, they were more inclined to use concepts such as 'struggle' of the 'oppressed and exploited' against 'corrupt and exploitative class of owners and office holders' to 'create countervailing power' but this is easily explained when considering its historical and geographical contexts. One would assume that Chambers is equally political in his explicit choice to work towards empowerment of the poor and the 'disempowerment of uppers'. But Chambers does not call for conflict or struggle; rather, he calls for the uppers to change voluntarily. With Uphoff, the magic word is self-reliance; here again the poor have to do it themselves (with the help of outsiders) but not via political struggle; he wrote: "Some advocates of participatory development emphasise empowerment, in terms of making effective demands for goods and services from government. This overlooks the fact that the rural poor will be more respected and attended to when they contribute to their own advancement by their own efforts. Demand making is usually zero-sum in its orientation and effect, whereas self-help efforts are more positive-sum, expanding the resource base from which needs can be met" (Uphoff et al, 1998; 189). This is probably also the reason that both Uphoff and Fals Borda place a heavier accent on local organisation as a crucial factor for self-reliance (Uphoff) and empowerment (Fals Borda). Chambers does not write much on local organisations in his latest book (1997). Röling does not write explicitly on empowerment but stresses that in the process of social learning all stakeholders have to participate and all have to learn from others. Röling also differs in that his audience is mainly an academic one while the others—and especially Chambers and Uphoff—direct much of their writings to development practitioners.

In the next chapter, I will assess some of the critical reflections on these theories and on practical experiences with participatory approaches based on these thoughts.

3 Critical Reflections on Participatory Approaches

The surge in the use of participatory approaches in development practice has been accompanied by a growing stream of—what I here will refer to as—critical reflections. There is widespread concern about 'bad practices' in implementation, which the advocates mainly attribute to wrong attitudes and behaviours. This view—that contends that while the approach itself is good, the implementation is not—is discussed in section 3.1. There are however also several conceptual and philosophical shortcomings in the way participatory approaches have been presented, and these are summarised in the remaining sections of this chapter. Here I will discuss the problems of defining the broad-ranging key concepts of participation and empowerment. These concepts are often used in a highly normative way; in that they are presented as inherently 'good' and therefore incontestable. Besides, it is often argued that participatory approaches do not give adequate attention to the intricacies of the different and dynamic power relations. In addition, the philosophy of participatory interventions would appear to be too narrowly based on the notion of communicative action.

3.1 'Bad Practice'

Concerns and critical reflection on the practice of participatory development have been voiced not only by critical social scientists who study such interventions. The very practitioners and advocates of participatory approaches—in line with the principle of 'embracing error'—are very much concerned about what they commonly refer to as 'bad practice'. Chambers summarised bad practice as follows; (Chambers 1995; 1997; 1999)

- Use of the label without the substance;
- Extractive PRA;
- Putting methods before process of empowerment;
- Putting methods before attitudes and behaviour;
- Ruts and routines, rushing;
- Poorest people are left out.

Use of the label without the substance refers to the fact that many organisations have adopted the concepts of participatory development and PRA without engaging in the commitment and the change in attitudes and behaviour that are required to achieve a transformative process in which the poor become empowered. In such cases, the terminology is often adopted because it is fashionable or because it allows easier access to donor money. Similarly, much of what has been called PRA was in fact extractive RRA in that its main objective was to collect data. In this process, PRA was often reduced to a number of tools and techniques and—even worse—these techniques often became ends in themselves. Many trainers emphasised the tools and techniques as if they alone constitute the most important element of participatory interventions. Too little attention was given to the attitudes and behaviour of facilitators of participatory development interventions. Many of them had inherited dominant behaviour from earlier work experience or from the way in which they were trained. Often, they were not even genuinely committed to the empowerment of the target group. It is a given that repetition leads to routine. And routine stifles creativity, which may fuel preconceptions. The same can be said of manuals; the process can too easily become formal and rigid. The more rules and sequences of 'how to' are introduced, the more likely it is for the level of participation to decrease. Rushing is a danger since facilitators in a hurry may overlook local

complexities and tend to work with the better-off in the communities to achieve rapid results. Facilitators tend to work with the 'uppers', who are often men belonging to the local elite. Advocates of the participatory approach explain the existence of bad practice by: a) a too rapid adoption of the approach, b) bad training and, c) the fact that institutions did not make the necessary reversals. Especially during the 1990s, the approach—sometimes referred to as the 'new paradigm for development'—spread rapidly. In the beginning of the 1990s there was still a widespread concern about how to 'scale up'; how to get the approach adopted by the major development institutions (Blackburn and Holland 1998). Only a couple of years later, the main concern centred around the fact that adoption had been too quick, since it was not accompanied by the required behavioural, professional, and institutional changes (Chambers 1997; Cornwall and Pratt 2000). Participatory development became 'mainstream' for many donors. The problem was that the organisations and development professionals adopted the fashionable rhetoric "without the substance". The high demand created a supply; almost overnight, consultants and trainers became 'specialists' in participatory development and PRA. Too often, training was based on classroom training instead of on fieldwork and, again, too little attention was paid to attitudes and behaviour. In addition, institutional changes were largely ignored; organisations continued to function in a top-down way.

During his experience with PAR, Fals Borda encountered similar problems of attitudes and behaviour of the activists/staff. They easily developed an attitude of superiority; they assumed too pivotal a role and imposed their ideas, rationalities, and methods onto the local people. Others "easily fall into nets of co-optation", become corrupted or become weary at the lack of rapid progress or, alternatively, hypnotised by radicalism (Fals Borda 1988, 31). It also appeared to be difficult to break down old habits of submission and dependency. Outsiders were viewed with suspicion by local people, which resulted in respondents giving false answers to questions posed in initial interviews. In an attempt to reduce resistance and suspicion, it was decided to make use of facilitators from the community. Nevertheless, "care had to be taken that the newly-trained staff did not adopt the superior attitudes and allow themselves to become pivotal figures" (Fals Borda 1988, 36).

In other words, advocates of participatory approaches did observe, and were most concerned about, 'bad practice'. But they contend that it is bad implementation of an inherently good approach. The approach itself is hardly questioned and the solution for 'bad practices' is a recurrent one; we, the outsiders, the 'uppers' have to change radically; we have to learn to change, to 'disempower', be unselfish, self-critical, generous, altruist and 'be nice' to each other (Chambers 1997; Chambers 1999). Underlying assumptions, philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of participatory approaches are often not made explicit. If practice works out differently from that which was envisioned, the solution seems to be more of the same—ABC (attitude and behaviour change) and institutional reform. In the remainder of this chapter, I will therefore highlight a range of more conceptual problems that are often neglected or avoided in the writings on participatory approaches.

3.2   Participation—the catch-all concept

Participation is often badly defined, and sometimes not defined at all. It thus remains a rather vague or a 'catch-all' (White 1996) concept. This vagueness is one of the explanations of the many allegations of "abuse" or "use as a label, without the content" since one could ask, who is to judge what is the 'right' use or abuse if it is not precisely defined? Participation can be

equated with the level of 'involvement' of local people. One can design an agronomic trial, give farmers precise instructions as to what to do, measure the results, and then state that research had been done with the 'farmers' participation'. Others, such as the advocates presented in Chapter 2, will only refer to participation if there is a serious process of empowerment or social learning in progress. As outlined in Chapter 1, this thesis too, will in principle only deal with participatory development interventions that at least formally, on paper—comply with those empowering and transformative objectives. But since the range of what is covered by the term 'participation' is so broad, it is useful to distinguish here different forms or levels of participation on the basis of the intended purpose of the intervention. Several authors have tried to do this, their attempts dating from as far back as the 1960s. Arnstein, for example, had already developed the 'ladder' (Arnstein 1969). Biggs made a useful overview of four modes of farmer participation in agricultural research: contractual, consultative, collaborative, and collegial modes (Biggs 1989). Pretty et al adapted a scale from Adnan et al, (1992), distinguishing seven levels of participation: passive participation, participation in information giving, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilisation (Pretty, Guijt et al. 1995).

Another useful distinction is the difference of participation **as a means** and participation **as an end** (Okali, Sumberg et al. 1994; Nelson and Wright 1995; Oakley 1995). The objective of participation as a means is to complete a project more efficiently and/or more effectively.

Table 1 Classifications of levels of participation

		Sources:
Participation as a means 'they participate in our project' goal = efficiency	Participation as an end 'we participate in their project' *goal = empowerment*	Okali et al 1994, Nelson and Wright 1995 Oakley 1995
Instrumental participation	Transformative participation	World Bank 1994 in: Nelson and Wright 1995
Pragmatic argument	Normative argument	Johnson and Wilson 2000
Consultative Collaborative	Collegial	Biggs 1989
Participation by consultation Participation for material incentives Functional participation	Interactive participation Self-mobilization	Pretty et al 1995
Co-opting practice	Empowerment	Chambers 1995

The objective of the project can, for example, be anything from economic growth, the building of schools or the conservation of the watershed. The participation of local people is then merely one of the means to achieving this project goal. The aim of participation as an end is that the group or community sets up a process to control its own development. Here the aim is the empowerment of the community. Parallel to this is the distinction between instrumental participation (similar to 'participation as a means': involving people in a project designed by outsiders) and transformative participation (similar to 'participation as an end': get communities to decide on their own priorities). In table 1 below, I have tried to put the different modes and typologies of participation together by using 'participation as a means' and 'participation as an end' as distinguishing criteria.

In a way, the distinction between 'as a means' and 'as an end' is problematic. One could argue that the difference between the two is a matter of degree. Imagine a project that has the empowerment of a specific group as its objective. We would rank such a project under participation as an end. But one can consider this as a case where it is still the outsider who proposes this project; it is the outsider who wants this group to empower itself. In fact, the project wants the local people to cooperate in order to achieve the goals of the outside project. Looking at it in this way, it can be equally called participation as a means.

The reverse is also possible. Imagine a project that has as its objective the building of schools, and the project involves local people in building the school. We can rank this under participation as a means. But it is possible that in the process, local people discover what they can achieve together and decide to take further collective action on their own.

Still, such classifications of modes—or levels—of participation as presented above are only useful to a certain extent. I have experienced such rankings as being very useful for a first broad categorisation, and in a first course on participation. But one is soon confronted with the limits of these models when one wants to classify a project into one of these levels, as I discovered when I was doing a study comparing 22 organisations involved in participatory development in Mozambique (Pijnenburg and Nhantumbo 2002). It was not a question of simply fitting projects into one specific box, mode or level since a project often consists of a range of activities. What is even more important here is that many different actors give shape to the intervention. One cannot capture a complex project under one label.

Furthermore, Nelson and Wright (1995,1) rightly point out that: "participation is imbued with different ideologies or given particular meanings by people situated differently within any organisation". White made a similar analysis: "…though we use the same words, the meaning that we give them can be very different" (White 1996, 7). She also distinguished four forms of participation, namely: Nominal, Instrumental, Representative, and Transformative; but she adds several dynamic elements. First of all, project staff on the one hand and the local people on the other, can have very different interests or expectations regarding an intervention. The objectives of the party formulating the project may be quite different from what participants expect to get out of it. Secondly, it is likely that even amongst project staff, as well as amongst groups of the local people, these interests may differ. Project staff, 'communities', or 'local people' cannot be considered as homogenous groups. Thirdly, the interests and expectations—and thus the character of participation—can also change over time. The level of participation may decline or increase over time. Finally, power relations in wider society, outside the direct project context, can influence the participatory process and place limitations on it. For example, people may not express certain interests because they simply do not believe that they can be achieved. These four dynamics very often prevents us from observing the above-mentioned typologies or levels of participation in a 'pure' form. (White 1996).

This analysis makes it clear that it is impossible to categorize a complex and multi-facetted intervention with various actors within one typology, label, or level of participation. Since participation can take multiple forms and serve many different interests, it is vital to distinguish more clearly what those interests are. The other side of the coin is that it is exactly this characteristic of accommodating such a broad range of interests that can also explain why the concept of participation can command such widespread acclaim (White 1996).

The analysis as proposed by White calls for an actor-oriented approach to study how different actors may have different perspectives and aspire to different goals. Different actors can be expected to have their own meaning, and these meanings may be contested and deployed in order to gain benefit (in whatever form). In this way, even participatory development

interventions where project staff have the best intentions of empowering the poor can work out quite differently during their implementation.

3.3 The other ill-defined concept—empowerment

Although the literature on transformative participatory development uses empowerment as a central concept, Crawley states that it rarely defines power or empowerment explicitly. It furthermore tends to avoid terms like oppression, subordination, and conflict. Cornwall states that: "Of all the words in the participation lexicon, 'empowerment' is perhaps the most malleable, undergoing the most marked shifts in meaning over the last three decades. Once redolent with the struggles of the oppressed for voice, rights, and recognition, it is now used by some as a shorthand for an agenda of economic and institutional reform" (Cornwall 2000). In the World Development Report 2000/2001 on poverty, a whole chapter was dedicated to empowerment, in itself a novelty for the World Bank. This report was criticised in that "the report does not spell out the different epistemological, ideological, and political interpretations of empowerment. No systematic presentation of the concept is presented" (Braathen NY). This seems to have been corrected by the World Bank with the publication in 2002 of the book "Empowerment and Poverty Reduction, a Sourcebook". Empowerment is presented here as an approach for reducing poverty and increasing development effectiveness. The book also mentions an "empowering approach to participation" and an "empowerment agenda". The definition of empowerment used in this book is: "...the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" (Narayan 2002, 14). Therefore, in order to say whether poor people are empowered, or are becoming empowered, they should do one or more of the following: participate in, negotiate with, influence, control or hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. The analysis in the World Bank publication has as its basic assumption that poor people lack assets and capabilities. The solution is twofold: a pro-poor institutional environment has to be created, and the poor have to organise themselves so that their voices can be heard—or heard more clearly. Successful empowerment initiatives share four elements that function synergetically: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organisational capacity. Setting this out as the framework, the World Bank publication also highlights the problematic sides of achieving all this and acknowledges that a lot still needs to be done to make this approach successful. For example, the fact that inequalities are often deeply ingrained in formal and informal institutions, and that any action that goes against these inequalities may be potentially conflictual. So while the analysis of the World Bank does acknowledge these political dimensions of the approach, it also does seem to—rather easily—gloss over these problematic aspects. The analysis seems to be biased towards a notion of power as 'a thing'. The more the capacities of the poor increase, the more their power will grow, and the growth of power of one person does not necessarily affect another person. The danger of such a notion is that power is considered as a personal attribute (Nelson and Wright 1995, 8). Power is however better understood as a relational phenomenon. Individuals are continually undergoing and exercising power in social relations. The inequalities that are ingrained in—mostly informal—institutions are, however, constantly being reproduced and it will be difficult for poor people to have access to, and control over, certain resources as equal partners to the non-poor. It is, at the very least , questionable whether those who have such control will be willing to share this with others. An increase in capacities is a step in the right direction, but probably insufficient to change relations and inequalities in a structural way. The World Bank acknowledges this by stating that institutions must also change. This is, however, easier said than done. While the approach assumes a malleable society, it is not always easy to even become aware of, let alone change, the many—again especially informal—institutions such as norms and informal

rules that maintain inequalities. Formal institutions such as laws and written regulations may be easier to change but this may also increase the risk of widening the gap between the formal law and common practice. It seems, however, that empowerment—and thus structural changes in inequalities in society—will not be achieved without conflicts, political struggle, and negotiation.

Crawley argues that participation as an end will remain an illusion as long as empowerment is not well defined. She then attempts to define empowerment, stating that it is about enabling people to: understand their situation, reflect on factors shaping that situation, set their own agenda, and take steps to change the situation. The author furthermore points out that PRA as a method or a strategy in itself is not empowering, often only contributing to the first two steps and thus achieving a 'pre-empowerment' stage that can be helpful in identifying critical issues. Whether PRA can really lead to a change and empower the people will depend a lot on the commitment of the people using it and whether the step can be made to change the underlying power structures (Crawley 1998).

Both the definitions of empowerment of the World Bank and that of Crawley revolve around enabling local people. In the World Bank definition it is about enabling poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. Crawley's definition is about enabling people to understand their situation, reflect on factors shaping that situation, set their own agenda, and take steps to change the situation. Empowerment along the lines of the definition of Crawley implies more of a learning process before one takes action. It wants to delve into the reasons and root causes of the situation of poverty. The learning aspect makes it also more transformative. Transformation implies learning and change of behaviour. Furthermore—and what is missing in the definitions above—empowerment should lead to some form of collective action. We do not talk here of the empowerment of one individual. Collective action means mobilising a group of people, agreeing on a common goal, and undertaking action collectively to reach that goal.

Poverty is a rather relative concept. This means that if we want to make a concept as 'empowerment of the poor' meaningful and operational in each and every context, we will have to define what group of people we consider as the poor, and probably also vis-à-vis which other group of people.

In thinking about empowerment of poor or marginalised people, gender studies can be very helpful. Moser distinguished between practical and strategic gender needs. The former refer to the day-to day needs of women such as access to clean water, while the latter refers to the need to change their subordinate position with respect to men (Moser 1993). Mayoux argues that these two types of needs are often interlinked, and that addressing practical needs is often constrained by underlying inequalities. "In practice, the achievement of women's immediate needs such as income earning, or the ability to protect their own health and /or that of their children, can rarely be achieved without underlying aspects of gender subordination such as the unequal division of reproductive labour, restrictions of female mobility, domestic violence, women's lack of autonomy, and so on." (Mayoux 1995).

Secondly, gender studies have shown that women themselves often demonstrate internalised behaviour that symbolise their own inferiority and that enforce their own restrictions. They may even use this in their own interest. This "internalised oppression" affects how they see themselves and their ability to change the world around them (Mayoux 1995; Crawley 1998).

We can draw more general lessons from the above when we replace 'women' by 'the poor' or 'the marginalised'. We can then conclude that addressing any needs of the poor will require addressing their powerlessness and their subordinate role in society. Secondly, it will not be

18

easy to mobilise the poor as long as they continue to perceive themselves as powerless and as long as they play the subordinate role that is 'culturally' expected from and by them.

3.4 Little attention paid to power relations

In the previous two sections, we have touched on the area where probably most criticism of the advocates of participatory development is to be heard; the lack of attention to the political interests and power relations of participatory development interventions. Up till now, many authors have argued that the way in which participatory approaches have been promoted and / or the ways in which they were implemented, neglected power relations (Mosse 1994; Doorman 1995; Nelson and Wright 1995; White 1996; Goebel 1998; Guijt and Shah 1998) (Johnson and Wilson 2000). Several authors have referred to participatory development as being 'populist' because of this neglect (Scoones and Thompson 1994; Brown 1997; Mohan and Stokke 2000). The tendency in PRA has too often been to try to generalise and seek consensus. This criticism has to do with how the approaches—especially PRA in the late eighties and the early nineties—were originally presented. They have been presented as the new paradigm for development, as a new magic bullet and, very importantly, in an a-political way. This again has contributed to the fact that many have co-opted the approach or have adopted it as a quick fix. It has been applied in a technocratic manner, and as such has many of the same problems as the earlier top-down interventions. "What began as a political issue is translated into a technical problem"(White 1996). Goebel also explains how the 'rapid' character of PRA was appealing, for it allowed—especially technically trained— professionals, to limit investigation in the 'messy' social world (Goebel 1998).

The authors mentioned above have pinpointed the absence of a political perspective on three different levels; community, intervention, and wider society. Most of them look especially at power relations within the local communities. Others also look into the relations between outsiders and insiders, or between project staff and the local people. Those who argue that the wider societal relations are neglected are fewer in number. I will discuss each level in turn.

The myth of community

The concept of local community is highly dominant in participatory development rhetoric. All too often 'the community' has been regarded as a homogeneous and harmonious entity. Guijt and Shah, in their book "The Myth of Community", state that much participatory work lacks a proper understanding of the different power relations within a community (Guijt and Shah 1998). But the very limits of a community are also often assumed to be clearly defined, while in reality this may not be the case (Kepe 1999).

In short, the criticism is that not enough attention has been paid to local diversity, to different groups within the community that may have different interests. These differences may not always be visible on the surface. It has been observed that the public nature of PRA for example may have obscured local complexities and validated dominant views (Mosse 1994; Goebel 1998). In this way, the intervention may empower the already more powerful in the community (White 1996; Mohan and Stokke 2000).

One of the measures adopted in the practice of participatory approaches has been to work with separate groups or different 'interest groups' typically divided by gender, age, and sometimes by wealth. So, for example, the visual diagrams of PRA are made by groups of men as well as groups of women. Still, when it comes to decision-making in plenary sessions, the men easily dominate the outcomes (Crawley 1998). The divisions according to sex and age are the most obvious but there are often other social dimensions of power and differentiation that can divide the community. Many of those alternative dimensions are less visible for the outsider such as lineage, ethnicity, religion and duration of residence in the community (Cornwall 1998; Goebel 1998).

The problematic outsider-insider divide

The second dimension in which power relations play a role, and one that has often been neglected by advocates of participatory approaches, is to be found where 'outsiders' such as project staff, facilitators, change agents, and NGO personnel. meet the 'insiders' (for example, local people, members of the community or target group). This can be called an interface in development interventions (Long and Villareal 1994). This is where we find several donor-beneficiary relationships. Such a relationship is by definition not an equal one, and may easily lead to manipulation by those in the donor role since they control the financial resources. This influence becomes even stronger where development agencies appear with interventions with specific objectives or single-issue approaches.

Local people can and do influence this relationship; projects depend on them. Especially participatory interventions will require local people to grant access, co-operate, and provide legitimacy to the project. In this sense, local people clearly have considerable power. However, power inequalities between the development agency and 'their clients' will never cease to exist since in most cases the outsider controls important resources to which different actors hope to gain access.

Participatory approaches have stressed ideals such as equality, partnership, and ownership by local people. But these are difficult to achieve as long as decisions on how donor money should be spent remains in the hands of the donors themselves..

Various authors have pointed out that such power dimensions exist in participatory development interventions (White 1996; Craig and Porter 1997) and many of them have criticised the advocates of participatory approaches for not paying due attention to them (Scoones and Thompson 1994; Mayoux 1995; Rhoades 1998). Mosse gave a good example when pointing out how projects and their staff play a powerful role in development choices (Mosse 1994). He described how project staff influenced the way in which the 'needs of rural people' were constructed; "given project-villager power relations, it is not greatly surprising that what was recorded in village PRAs reflected (and endorsed) a broad project analysis"(Mosse 2001, 19). Participatory projects can also turn out to be complete impositions as Nuijten has shown in a Mexican case (Nuijten 2002). There is often the tendency to create artificial, externally conceived committees or groups (Rhoades 1998). Existing local institutions are often overlooked since outsiders strive for a recognisable, organised structure to work with.

Related to this phenomenon is that the facilitator has been often depicted as a neutral person. However, "the agenda is set by the facilitator to a much greater extent than they will usually admit" (Doorman 1995). So far, little attention has been paid to the role of the facilitator although this is changing. The role of the facilitator often remains 'mystified' and only recently there have been calls in literature to render the motivations, roles, and styles of the facilitator more transparent (Groot and Maarleveld 2000; Groot 2002) and to abandon the idea of a neutral facilitator (Mollinga 1998; Leeuwis 2000).

Emphasis on the 'local' obscures wider political dimensions

Mohan and Stokke argue that the move towards participatory approaches in development practice results in focussing heavily on the 'local'. This tends to underplay broader economic and political structures (Mohan and Stokke 2000). They criticise Chambers for focussing too much on attitudinal and behavioural changes of the outsiders as the only way forward, and for not putting forward strategies for affecting wider structures as well.

Doorman refers to the fact that interventions are, in general, limited to certain communities. In addition to the high risks of elites appropriating or dominating the outcomes of the participatory intervention, he talks of second level conflicts of interest, which emerge when the satisfaction of the target groups' needs could run counter to the interests of other groups

in society (Doorman 1995). Such conflicts can also emerge when, for example, satisfying the demands of a specific community requires a disproportionate share of resources of a project.

To summarise then, there is widespread criticism that participatory approaches have stressed too highly the possibility of achieving consensus and win-win situations based on harmonious and conflict-free relations. Power relations have not been adequately addressed. There is concern that the more powerful, either inside or outside the community, can co-opt the interventions or use them to their benefit. It can therefore potentially disempower the poorest or the most marginalized even further.

3.5   The morally uncontested notion of 'participation'

We can consider concepts such as development, participation, and empowerment as container concepts or as 'plastic words'. Plastic words are very malleable and are difficult to define. They do have strong connotations, however; there is a specific complex of feelings, values, and associations around the word (Pörksen 1990).

In section 3.2, I referred to the fact that the concept of participation is very vague in that it can have many different meanings. But the meanings attached to the plastic word 'participation' have in general a highly positive connotation. The dominant development discourse in the 1990s was highly normative in that 'participation' and 'empowerment' were regarded as inherently good. They seemed to be non-contested ideals that everybody was striving for and it was 'not done' to be against it. Several authors observed this 'feel-good' aspect of the concepts that were central in participatory development (Nelson and Wright 1995; White 1996; Guijt and Shah 1998).

It is interesting to compare these with several other notions that seem to be uncontested and always linked with positive values. Examples of similar concepts are development (Sachs 1992), sustainability (Pretty 1995), nature (Aarts and te Molder 1997), community (Kepe 1999), democracy and good governance (Abrahamsen 2000). What these concepts also have in common is that they are highly ambiguous. They are very difficult to define unequivocally. Or, for that matter, one could say they are easy to define since there are so many definitions being used. It seems that their elusive character is closely related to their normative, positive, values. These words seem to be ideal for populist speeches.

White also makes the link between the positive connotation and the vagueness of the concept of participation: "The status of participation as a 'hurrah' word, bringing a warm glow to its users and hearers blocks its detailed examination" (White 1996, 7). And with this, we are also back to politics when Guijt and Shah refer to the concepts of participation and community as providing "a smoke-screen" to avoid addressing intra-communal struggles (Guijt and Shah 1998). Crawley writes that empowerment suffers much the same fate as the concept of participation; she writes that it has "an aura of moral superiority" that protects practitioners from criticism and avoids critical self-reflection (Crawley 1998, 25).

From the talk of levels or modes of participation such as presented in table 1, donors and practitioners tend to conclude that it is possible and desirable to move to the most intense form of participation (Guijt and Shah 1998; Leeuwis 2000). Only the 'higher' levels will lead to empowerment and only these forms are considered to be 'real' or 'genuine' participation (Oakley 1995). In other words, in much of the writings on participation there is a highly normative notion that the more participation, the higher the level, the better it is.

In contrast to this striving for 'maximum' participation, I believe that every mode of participation can be perfectly justified, depending on the objective of the intervention and on the specific local context. It is then probably better to speak of optimal rather than maximum participation (Doorman 1995; Uphoff, Esman et al. 1998; Cornwall 2000). But the very act of

thinking in modes and ladders has pushed the development practitioner into the direction of achieving the highest levels of participation in order to be politically correct. A similar thing can be said for the distinction between RRA, as an extractive research method, and PRA, as a process leading to empowerment, which Chambers made in 1992. The use of RRA can be perfectly justified where the objective is to do research. But the way in which PRA was presented by Chambers, with the dichotomy that 'RRA = old' and 'PRA = new', results in everyone wanting to do PRA. Even if they continue doing RRA, they will probably *call* it PRA since this is more fashionable. This has also contributed to the use of PRA 'as a label'.

3.6   A critique of the implicit philosophies

Participatory approaches are—explicitly or implicitly—based on certain notions and philosophies. Various authors stress that PRA and participatory approaches in general have not been sufficiently theorised and politicised (Leeuwis 2000; Edmunds and Wollenberg 2001; Kapoor 2002). Every methodology has philosophical and theoretical foundations. In the case of participatory approaches, these often remained covert, and assumptions were not adequately considered. In this section, I want to make some of these underlying concepts more explicit so that we can see that participatory approaches are often based on normative wishful thinking.

Concept of mankind—the conscious and able actor

As we read in section 3.4, the participatory approaches have been referred to as being populist for being a-political. The other reason of being viewed as populist is that the approach cherishes and sometimes romanticises the local (Brown 1997; Mohan and Stokke 2000). Key elements here are the appreciation of local or Indigenous Technical knowledge and the belief that "they can do it" (Chambers 1997). The advocates stress the resourcefulness, skills, and knowledge of the local people. Local knowledge can be married with formal scientific/outside knowledge, resulting in both—or, even better, the combination of the two—becoming more effective. In addition, it is suggested that local people are in the best position to define their own needs. In fact this hinges very much on a classical liberal view of each individual knowing what is best for him or herself, and being able to act in accordance with that.

Heymann describes how this 'subject-thinking', depicting each individual as autonomous, has become the norm in 'western' society. This thinking hides the influences others may have on one's behaviour. This view of the autonomous subject easily reinforces the assumption that people are very much able to define and reflect upon their own needs (Heymann 1999).

This can also be linked with a certain view of mankind that can be seen in such diverse areas as current social sciences and business administration. In many branches of development studies, such as in the actor-oriented approach, man is no longer depicted as a victim of structures that determine behaviour. Instead, women and men are seen as able and conscious actors with agency. They are no longer seen as passive subjects as they were in the more deterministic and structuralist approaches such as functionalism and (neo-)Marxist theories. This in turn fits in well with prevailing values in western society that stress individualism.

But these ideas can also be seen in the area of business administration . Employees are not parts of the big machinery that have to be ordered around and controlled. Instead, trust in the employees, involving them in the processes of decision-making and innovation play a key role in modern business management. In fact, Chambers himself refers to this parallel,

indicating values such as decentralisation, open communication, sharing knowledge, empowerment, diversity, and rapid adaptation that are play a major role in Business Administration courses as well as in PRA (Chambers 1997, 197).

This way of looking at mankind can also be understood in the light of the efforts to counter the colonial view of the backward, poor rural people in the Third World (respectively employees or workers in the case of business administration). On the other hand, neither can it be denied that the very situation of powerlessness, lack of education, limited exposure to alternatives limits the majority of the rural poor in Africa in their advancement. It is likely that, influenced by wishful thinking, the ingenuity, skills, and resourcefulness of the rural poor and the existence of local institutions that effectively manage natural resources has been over-estimated.

Communicative rationality

Participatory approaches have been criticised for being mainly based on what Habermas has called communicative rationality (Leeuwis 2000). Röling and Fals Borda explicitly refer to this philosophy but the ideas of the others, especially the work by Chambers, can be considered as sharing the same basis (see also Kapoor 2002). Communicative action is juxtaposed to strategic action. One can talk of strategic action when actors bring in various power resources in the interaction with other actors in order to achieve their goals. When talking of communicative action, actors aim at reaching an agreement on a shared definition of a situation and co-ordinate their activities in an open process of argumentation. In the philosophy of communicative action, conflicts are not denied, rather it is suggested that these can be resolved through a process of joint learning, improved communication, and facilitation. Communicative action also presupposes the possibility of a power-free 'ideal-speech situation'. This would mean an inclusive, coercion-free, and open discussion among free and equal participants where consensus is formed by the force of the better argument (Kapoor 2002).

Kapoor points out where the work of Chambers distinguishes itself from that of Habermas. It is stated that PRA is too informal in its procedures. It lacks systematic rules and grounding principles to regulate the dialogue, to reach just consensus or to check power relations. The only thing Chambers proposes is the rules on attitudes and behaviour of the facilitator. In other words, good and just practice solely depends on the commitment of the staff facilitating PRA. Another criticism is that Chambers appears to avoid conflicts at all costs. His philosophy on PRA hinges on the willingness of the 'uppers' to 'disempower'. Kapoor concludes that PRA refrains from entering "into the messy territory of politics" (p.115). The author concludes that the work of Chambers on PRA is insufficiently theorised and politicised. Therefore PRA can be easily misused or abused (Kapoor 2002).

Leeuwis has argued that the methodology for participatory processes should not be based too narrowly on the philosophy of communicative action (Leeuwis 2000). He states that the approaches based on communicative action possess 'wishful thinking' dimensions in that it assumes that people are willing and able to learn from each other and that consensus is the motor for societal progress. Basing participatory approaches on communicative action alone, would relegate strategic action to undesirable behaviour.

However, it is likely that in any project context, different actors have different priorities and consensus amongst them on the needs and aims of an intervention may not always be possible (Mayoux 1995; Rhoades 1998). Leeuwis points out that in any meaningful process of change, conflicts will emerge. He therefore calls for an integrative negotiation approach in participatory trajectories that allows more attention to conflict and strategic behaviour (Leeuwis 2000).

Leeuwis also argues that it is in fact rather hard to separate communicative from strategic action; they are two sides of the same coin. Communicative action by a particular group of people is at the same time strategic vis-à-vis other actors or groups of actors. So whether an

action is strategic or communicative depends on where one sets the boundaries, and this blurs the distinction between the two types of action.

In this light, it is interesting to compare the foregoing with the work of John Forester on the "Deliberative Practitioner" (Forester 1999). What he proposes as participatory planning is very similar to what Röling envisages with social learning. The main difference is, however, that Forester pays specific attention to conflicts and the 'messy' politics of negotiation that is inherent to the work of planners. Here again we see that it is difficult to separate communicative action from strategic action. Forester quotes Mansbridge, stressing the closeness between negotiation and learning; "In negotiation, the parties involved not only manoeuvre for advantageous positions, they also try to understand what the other really wants…. It requires making suggestions that the other may not have thought of, and learning from both acceptance and refusal…. They can even help others develop new values…. Successful negotiations rarely rely on jockeying for advantage…successful negotiators often find ways of meeting one another's real needs…." (Forester 1999, 62). One can see that successful negotiation is not merely based on either strategic or communicative rationality; it requires a mix of the two. In his recent work, Röling also pays explicit attention to conflict resolution and 'negotiated agreements' between interdependent stakeholders (Röling 2002).

3.7   Summary of this chapter

Participatory approaches are based on certain normative principles and values and are imbued with wishful thinking on human behaviour. The positive connotations attributed to the approach also largely explain its appeal and therefore its popularity in development practice. Participation and empowerment seem to be non-contested ideals and it is often implied that the more participatory the process, the better it is. The underlying philosophy of participation is that individuals are sufficiently knowledgeable, willing and able to reach a consensus. Although it reflects highly laudable ideals, it can also be regarded as rather naïve since the experience of many years of development interventions has shown that social change does not come about without conflicts. The obvious risk of not paying due attention to the underlying power dimensions of poverty is that one easily overlooks the fact that the approach can empower the more powerful, can be misused, or can raise unmet expectations. Whether the intervention can lead to a serious process of empowerment of the poor will depend very much on the commitment of the actors involved.

4 Discourses and Everyday Practices of Development Interventions

For earlier versions of my research proposal I used the working title 'Rhetoric and Reality' (of Participatory Development Interventions). Over time I have decided to use the concepts 'Discourses' and 'Practices' instead since these are better defined in the social sciences. In this chapter I elaborate on these two concepts and explain how I have used them. I will first reflect on the discourse concept, then on the concept of (everyday) practice and finally on the intricate relationship between the two. On the basis of the theoretical notions in this chapter, together with the review of criticism on participatory approaches in the previous chapter, the chapter will end in concrete research questions that have structured the analysis of the field material of this study.

4.1 Discourses

By discourse, Michel Foucault meant "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, a way of representing the knowledge about, a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall 2001, 72). Discourse is not merely text or speech. Discourse is rather a system of representation. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall 2001, 72). With the discourse concept, Foucault provided a tool for historical analysis. He applied the concept amongst others to show how ideas on madness, punishment, and sexuality changed over time. He described what is 'sayable' or 'thinkable' about those phenomena at a particular historical moment. He also explicitly looked at power by analysing how statements and rules of what to say or think acquired authority. By doing this, Foucault also looked at legitimation processes.

Foucauldian Analysis of 'Development'

Several authors have applied the Foucauldian notion of discourse to the concept of 'development' (Ferguson 1990; Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Grillo and Stirrat 1997). They showed how the Third World has been constructed by 'the North' and how donors have used this to legitimise their development interventions. In the view of these authors, the development discourse is an outcome of an institutionalised production of certain ideas of modernisation, often in the interest of the North. This discourse stipulates what is desirable or acceptable and it shapes the thoughts and actions of development bureaucrats and practitioners. The title of the book by Ferguson contains the metaphor of 'Anti-Politics Machine', which refers to the way in which development projects tend to take over the role of national governments and attempt to have their interventions appear as mere 'technical' solutions (Grillo 1997, 18). The work of Escobar and Ferguson has however also been criticised for depicting the North as the hegemonic developers and people in the South as the (passive) victims of development and thus neglecting the agency of the different actors in the South (Grillo 1997).

Multiple discourses and discourse coalitions

It should be acknowledged that we find many actors within the group of 'developers', either from the South or from the North, who may have very different ideas and understanding of their own and of each other's work. Therefore, we may not be able to talk of 'the' dominant development discourse. Many discourses of development co-exist and there is much diversity

to be found within the community of 'professional developers' (Grillo 1997, 21). It is therefore better to speak of multiple discourses.

However, if one studies how donors and development agencies view development, one can clearly distinguish certain narratives, discourses or paradigms that many actors seem to have in common[2]. They change over time and they may differ according to (groups of) organisations (for example the World Bank, Nordic countries, certain NGOs). But some discourses may become more powerful and dominant than others (Hilhorst 2000).

In this respect it is interesting to look more closely at what Maarten Hajer has called discourse coalitions. A discourse coalition is a group of actors who share a social construct (Hajer 1993, 43-45). Discourse coalitions are often found among selected actors from the civil service, politicians, and interest groups in a specific policy area. These coalitions can be transnational and are expressed in a common language among these actors. This language changes constantly, and if one wants to be taken seriously, one has to keep track of the new language and the new concepts. In this way the language functions as a mechanism for selection and exclusion (Hajer 2000, 24). Discourse coalitions fulfil an important role in the reproduction of the discourse and its inherent power relations. Government power depends for a greater part on the capacity to determine and control the language that is being used to talk about societal questions. In much the same way, the World Bank determines and controls the language that is used in development issues. In an analogy of the work of Hajer, one could depict donors and development agencies (or parts of this group) as a discourse coalition. We could also depict the advocates of participatory approaches (or again, a part of them) as a discourse coalition. We can distinguish a common language that may change over time. The evolution of RRA, via PRA to PLA, as described in chapter two, could be considered as an example of such a change in discourse among the advocates.

Discourse Analysis by Discursive Psychologists

The concept of discourse is used in different schools of thought in the social sciences. Discursive psychology (Potter and Edwards 1992; Potter 1996) developed a perspective and a method that has been named 'discourse analysis'. It explicitly moves away from the notion that language would be a neutral vehicle for the transmission of information. Text and talk are in fact social practice; language is used to perform a range of different actions (te Molder 1995, 17 & 43). By giving somebody a compliment for example, one can strengthen a social relationship or boost the other's self-confidence. But one can also use text and speech to legitimise a nation going to war. Discourse analysis attempts to describe and understand how and what meaning is created with language in social interaction. Typical questions raised are: what activity are speakers engaged in when they say a particular thing? What are they doing, beyond expressing themselves verbally, by talking in this way at this time? It is very important to look at the context in which text or speech is spoken or written, in which discourse takes place and in which it is interpreted. Meanings are constructed by the participants and may differ a fair amount in different contexts. One of the concepts that discourse analysts have criticised in that respect is the notion of attitude. Cognitive social psychologists have depicted attitude as a relatively stable mental state. Each person can then be placed on a scale that ranges from having a positive to a negative attitude towards a specific issue. However, someone's attitude is not static; when people give their opinion, they

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[2] During the review of the concept it appeared to me that there are many concepts that have a very similar meaning. It occurred to me, and to other authors with me, that discourse can often be interchanged with paradigm (Grillo 1997), narrative (Fairhead and Leach in Grillo and Stirrat, 1997), register or frame (Schön and Rein, 1994).

are not so much expressing a mental state, as performing a social action. Discourse analysts have shown that, depending on the context, people can draw on various registers. This brings into question the stability of attitude; a person may show considerable variation across different social situations[3].

An implication is that a person's attitudes or views say very little about the actual behaviour of that person. A good example in this respect is that many people say they are in favour of biological farming but when they make their choices in the supermarket they opt for the cheaper standard products. Discourse analysis can therefore contribute little in predicting behaviour. What discourse analysis can do, however, is to start a critical reflection on everyday reasoning and legitimation practices (te Molder 1995, 24). This then may be a starting point for change (te Molder 1995, 25).

Comparing the two schools

The work of the sociologists in the Foucauldian tradition is quite different from that of discursive psychologists. While Foucault's aim was to provide a tool for historical analysis, discursive psychologists study everyday conversations in detail. Foucault's emphasis lay more in explaining how one discourse becomes hegemonic over other discourses. Discursive psychologists would look less into the concepts of meaning and intention but rather into what language accomplishes. Finally, the scale of the context is very different in the two schools; while the psychologists may be satisfied with the conversation alone as context, the Foucauldian concept of discourse would look much wider for structures and power relations in society.

But we cannot deny that the two schools also have a lot in common. Both link the use of language with (social) practice. Another common point of departure is that language is not neutral. Both consider text and talk to actually be social practice. People do more with language than just write symbols or utter sounds. What language does depends on many factors such as the context, the status of the people using the language, and the meanings attached to text and talk.

In terms of concepts, this study is closer to the Foucauldian notion of discourse than to the approach of the discursive psychologists. The conceptual implications for this study will be discussed in more detail in section 4.4, after the relation between discourses and practices has been discussed.

4.2   Practices

We will now turn to the concept of practices. Sociologists such as Goffman and Giddens have focused attention once more on practices of men and women in everyday life. Why does somebody do what they do? One can explain human practice by stating that a person follows a kind of structure in society, the rules and norms in the groups to which that person belongs. This can be regarded as an objectivist sociology; the social object ('society') has some sort of priority over the individual agent. In contrast, in the subjectivist view, the human agent, as a purposeful, reasoning actor is treated as the prime focus of social analysis (Giddens 1987, 59). Giddens has bridged these two perspectives with his structuration theory. Human social practice is influenced by both the agency of the individual actor as well as by the modalities of structure in society (rules of interpretation, resources and normative rules) (Giddens 1984). What is more, structure and agency reproduce each other. It is not a dualism but rather a duality. Giddens speaks of the duality of structure; structure is both the medium and the

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[3] Even within one and the same conversation, people may express very different opinions (te Molder, 1995).

outcome of human activities that it recursively organizes. We create society at the same time as we are created by it (Giddens 1987, 61) (Giddens 1997, 8).

Leeuwis identified a theoretical model that helps to understand social practices. He points to the fact that people constantly have to make trade-offs in their choices to do or not do something on the basis of their own evaluative frame of reference and on the basis of the influence of other people in their environment. An actor has to evaluate what consequences a certain practice might have and whether it will be worthwhile undertaking the action with respect to his or her aspirations. In the figure below this is depicted in the box "evaluative frame of reference". He or she will also make an assessment regarding whether others will collaborate (in the box "perceived effectiveness of the social environment"), whether he or she is able to carry out the activity in a satisfactory way ("perceived self-efficacy") and the perceived pressure of other actors ("social relations and perceived social pressure"). This does not, however, mean that these trade-offs are purely rational and conscious decisions.
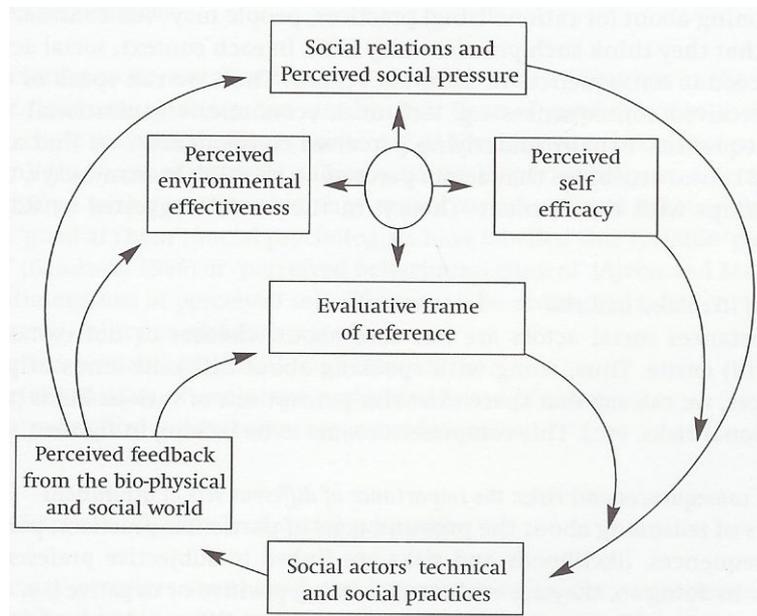
Figure 1 Model for understanding social practices (Leeuwis 2002, 395)

The beauty of this model lies in the emphasis on social relations and perceptions of the actors involved. In this respect, the model goes beyond many of the existing rational choice theories, paying explicit attention to non-cognitive aspects. The aspirations, for example, can be of all kinds, such as technical, relational, cultural, emotional, and political (Leeuwis 2002).

Routines

Many everyday practices consist of routines. Leeuwis describes routines as not actively deliberated practices although they may have been derived historically from deliberate decisions in the past (Leeuwis 2002, 396). Routines refer to actions we tend to repeat without consciously thinking about what we are doing. Young refers in this context also to habits and customs. Habit is "….the tendency we all have, in greater or lesser measure, to do again what

we have done before" (Young 1997, 39). There are degrees of routinisation or automation. When it is complete, there is no need for thinking at all; there may not even be any conscious recognition of the situation that produces the habitual behaviour (Young 1997, 40). Habits can in themselves be extremely useful and efficient. They economize on the cognitive capacity we may need for more conscious activities.

Studying intervention practices

As will be explained in more detail in chapter five, this thesis is inspired by the school of actor-oriented studies of development interventions developed by Norman Long. Long is interested in the so-called everyday practices of development interventions (Long and Long 1992). In this approach, interventions are often depicted as ongoing social and political struggles that take place between social actors with different cultural perceptions and social interests. In this respect, interventions have also been depicted as "arenas of struggle" (Crehan and Oppen 1988). A central research problem in this type of analysis is to understand the processes by which interventions enter the life-worlds of individuals and come to form part of the resources and constraints of the strategies and practices these individuals develop.

A useful concept in the actor-oriented sociology of development interventions is 'interface'. This concept refers to the "points of intersection between different levels of social order where conflict of value and social interest are most likely to occur" (Long 1984, 177). The strength of this concept is that it draws our attention to the fact that different actors are likely to have different worldviews, perspectives, and interests. Any development intervention has political or power dimensions, and in any project context, one can find many interfaces where different interests and different perspectives collide or are being negotiated (Long and Villareal 1994). At these interfaces, discourses are actively being framed or translated (as will be discussed in the following section).

Framing

Framing is about interpretation and giving meaning. Framing refers to "… our ordinary, taken for granted view of how we experience the world around us and the events and activities which we initiate, take part in, and watch" (Burns, 1992, 246 in: Aarts, 1998, 131). People's expectations and assumptions influence directly the meaning they derive from their experience. Framing can also be regarded as the process of selection and organisation of knowledge, and the attribution of meaning. People tend to frame in such a way that new observations fit as much as possible in their existing cultural frames. Frames then are defined as the "underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation" (Schön and Rein 1994). Frames determine what counts as a fact and what arguments are taken to be relevant and compelling. In policy controversies—about which Schön and Rein wrote—the different frames of the different parties play a major role. Each party engages in the framing process; information is selected for attention in such a way that it fits the frame constructed for the situation.

Craig and Porter (1997) applied the concept of framing to the practice of participatory development projects and they inspired me to do the same. They referred to the process of filtering and re-interpretation of literature on participatory development, of donor policies, and of project proposals. They showed for example how development professionals have the tendency to impose categories, homogenise, standardise practices and to put the project activities into time frames and log frames. Local situations are presented in a certain way so that they fit into the rationalities and priorities of the development organisation (Craig and Porter 1997).

In the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to either framing or translating. I refer then to the—conscious or unconscious—practice by actors of changing meaning; selection; re-interpretation or filtering of text and talk, which often happens in interactions between people.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary attributes the origin of the verb frame to the Old English word *framian,* which means: be useful (Pearsall 1999). The actors who are involved in the implementation of a participatory development project tend to frame the text and talk around the project (e.g., the project proposal) in order to make it useful. They are likely to do this according to their own pre-existing perceptions and objectives, and the manner in which they do this also depends on the socio-political context.

4.3   Discourses and Practices

It is highly problematic to separate discourse and practice since we have seen that discourse is in fact social practice. Not all practice is discourse, however, since I regard discourse as possessing a language component, and not all practice involves the use of language. But the relationship between discourse and practice is more intricate than that. Discourses and practices recursively influence each other; they can be considered as two sides of the same coin and are thus inseparable. This intricate relationship does allow changes in both discourse and practice. I will also go into more detail about how and where—in a project context— discourse is likely to be translated or framed during the process in which concepts and methodologies are put to work in the everyday practice of development interventions.

Duality of discourse

Foucault is often regarded as belonging to the French school of structuralists. In the Foucauldian tradition, of which the work of Ferguson and Escobar (see section 4.1) are examples, discourse works very much like a structure that influences both understanding and practice in a unilateral way. I was therefore attracted to the ideas of Hilhorst, who brought in agency and writes about the 'duality of discourse' in an analogy of the concept of the duality of structures by Giddens. In this way, discourse become less determinist; rather "discourses are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise" (Hilhorst 2000). In other words, discourse and social practice shape each other.

This idea of duality of discourse highlights the dynamic character of discourses and practices. In the process of their reproduction, discourses are likely to change over time. In social interaction, discourses are constantly being re-interpreted and re-negotiated in local contexts. Text and talk may change as a result. In this case, actors may improvise new words, leave out others, or make new combinations of words. It is also possible that text and talk literally remain the same but acquire a different meaning. In this case, we talk about words that remain the same but their meaning changes. This is likely to happen in social interaction, leading to situations in which one person might attribute a meaning to a certain word that is different in meaning from that attributed to it by another person. This brings us back to framing. Actors are able to improvise, interpret, bend, and negotiate the discourse. They may do this consciously or unconsciously but it is likely that they will do this in such a way that suits their existing frames best. Selection of text and talk and the attribution of (new) meaning is most likely to be found at interfaces. Let us have a look at a number of interfaces in a development-related context where such framing is likely to take place.

Interfaces where discourse is framed

Grillo suggests that an Anthropology of Development must be increasingly 'multi-sited'; in other words, analysis should take place at various levels (Grillo 1997, 26). In table 2, I have

tried to depict some organisational levels in a participatory development project context that are relevant for this study[4]. The points of intersection of these levels are the interfaces.

We can distinguish influential—often academic—writers on development issues such as the advocates mentioned in Chapter two. They write books or articles in academic journals. We can also look at donors and implementing agencies whose representatives are influenced by, amongst others, the advocates. This may not happen in a uni-directional, linear way. We can read about these agencies in their policy documents and project proposals. Then we can look at the level of the intervention or the development project. Here project managers or senior project staff members are responsible for operationalising the activities envisaged in the project proposals. Lower cadres such as field staff and those trained by more senior staff or other trainers execute the activities on the local level. In many cases, one can also talk of local facilitators. These are local people mobilised by the project for specific activities such as being a member of a Local Development Committee co-facilitating a PRA. These local facilitators may be paid or unpaid.

Framing	Levels	Often located in:
	Academic advocates	International Institutions
	Donors and development agencies	National Capitals
	Project managers	Provincial Capital
	Field staff	District
	Local facilitators	Community

Figure 2 Different interfaces where discourses are framed

In this study, I focus mainly on the last three to four levels, so the project environment and the project staff and their interaction with local people are the main object of study. The work of the academic advocates, some of which was presented in Chapter two, is presented as an important context and source of inspiration for the other levels and thus for what is happening in everyday practice in development interventions. I also use the normative rules for PRA practice mainly spelled out by Chambers and colleagues. I will compare these with the PRA practices as observed in the projects.

The arrow in the left side of the table shows the direction in which discourse finds its way from the higher to the lower levels. It is not a straight arrow, indicating that it may not always be a linear process. Concepts and ideas represented in documents have to be implemented and operationalised into concrete activities in the villages. I have used the term translation or framing for this process because I want to draw attention to the fact that actors are likely to constantly be interpreting and translating the discourse in order to fit it into their pre-existing set of values, interests, and beliefs; in other words to fit it into their own frames.

The philosophy of participatory approaches has actually been translated into training manuals and guidelines (Pretty, Guijt et al. 1995; Veldhuizen, Waters-Bayer et al. 1997). Donors re-pack the ideas of the advocates in logical frameworks that can fit in three, four or, at most, five-year projects or programs. In the project environment, the concepts of the project document have to be further operationalised. In this process, as the concepts cascade down, the very concepts are being framed; "at each point on this chain, the project is filtered and framed to fit the objectives and categories of the organisation at that level" (Craig and Porter 1997). In every step a translation, a filtering, takes place, the concepts are adapted to the specific context and to the agendas of the actors involved.

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[4] Van der Borgh made a similar type of analysis in a case study on El Salvador. He wrote about a "chain of intervention" (van de Borgh 1999).

We can easily link the table above with the interface concept that was discussed in section 4.2. Where one level meets another, we can talk of an interface situation. But as well as these, one can think of many other types of interfaces. Even within the same 'level', for example among field staff, one can distinguish different social groups or individuals who have different perspectives on what they should do and how they should do it. Different people who are likely to have different frames. One can for example imagine that when a project document proposes to do PRA, different staff members of that project are likely to frame this differently, they may have very different interpretations on how this PRA should be done and what the ultimate purpose should be. In the case of a project staff member in a village explaining the intention of the project to organize a PRA in the village, we have another interface situation. The audience will try to frame this information and make it fit their perspectives, wishes, and objectives.

If we want to understand the process of framing that is constantly taking place, we have to look at the different perspectives and interests that actors have in the intervention. Actors use their 'best judgement' to make the intervention, in their eyes, a success. They all use their experience and ideas to decide what they think would be good or convenient. They will try to fit the activities they are involved in within their own context and agenda, within their own life-worlds (Long and Ploeg 1989). This does not necessarily mean that all actors are merely chasing selfishly after their individual interests. Their interests may coincide with public interests or may be genuinely oriented towards others.

It is likely that actors constantly have to make trade-offs in defending different interests. NGOs, for example, may take a serious interest in the empowerment of the poor segments of society but at the same time have an interest in organisational survival; they have to stay in business. They do this by satisfying donors and politicians and by justifying that continued support is necessary (Craig and Porter 1997). Donors and development agencies come with their own agendas. These may not coincide with the immediate needs and wishes of their presumed beneficiaries.

4.4 Implications for this study

This study is not a discourse analysis as proposed by discursive psychologists, who tend to look at everyday conversations on a micro scale. Neither can it be considered a typical Foucauldian study since it does not claim to give an 'archaeology' of participatory development. Rather, I have used the Discourse concept in an heuristic manner. The theory around the concept has provided me with the tools to focus more clearly on what actually happens when actors use concepts such as participation and empowerment in text and talk, or when they apply them in practice, non-verbally or otherwise.

Discourse refers, amongst others, to the fact that language is not neutral. The meaning that is attached to words forms the essence of what language can do. One can describe a group of armed men fighting for a cause either as freedom fighters or as terrorists. One can imagine how each label can have totally different consequences since each has a completely different meaning. Language is always imbued with meanings, and meanings may change in different contexts as well as change over time. The study of discourse can help us to see how meanings are constructed and reconstructed.

For me, discourse has much in common with paradigm or narrative. In many respects, it includes normative rules that determine what can be said and written in a particular social group at a particular time. It provides the repertoires that actors in that group can draw upon.

Discourse and (discursive or non-discursive) practices recursively determine each other. One is thus both medium and outcome of the other. Looking at it in this way makes it possible to highlight and analyse the agency of actors and the dynamic character of discourse.

I view discourse in a wide context. This means that the analysis is not limited to conversation or text alone; I specifically include the historical, socio-cultural, and political context to explain how different actors in different situations frame the discourse. I do this also at different 'levels'; this means I look both at what happens in a remote village and to communications with headquarters of UN organisations.

For this study we are especially interested in how discourses are framed or translated. Framing refers to the process of filtering and selection of elements in the discourse that leads either to new text and talk and their new meanings, or social practice. The model of Leeuwis shows how actors undertake action on the basis of their aspirations, the influence of others, and on the basis of their evaluative frame of reference. Actors will frame—consciously or unconsciously—the concepts, policies, and methods of participatory development as they see them to fit into their frames.

Once again, framing is thus the practice of selection, filtering, re-interpretation, and change in meaning of text and talk. This occurs in general during the process of social interaction; different actors interpret certain words differently. Framing may be visible in (slight) changes of words, new words, or new combinations of words. In this context, we say that text and talk changes. It is also possible that text and talk remain the same but that the meaning changes considerably to fit the result with one's interests, values and beliefs, in one's frames.

We can consider this framing or translation as discursive action. In interaction we can use language not only to reproduce, but also to transform meanings, including normative rules. We may interpret certain rules in a different way or assign some a higher level of importance than others. For example, in the list of principles of how to behave during PRA (the 'dos and don'ts' of PRA) some rules may become redundant or may be interpreted in a different way.

The actor-oriented sociology and the interface concept draw our attention to the fact that the different actors involved in a development intervention may have different interests and different perspectives of what should be done and how it should be done. I have highlighted different interface situations in the context of development projects where framing is most likely to become visible.

If we regard discourse as belonging to a certain social group, it follows that we cannot write about one single discourse of participatory development; it is better to speak of multiple discourses. But even one and the same person can draw from several discourses depending on the social settings, either consciously or unconsciously. It is likely that different actors attribute different meanings to certain concepts and ideas. Several authors have observed that this is especially relevant for participatory approaches (Nelson and Wright 1995; White 1996; Cornwall 2000).

4.5 Research questions for this study

The justification of this study, as stated in the introductory chapter, comes from the observations made by myself and by many other authors that what is said and written about participatory approaches does not always correspond to what is actually happening in the field. I want to look further into these incongruencies or gaps between the rhetoric surrounding participatory development projects and espoused by donors and development organisations, on the one hand, and the practices in the field on the other. I did this by studying the project discourses and practices of several participatory development interventions in rural Mozambique. When speaking of participatory development interventions in this thesis, I refer to projects that have emancipatory or transformative goals; they are, according to the project documents, geared to the empowerment of rural people.

The objective of this study is to describe the discourses and practices of such participatory development initiatives in rural Mozambique. More specifically, the study describes what is said and written about participation and empowerment, and how the different actors in the project context frame these discourses, and give shape to everyday project practices. The research questions that emanate from the research objective are:

1.   What was the project context?
2.   What discourses did representatives of donors and development agencies use for participatory development interventions in Mozambique, especially around the concepts of PRA, participation, and empowerment?
3.   What were the everyday practices of the development interventions under study?
4.   How did everyday PRA practices of project staff compare with the theories and principles of 'good PRA practice' as outlined by its advocates?
5.   How did project discourses compare with project practices, and can we speak of any gaps between discourses and practices?
6.   How can we better understand gaps between the project discourses and project practices?

With the help of the theory in this chapter and the previous one, I have elaborated these research questions further.

1.   What was the project context?

A project does not function in a vacuum. That is why it is important to describe the context for each case, including the area, the people, important local institutions, and the experiences of local people with earlier interventions in the area. In short, the questions I would like to answer for each case are:

*   What was the historical, socio-cultural, institutional, and political context in which the intervention took place?

2.   What discourses did representatives of donors and development agencies use for participatory development interventions in Mozambique, especially around the concepts of PRA, participation, and empowerment?

On the basis of a review of documents, and on the basis of what representatives of the projects and donors have stated in interviews or in public events, I will distil important elements that reflect the logic and give the justification for choosing a participatory approach in the project. Questions I will answer are: What were the literal texts used in documents, and what was stated by representatives of the donor and the project regarding PRA, participation, and empowerment? With what kind of discourses was the intervention legitimised? What were the statements concerning participatory development? What kinds of assumptions were made? What did the discourse assume regarding the beneficiaries? How were visions and theories on participatory development translated into the project documents? When and how were central concepts framed?

It will be important to find out whether PRA/participation was defined at all. What was project staff supposed to achieve with PRA/participation? How did they intend to do this? It is likely that different people had different ideas. What were the major differences in perspectives and meanings with respect to central concepts and methods? The same should be done for the concept of empowerment. Was this an important element in the text and talk in and around the project? And if so, did project text and talk define clearly what empowerment would be, why they wanted it, and how they wanted to achieve it? What was the discourse around the concept of empowerment? In short, the questions I would like to answer for each case are:

*   How were the interventions legitimised?

- If at all, how were the concepts of PRA, participation, and empowerment defined?
- How were the discourses around these concepts PRA, participation and empowerment framed?

3. What were the everyday practices of the development interventions under study?

The actual activities of the intervention have to be described; what events took place? What were the everyday practices in the projects under study? I will describe in detail some of the concrete activities that took place. I will also describe the different actors in each project, how each of them perceived the project, and how they influenced the intervention. It is also interesting to observe whether any conflicts emerged, and if so, how the project staff dealt with those conflicts? How did the intervention change over time? In short, the questions I would like to answer for each case are:

- What happened in the project context in the field?
- How did different actors influence the intervention?

4. How did everyday PRA practices of project staff compare with the theories and principles of 'good PRA practice' as outlined by its advocates?

All projects in this study used PRA. How was this done? Was PRA used to extract information from local people or to empower them? Were the PRA tools used as ends in themselves or were they critically used as a way to achieve a process of (joint) learning, awareness raising, and capacity building? What could be said about the attitudes and behaviours of project staff? Did they demonstrate attitudes and behaviour such as being open, flexible, respectful, critical, self-critical? Did they 'hand over the stick' and 'embrace error'? Did staff triangulate, did they make critical use of the PRA tools, and did they adapt them to the local situation? How did they handle criticism?

The questions I would like to answer for each case are:
- How were the PRAs implemented?
- Did project staff adhere to the principles of 'good PRA practice'?

5. How did project discourses compare with project practices and can we speak of any gaps between discourses and practices?

To answer this question I will make a synthesis of the project discourses and the project practices around participation and empowerment. How did the project practices (third research question) relate to the discourses (second research question)? What were the incongruencies, gaps or contradictions that emerged strongly from this synthesis.

To what degree did the interventions contribute towards empowerment of rural people? In order to say something about empowerment, I will have to assess whether the interventions enabled local people to: understand the situation; reflect on factors shaping that situation; set their own agenda, and, finally, take steps to change the situation (Crawley 1998). In this respect it is also important to assess the extent to which power relations were explicitly taken into account in the implementation of project activities. Did project staff acknowledge diversity, power differences, and if so, what kind of power differences? Did they distinguish groups or interest groups at all, or was the community seen as being homogenous? Was any analysis made regarding who the less powerful were? Did they explicitly support the less powerful? Was project staff committed to empowerment?

The questions I would like to answer for each case are:
- How did project practices compare with the project discourses expressed by staff of donors and development agencies?
- What gaps can we identify?

- Were power relations explicitly taken into account?

6. How can we better understand gaps between the project discourses and project practices?

How can we best explain the existence of the gaps between the project discourses and the practices in the field, as assessed via research questions four and five? Did project staff members perceive these gaps as such? And if so, how did they deal with them? To what extent are these gaps problematic? To what extent can a better understanding of the specific Mozambican context contribute to an explanation of the observed gaps? Is it a question of 'bad practices' alone or can we also speak of 'bad discourse'? To what extent can the inherent assumptions and theories in the participatory development approach contribute to explaining the gaps? How can the theory on discourse and framing contribute to a better understanding of the issues raised in this study? What are the theoretical implications? How can we go forward with participatory development interventions?

In short, the questions I would like to answer in the concluding chapter are:

- How can we understand the gaps between discourses and practices of participatory development interventions in rural Mozambique?
- How did project staff deal with these gaps?
- What is the validity of the criticisms as summarized in chapter three in the Mozambican context?
- How can the theories on discourses and practices as presented in chapter four contribute to a better understanding of participatory development interventions?
- What can we learn from this thesis in order to increase effectiveness of transformative participatory development approaches in Africa?

In section 5.9 some of the central concepts in these research questions will be further operationalised. Chapter six on Mozambican history, as well as the empirical chapters seven, eight and nine, will provide answers to the first three research questions. The empirical chapters generally have the following outline; the description of the project context; the project and the discourse used by representatives of the project and, finally, some episodes or critical events that reflect project practices. Research questions four and five will be answered in chapter ten, in which several gaps between project discourses and practices are further specified. Research question six, an explanation of these gaps, will be answered in chapter eleven.

5 Approach and Methods used in this Study

In this chapter I describe how I collected the empirical material for this study and justify my choice of method. If one looks at the way in which this thesis is structured, one might easily assume that the study was performed by following a neat sequence of developing the theoretical framework and a methodology, and then setting out to do the fieldwork. Quite the reverse is the case. Much of the theory, especially the review of critical reflections on participatory approaches (chapter 3) and of the concepts of discourse and practices (chapter 4) was developed after the fieldwork had been conducted. The analysis of the field material and the review of theory have been more of an iterative process. I argue here that I followed an inductive approach. There can however be no induction without deduction. What I have observed, and the way in which I did this, is of course influenced by theory. I therefore regard it as indispensable to set out in this chapter 'where I am coming from'. The actor-oriented sociology as developed in Wageningen, constructivism, and theories of participatory development have all been very influential in my life and in conceptualising this thesis.

The study uses mainly interpretative and qualitative social science research methods. In this chapter, I reflect on a number of criteria for judging the quality and rigour of qualitative social research. After that, I describe in detail how I collected the data for this study and I operationalise some concepts further.

5.1 The research approach: Action-oriented, Contextual, Inductive, and Analytical

I describe the approach for this study as being action-oriented, contextual, inductive, and analytical. Below I explain briefly what I mean with each of these characteristics.

In all of the five projects that make up the five case studies my role has been that of practitioner and, to varying degrees, a researcher. I became involved in these projects either as a project reviewer, advisor or trainer. Because of this active participation, I have called the research approach action-oriented. Through my involvement in some of the everyday practices of the projects, I was able to perform participant observation. This gave me a unique opportunity to take a look in the kitchen of donors and development agencies, and the interventions they organised.

By using the term contextual, I want to highlight the importance of placing the stories of the projects as much as possible in their historical, political, and cultural context. The context of rural Mozambique in the nineteen nineties is quite specific. In order to understand practices of the different actors, one has to place this in the context of, amongst others, the recent de-colonisation, the civil war, the poverty, and the social relations that have shaped the rural realities of Mozambique today.

Thirdly, I use the term inductive. The study is based on empirical observations from the field. Both in the field and in the analysis afterwards, the study was shaped by emergent issues. Obviously my observations in the field have been influenced by theories I have come into contact with but the study does not set out to test hypotheses or theories deductively. Instead, the study is very much grounded in my own work as a "reflective development practitioner" (Schön 1983). In fact, the whole idea of the study emerged from my own experience and the uncomfortable feeling I had regarding the discrepancy between the development discourses on participatory development and the difficulties I encountered when trying to implement participatory interventions in a satisfactory way in Zambia and in Mozambique.

In the analysis stage too, the approach has, to a large extent, been inductive. I did not follow a pre-defined theoretical framework to deduce hypotheses or to analyse the data. Instead, I decided to first write the stories of the projects, which later became chapters seven, eight, and nine. From these stories, I distilled several issues that highlighted the gaps between the more formal and official project discourses and the practices or actual activities in the field. I then grouped these together to arrive at the gaps that I finally identified and which are presented in chapter ten.

This way of working does of course not mean that I did not use any theory. As Drinkwater rightly argues, one cannot generate theory without theory (Drinkwater 1992). Or, in constructivist terminology, the way I have observed and selected my case material and the way I analysed it can not be detached from my socialisation, my formal education, and my experience. As I will describe below, the actor-oriented approach has been of great influence on the way I carried out this study. I did not use this theory as a framework from which to derive hypotheses or theories to test; rather, it provided me with perceptions and ideas that have been helpful in my observations and interpretations. The more theoretical chapters three and four were written after the fieldwork had taken place. They made it possible to perform a more detailed analysis and to elaborate further on the theory.

Finally, I called the approach analytical. With this, I mean that I have been trying to make sense of what is happening without being prescriptive as to what *should* happen. I have observed, I have pulled things together, and I have tried to contribute to an explanation of the gaps between the discourse and practice. In this way, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of those phenomena that confront many development practitioners in their daily lives. Unfortunately, most development practitioners have no time to reflect on such aspects more thoroughly. I have tried to describe, to analyse, and to explain. However, the reader should not expect a long list of detailed recommendations at the end of this thesis. Rather, this thesis may provide practitioners with elements or tools, which they can use when reflecting upon their work.

5.2   Conceptual background of the research approach

As stated above, I believe it as important that the reader is aware of where I am coming from, my personal context. It is important to make explicit the kind of spectacles I have been wearing when making my observations in the field. While studying Rural Sociology at Masters level at Wageningen University, I have been influenced by the work of two departments—the Rural Sociology department headed by Norman Long and, as it was known then, the department of Extension Science, which was then led by Niels Röling. In this study, one can still clearly discern the influence of both.

The actor-oriented approach as proposed by Norman Long represents a shift away from the more deterministic and structuralist approaches. Wageningen Sociology as propagated by Long (1984) condemned both Marxist or dependency theories of development, and the modernisation theory and technocratic visions of development for not paying attention to people's ability to 'create space' for their own projects. In the actor-oriented approach, people are regarded as capable and knowledgeable actors who actively engage in shaping the outcomes of development. They deal with changing circumstances and try to benefit from them. The interactions and strategies that result from this can again have a feedback effect on the wider structure and thus influence the broader process of change (Long, 1984:172). The

actor-oriented approach also allows us to better understand differing responses of actors to similar conditions (Ploeg 1990).

A key concept of the actor-oriented perspective is 'interface', something that has already been discussed in chapter 4. This concept is also methodologically important in the study of development interventions. It draws our attention to the fact that different actors can have very different worldviews and differing interests. These are most likely to collide where these different actors intersect. This means that these different interests and worldviews are best studied at these interface situations. Long and van der Ploeg (1989) call for analyses that question the intervention and the planning process itself, link interventions with earlier and other interventions, study relations between the intervening agency and the target group, the dynamics of the intervention and its consequences for other, more 'autonomous' modes of development.

Several authors have criticised the actor-oriented studies for not being practical. Drinkwater (1992) writes that the Wageningen Sociology pays little attention to 'praxis' and argues that the relationship between theory and practice should be made more productive. Röling recognises the valuable contribution of Wageningen Sociology but writes: "Yet it (the actor-oriented perspective) does not provide for understanding the kind of social learning that seems required for a sustainable society" (Röling 1996, 42).

And here we see a major difference between the sociologists and what I call the interventionists. The sociologists such as Long mainly stay on the sideline and study the development interface. Röling is different in that he works in a department studying interventions and that is more concerned with the question of how to improve. Röling proposes research that will eventually contribute to a more sustainable world. He is interested in a praxeology; a theory that can inform practice. Röling and like-minded authors call for new '*paradigms*' for research and action for rural development (Pretty 1995; Röling 1996; Chambers 1997; Röling 1997). They also argue that problems of sustainable development are too complex to be handled by 'positivist science' or 'normal professionalism' alone, and that solving such problems will require concerted action on the part of all actors and stakeholders involved. Several names have been given to juxtapose the 'old' and the 'new' paradigms. I have tried to summarise these in the table below.

Table 2 'Old' versus 'New' paradigms

	'Old' paradigm	'New' paradigm
Röling (1996, 1997)	Hard systems Realist – Positivism	Soft systems methodology Constructivism
Pretty (1995)	Positivist Science	Alternative Systems of Inquiry
Chambers (1997)	Normal Professionalism 'things'	New Professionalism, PRA 'people'

These authors have in common that they shift away from (neo)positivist science and opt instead for a constructivist paradigm. Röling (1996) summarised the central elements of the epistemology of the realist-positivist scientific paradigm:
- Reality exists independently of the human observer;
- Scientific research allows us to acquire true knowledge about the nature of that reality and establish laws;
- The aim of research is to contribute to the stock of knowledge;
- Scientific research is the source of innovation;
- Technology is applied science.

Röling (1996) continues by giving some reasons why this realist-positivist paradigm is no longer satisfactory in the search for a sustainable society. Productivity, sustainability, equity, and stability are mutually inconsistent. Often, there is no single best solution, and the use of natural resources has to be negotiated among the various stakeholders. This has become decreasingly dependent on technical expertise alone and more dependent on agreement among people. Social innovations are no longer seen as a result of uni-linear scientific research but rather as a result of interaction between different actors.

Both Röling and Long can be regarded as constructivists. The central element of constructivist thinking is that all knowledge is actively constructed. All persons construe knowledge on the basis of past learning, experience, and their beliefs, values, and preferences. This means that we have to deal with multiple realities. According to Röling, these multiple constructed realities call for negotiation and accommodation. In the constructivist paradigm, the aim of science is no longer to find the objective truth but to look at interpretation, to self-reflect ,and to stimulate learning (Röling 1994, 388).

While working in Africa between 1990 and 2000, I straddled both sides of the fence; on the one hand I was a development worker, and therefore an interventionist, and on the other hand I was the researcher, and therefore the sociologist. Looking back, I can say that I acted mainly as an interventionist, rather than as a sociologist. In my work as a trainer, consultant, and facilitator I have drawn my inspiration from the works of those I have called the advocates of participatory development in chapter two. However, for this study I have drawn conceptually and methodologically predominantly from the actor-oriented approach.

5.3   Criteria for judging the quality and scientific rigour of qualitative social research

But it is not only in terms of approach that I have been straddling, but also in terms of methodology and epistemology. This has to do with my education as a social scientist in a more constructivist tradition and my professional work within institutions that adhered to a positivist and reductionist scientific paradigm; the research branch of the Zambian Ministry of Agriculture and a Faculty of Agronomy in Mozambique. In both environments, I was in the minority, and the temptation was always present to participate in the type of positivist research in order to gain esteem and recognition from my colleagues. Struggling with these two paradigms of scientific research has forced me to think about the advantages and disadvantages of both. The trouble with assigning labels such as new and old paradigms is that the old one is condemned or declared redundant. However, what is being labelled as old —the positivist and reductionist science—will still work very well in many disciplines; mainly in the natural sciences but also to a certain extent in the social sciences. I want to take the best from both worlds and create my own criteria for guaranteeing what I regard as scientific quality for this study. But first, I would like to summarise how mainstream social science and advocates of new paradigms have tried to establish rules for methodology and rules for maintaining quality in social research.

Many generations of social scientists have done their best to be as 'hard' as the natural sciences. There have even been attempts to come to a universal method of science. An example is the article by Krajewski (1992) entitled "The Universal Scientific Method". This article claims that humanities can explain social phenomena on the basis of laws, just as the

natural sciences can for natural phenomena. The postulates of the universal scientific method are set out as follows (Krajewski 1992):

1) Postulates of rationality: Inter-subjective communicability, which refers to clear expression of each statement; Inter-subjective testability, which means the researcher has to present a justification for all theses by presenting all experiments, observations and ways of reasoning; - Accordance between degree of certainty and degree of confirmation, which means basically that we should accept proof on the basis of rules of probability.

2) Epistemological postulates: Coherence, which means that a theory may not contain internal contradiction and even contradictions between theories are not permissible; Agreement with facts, which means that a scientific theory must agree with facts established by experience.

3) Methods of discovery of laws: Induction, which is the gathering of facts and drawing conclusions from them; Hypothetical-deductive methods, which mean deducing and testing hypotheses; Idealisation; in other words, ideal models are created in order to analyse a phenomenon in a 'pure form', for example Weber's 'ideal types' of society, or ceteris paribus equations in natural sciences and economics.

4) Ethical and methodological norms: Empirical honesty; scientists should not stretch the truth by mentioning only those facts that fit their hypotheses; Reliability, which requires that measurements and experiments be repeated many times; Critical attitude; Self-criticism; Openness and democracy; Observation of the universality of science.

Some elements of this 'universal' method may be inspiring but others are not without their problems. There are important differences between the natural sciences and the social sciences (see also Leeuwis and Van den Ban 2002):

- Both object and subject in the social sciences are human. This object is intentional. He or she can say something and think differently. In addition, the social scientist is also human. He or she can influence the behaviour of the one being studied and make all kinds of biases or even errors in observation and interpretation. Therefore objectivity is a very problematic criterion in the social sciences.

- Repetition in time or controlled experiments is often not possible in social sciences, and this makes the concept of reliability in many cases superfluous.

- Observation is not always possible since many things happen behind closed doors or within a person's mind. In addition, the observation itself may influence the behaviour of the person being studied.

- Social scientists also have to deal with 'double hermeneutics', in other words, interpretation of interpretation, since respondents have their own explanations about certain phenomena. Therefore social scientists always have to distinguish their own explanation from the one of the respondents.

- In the social sciences, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to define laws on human behaviour similar to the ones in the natural sciences.

- Finally, the social realities are often complex, and mono-causal relationships are rare. This makes reductionist approaches less useful, and predictions highly questionable.

Other highly problematic concepts in Krajewski's list of postulates are 'fact' and 'truth'. These are difficult to uphold in a more constructive perspective. Facts are 'socially created' and the truth of one person can be very different from the truth of another. In the social sciences, we can make a distinction between the more positivist, etic approaches (making more use of quantitative methods for data collection) and a more interpretative, emic approach for which mainly qualitative methods are used. The positivist etic approaches use the concepts of the researcher and generally come up with overall sums and averages of a limited and predefined number of variables. The interpretative emic approaches use the

conceptual framework of those being studied, and describe how people understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives. Rubin and Rubin give a rather apt example that illustrates the difference: "it matters less whether a chair is 36 inches tall and 47 years old than that one person perceives it as an antique and another views it as junk" (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 35). Both emic and etic approaches can be extremely valuable, depending on the objectives of the study.

In the social sciences, it has been mainly economists and other social scientists using structured surveys and statistical analysis who can be regarded as typically fitting in the positivist paradigm. Quantitative methods in mainstream social science adhere to specific concepts to evaluate the quality of the research such as validity, reliability, and objectivity (Swanborn 1987). Validity refers to 'truth'; to the degree in which a technique is able to measure what it is really intended to measure, and to the degree in which results of a study can be generalised to a wider population. Reliability refers to the degree of consistency; it can, for example, refer to the bias of the researcher. If different researchers repeat the same study and they come up with the same results, these results are considered reliable. Objectivity, however, refers to the neutrality of the researcher.

The criteria of reliability and objectivity become problematic in the more interpretative and emic approaches; it is impossible to eliminate the interpretation of the observer, and thus his or her inevitable bias. In ethnographic work it becomes very difficult to repeat a study. In non-structured interviewing it becomes more difficult to eliminate interpretation by either respondent or interviewer since fixed interview schedules, pre-coding and pre-testing questionnaires do not apply. Quantitative approaches have spawned sophisticated statistical instruments to test validity that are obviously far less relevant for qualitative methods. The concern for reliability and validity in quantitative studies may indeed be real since much of data collection is delegated to enumerators, thereby allowing the researcher less control over the quality of the data.

Other criteria have been proposed to judge the quality and credibility of qualitative research. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 85) name transparency, consistency/coherence, and the communicability of research. Transparency means that a reader is able to see the process of data collection. Consistency means that the information should be checked for different settings or cases: the purpose is not to eliminate inconsistencies, rather, the researcher should try to explain them. Communicability refers to the fact that the picture presented in the research report is real to the reader. "Research that presents lots of evidence, that is vivid, detailed and transparent, consistent, careful and well documented is going to be convincing" (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 91).

Silverman argues that reliability and validity remain important values to strive for in qualitative research (Silverman 1993). What can be done is rigorous and systematic recording of field notes and transcripts. If possible, other researchers should also interpret these data. Furthermore, triangulation and respondent validation may be very useful to claim validity. Triangulation refers to the use of different methods, such as observation and interviews. Respondent validation means taking one's findings back to the subjects being studied and discussing these with them.

5.4   Implications for this study

A new paradigm does not mean that the old—or more accurately said, other—paradigm is completely abandoned. It is more likely that the good elements of the other are incorporated into the new. This is certainly true for methodological norms and rules. So what are the methodological implications of the aspects discussed for this study?

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, I have chosen for an inductive and analytical approach; based on the observations, I want to improve the understanding of development practice. From these observations and a review of the literature, I attempt to generate an adequate description and build a theory. Theories are concepts and statements about the way concepts are interrelated. Popper once wrote that theories provide "nets to capture reality". Building theories undoubtedly implies simplification and generalisation. It involves a process of reducing complexity and categorisation. Looked at in this way, all theory building is, by definition, reductionist. Adhering strictly to an emic and constructivist approach would mean excluding any interpretation by the researcher such as would be the ideal case in symbolic interactionist work. I believe it is not possible to exclude interpretation and I therefore believe that objectivity does not exist in qualitative social science. The results of this study cannot be regarded as 'the truth'; they form 'a truth', a truth that is supported by the criteria set out by Rubin and Rubin; transparency, consistency/coherence and communicability. But in addition to being 'a truth', the purpose of this thesis is to make an argument and offer new viewpoints that are directly related to the opinions of the author.

During observation and interpretation, one is obviously making choices all the time, some more deliberate and conscious than others. From the outset I have been looking for gaps between what I called in the first versions of my research proposal Rhetoric and Reality of participatory projects. This does not mean, however, that I have been looking for 'bad' projects or have been selecting specific events in order to prove a predetermined point (the gaps). As I will explain in the next section, the five cases were projects I was involved in either as a trainer, consultant or evaluator during my work as a university lecturer. I only involved myself with projects that took issues of participation seriously; projects that claimed to support empowerment of the rural poor and that did not use participation simply as a label. In my view, these were the relatively 'better' participatory projects.
I would also argue that the projects I have described—and therefore the gaps I have identified —are by no means unique; what I describe happens all the time in many places in Mozambique and probably also in many other African countries[5].
In other words, the objective of the study did not influence the selection of the projects or the selection of the events that are described in this thesis. However, the way in which I have observed (and thus my selection of what to record) and the interpretation of my observations has obviously been determined by the objective of the study, my conceptual background (see section 5.2), and the research questions.

In this study I am dealing with the meanings of concepts such as participation and empowerment and the way these concepts are being translated. The thesis tries to explain why they are translated in this specific way. These are issues that are difficult to quantify and that call for interpretative and qualitative methods. I used a range of methods, the most important of which were observations, non-or semi-structured interviews and secondary data. In the following sections, I will describe the methods of data collection in more detail.

Finally, what is the implication of a constructivist approach? Of course the notion of different actors attributing different meanings to a certain phenomenon is crucial to this study. Still, the

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[5] I base this on personal experience and on conversations with peers and co-development practitioners who have been working at different places in Mozambique and other African countries.

analysis I make is rather etic. It is my analysis framed in the concepts that I have chosen and constructed, based on various theories. Another consequence of the notion that all knowledge is actively constructed is that I have to be very explicit about where I am coming from, my personal conceptual background, as I have done in the previous sections and previous chapters. It also stresses the importance of being explicit on how the data were collected and how the argument was constructed. In the following sections I will therefore elaborate in detail the selection of the cases and the methods and techniques I have used. Throughout the thesis, I have done my best to present my arguments in a logical manner so that the reader is able to understand what has become my representation of the five project ethnographies, their context, and the ways in which gaps between discourse and practice came to be reproduced, and are still being reproduced.

5.5   The five case studies and my role in the projects

It was in 1997 that I decided to do this study. By then, I had been involved in various development interventions for seven years in both Zambia and Mozambique using participatory approaches. I started by writing a research proposal. In the early versions I had envisioned a comparative study using Zambian and Mozambican case studies. However, I was working and living in Mozambique and as time went by I decided to give up the idea of incorporating Zambian cases. The selection of the five projects that now make up the case material was determined by the opportunities I had received to become involved with these projects in one way or another. I was working as a lecturer at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. In that capacity I was able to do advisory work and carry outfield research, sometimes together with students and sometimes without. I did all the advisory work in teams with Mozambican colleagues. In addition to that, I was co-founder of a network of development practitioners working with participatory approaches, the *Rede-DRP*, the national PRA network. It was in this capacity that I became familiar with many other experiences with participatory development interventions in the country.
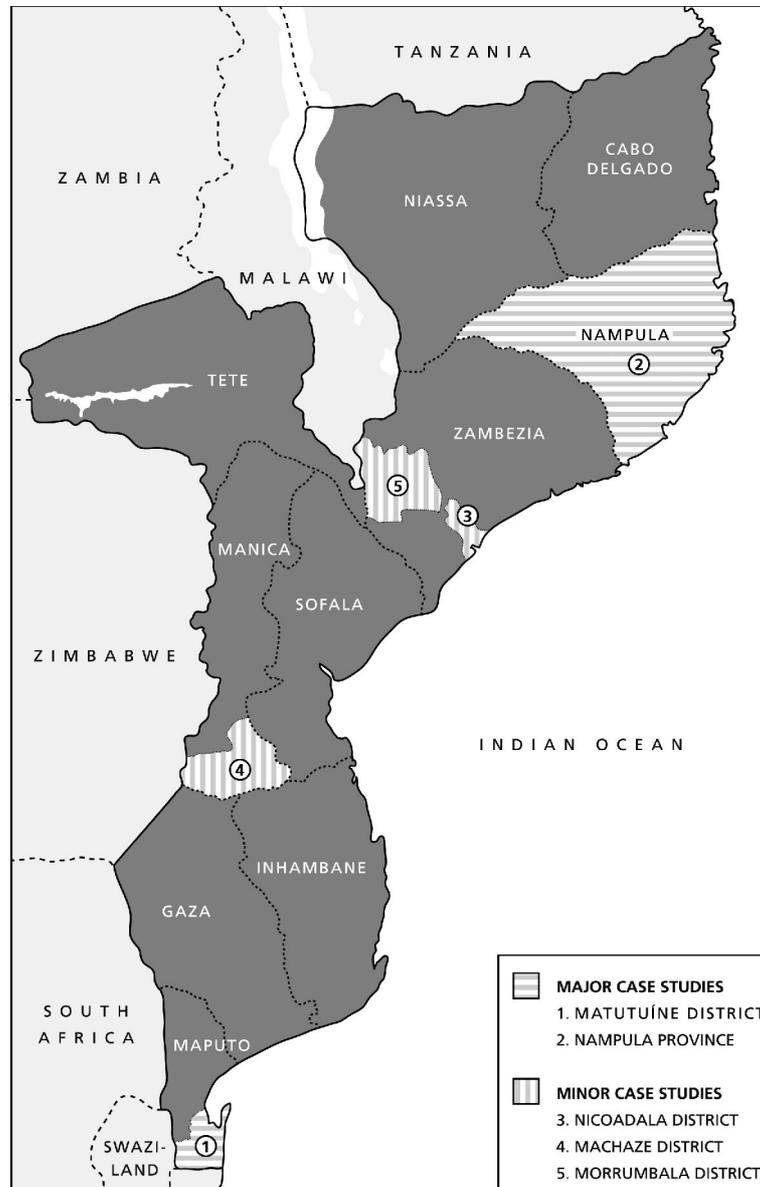
Map 1 The locations of the project areas

In order to find answers to my research question, I created five project ethnographies; two major cases and three minor ones. Pottier calls for such 'project ethnographies' in order to go beyond the debate on 'ethnography in development' and to highlight aspects of an 'ethnography of development'. A project ethnography must focus on power relations that emerge within a project, the internal functioning of the development organisation, and the ideologies, values, and assumptions that underpin the activities of the project (Pottier 1993, 7-8). This author deems such studies particularly necessary and valuable in order to be able to deconstruct the reality of participatory research (Pottier 1993, 30).

The two major projects, presented in chapters seven and eight were followed over a period of two and a half and three years respectively. The other three minor projects were ones where my involvement was relatively light, both in terms of time and intensity. These cases are presented in chapter nine. In all cases, I was involved either as an adviser, trainer and/or as a researcher. Below I have tried to summarise the five projects and my involvement in each of them. For the locations of the sites, see map 1.

Community Based Natural Resources Management in Matutuíne (Chapter 7)

In 1996 the Mozambican government granted a concession to Blanchard-Mozambique Enterprise to develop luxurious tourist facilities in the area east of Maputo River. The Swiss NGO Helvetas had been working in Matutuíne district since 1994. This NGO prepared a project with the objective to build capabilities among the local residents in order to counterbalance the economic interests of the investors. The project was funded by the IDRC and started in January 1998. My involvement in the Helvetas project started in the same month. The project manager had invited us—three teachers and some 24 students of the Faculty—to assist in organising two PRAs. From then onwards, I went back to the project area several times for further field research, as can be seen in the table below. I was supervising two students whose thesis research was focused on how the local population perceived the different interventions in the area. They were present at various interventions during the project. A colleague of mine did her MSc thesis in the same area, looking at interdependencies between different stakeholders in Matutuíne (Cavane 2000). I joined her in part of her fieldwork in 1999. One could describe our Faculty's relationship with Helvetas as loose and informal. On several occasions we were invited by the NGO to attend meetings in the district and we exchanged reports. For the study that our Faculty implemented with the FAO (see section 5.8), I selected the community Massoane as one of the four sites for this research. Massoane is located in the project area. On various occasions, I interviewed staff of the NGO, the administration of the district, the administration of the National Park, and representatives of BME and another major project in the area: TFCA. I was given access to the archives of Helvetas. For more details on the fieldwork I refer to appendix 1.

Table 3 Field visits to Matutuíne district

Date	Activity/my role	Location (Villages)
January 1998	Field work (PRA) with students and staff of the NGO Helvetas	Madjanjane
1998	Supervision fieldwork of three students, additional interviews	Various villages
October 1998	Rapid Rural Appraisal for FAO study	Massoane
April 1999	Participation in a seminar organised by Helvetas	Zitundo
July 1999	Field work[6], additional interviews	Gala, Phuza

Decentralised District Planning in Nampula (Chapter 8)

I became involved in two different phases of this project—the first phase (1995-1997) and the second phase (1998-2001). The first phase covered three districts of Nampula province. In the second phase this number had risen to 14 districts. The second phase was funded by UNCDF, UNDP, and the Dutch government with a budget of five million US dollars. The project was a 'good governance' project. It established a Local Development Fund from which districts could draw money for social investments. Districts could only draw from this fund if they had

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[6] Fieldwork was combined with fieldwork by Eunice Cavane, who was collecting data for her MSc thesis.

followed the procedures set by the project. These procedures were devised in such a way that community participation and the devolution of administrative and financial responsibilities to the district government would be guaranteed. Project staff worked closely with the provincial department of planning and finance.

In July 1997, UNCDF contracted a colleague of mine and myself to evaluate the use of PRA in the project. Two months later we were invited to moderate a workshop on possibilities for decentralised district planning and civil society participation with representatives ranging from villagers to provincial directors. In 1999, we were again invited to do the mid-term evaluation with colleagues from the School of Government of the University of Western Cape in Cape Town. Instead of a standard two-week visit, we opted for a methodology that allowed us to gain a more in-depth view of the practice of the project. We composed a team of three people (two colleagues from the University and myself) who undertook several case studies divided across five visits to the districts. As well as interviewing, we participated in and observed several activities such as PRAs, training sessions, and Consultative Councils meetings. In the process, we had meetings and workshops with project staff, representatives of the donors, and ministries. Also in this project area, I selected a village, Netia, for the study we conducted with the FAO (see section 5.8).

Table 4 Field visits to the Nampula project

Date	Activity/my role	Location (Districts)
July 1997	Evaluation of PRA training, PRA, and community involvement in district planning[7]	Muecate and Monapo Districts
September 1997	Moderation of a workshop on decentralization in Nampula Province	Nampula
November 1998	Rapid Rural Appraisal for FAO study	Monapo (Netia)
1999/2000 Mid-term evaluation[8]:		
August-December 1999	- Preparatory meetings	Maputo and Nampula
January 2000	- Visit 1	Nampula, Mecuburi & Muecate
May 2000	- Visit 2	Nampula, Malema & Ribáue
May/June 2000	- Visit 3	Monapo and Memba

Community Land Delimitation in Nicoadala (section 9.1)

The international NGO World Vision has been running a multi-million agricultural development programme in several districts of Zambezia province with funding by DFID. One of the activities this project had been supporting from 1998 was the delimitation of community land. This is a way of increasing land ownership by the community that had become a legal provision after the approval of the Land law of 1997. World Vision delegated this activity to the national NGO ORAM. In 1999, World Vision approached me to review the PRA methodology and to assist them with further training. I did this work with two junior colleagues of mine. We joined a team of ORAM and observed how they used the methodology in Nicoadala district. However, by doing this, we encountered many bottlenecks that required an analysis of the whole concept and methodology of community land delimitation. In this way we got involved in the (national) debate about the land law and the implementation of its regulations in different forums. At the beginning of 2000 we went back to Zambezia province to train ORAM staff and to perform a joint PRA.

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[7] The team consisted of Eunice Cavane and myself

[8] The team for the mid-term evaluation consisted of John Bardill of the University of the Western Cape, Eunice Cavane, Luís Artur and myself of the Eduardo Mondlane University. In total, 5 visits to Nampula were made, the first three of which I joined. The team leader John Bardill wrote the final evaluation report.

Table 5 Field visits to the Community Land Delimitation Project in Nicoadala

Date	Activity/my role	Location
October 1999	Observation of a PRA	Terepano village
April 2000	Training in PRA	Quelimane
April 2000	PRA with ORAM staff	Mucelo-Novo village

The establishment of Local Development Committees in Machaze (section 9.2)

The international NGO Concern started their work in Machaze in 1999. The goal of the project was to build local people's capabilities to participate in the decentralised planning by the district administration. One of the main activities was to establish Local Development Committees (LDCs) in the villages of Machaze district. This case study is a very special one, since I have never been in Machaze district myself. Most of the material I have used for this case is secondary and based on videotapes. This film was the product of an activity of the PRA network. We arranged funding for making a training video based on Mozambican material. A cameraman and director followed a team of the NGO Concern and a team of local facilitators conducting a PRA. My involvement in the production consisted of selecting the material and providing technical backstopping during the production of the video and the writing of the accompanying guidelines for the use of the training video. Furthermore, I interviewed staff of the NGO and two members of the Local Development Committee, who also acted as local facilitators during the PRA.

PRA training and Community Development in Morrumbala (section 9.3)

Save the Children Fund (UK) has been working in Zambezia province since 1986, mainly in the areas of health, education, and community development. During and just after the war (which lasted from 1984 to 1992) the organisation had been mainly involved in emergency aid and rehabilitation of the social infrastructure. In 1995, staff and their counterparts had already undergone a training in PRA. In 1998, the country representative contracted two colleagues of mine and myself to provide further training on PRA with the objective to 1) enhance the capabilities of staff and their counterparts to use participatory methodologies; 2) to demonstrate the benefits of using such approaches; 3) to identify new issues within the communities. This training course consisted of a one-week classroom-based training and a one-week PRA session in the field, mid-1998.

Table 6 Visits to the SCF project in Zambezia/Morrumbala

Date	Activity/my role	Location (Villages)
June 1998	PRA training of governmental and SCF staff	Quelimane
June 1998	PRA with SCF staff and partners	Mepinha village, Morrumbala district

5.6   Case study methods

Data collection for this study consisted of a combination of participant and non-participant observation, non- and semi-structured interviews, and a review of secondary data. For a complete overview of my involvement in the five projects, important moments of data collection, the interviews and reports written, see appendix 1.

(Participant) observation

My involvement in the projects as described in the previous section provided an ideal opportunity for participant observation. By being present as an actor I was able to observe real-life situations. This also meant that much of the learning and analysis happened 'on the spot', by alternating observation and reflection, which is typical for qualitative methods.

Especially in the two major cases (in Matutuíne and Nampula) I became involved in several stages of the projects in different capacities as a trainer, adviser, researcher, evaluator or consultant. This prolonged involvement also had the advantage that I was able to build up a good relationship with different staff members of the project. In both cases my relationship with the project managers was good. I was invited to seminars and internal meetings of these projects in the position as 'friend of the project'. Being part of the monitoring and evaluation team of the Nampula project opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed to an external researcher. The meetings with donor, government, and project representatives provided many insights. In the cases in Nicoadala and Morrumbala, I combined the roles of actor and observer.

In all cases, except for the case in Machaze, I observed interventions and activities of the projects, such as PRAs, meetings and training sessions with local people, or with local staff. Sometimes I did this more from the sidelines, as an observer/evaluator and sometimes as an active participant, trainer or facilitator in workshops or PRAs. The various meetings with project staff, informal conversations, the interviews (see below) and my correspondence with donors or project staff also provided a rich source of data.

Interviews

I did semi-structured and non-structured (informal) interviews. The semi-structured interviews were based on simple guidelines. Interviews with local people dealt basically with their experiences with the project and their opinions about the project. These interviews mainly contributed to answering research questions one, three and four. The interviews with project staff dealt with the work they did, the problems they encountered, and their opinions on the project or their work. These interviews helped to answer research questions one, two, three and four. At times, an interview could also have a very specific topic such as how a community was selected to participate in a particular intervention, or to discuss a single event or conflict.

For the case in Matutuíne I collected 74 transcribed interviews. 17 of these were held by myself. These were mainly in-depth interviews with representatives of the project, the government, or other central actors in the area. 44 of these interviews were performed by a colleague of mine, and the remaining 13 by students. Interviews were partly recorded on tape. The interviews that had been held by others in the local language were transcribed in Portuguese by students. Two of my students did around 100 more interviews for their own thesis research, and their work also provided valuable additional information for this study. Their theses dealt with the local perceptions on the projects in the area. From the earlier fieldwork with a group of students in January 1998, I collected another 50 transcribed interviews, all with local people.

For the Decentralised District Planning project in Nampula, I collected 42 transcribed interviews. Except for one, I performed these interviews myself, in most cases together with a colleague from the mid-term evaluation team. In addition to these transcribed interviews, we must not forget the many informal conversations that took place during the fieldwork itself. The earlier fieldwork of July 1997 is not included in this list. The interviews held in 1997 were analysed and synthesised in our report of that same year.

Material for the three minor cases was mainly based on participant observation and secondary sources; I performed only seven interviews for these cases.

Use of secondary sources

I used many secondary sources, especially documentation supplied by the donors and development organisations involved in the projects. Document analysis was the most important source used to describe development discourses. Project documents were important but there were also all kinds of other documentation to which we had access. For the two main cases of this study, the ones in Matutuíne and in Nampula, I had access to most of the archives and files of the projects. These sources provided me with valuable internal reports and correspondence. A special case of use of secondary data was the use of the videotapes in the CONCERN case of Sambassoca in Machaze. All tape transcripts were translated into Portuguese.

Respondent validation

The consultancy reports that I provided and discussed served, in a way, as respondent validation. On several occasions I was able to share my observations on the project with their staff, which also provided valuable feedback.

In the very last stage, in early 2003, I sent some of my (draft) empirical chapters to the respective project leaders and people who had been closely linked to the projects in a further effort to crosscheck my observations and as a way of respondent validation by people who had been involved in the projects.

The UNCDF project manager read and commented extensively on the chapter on the decentralisation programme in Nampula. He had lived in Mozambique for ten years and had co-ordinated this project from 1996 to 2001. This chapter was also read by a former colleague at the Faculty, who had joined me in the evaluation team. Section 9.1 was proofread by the senior project advisor on land tenure who used to work for World Vision and who invited me to carry out the work in Nicoadala with ORAM. Section 9.2 was read by the filmmaker who had spent two weeks with the team in Machaze and with whom I made the video. Section 9.3 was read by my former University colleague, who had joined me during this fieldwork.

This provided extremely valuable and positive feedback and led to a few minor corrections in the text. It was very supportive in that these readers acknowledged and agreed with my arguments regarding the difficulties of getting different actors such as donors, government representatives, NGOs, and local people involved in their project in the highly politicised Mozambican context.

5.7 Strengths and weaknesses of my dual role in the projects

Being both actor and observer meant that I often had a dual role vis-à-vis the staff of the projects. In most cases, I was actively contributing in shaping the project as one of the actors, as a trainer, advisor or as a back-stopper. At the same time I was studying the process of how the intervention took place and how they gave meaning to PRA, participation, and empowerment.

This situation of being both an actor and a researcher had some clear advantages and some disadvantages that I here refer to as the strengths and weaknesses of this dual position. The obvious strength is that as an actor I was close to the fire so to speak. The many meetings and events to which I was invited provided valuable material for my study. It allowed me to perform participant observation in the real sense of being part of the process. My position as one of the collaborators in the project also allowed me access to reports, correspondence, and other files of the organisation as stated above. Especially in the case of the two major projects (in Matutuíne and in Nampula) in which I was involved for several years, I was able to get to know the staff and build up a relation of trust and friendship with several of the project staff.

But my dual position also had some downsides. In all cases I had announced I was doing this thesis research as well as being involved in the project either as an advisor, evaluator or trainer. In some cases this raised suspicion. This was especially the case in the work with ORAM in Nicoadala. We had agreed with the donor that the first visit served to observe how the facilitators of the NGO performed PRA in the field. So we wanted to keep some distance, not take the initiative. And although personally we got along well, during the fieldwork we felt that we were somehow eavesdropping. The facilitator of the PRA did not feel comfortable with our presence. Of course, we discussed everyday items with the team on the methodology but it seemed the harm had already been done. Some people perceived us doing some kind of spy work for the donor (World Vision) and were not happy with our involvement, which made later collaboration more difficult (see section 9.1). But even in the Helvetas (Matutuíne) and UNCDF (Nampula) projects, we were sometimes perceived with a certain suspicion. Although in these cases we were regarded as "friends of the project", at times project staff were quite concerned that we were being too critical on the project in our reports. On almost all occasions, the project managers of both the Helvetas and the UNCDF projects would stress the positive results of their projects and brush away the more problematic sides. On one occasion for example, I found a rather critical report in the project archives about an Helvetas project that had taken place some years earlier. When I asked the project manager for a photocopy, the first thing he replied was that the photocopier was not working properly to make that many copies. Later he approached me saying that he would not like to have me quoting from that report.

The same project manager was also not too eager to see me too often in the field. He, being light-skinned himself, wanted to avoid as much as possible the project being identified with light-skinned people. He was afraid that as a result, Helvetas would too easily be associated with the foreign (South African) investors active in the area. One of the strategies we developed for dealing with this was to have students and colleagues do part of the fieldwork. They would join Helvetas on their fieldtrips. I also took other opportunities for fieldwork in the project areas outside the project context. The FAO study (see section 5.8) was also instrumental in this respect. This means that I had the opportunity to do fieldwork with and without project staff both in Matutuíne and in Nampula.

Another weakness is that my involvement in the projects may have been too short. Especially for processes such as empowerment, it is obvious that long-term involvement is essential for making any assessment regarding whether or not a project is heading in the desired direction. Although I was able to follow the two major cases for a reasonable amount of time—two and three years, respectively—one could say that I did not observe the whole evolution, nor did I witness the events after 2000. I had to take mid-2000— when I left the country—as a cut-off point since I was not able to do new fieldwork after that time. For almost all projects, PRA and the methodology of community land delimitation was still quite new when I was doing fieldwork and project staff were obviously still experimenting. I am sure much has improved in terms of project practices since then, but again I was not able to make any assessment after that period.

5.8   Other studies

In addition to the five case studies—or project ethnographies as I have called them—I will at times draw on two other studies that I conducted between 1998 and 2000. Firstly, in 1998, together with a colleague, I studied 22 organisations involved in participatory interventions in Mozambique (Pijnenburg and Nhantumbo 2002). This study was based on interviews with representatives of these organisations and did not allow for any fieldwork or observations in the rural areas. It was however possible to make some comparison and to identify the different meanings attributed to participation and some lessons learnt from practice. This

served as a good primer for the fieldwork of my thesis research. The Helvetas and UNCDF projects were also covered in this 1998 study.

Secondly, in 1998 and 1999, I co-ordinated a study on livelihoods of rural families and their interaction with local institutions in rural Mozambique (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000). This study was initiated by FAO-Rome and implemented simultaneously in India, Mexico, and Mozambique. One village was selected in each of the Tete, Nampula, Gaza, and Maputo provinces. The ones in Nampula and Maputo provinces were selected so as to ensure that the Helvetas and UNCDF project had activities in them. In these villages we did an appraisal using semi-structured interviews and various visual techniques with groups and with individuals. For this purpose we stayed in each village for one week. We did a wealth ranking exercise and made so-called institutional profiles of every village describing as much as possible local formal and informal institutions. Later on, we also conducted a questionnaire survey on the basis of a stratified sample of around 40 households in each village. This study provided basic but valuable information on rural livelihoods.

5.9   Elaborating on some important concepts

For a proper assessment of the material as presented in the empirical chapters seven, eight and nine, it is important to further operationalise some concepts. Additionally, in chapters ten and eleven, I will use evaluative statements on project practices, for example, regarding whether the interventions were imposed or not, and whether they contributed to empowerment or transformation, or whether they can be considered as 'good' or 'bad' PRA practice. For answering research questions four and five in particular, it is necessary to specify some indicators and operational criteria that I have used to assess project practices. I will therefore conceptualise the following concepts in this section: empowerment, transformative change, imposed (intervention), ownership, extractive, 'bad' PRA practice and 'good' PRA practice.

Empowerment and transformative interventions

In order to be able to speak of empowerment, proof must exist that a process whereby local people gain more say in things that affect their lives is taking place. Empowerment is about enabling poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable, institutions that affect their lives (Narayan 2002). One can also distinguish different steps in the process; Crawley states that empowerment is about enabling people to understand their situation, reflect on factors shaping that situation, set their own agenda, take steps to change the situation (Crawley 1998). These steps imply a learning process, and ultimately involves mobilisation and action by local people. In the end, all steps have to be taken in order to speak of empowerment. In other words, it is only in cases where local people are involved in a social learning process and are enabled to take voluntary action as a result of the intervention can we speak of empowerment.

I have linked the adjective transformative to the concept of empowerment. So we can speak of a transformative intervention or transformative participation if there is a process of empowerment taking place. Transformation also stresses rather radical changes such as the required changes in attitudes and behaviours (see below) and double-loop learning in which existing premises, beliefs, norms, and values are questioned in a self-critical way.

More specifically, it is necessary to look at who is learning during the intervention; is the project geared to learning 'by local people' or more to learning 'from local people' (often by project staff). What kind of learning is involved? Is it mere petty facts or are basic

assumptions, norms, and power relations challenged? Secondly it is necessary to determine whether local people undertake action, independently from project staff.

Imposed interventions / Imposition / Ownership

I consider an intervention as imposed when the planning of the project activities is done by outsiders, non-local people (such as project staff or facilitators who do not belong to the local community). Determining the next step and the actual decision-making on what kind of intervention and activities are needed remains in the hands of the outsiders. In the case of an imposed intervention, local people may be consulted but the agenda and decision-making power remains firmly in the control of project staff.

A related concept to imposed intervention is ownership. One can speak of ownership when local people, other than project staff, fully support the activity and are willing to invest in the activity. An imposed project is likely to have a low level of ownership although this is not necessarily always the case.

Thus, the specific operational criteria on whether an intervention is imposed is based on whether—and to what extent—local people are involved in setting the agenda, and in the decisions regarding steps to be taken during the intervention. Another good criteria for ownership is whether people are willing to contribute to an activity of the project without remuneration.

Extractive interventions / Extractive PRA

In this thesis I refer to extractive work when the major output is the collection of data, for the purpose of obtaining information from local people in the interest of the outside organisation. Even in cases where this information is (said to be) required for the improvement of future interventions of the local people, such as in the case of consultative participation (Biggs 1989), I would consider the activity as extractive. The information requirements are determined by the outsider agency. Sharing, joint interpretation, and analysis of the collected data is mainly done by the team of facilitators or project staff, thereby resulting in the outsiders predominantly learning. In the case of an extractive exercise (such as a PRA, or a meeting), the learning that takes place by local people is minimal. Although learning by local people may still happen in such a case, this learning process is not regarded as a specific output or a desired goal by those organising the process.

'Bad' PRA practices

I have summarised 'bad' PRA practices, based on the work of Chambers (1995; 1997; 1999), as follows. For each point, I have added questions that have guided me in assessing project practices:

- Use of the label without the substance. Project staff claim that they do PRA while in fact they are not really committed to the empowerment of local people and do not apply basic principles of good PRA practice (see below). To what extent is project staff committed to empowering local people?
- Extractive PRA (see also above). The purpose is data collection by extracting information from local people rather than setting up a process for learning by local people. To what extent are project staff committed to initiating a process of learning by and for local people?
- Putting methods before process of empowerment. The techniques and tools—such as visual diagrams—are rather impressive and when using them enthusiastically one tends to forget the real purpose of it all: local learning and empowerment. Do project staff use the methods in a critical way in the sense that they remain aware of the transformative objectives of the PRA?

- Putting methods before attitudes and behaviour. Do facilitators question their own attitudes and behaviours (see also below under 'good' PRA practices)?
- Ruts and routines, rushing. Repetition and routines can easily stifle creativity and lead to a lack of self-critical awareness. There is a risk that PRAs become formalised in procedures, cookbooks and recipes. Rushing involves the risk of overlooking local complexities. One can speak of routines when practices are copied from one situation to the other and when staff do not reflect critically on what they are doing or why they are doing it. Other telltale signs of ruts, routines, and rushing are: unnecessary repetition, overlooking complex problems, and taking too little time for a PRA.
- Poorest people are left out. Project staff tend to work with the 'uppers', the better-off in the community. These are often male, and part of the local elite. Has a proper analysis been made to establish who the poor in a community really are? Has any specific attention been paid to intra-community differences?

'Good' PRA practices

Using 'good' PRA practices does not mean simply that no bad practices are being carried out. 'Good' PRA practices typically refer to the attitudes and behaviours of the facilitators. This list of 'good' practices was adapted from section 2.5 in this thesis that was based on Chambers (1997). Again, this is followed by some questions that have helped in my assessment of project practices.

- Establishing good rapport; outsiders have to 'unlearn', relax, listen to the poor, learn from local people and 'hand over the stick'. How did project staff behave in this respect?
- Flexibility and 'optimal ignorance', learning should be iterative, only useful information and relevant tools should be used, recipes should be avoided. How critical were the facilitators in choosing tools in order to optimise the learning process?
- Sharing information and triangulation, one should look for complexity and diversity, and information should be cross-checked; did staff share, probe, and triangulate sufficiently?
- Embracing error and critical (self-) reflection; criticism should be handled in a constructive manner; did project staff reflect on their own practices? How did they handle criticism?
- PRA is not an extractive research method. The use of tools and techniques should not be ends in themselves. PRA should be an action-oriented process leading to the empowerment of local people. How was PRA perceived by the people using it?

6   The context: Mozambique 1992-2000

This chapter provides the reader with some of the basic context for the cases described in chapters seven, eight and nine; the historical, socio-economic, and political situation of rural Mozambique in the 1990s. We cannot understand the current social reality properly without looking into and appreciating what preceded it. This means I will have to go back some way through history. We have to understand how violence and discontinuities in Mozambican history seriously damaged trust; trust between governors and the ones being governed, trust between rural and urban dwellers, trust between different political parties and trust between different parts of the country. In the light of this study it is also imperative that we look into the complexities of the local institutions in the rural areas, the types of interventions that have taken place in the countryside, and the role of the donor community. Therefore I will look into important policies and actions of the government, donors, and development agencies that have had an impact in what constitutes rural Mozambique at the end of the 20th century.

6.1   A short history of Mozambique

Mozambique has a very turbulent and violent history, and acknowledging this will help to explain some of the phenomena described further on in this thesis. Vasco da Gama landed on the Mozambican coastline in 1498. A physical presence of the Portuguese remained for almost 400 years, mainly limited to a few small towns and trading posts along the coast, although it is not difficult to imagine the disastrous effects that the slave trade had on the societies in the hinterland. While most colonial powers started to establish control over their African colonies after the Berlin conference of 1885, Portugal had difficulties in effectively occupying all the territory that is now Mozambique. In the north and centre of the country, the Portuguese granted concessions to large corporations, many of them funded by British capital. These companies were not just commercial enterprises but were also responsible for the administration of these huge areas. They often did this on the basis of physical violence or the threat of physical violence (Galli 1999, 83).

Another development that took place at the end of the nineteenth century was the huge growth of the mining industry of the Rand, which attracted labour from mainly the south and centre of Mozambique. Several generations of male migrant workers worked for parts of their lives in the mines in South Africa. The colonial government, and—after independence in 1975—also the FRELIMO government, siphoned off part of their wages.

In the 1920s, the fascist regime of Salazar introduced *Chibalo*. This was a system of forced labour, either lowly paid or at times not paid at all. It involved compulsory work and could be administered by either the corporations or the colonial state. *Chibalo* was extended to the mandatory cultivation of cash crops such as cotton, rice, and sisal. This system of forced labour was abolished as late as in the early 1960s. Several colonial regimes in Africa imposed forced cotton cultivation but according to the book of Isaacman, 'Cotton is the Mother of Poverty' (1996), the intervention in Mozambique was exceptional with regard to the duration of the period, the huge number of households involved, and its brutality. Isaacman also reports on the many strategies of resistance implemented by farmers such as boiling the seed so that it would not germinate (Isaacman 1996). Many rural people tried to evade these brutal policies, and this led to massive population movements in the country (Galli 1999, 85).

The *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, FRELIMO started the armed struggle for independence in 1964. The guerrilla war against the Portuguese mainly took place in the north of the country. The revolution within Portugal in 1974 accelerated the process of independence, and in June 1975 Mozambique became independent. The FRELIMO government established a single-party Marxist state, nationalised industry, and abolished

private land ownership. It stepped up the provision of education and health facilities. In the first years after independence, the government adopted a policy of rapid socialisation of the countryside. They promoted state farms and co-operatives on abandoned settler farms and relocated rural people to communal villages, the so-called *aldeias communais*, similar to the Tanzanian concept of Ujaama. In the period between 1977 and 1983 especially, FRELIMO attempted an aggressive implementation of these policies (O'Laughlin 1996, 17). Priority for investment was given to the state farms. It was hoped that in this sector economies of scale merited these investments, and it was thought that the subsistence sector did not require them for their survival. But the state farms failed miserably; they consumed more money than they generated. The establishment of agricultural co-operatives largely failed too, partly due to not enough attention being paid to the intra-co-operative conflicts, and due to the incorrect assumption that all members would share the same interests (O'Laughlin 1996, 24). Another failure was the policy of agricultural marketing and of the communal villages, *aldeias communais* (Harrison 1998). The restriction of the private markets brought many rural households to the edge of famine in the early 1980s. There were of course groups of people that benefited from these turbulent times, scarcity of basic products, and later from the war. This led to renewed social differentiation and, increasingly, to sharp regional divides. The poorer areas were a breeding ground for the opposition RENAMO (O'Laughlin 1996, 30).

Soon after independence in 1975, Mozambique had become the base of ZANU and ANC militants. This angered the Rhodesian and the South African white minority regimes, and between 1976 and 1980 the Rhodesian army destroyed many Mozambican infrastructures. It is widely believed that the Rhodesian secret service was instrumental in the conception and birth of the MNR, Mozambican National Resistance, or RENAMO, *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique*. By 1980, when Zimbabwe gained independence, the South African regime had switched support to RENAMO. We should however be careful in explaining RENAMO as purely a fabrication of foreign relations as is often claimed in the official history books. RENAMO did enjoy wide support, especially in the rural areas. The study of Geffray has been enlightening in that he showed that popular support to RENAMO could be explained by the widely felt dissatisfaction of the rural population with the policies of the FRELIMO regime (Geffray 1991). Especially the forced collectivisation of agriculture, and forced relocation in communal villages disillusioned rural people in many areas. According to Newitt, RENAMO can only be understood in the light of the violent history of Mozambique, which goes much further back in time. Banditry and warlordism have been endemic for a long time (Newitt 1995, 575). Schafer too refers to the long history of violence that dates back to pre-colonial wars in an attempt to explain the atrocities committed by both FRELIMO and RENAMO soldiers during the civil war 1976-1992 (Schafer 2001). During the 1980s, RENAMO gained control over much of the countryside. The guerrillas destroyed many government installations including industries, schools, and health posts. Travelling overland became a risky activity.

Peace talks began in 1990, and the armed struggle finally ended with the signing of the general peace accords in 1992. This meant the end to a period of many years of bitter violence. Just as the start of this war can be partly explained by looking at what happened beyond Mozambican borders, so too can its end. With the fall of Berlin wall, Soviet influence on Mozambique collapsed. The FRELIMO government could no longer rely on solidarity military aid from Eastern Europe. At the same time, South African president F.W. de Klerk was negotiating with Nelson Mandela on his release and about allowing the ANC to operate freely. The support for RENAMO, that in fact germinated when Mozambique was punished for supporting the ANC, obviously did not fit in with this new strategy any longer. So neither FRELIMO nor RENAMO seemed to have a solid resource basis for continuing the war.

The war between FRELIMO and RENAMO had disastrous consequences. It is estimated that almost a million people lost their lives, almost two million people fled across the borders and another estimated four million people became internally displaced out of an estimated total population of around 15 million in the early 1990s. Virtually all infrastructure in the rural areas was a shambles, and it left Mozambique one of the poorest countries in the world. Communities were disrupted, and by the end of the war many rural areas were deserted.

In the meantime, during the1980s, the FRELIMO government had gradually abandoned its socialist orientation. The government adopted more market-oriented economic policies. The country became a member of the World Bank and the IMF, and started implementing a structural adjustment programme. In the 1990s, many companies were re-privatised. With peace at hand, these policies fuelled the post-war economic boom in the late 1990s. From 1996 onwards inflation remained low and the foreign exchange rate stable. Foreign investments increased rapidly. Although operating from a small base, the economy grew at an annual rate of 10 % between 1997 and 1999, one of the highest growth rates in the world.

In 1990 FRELIMO had also changed the constitution so that it allowed for a multi-party democracy. This was an important step in the negotiations with the opposition. The first multi-party elections in 1994 resulted in a slight majority for FRELIMO over the RENAMO opposition, and FRELIMO candidate Chissano won the presidential elections. The December 1999 elections were again won by FRELIMO and Chissano, albeit with even smaller margins. The presidential candidate of RENAMO, Dhlakama denounced the results as fraudulent and called for a recount. The Supreme Court denied this request. RENAMO's members of parliament boycotted parliamentary sessions and tensions between the two political parties remained. Dialogue between Chissano and Dhlakama was initiated and broken off several times during 2000. RENAMO leadership called for civil disobedience in protest against the 1999 election results. In November 2000, this led to brutal political violence. At least 41 RENAMO supporters died when they clashed with police forces during demonstrations organised by the opposition party. In the worst hit town, Montepuez in Cabo Delgado, the police rounded up anyone believed to have been in the demonstration. They were thrown into a grossly overcrowded police cell where at least 83 detainees subsequently died of asphyxiation (AIM 2001).

6.2   Political-administrative institutions in rural Mozambique

The Portuguese colonial government had imposed its version of indirect rule in the rural areas via the system of the *regulados*. This was a mixture of 'customary' authority and imposed Portuguese local level administration (O'Laughlin 1996). Where possible, the Portuguese used pre-existing local level political institutions to create territorial local authorities, but in other cases the Colonial government imposed a new *régulo*. These *régulos* typically had a traditional title such as *mwene, mambo, inhacuaua* or *induna*. They worked and lived in the African languages and cultures, and depended on ties of patronage to lineage-heads, but their tasks were strictly colonial. They applied customary law in land distribution and minor conflicts. Similarly, inheritance of the *régulo* took place according to the customary laws of succession (Negrão 1995, 163). But the *régulo* also collected taxes for the colonial administration, recruited workers for forced working regimes (*Chibalo*), enforced and supervised forced cropping, and provided political and military intelligence to the Portuguese administrator (O'Laughlin 1996, 8).

The system of *régulo*s was considered as part and parcel of the colonial administration and was abolished when FRELIMO came to power in 1975. The *régulo*s were replaced by *grupos dinamizadores*, 'dynamising groups' that were to become party cells with their own *secretários* and local assemblies. These assemblies hardly ever functioned and over time the

secretários became very much like the *régulo*s, in that they functioned as the bottom-end of the administrative long arm of the central government.

Local leadership in the 1990s in rural Mozambique provides a very diffuse and complex picture (West 1998; Kloeck-Jensen 2000). Negrão writes that this disorder and complexity of territorial division and legitimate leadership already existed in colonial times (Negrão 1995, 165). These days, the situation is as follows: in some areas, the *secretários* are regarded as the village leaders, in other areas, the *régulos* are looked upon as the legitimate leaders, and in yet other cases local people refer to other, more traditional titles such as local *mambos, mwenes, indunas,* etc. There are cases whereby two different powers co-exist peacefully where, for example, the *régulo* fulfils more ceremonial functions and the *secretário* the more official and administrative ones. In yet other cases, one and the same person fulfils various functions and has several titles. This is not surprising since the colonial government had already appointed or recruited *régulos* that were of 'royal blood' or otherwise fulfilled an important role in the local society. When FRELIMO installed the *grupos dinamizadores* and the *secretários*, again these people—sometimes over time—were often members of the more influential families in the area. It is also common for the *secretário* to be, for example, a nephew of the local traditional leader or *régulo*. These aspects cause the distinction between 'traditional' authorities and 'modern' structures to become considerably blurred (see also West 1998). There is a constant debate going on within Mozambique on the (future) role of 'traditional authorities'. This debate has strong political connotations since RENAMO and the *régulo*s are considered to support each other.

This situation can obviously be rather confusing to an outsider upon arrival in a community. However, if one asks to speak to the local leader, someone or another is always designated. In other words, there is always a local leader, although this person may differ according to: the purpose of the visit; the one who is asking, or the one who replies. The fact is that in most communities, micro-level conflicts are in general resolved internally. In this respect, many observers refer to the process of the return of the millions of people who had been displaced during the war and who have reoccupied the land without major (known) conflicts.

The territorial administrative division in Mozambique is constructed as follows: the country has ten provinces, 128 districts and 393 administrative posts—in Portuguese *postos administrativos*. The highest authority at district level is the District Administrator. He is assisted by what is now called the Executive Council, which normally consists of the heads of governmental departments who are represented in the district, with the addition of the commander of police. Typically, a district has two to four administrative posts, with each post being headed by a *chefe do posto*. This position is still on the payroll of the government. Further territorial division is rather less well defined; depending on the area and people you talk with, the administrative posts are either divided further into *localidades*, *regulados* or communities, or a mixture of these. Similarly, the representation of the rural people, or the line of communication goes either via *régulo*s (*regulados*), *presidente da localidade* (*localidade*), *secretários* or via other local leaders (*mwenes, mambos,* etc. depending on the local situation).

In 1994, a law was proposed allowing the creation of municipal districts and the election of their representatives and executive bodies. Local elections for these municipalities were intended to take place in 1996. However, many amendments in parliament resulted in delays and changes in the legislation. Amongst others, the territorial basis was changed, limiting the process to urban areas alone, thus excluding the rural areas from the decentralisation process. The government adopted a policy of 'gradual municipalisation' and eventually, in December 1998, local elections took place in only 33 municipalities—in all the major cities and some of

the larger towns. This led to the strange situation in which those districts with a larger town and thus a municipality, had two systems of governance in co-existence—one elected body for the urban area, and the former system of (appointed) district administration for the rural area. In other rural districts nothing changed; the district administrator maintains a very strong political and administrative role. It is likely that the unclear position of the 'traditional leaders' (see above) was one of the reasons for the central government to exclude the rural areas from the process of municipalisation.

The district administrator is only controlled by those that appoint him or her, the provincial arm of the Ministry of State Administration. The position of the district administrator is both strong and weak at the same time. It is strong in that administrators fulfil a key position in almost everything that happens in the district, and he is subject to little control by others. Administrators may collect and control local revenues such as market fees. A study of the Ministry of Planning and Finance showed that finances of most districts are not in order and hardly accounted for (Fozzard 1999). On the other hand, district administrations are weak in that they are under-funded and under-staffed and often have limited autonomy compared with the provincial government and/or foreign NGOs. Except from what is locally collected, and the funds intended for the operation and maintenance of the district headquarter and the administrator's personal residence, all other district funds are controlled at the provincial level. Total district revenues are low and personnel are lowly educated. In 1995, only 2 % of the national civil service had a university degree. Of the provincial staff of the Ministry of State Administration (working on the provincial and district levels), that plays a critical role in support to local authorities, only 0.1 % has a university degree and 37 % has no formal education at all (UNCDF 1998, 4). Many of the current district administrators were old combatants who were appointed in key positions when FRELIMO had to replace the Portuguese administration. In the rural districts there are hardly any formal grassroots organisations or other representations of 'civil society' that could provide some countervailing power to the actions of the district executive council. The Ministry of State Administration is working on legislation that would provide for 'consultative councils' at district level, but as at 2000, such a legal framework did not yet exist.

6.3   Policies for rural development and the role of donors and development agencies

We have seen that FRELIMO, which fought brutal colonial rule, itself turned into a new Leviathan. The policies of the nationalisation and collectivisation of agriculture, the forced relocations in *aldeias comunais* and the substitution of the (partly customary) administrative system with new structures contributed to the alienation of many who were initially enthusiastic FRELIMO supporters. In many respects, a new elite replaced the colonial administration.

Few resources have been effectively spent for rural development. Little attention was paid to small-scale or family-sector agriculture. Also, little development aid was spent on rural development. The expenditures that were earmarked for rural development remained far behind target. For the period 1985-1991, Abrahamsson and Nilsson calculated that aid was mainly spent on macro-economic support (78%). The other sectors that received aid were: urban development (10%), the energy sector, (5%), education (4%), the Beira corridor (2%), health (1%), and 0% for agriculture (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994, 144). Until 1992, initiatives for rural development were obviously hampered seriously as a result of the war. Most rural areas were inaccessible or depopulated. During the war, many international and

national governmental and non-governmental organisations were involved in relief aid to the victims of the war. After 1992, these agencies continued their activities. In addition to relief aid, their focus shifted to the resettlement of the many refugees and displaced persons, and the reconstruction of the infrastructure.

From the moment that Mozambique joined the Bretton Woods institutions in the mid 1980s, aid grew fast, with the country receiving 250 million US dollars in 1983, 900 million US dollars in 1987, and 1200 million US dollars by 1991 (Hanlon 1997). This resulted in the country becoming increasingly dependent on foreign aid. In the beginning of the 1990s, aid made up more than 75 % of the GNP and paid for more than 80 % of all imports (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994, 153). With this financial dependence, the country also became increasingly subjected to the policies of the donors. Several Mozambique-observers have indicated the extreme dependence of the government on foreign donors, and specifically the Bretton Woods Institutions (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994; Hall and Young 1997; Hanlon 1997). Major economic decisions are first taken by the IMF or by the Club of Paris before they are presented in the national parliament (Hanlon 1997). It meant that the country had to comply increasingly with the development agenda of the donors. In the 1990s, an important part of this agenda was democratisation and good governance. Abrahamsen has shown how democratisation has been imposed in several other African countries. She argues that democratisation is often presented as coming from within the African countries, since donors are eager to avoid allegations of undue interference, but she argues that it is part of promoting the western neo-liberal model in which democracy is linked to open markets (Abrahamsen 2000, 11). Hall and Young make a similar argument for the case of Mozambique. With the new development agenda, both a democratic form of governance and a liberal market economy was imposed on Mozambique (Hall and Young 1997). During the 1990s the World Bank discovered that development is not only a question of 'getting the markets right'; it was also about 'getting the institutions right'. More emphasis was laid on the need for a government that functions well and an empowered 'civil society' to provide the necessary checks and balances (WorldBank 2000).

Along with this good governance agenda, largely imposed by the donors, other buzzwords came to Mozambique such as participation, empowerment, and civil society. During the 1990s, these were increasingly used as key words in the policies and project documents of both governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the multilateral agencies that were active in Mozambique. In 1995, the Mozambican government declared the end of the era of emergency aid and the start of 'sustainable development'. Participation was regarded as a requirement for sustainability. The Government of Mozambique, through its resolution 3/98 of February 24, affirmed that: "decentralisation of decision-making and development in general is to be achieved through community participation".

A related concept in the good governance agenda that pops up in policy documents is civil society. There seems to be no uniform definition of what would constitute a civil society, but in the good governance agenda civil society is regarded as a countervailing power to the state (Abrahamsen 2000, 52). It seems that civil society is often interpreted as being formal institutions that are other than state and other than the commercial sector. Sogge argues that the concept of civil society is not very relevant to the Mozambican situation for three reasons. One is that both in colonial times and in the FRELIMO era, there was very little space for associational life; the co-operatives that existed were established from political motives, and not to defend the interests of its members. Another is the loss in confidence and legitimacy of formal institutions. The third reason is that much of the social, economic, and political life is

governed by informal norms and networks. Many social and economic processes are consciously evasive of state authority and are kept deliberately opaque. One may straddle the formal and informal, capturing the advantages of both (Sogge 1997, 44).

What is then often cited as constituting the civil society in Mozambique is the large and colourful variety of NGOs. Between 1980 and 2000, the number of national and international NGOs grew astronomically. Several authors have criticised the booming of NGOs, since these organisations tend to withdraw good quality staff from governmental organisations, create parallel structures, and are mainly accountable to a foreign donor rather than to any democratic institution within Mozambique (Hanlon 1997).

During the 1980s, food became scarce and the flow of food aid swelled. Donors assumed that NGOs would be able to distribute his food more efficiently than government . USAID demanded that the relief aid be channelled via international NGOs (Hanlon 1990; Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994). This policy was instrumental in the creation of parallel structures. Even long after emergency aid had been abandoned, and throughout the 1990s, large NGOs such as Care and World Vision continued to operate largely via parallel structures, for example in the area of agricultural research and extension systems. Hanlon criticised the NGOs for being mainly accountable to their donors and not to the people they were assigned to help. NGOs had become mere contractors of donors (Hanlon 1997).

International NGOs and donors display a preference for working with national NGOs; in fact, it is part of their policy for stimulating the 'creation of civil society'. The result is that national NGOs have mushroomed. Thus, these national NGOs do not surge spontaneously to satisfy the needs of their members or of fellow Mozambicans; rather, many of these NGOs emerged as contractors and are regarded as a means of access to donor money.

Additionally, many new policies and new legislation that was formulated during the 1990s reflect the fact that many actors have embraced the concept of community participation. The international development agenda in such legislation is easy to discern. One example is the new constitution of 1990 that allowed for multiparty democracy with an advanced level of decentralisation and elected bodies on all levels. However, as we read above in section 6.2, this was revoked, and subsequent legislation restricted the municipalisation to urban areas. This means that rural areas will have to continue with the appointed (political) administrators without representative structures. However, it is clear that elections and the—albeit limited—decentralisation fitted well within the agenda of good governance.

Another example of legislation that dovetails with the ideas of decentralisation and the empowerment of local communities is the law on forestry and wildlife (Law 10/99), which states that the management of natural resources has to guarantee the participation of local communities in the use of forestry and wildlife resources. The law states that local councils for the management have to be constituted, although the law is not clear about how these should be formed (DNFFB 1999). The third example is the land law of 1997, which was partly based on the principles of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). This law is discussed in the next section.

Donors are eager to support initiatives that are based on this legislation, and in many cases externally funded projects contributed to their formulation either via pilot projects, for example, or via direct technical assistance. Although the concept of CBNRM was rather new in Mozambique in 1996, by 1999 there were already more than 40 donor-funded projects active in this area. The major cases in this thesis—decentralised district planning, CBNRM, and community land delimitation—are in fact examples of donor support in these areas.

These new laws assume that there will be authoritative institutions at community level in place that can manage these local resources in a just and sustainable way. It provides for the creation of so-called land commissions. It is still too early to assess whether these local structures will function in the way desired and envisaged by those formulating these new laws.

Many rural development projects started using PRA during the 1990s. It even became part of legislation in that PRA was one of the steps to be taken in the process of community land delimitation as described in the technical annex of the land law (see the next section). There were however few PRA trainers, and accessible training material was scarce. There was hardly any training material on PRA in Portuguese when I arrived in Mozambique in 1995. There was one manual that had been published by the National Commission of Environment (that later turned into a Ministry) in 1994. I refer to this manual since it was long the only resource for many Mozambican projects that worked with PRA. It had been compiled by Martin Whiteside on the basis of a paper on RRA of 1988, the report of a seminar in Cape Verde in 1991, and a field exercise in Cabo Delgado in 1993. The title was 'Diagnóstico (Participativo) Rápido Rural, Manual de Técnicas' (Whiteside 1994). In other words, the manual seemed to be about both RRA and PRA. The author writes that he would have preferred to have called it RRA, since it reflects the current practice (Whiteside 1994, 4) but still, the letter P was included in the title. The manual is indeed more about RRA; it is proposed as a method for performing research and/or planning development projects. The manual contains some general principles and describes a range of techniques, including do's and don'ts. The general principles that are referred to are: triangulation, the iterative, innovative, interactive, and informal character, learning from the knowledge of local people, 'optimal ignorance' and doing the work in the community.

Many projects used Whiteside's manual since it was one of the few resources on PRA available in Portuguese, while in fact the manual was more about the (more extractive) RRA. Some NGOs wrote their own trainers' reports or guidelines but these were often not made available to others. The NGO Action Aid made a Portuguese translation of their manual on the method REFLECT, but this came out as late as 1998 or 1999. This publication was more directed to action research, combining the philosophies of Freire and PRA. In early 2000, the PRA network released a training video on PRA that had been filmed during the work done by the LDC of Sambassoca (see section 9.2).

There were few experienced PRA trainers active in Mozambique and those that were active knew each other, with the majority taking part in the seminars of the Mozambican PRA network. Dan Owen trained a team of young Mozambicans for the participatory poverty assessments, but again this work was rather extractive since it was oriented towards data collection and often a one-off activity in the rural areas where they worked. INDER, the national institute for rural development, also did some work with PRA with the help of expatriate staff. I trained students in PRA, amongst other things, at the start of the Helvetas project. Later, INDER gave another training course to Helvetas staff. The UNCDF team had been trained in PRA in an earlier phase by a Danish and a Mozambican consultant, who were mainly self-taught in PRA. I gave the training course to Save the Children-UK together with Dan Owen. For the community land delimitation, the PRA method had evolved via the various pilot projects implemented by different NGOs, amongst others by Helvetas and ORAM. This was further documented by a Belgian FAO expert of the technical secretariat of the land commission. CONCERN organised their own training sessions for their own staff. For the majority of projects it was very difficult to obtain staff or hire trainers that were familiar enough with PRA.

6.4   The land law of 1997 and community land delimitation

It is hardly necessary here to emphasise the importance of access to land and other natural resources for the livelihoods of the rural people of Mozambique. Practically all rural

households cultivate land. In the four provinces in which we conducted the study for FAO, all 159 rural households of the sample had their own crop fields (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000). Besides, a large proportion of town dwellers own a plot in the countryside. In addition to the land to cultivate, many other natural resources such as fish, fuel-wood, fodder, wild food, etc., provide basic ingredients for the livelihoods of rural Mozambicans.

In 1997, the Government of Mozambique approved a Land Law (lei 19/97) that replaced the earlier law of 1979. The economic liberalisation, the new political situation, and the privatisation of state farms made this new law imperative. A FAO advisor assisting the National Land Commission wrote an excellent sociology of how the land law came into being and describes the philosophy behind the land law of 1997 (Tanner 2002). The law had to give legitimacy to practices already being followed by the vast majority of the population, while at the same time offering secure conditions for new private investments in rural areas. Its aim was, on the one hand to protect the millions of farmers who do not have a formal land title, and on the other hand to promote new investments. The philosophy was to combine those two objectives via new partnerships. Investors were needed for economic development but mechanisms were required so that local communities would benefit in one way or another from these investments. So the theory was that when investors needed land, they would need to negotiate this with the local communities that use this land. Thus, the law was seen as an important development tool with equitable and sustainable development as underlying objectives;

> *"through a process that should allow local people to realise and use the capital value currently locked up in their one key asset (their land); and through the decentralisation and democratisation of land and natural resources management right down to community level. It is this process that will stimulate a profound process of social development amongst newly-empowered communities" (Tanner 2002, 1).*

So the core idea was attracting investments in rural areas and creating partnerships between investors and communities. The assumption thereby was that:

> *The result thereby is integration not separation, and the chance for cross-fertilisation of ideas, benefits, and resources between the 'family' and the 'private' sectors (Tanner 2002, 48).*

In defending the new land law, Tanner made specific reference to neighbouring Zimbabwe as a situation to be avoided, with its separation of extensive areas of private land and communal land. The contrary was envisioned to: "stimulate integration and positive collaboration between the various parties (Tanner 2002, 3)". He also stresses that it is a move away from colonial practices with the 'colonatos' for white Portuguese small-scale settlers, and the extensive plantations in the hands of private companies. Brouwer however argues that the new land law does incorporate a risk of a return to colonial times, since it will de facto re-instate legal dualism; the state's civil law and the so-called traditional system (Brouwer 2000, 11). He states that the law is based on an incorrect assumption that land is held in common by the community ruled by its traditional chief. A return to legal dualism and the colonial system of indirect rule can, according to Brouwer, lead to ethnic violence. Tanner is convinced that the new law; "will reduce the potential for conflict…by promoting dialogue and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and resources" (Tanner 2002, 52).

As compared to the legislation in neighbouring countries, the new law is regarded as progressive in several respects; the law recognises that smallholders can secure land use rights through 'occupation'. This right is equal to land use rights acquired through a written document. The new law thus allows customary rights a more important role as compared to the situation under the old law. Occupation according to local rules is considered as legal; it is assumed that within the local communities people are aware of the limits of the land, that the rules for access are legitimate and thus that there is no need to register an individual's

land in a formal procedure. A novelty is that the law permits land to be registered in the name of the 'community'.

Tanner also stresses the uniqueness of how the law came into being. He refers to the inter-ministerial committee, the national conferences and the consultations at various (national, provincial, and local) levels. This was indeed a remarkable achievement. But he probably overstates the fact by writing about: "a strong sense of national ownership" and about: "the new policy and law had real legitimacy in the eyes of most Mozambicans" (Tanner 2002, 18). He in fact undermines this point in the same paper when he writes about the resistance against the law and its slack implementation so far. The undertone is to stress legitimacy and ownership by Mozambicans. It might be an attempt to cover up the role of expatriate advisors in the process, such as his own role. Another sign is the use of the concept 'civil society' when in fact he refers to the group of NGOs. The large majority of these organisations is completely dependent on foreign donors. Tanner acknowledges the fact that the continuity in making the law was due to external support. Formally speaking, the interministral committee drafted the law and the subsequent regulations, and subsequently drafted the technical annex on community land delimitation. But preparatory work was done by a technical secretariat, in which expatriate FAO supervisors played an important role.

Tanner also acknowledges the difficulties and the challenges ahead. He acknowledges the forces active in Mozambican society that oppose the inherent philosophy, that do not take small-scale 'family sector' agriculture seriously, and acknowledges that this may undermine its legitimacy (Tanner 2002, 3). He calls for a change in mentality.

He specifically refers to the complexities in the participatory development model within the law:

> *"Questions still abound about how the partnership between communities and investors can work. Others question the capacity of largely illiterate communities to manage land and natural resources, while questions of local level representation and the legitimacy of consultation and delimitation processes are also constantly raised." (Tanner 2002, 50).*

The definition of community

Kloeck-Jensen critically assessed the new land law and states that the law "provides potential safeguards for rural smallholders" and "a step in the right direction" but he also highlighted several ambiguities in the law (Kloeck-Jensen 1997). A crucial issue is the concept of 'community' that emerges in this law. When the last draft of the law was discussed, it was discovered that this was a new entity in Mozambican jurisprudence. 'Community' does not have a legal personality or institutional relationship with formal state institutions. This was resolved by adding an article saying that the meaning and mechanisms of representation of the communities would be established later. This was done in the 'regulation' that accompanied the law and that was published as a decree (decree 66/98). The Inter-ministerial Land Commission wrote these regulations. In this document, community is defined as:

> *"a group of families and individuals living within a geographical area at the territorial level of a locality or subdivision thereof, and which seeks to safeguard its common interests through the protection of areas for habitation or agriculture including both fallow and cultivated areas, forests, areas of cultural importance, pasture land, water sources, and areas for expansion".*

However, many questions regarding the boundaries and the representation of the communities remained unresolved. In relation to the 'consultation of the communities' in the case of land titling, the law did not clearly establish how this should be done and whether the community could veto the titling.

The discussions over the concept of community kept recurring during the making of the law and the subsequent regulations and technical annex (Tanner 2002). It is indeed hardly possible to define this further because Mozambique is so culturally and geographically diverse. The definition was compelled to remain vague to cover this diversity.

Community Land Delimitation

Soon after the approval of the new land law, many national and international NGOs organised themselves in the platform "*Campanha Terra*" to work on the dissemination of the new land law in the rural areas. They embraced the concept of community land delimitation. It provided a very concrete activity, within the legal Mozambican cadres, to work on the empowerment of smallholder farmers. Also, the many projects in the country that were being run according to the philosophy of CBNRM found community land delimitation an important tool for securing the rights of the local people over their natural resources. In 1999 a new sister law on Forestry and Wildlife (lei 10/99) reinforced the importance of the communities for the management of these resources. As a result, many projects with the delimitation of community land were started up enthusiastically.

The method of community land delimitation was elaborated in a technical annex by the technical secretariat of the land committee. It details the process of participatory work and sets a procedure to establish which land rights are proven and delimited. It involves different mapping exercises and consultation with neighbouring communities. In the end, this process of land delimitation in the communities consisted of the following steps:

1. Explanation of the new land law and the possibilities of community land delimitation;
2. Sensibilisation of the community;
3. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA);
4. Elaboration of the draft map and the descriptive memorandum;
5. Confirmation with neighbouring communities;
6. Feedback in the community;
7. Launch in the cadastral atlas and the issuing of a certificate.

Early experiences indicated that sensibilisation was a very important step in the process. This came up as a lesson learnt during the many 'pilot' exercises of community land delimitation during 1998 and 1999 by different organisations (DINAGECA 1997; SPGC 1998; CIM 1999; FAO 1999; ORAM 1999; Helvetas 1999b). One of the findings of these exercises was that local people were often unaware of what the process of land delimitation involved, and this often led to misunderstanding (see also section 7.5). In many cases, local people feared that land delimitation, intended to protect them, was being used to 'sell the land'. There was also fear that delimiting community land would scare off or exclude would-be investors, while for many rural people these investors would be very welcome. Then there were the cases where rural people were simply not aware that something like land delimitation had been going on. So one of the lessons of these pilots was that the phase of sensibilisation needed more attention; people had to be informed better and 'persuaded of the importance of delimitation'.

Although the PRA is central in the whole process, the commission was not very clear on the objectives this step. The documents of the land commission described PRA in one place as an extractive tool to collect data, where the role of the local people is to 'validate' the data and at other places as a "form for capacity building" (CIM 2000).

The report by Tanner gives some more detail. He writes that the idea of incorporating PRA was instigated by the experience of some NGOs and FAO advisors. It was considered crucial to work closely with the local people before rights and borders could be established. There was however another interesting thing that gave strong support for using PRA, described by Tanner thus:

> "At the time (mid-1998, BP), the government was under strong donor pressure to finalise the Land Law regulations as a condition for advancing with the new Agricultural Sector Programme (PROAGRI). It was also

clear to critics of the Technical Secretariat/FAO approach that the local community definition in the land law would be almost impossible to implement without some clearer idea of how to define it in practice. The Technical Secretariat/FAO team knew that a lot of fieldwork was needed to develop an appropriate method, but they were convinced that the participatory diagnosis approach was the only feasible approach. The underlying point was, instead of having a single all-embracing definition of 'a community' that could be applied across Mozambique, there should be a single, legally prescribed methodology. If applied correctly, this methodology would result in a definition of a local community that was relevant and useful in the cultural and geographic contexts." (Tanner 2002, 45)

In other words, the way out of the difficult discussions and the impasse on the definition of community was to leave it vague and the community would have to auto-define itself. PRA was regarded as the ideal method to ensure that communities would auto-identify themselves. Pressure from the donors did the rest.

There were other wishful thinking elements in the discourse around the participatory way of working in community land delimitation and Mozambican culture:

"Validation of existing rights and values is inherent to the methodology, and this through one of the biggest virtues Mozambican communities possess – consensus seeking. Along the road, a series of validation mechanisms are built in so that the outcome of the registry exercise does not prejudice any group within the community, any neighbouring community, or private investors." (deWit 2000, 8).

The PRA is regarded as an excellent tool for strengthening local empowerment, conflict resolution, and conflict (deWit 2000, 9). It is based on the assumption that local people are able and willing to identify themselves as being a community, choose their representatives—who would then be able and willing to represent community interests—and manage natural resources in an equitable way. Furthermore, the method was considered to be "genuinely participatory" because "the technical team would only facilitate the process and the communities would identify their values" (deWit 2000, 7). In other words, expectations were running high with regard to all the good things PRA would be able to accomplish.

Liversage and Norfolk, who have been involved in community land delimitation, wrote about the many challenges ahead. They specifically refer to the low level of capacity—both human and material—for the cadastral services and other institutions that should be responsible for an implementation of the law that would safeguard the interests of the rural poor and small-scale farmers. They state that the only serious attempts of land delimitation so far are initiatives from NGOs and donors. None of these attempts led to the envisioned partnership between investors and communities (Norfolk and Liversage 2002, 12). Five years after approval of the land law, Tanner continues to write in terms of the 'potential' of the law and he seems to be in dire need of a good example of a successful partnership (Tanner 2002, 53).

6.5   Mozambique at the turn of the millennium

Although economic indicators for post-war Mozambique have been impressive, in 2000 it remained a relatively poor country. In the UNDP Human Development Report 2001, Mozambique still ranked number 157 in the Human Development Index of 162 countries. The

economic growth that has taken place has been uneven; there are great differences between urban and rural dwellers, and between the different provinces.

Extrapolating the census data of 1997, it can be estimated that by 2000 the total population of Mozambique was around 17.5 million people. Around 40 % of these can be considered as urban. 41 % of the men and 72 % of the women aged 15 and above are illiterate (WorldBank 2001). A quarter of the children under five are under-weight and life expectancy is around 40 years (UNDP 2001).

The first large-scale household survey that was done in 1996 and 1997 calculated that the average consumption level was around 160 US dollars per person per year. This study also revealed the large differences between rural and urban households. On average, urban households consume 30 % more than rural households (corrected for price differences). It also showed large differences between the provinces and regions. In the centre of the country in Sofala, Tete, and Inhambane provinces, between 82 % and 88 % of the population lives below the poverty line, while this is 48 % in Maputo city (MPF/UEM/IFPRI 1998). Similar differences are revealed in the National Human Development Report. Maputo city has an HDI of 0.6, while the poorest province in this study, Zambezia, has an HDI of 0.2. Life expectancy is significantly higher in Maputo province, whereas child mortality, school enrolment, and adult literacy are significantly lower in the northern provinces of Zambezia and Nampula (AIM 2001).

The study on rural livelihoods that the Faculty of Agronomy conducted in collaboration with the FAO, only covered rural households and revealed clear differences within rural communities. It indicated the extremely weak purchasing power of especially the poorer rural households. We calculated that the richest 25 % of the households had an average consumption (own production plus total expenditures) of an equivalent of 175 US dollars per person per year, while the poorest 25 % of the sample consumed a meagre 21 US dollars per person per year (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000).

Relatively little commercial investment has been undertaken in the rural areas. The capital Maputo and surroundings have recently benefited from large foreign investments. The national figures on investment show a sudden increase around 1999 and 2000 because of the building of a one billion US dollar aluminium smelter near Maputo. Also, the export figures suddenly changed from 2000 as a result of the construction of the aluminium plant. Exports were traditionally dominated by prawns, cotton, and cashew nuts. Currently, these sources only make a fraction of the receipts generated by the aluminium exports. Although these developments have improved the national balance of payments and GDP figures, the effects are hardly felt by the large majority of rural people, further away from the national capital. The economic development of Mozambique has been rather unbalanced. Rural areas have so far benefited little from the 'economic miracle' as Mozambique has been portrayed in the media.

Rural households in Mozambique are typically involved in a large variety of livelihood strategies depending on where they are located and on the season. Almost all rural households are, in one way or another, involved in agriculture but they also depend on a range of non-farm sources of income. Especially in the south, many households depend to a large degree on cash sent to them by family members working in the city or abroad. All over the country, households exploit a range of natural resources such as forestry or fishery products to provide for their own consumption or income. Many are involved in casual work and in processing products such as beer brewing.

The war has had a devastating effect on the country; it will still be many years before rural households regain the level of assets they had before the war. Recovering pre-war livestock levels is a particularly long process. This means that economic activities such as the sale of livestock and, in the south, the use of animal traction, have decreased (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et

al. 2000). Much of the feeder roads and other rural infrastructure such as schools and health posts were rebuilt during the 1990s. The availability of food and other consumer goods also improved rapidly.

6.6   Conclusions

As we have seen above, rural change in Mozambique has come about via many discontinuities. Roughly speaking, we can distinguish four periods; the colonial era, the period just after independence (1975) that promoted a rapid socialisation of the country, the period of liberalisation of the market but with a war-torn countryside (as from the mid-1980s) and the era since the signing of the peace accords (1992). Any Mozambican born before 1975 has lived through dramatic changes; from the oppressive colonial rule to the optimism and enthusiasm just after independence, via hunger and a devastating war to new hopes after the peace agreement. Mozambican history is littered with violence and coercive policies. But Mozambicans also have devised all kinds of strategies of evasion, resistance, and sabotage while keeping up the appearance of co-operation (Isaacman 1996; Sogge 1997, 47; McGregor 1998). This history of violence and coercive measures explains to a large extent the current distrust that rural Mozambicans have towards outsiders.

Below the level of *posto administrativo* there are no uniform administrative local structures. The situation in terms of local leadership is quite heterogeneous. 'Traditional authority' has been reinvented several times over (West 1998). The leadership may be contested but in most rural communities mechanisms do exist and are functioning to resolve local problems. Many observers have praised the fact that the return of the millions of refugees and displaced people to their land after 1992 has happened so smoothly. One can find many examples of strong informal institutions such as labour exchange and other mutual support. There are however very few formal institutions to be found in the rural areas.

Mozambique has done well according to the recipes of the Bretton Woods Institutions and the country has received the attention of many donors. The resulting flow of foreign aid has led to serious doubts about the absorption capacity. The ambitions of the donors and development agencies combined with the lack of capacities of Mozambican government officials result in the latter being hardly involved in the formulation and implementation of development projects. They are either informed after the fact, or may fulfil an occasional ceremonial function such as opening a school. But also on a central level, the executive has been guided by the policies and advice of international development experts. Mozambique watchers write about "an extraordinary degree of foreign tutelage" (Hall and Young 1997, 226). Donors have been criticised for closing their eyes to corruption. Donors would do so since they need Mozambique as a showcase, as a success story of a country where structural adjustment results in economic growth (Harrison 1999; Hanlon 2002).

The development agenda of the donors is characterised by an increased consensus and emphasis on the importance of good governance and democratisation. There are several examples of policies and legislation that were approved during the 1990s and that call for a major involvement of civil society and for community participation. For example, the new land law and the laws on the management of natural resources assume a major involvement from local communities. These laws have also been formulated under pressure from the donor community, with the help of foreign technical assistance, and often on the basis of pilot projects again paid for by development aid. It remains unclear however, how these laws will be implemented. Since this will very much depend on the working of local institutions, only

time will tell. The social fabric of rural Mozambique is difficult to assess; it is probably strong but very different from what 'western'-educated people, who devised these laws, would regard as legitimate and just institutions. The debate on 'traditional authorities' will probably continue for a while in Mozambique since it is extremely politically sensitive and since their legitimacy is, to say the least, contested.

7 Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Matutuíne

For this chapter I followed the NGO Helvetas, that was implementing a project based on the philosophy of community-based natural resources management in Matutuíne district, from early 1998 till mid-2000. The immediate cause that prompted Helvetas to start this project was the large area that was given in concession to a foreign ecotourism company. In addition to these two actors, there were several others with stakes in the natural resources in the area. That is why this chapter starts with a rather long section describing the project context (research question 1, sections 7.1 and 7.2), before describing the project itself; the history, philosophy, and discourses of the project (research question 2, in section 7.3) followed by some concrete episodes on project practices (research question 3, in sections 7.4 and 7.5).

7.1 The project context I; Matutuíne and the concession area

The district Matutuíne lies south of Maputo bay. It is the southernmost district of the country and stretches to the borders with the Republic of South Africa in the south, and to the Kingdom of Swaziland in the west. Its eastern border is a pristine beach on the Indian Ocean. The Maputo River that enters Mozambique on the South African border and flushes into the Maputo Bay splits the district into a western side and an eastern side (see map 2 below). For this study, we consider only the area east of Maputo River. This is the concession area that was granted in 1996 by the Mozambican government to Blanchard-Mozambique Enterprise (BME). The Helvetas project that is described in this chapter was a reaction to this concession and consequently this area east of Maputo River also became the working area for the project. This is an area of 236,000 ha. It includes the Maputo Elephant Reserve of some 70,000 ha, and covers almost half of the total surface of the district. This area is part of the so-called Maputaland Centre of Plant Diversity that ranks as a first order site of global significance with important coastal forests and a high rate of endemism (World Bank 1996). Huge plains with tall grasses, forests on old dunes and freshwater lakes characterise the landscape. Helvetas estimated that some 3,500 families or 15,000 people live in this area (Helvetas 1998a). Infrastructures were in a relatively bad state. The distance between Salamanga and Zitundo is about 40 km. This road could only be navigated with a 4-wheel driven vehicle and it takes two to three hours depending on the season.

History of the area

The Maputo Elephant Reserve was officially established by the colonial government in the 1930s. In 1968 the area of the reserve was extended to its current 700 km^2. At several points in time, people who lived inside its boundaries were forcibly relocated. For example in 1958, the authorities of the Reserve removed the majority of people residing within its boundaries. The people who were born and raised in the area were simply told to leave with the argument "this place is for animals". Their huts were burnt down[9]. According to Oglethorpe, between 5,000 and 10,000 people lived within the boundaries of the Maputo Elephant Reserve in the 1970s. They owned some 4,500 heads of cattle. Because of these numbers of people and cattle, the amount of game was dwindling (Oglethorpe 1997). Soon after independence, in 1975, the government started its policy of *Aldeias Comunais* (see chapter 6). This was again an opportunity to remove people from the Maputo Elephant Reserve. The people from Muvukusa and Gala were forced to move to the *Aldeia* of Zitundo. They were instructed to

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[9] Interview with Mr. Tembe, Madjanjane, 26/8/99

pack their things and a couple of days later they were picked up by a tractor and taken to Zitundo. Again, their huts within the Reserve were burned down. There was widespread popular resistance against the policies of forced villagisation and only less than one percent of the population of Matutuíne and Namaacha districts, approximately 1,000 people, were actually moved (McGregor 1998, 42).
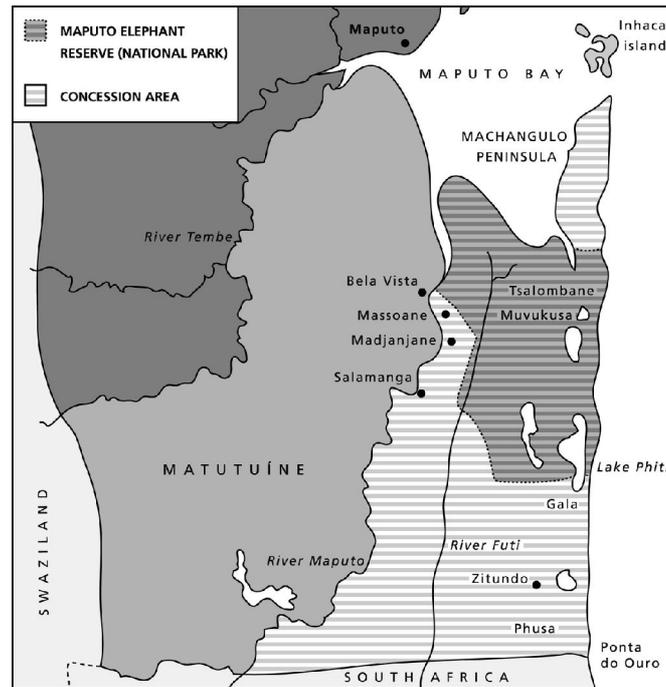
Map 2 Matutuíne district and the concession area (east of Maputo river)

In 1983/1984 there were yet again new forced removals of the people living within the boundaries of the Reserve. This time, the authorities moved them to Massoane and areas in the flood plains of the Maputo River. When this river flooded in the beginning of 1984, several of them died. This caused increased resentment against the Reserve (Osborn 1998). The *induna* and other members of Muvukusa community did not accept the forced removal and soon returned to their place of birth within the Reserve.

From 1984 onwards the civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO started to affect the rural population of Matutuíne. People from Massoane reported that the first attack by RENAMO took place in 1986. By 1987 most of them had fled to the nearby chalk mine that was protected by government soldiers. When, in 1989, RENAMO also attacked this mine, most people fled across the Swazi and South African borders and some fled to Maputo. Large segments of the people from the peninsula Machangulo fled to the Island Inhaca. Most of the rural areas in the district were controlled by RENAMO during the civil war, although very few people had remained. The war caused much damage to the economy and infrastructure of the district. Cattle population decreased from over 100,000 to less than a thousand head (McGregor 1998, 57).

The phenomenon of labour migration from southern Mozambique to South Africa is more than 100 years old and there are intricate links between the peoples on both sides of the border. The lineages of Matutuíne originally belong to the Tembe chiefdom, whose paramount chief lives in South Africa nowadays. There are many older people who have worked in South Africa and who receive a pension, which requires them to travel regularly into South Africa to collect their money. Many people in the south of Matutuíne speak Zulu and prices are often expressed and paid in South African currency.

Since the FRELIMO-RENAMO war, migration patterns have changed. Before the war, men went to South Africa (mainly) or Swaziland for a couple of years, while their family would stay behind in Mozambique. The men would send remittances once in a while and would come home once a year. Between 1987 and 1992, there was a massive flux of people into South Africa, fleeing from the violence of the war. Many people had lost almost all their assets, such as cattle, and built up a new livelihood in South Africa. So, while many people returned to Mozambique soon after the peace accords of 1992, certainly not all of them did so. In the meantime, whole families had established a new way of living, had a house, found employment and/or had their children attending South African schools. Many older people returned but especially younger (nuclear) families now live either permanently or semi-permanently in South Africa, legally or illegally. Boyd (1996) conducted a questionnaire study among 82 respondents along the Futi River. She recorded that only 35 % of them had stayed in the area throughout the war. But 93 % of the respondents reported that they had family members across the borders. They also gave the reasons for their family members not returning from South Africa: having employment (71%); being in school (16%); being afraid (15%); not being able to return with their livestock for fear of the customs officials (12%); married (9%) or concerned with the low level of development in Matutuíne (8%).

For the area under study, this had two distinct demographic consequences. The population density fell as compared to the pre-war levels, and the average age increased. The total population for the district fell from around 57,000 inhabitants in 1980 to just over 35,000 inhabitants in 1997 (INE 2000). Another clear indication for the lower population density is that people living near the Reserve complained of a higher incidence of crop losses through wildlife. We found a confirmation of the relative older age of the people in the area in the study we did with the FAO. The average age of the people in Massoane village was 33 years, considerably higher than the average age in the other three villages (in other districts) that ranged from 19 to 26 (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000).

Rural Livelihoods

The people in the area have a wide variety of activities and resources at their disposal for making a living. All households have a plot for growing crops, although the areas are very small. The average acreage in Massoane is less than half an hectare per household. Typical crops are maize, cassava, rice, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, bananas, pumpkins, sugar cane, tobacco, some vegetables, groundnuts, sorghum, and millet. The bush is cut and burnt and all cultivation is done by hand with a hoe. Before the war, some people with access to oxen cultivated the land with a plough. Nowadays there are hardly any cattle left. After three to five years of cultivation, the land is left fallow. Little to nothing of the agricultural produce is sold (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000). Productivity in the area is low and in the communities near the Reserve agricultural production is even lower because of frequent crop damage. Hippopotami are destroying crops along the Futi River and near the lakes. In 1997 and 1998, Massoane and Madjanjane communities suffered from severe crop losses caused by elephants. In the other communities south and north of the Reserve, people complained that their crops were being destroyed by bush pigs and monkeys. Killing or hunting animals happens but this has become more difficult in recent years since the wildlife rangers of the Reserve have become stricter. Local people told us that they were still allowed to kill smaller

animals (not hippos or elephants) when found in their own crop field but that trapping and killing an animal in the bush was forbidden. Nevertheless, these practices were quite common.

Wild fruits are an important component in the daily diet. The wild fruit Macuacua is used to make a thick bitter paste 'Nfuma' that can be conserved for up to three years and that serves as a hunger food. Some of the fruits are used to make alcoholic beverages. The most famous wild fruit is *Canhú*, marrula. In the south of the district, near Zitundo, there is a lively trade in palm wine, locally known as 'Sura'. Much of the Sura production is traded on the market in Phusa on the border with South Africa that takes place every Wednesday and Saturday. Another common alcoholic (distilled) beverage, and a source of income, is made from sugarcane.

On the Machangulo peninsula, along the coast and near the freshwater lakes, many people are dependent on fishery activities. Some make and sell sea salt. Inland fishing is done in Lake Phiti (see below) and to a lesser extent in other lakes and rivers. While most of the produce from Machangulo goes to Maputo, the fish from Lake Phiti is sold at the Phusa border market to South African clients.

Very important sources of cash income for many families in the area are remittances from family members residing in South Africa, Swaziland or Maputo, and pensions. During the interviews, many respondents complained of the lack of local employment opportunities. One woman said: "our children are losing themselves in the land of others" referring to the labour migration to South Africa.

Another source of income is producing charcoal, although this has reduced in importance since stricter controls on licences have been enforced. Other natural resources that may be exploited and sold, although in small quantities and mostly sold locally, are honey, building materials such as poles, reed, and grass.

Although there were quite some cattle before the war, they are now almost non-existent and the few, small herds that do exist are concentrated in the south of the district. In Massoane, for example, we only found one household that had cattle in 1998. But also the numbers of the smaller species such as goats, chickens, rabbits, and ducks have dwindled compared to pre-war levels, and accumulation occurs rather slowly. The low livestock numbers signify relatively low levels of wealth and savings, and thus increased vulnerability. Cattle and other livestock normally form an important buffer and play a key role in coping strategies in times of crisis.

Local Leadership

As we explained in chapter 6, local leadership in Mozambique is a complex mix of remnants of structures stemming from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Talking about power structures in rural Mozambique is quite polemic in the multi-party era. Rightly or wrongly, *régulo*s are often considered to be RENAMO supporters and the FRELIMO government is very cautious in permitting a formal devolution of powers to the *régulo*s. The debate is also imbued with gross simplifications distinguishing *régulo*s representing 'traditional structures' and the *secretário*s that would represent 'modern structures'. The situation is more complex and diffuse, as described in section 6.2. In many cases, the *régulo*s were installed by the colonial government, and in all cases they were part of the colonial administration. They cannot be regarded as purely 'traditional'. And the *secretário*s, originally part of FRELIMO machinery, were in general selected from the more influential families, and were thus often close to, or part of, the dominant lineages. McGregor found similar evidence for both Matutuíne and Namaacha districts; especially the lower level traditional leaders were often incorporated into the new FRELIMO institutions (McGregor

1998, 42). That the situation is more diverse and more complex than the dichotomy *régulo* = traditional and *secretário* = modern is also demonstrated in Matutuíne, where we find all kinds of arrangements. In Massoane, for example, the *régulo* is the son of the former *régulo* and seems to be widely respected. He reports directly to the administrative post in Bela Vista. In neighbouring Madjanjane, most people—though not all—, refer to Mr. Chinde as being the local leader. He is referred to as the *secretário*. This would mean: he is a 'modern', post-independence leader, but he also performs traditional ceremonies. He used to be a *'cipaio'*, a 'policeman' of the *régulo* Madjanjane in colonial times. In Gala, when asked for the local leader, we were directed to a man who was referred to as the *régulo*. But additional research showed that he is in fact a substitute of a substitute, not highly respected in the community and not of the right family ("not of royal blood"). In the case of both Madjanjane and Gala, there are living descendants of the former traditional leaders, who were also baptised as *régulo*s in the colonial era. But in both cases, these descendants reside in South Africa. They fled during the war and have no wish to return to Mozambique.

Especially older people complained of loss of traditions and of a lack of strong leadership. The traditional leaders used to perform certain ceremonies to appease the spirits of the dead forefathers. In this way all kinds of misfortune were averted such as crop failures through drought or crop pests. Because the traditional leaders are no longer present, these ceremonies are allegedly not performed correctly. Others complained that the community is no longer united and that the strong leadership required to organise the people is lacking.

Local Institutions for the Management of Natural Resources

I will now describe some other institutions that are mainly linked to how the rural people of Matutuíne deal with the natural resources in their environment. Here again we see that although we may not discern formal organisation, there are clearly shared "norms and behaviour that persist over time and that serve some collectively valued purpose" (Uphoff 1986).

There are many norms and rules that determine access to natural resources. People know for example what land is free to cultivate and whom to ask for land that is considered as belonging to a certain family. People from outside the community are required to ask permission. When the outsider is not known within the community, this may require a check on references from the community to which the outsider belongs. So-called sacred forests cannot be cultivated and entrance is restricted to specified family-members[10].

There are also many rules that contribute to a sustainable land use. Land is left fallow after some three to five years of cultivation. If one has to burn the vegetation for cultivation, one is expected to burn very carefully and only the land that one intends to cultivate. Fruit trees cannot be cut and cannot be used for firewood, unless they are unproductive. Only dry wood is used as firewood, and roots and other parts of plants can only be removed in such small quantities in order to prevent it from going extinct.

There are also clear cases of collective action in the control over natural resources. For example, residents of Machangulo once caught and chased away people from Maputo city who were cutting the mangrove forests for firewood. Other incidents refer to the protest against the wildlife fence in Madjanjane, described in paragraph 7.4, and the measures that fishermen of Lake Phiti have taken to prevent overfishing. It shows that when the need arises, people organise themselves. In the next section, I describe the case of the collective action by the fishermen of Lake Phiti in more detail.

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[10] Sacred forests are in fact cemeteries and can be quite small. However, it is believed that anyone entering without permission will become lost.

Fisheries at Lake Phiti

The majority of Lake Phiti lies within the Reserve. Its fishermen and the other residents near the lake belong to the community of Gala. Commercial fishing has existed for at least 30 years. Fishermen use nets and small boats that can hold one or two persons. The fisherman who is able to arrange transport for that day might sell fresh fish, but the majority of the catch is salted, dried in the sun or over a fire, and sold at Phuza market on the border with South Africa. Twice a week, the produce is taken by car to this market. There are about ten fishermen, about half of whom were born in Gala while the other half came from other places to fish here. Almost all have a licence issued by the district authorities. They abide by certain rules that originated partly in governmental rules and partly in indigenous rules. To a great extent, the control of these measures is done by the fishermen themselves. The minimum mesh size of the nets is three inches. Also, the number of nets per fisherman is restricted, certain parts of the lake are sacred and may not be fished in using nets. Fishing on the main lake is prohibited from November till February, which is the mating season for the fish.

The fishermen once caught a man from another district fishing at night with a net with a smaller mesh size than the one specified . His catch and nets were seized and the man was put on trial by the other fishermen. The outsider expressed regret and asked permission to stay. The fishermen discussed the situation and decided that the man could stay but only after a probation period of five months under close supervision by Thomas, a senior fisherman. Thomas travelled to the district from where the man came to check on the family and history of the man. In the end, the man was admitted as a new fisherman and he was accompanied to the district by one of the senior fisherman to obtain his licence (Pijnenburg and Cavane 2000).

The case of Lake Phiti shows that the fishermen have ways of preventing overfishing of the lake and, to a certain extent, of guaranteeing equality (maximum meters of nets per fisherman). When we asked the fishermen how they are organised, we again got a very diffuse picture; some name a leader, some name a committee, but there seemed to be no consensus as to who the leader was. This made us aware that we, as outsiders, are often looking for neat and formal structures while the organisation is much more informal and ad hoc. The important thing, however, is that local institutions are in place that allow for a certain management of natural resources.

Organisations imposed by former interventions

Finally, to conclude this section, I think it is important to pay some attention to the more formal organisations that have been imposed by outside interventions in Matutuíne. In the interviews, people still referred to these organisations as though they still existed, but further investigation showed that they had all ceased to function as soon as the outside support for them disappeared. Soon after independence, the FRELIMO government promoted co-operatives, under the name of '*Machamba do Povo*', 'crop field of the people'. Some of these existed in Machangulo but they were short-lived. In 1993, the Spanish NGO Intermon organised the residents of Massoane to form a farmers' association. They received seeds and —later—five heads of cattle from Helvetas. The association soon had 100 members. But by 1998, four out of the five cattle had died and the association had only six members left. No meetings were held any longer. This association is an example of what I have called elsewhere a 'service-group' (Pijnenburg 1998); the association was seemingly formed in the interest of the intervening agency to facilitate the channelling of donations rather than in the interest of its members.

The scramble for Matutuíne, 1992-2000

At the end of the war in 1992, the Maputo Elephant Reserve was virtually abandoned; only very few people had remained within its boundaries. There was no cattle left, wildlife numbers had dwindled as a result of uncontrolled poaching and thus pressure on the natural vegetation had reduced. After peace, the area soon drew much (outside) attention. Its proximity to Maputo, South Africa and Swaziland, its relative 'virginity'[11] and its beauty attracted different investors. Here we refer specifically to development NGOs, a forestry enterprise, the tourist industry— with most notably the plan for the development of ecotourism by BME—the trans-frontier conservation area project, and, most recently, the plans for a deep-sea port.

After the peace accords of 1992, several NGOs started emergency programmes in the district to help residents and returning refugees re-establish their normal lives. There were four international NGOs (Helvetas, MSF-Spain, Intermon, EWT) and two national NGOs (Caritas and RRR) active in the district. They re-built basic social infrastructures such as health posts, wells and schools, provided goods such as medicines, food aid, animals for re-stocking, and promoted farmers' associations. From 1993 to 1995, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) supported the Reserve in patrolling to combat poaching. According to Oglethorpe (1997), they made no distinction between subsistence hunting by local population and poaching by people from the town who would come with cars, light-beams and guns and would return with a car full of animals. This, inevitably, worsened the relations between the Reserve and the local population (Oglethorpe 1997).

In 1994, Moza-Florestal, a joint venture of the South African company Sappi Forests and Mozambican investors started to plant eucalyptus near Zitundo for the South African paper pulp industries, employing local people. This company had the plan to plant 80,000 ha. with trees, thereby providing some 4,000 people with employment.

In the meantime, the tourist and scuba diving industries in Ponto Douro and Ponto Malongane in the south had grown rapidly, thriving mainly on South African tourists. Many private investors tried to get land concessions to build holiday homes along the coast. By 1995, the entire coastal area had been demarcated as a concessionary area, under request, with plots varying in size between 450 and 4,500 ha (IMPACTO 1997).

By far the most spectacular investment scheme was the master plan of Blanchard Mozambique Enterprise (BME), later re-named the Elephant Coast Company (ECCo). In November 1996, the Mozambican government granted a concession of 236,000 ha to BME in order to develop ecotourism east of Maputo River. Costs for implementing the plan were estimated at some 800 million US dollars and included restocking the Maputo Elephant Reserve with wildlife, the building of holiday houses, ports, a floating casino, several hotels with a total capacity of 5,200 beds, golf courses, a railway line. BME was a holding company and tried to attract sub-investors in the scheme.

BME set an important condition: the government would have to withdraw the license given to Sappi Forests / Moza-Florestal. With the argument that the Eucalyptus plantations would endanger the unique biodiversity of Matutuíne, a unique alliance of BME and environmental movements such as the IUCN and the Endangered Wildlife Trust forced the government to halt the activities of Sappi in the district. As compensation, Sappi was given land concessions in Manica province. Also, all the other concessions for land along the coast that were under request were cancelled.

The Blanchard' plans fitted well with those of the World Bank, which had prepared a document for three Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in the country. One of these would be the so-called Futi Corridor in Matutuíne district. This corridor would guarantee that

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[11] Brouwer (1998) argues that the landscape is in fact better described as an orchard, used by local people, and that the notion of the pristine and untouched landscape is created and used in ecotourism discourse or 'green-speak' and used by BME in this way to appropriate the area.

wildlife (especially elephants) could wander freely from the Maputo Elephant Reserve to the Tembe Elephant Park and Ndumo Park in South Africa, just across the border. The TFCA project was also approved in 1996 by the Mozambican government.

In January 1998, Helvetas started a new project focused on capacity building and empowerment of the local population. The project was justified by a concern over the concession granted to BME. It was feared that local communities would not be sufficiently involved, and would not benefit accordingly from the planned investments. The NGO started a programme with PRAs in 18 communities, explaining the land law and holding seminars to discuss issues related to the land law, development, local organisation and ecotourism.

The BME's project never really took off. A combination of not being able to obtain commitments from big investors and legal and bureaucratic complications did much to slow progress immensely. It was apparently difficult to find capital for the initial master plan and quite soon new, less ambitious, plans were launched in a new attempt to attract investors. In the meantime, little or nothing happened in the field. In March 1999 Mr. Blanchard, major shareholder of BME, died. A spokesman of the company stated its intention to continue with the project. Allegedly, the company tried to sell the whole concession. Out of the blue, in July 1999, the media announced an agreement between the government and Porto Dobela Ltd. This company dusted off a plan dating back to the 1960s to build a deep-sea port at the coast near Lake Phiti, which lies within the Reserve. This plan would mean the construction of an industrial zone, a railway line, and a highway cutting right through the area considered as a special biodiversity site. The costs were budgeted at 515 million US dollars employment for 10,000 people was guaranteed. It seemed to be a strategic move by the government advising BME to: 'hurry up, otherwise we withdraw your concession'. And this is exactly what happened in November 1999; the government cancelled its concession and the curtain fell for BME. Since then, nothing more has been heard of plans for the deep-sea port. Three years of high hopes, frustration, and uncertainty for all actors involved but nothing much had changed for the residents of Matutuíne.

7.2 The project context II;*"O Americano"*

Since the plans of BME were the most important trigger for Helvetas to start their activities in the area, I will present some more detailed information on this company. The idea to develop the ecotourism paradise in Matutuíne was dreamed up by an American multimillionaire, James Blanchard III. This man was not a complete stranger for Mozambique; he is known to have been a financial supporter of RENAMO during the civil war (Sayagues 1999). He was also the main shareholder of the company Blanchard-Mozambique Enterprise (BME), also known as Blanchard-Sodetur, and from 1997 onwards trading under the name of the Elephant Coast Company (ECCo).

The company cleverly used conservationist 'green-speak' to appropriate the concession (Brouwer 1998). Their plans contained statements on involving the local people. In the draft management contract (ECCo 1997) it is stated that:

> *"the principal objective of BME is to uplift and empower communities within and on the boundary of the BME concession area" and "the developer recognises that the surrounding communities must benefit from conservation…..the developer postulates that the community see the proposed developments as being partly theirs. Only in this case will communities see it as their ally and will assist in law enforcement and day-to-day management of the facility, for example providing fresh produce, wood, labour, etc.".*

Critics argued that BME was not clear on how to involve the communities stating: "this is the weakest component of the project" (IMPACTO 1997, 5). It indeed transpired to remain a

rather weak point and we will never know to what extent BME was serious about its declared intentions in this respect since the project never really got off the ground. Notwithstanding the 'participation-speak' of empowerment, it is clear from what followed that the involvement of the local communities was intended to be one of co-opting the communities, getting them on board, and getting them to support the notion of ecotourism as proposed by the company; i.e. assisting with law enforcement (against poachers) and the provision of supplies for the tourists.

In an attempt to get the communities on board, BME started a rural development component. An NGO was created under the name of Mozambique Foundation for Education and Health (MFEH). Mr. Nguenha, son of Mozambican parents but raised in the United States of America, was contracted to work with the communities in the name of MFEH. He started working in 1997; he selected representatives in several communities in the area and made all kinds of promises to the rural population such as the building of schools and health posts. Expectations were raised but there was no follow-up. In January 1998, when we did PRAs with Helvetas, the residents of the area had already mentioned the 'false promises' made by BME. Local people did not trust the company and talked with resentment about BME. One lady we spoke to put it this way: "*não estou contra os investidores mas estou contra investidores que vem enganar nós*", "I am not against investors, but I am against investors who come to cheat us". Another resident expressed it in more cryptic terms: "Everybody who comes with good intentions is welcome". This resident did not have much confidence in the project and believed that eventually the local people would have to abandon their land and leave the area, in which case he would not even protest since: "it is the government and Blanchard who have the power. Blanchard has money and power and will turn everything his way, whites always have the power".

As stated above, the BME's project never really took off as had been planned in 1996. BME did not have many resources for starting up concrete activities. BME did some minor re-stocking of wildlife (24 antelopes) and supported the management of the Reserve. In 1997 a wildlife fence was erected, starting in Massoane, west of the Reserve. At the end of that same year the local population of Madjanjane, some 27 km further south, blocked further construction of the fence because of a conflict about the location of the fence (see below).

The Reserve benefited from several grants (from different sources) to beef up wildlife management. Law and order were however quite weak, as can be concluded from the impunity with which poachers were treated. On several occasions poachers were caught. Often the poachers were, or were accompanied by, Mozambican military or police officers. Normally they would be released the following day and even the weapons would not have been taken from them. This led to much frustration among several of the foreign staff of BME and this may have been one of the reasons why they eventually pulled out.
The representatives of BME, the majority of whom were foreigners who spoke little or no Portuguese, operated from their offices in Maputo. Very little actually happened in the district. BME allowed the Mozambican company Nkomati Safaris to open a tented camp within the Reserve, near Muvukusa. Within BME, there was a relatively quick turnover of staff and the project did very little in terms of public relations. In 1999, Nkomati Safaris was sub-contracted to manage the whole Reserve. Nkomati Safaris soon complained that BME was in arrears with payments.
The NGO Helvetas had several conflicts with different representatives of BME (see also section 7.5). Helvetas was blamed several times for not co-ordinating its activities and for stirring up the local population and setting it up against them, thereby blocking the plans of BME (Helvetas 1999a).

The story of the wildlife fence

In the 1990s the people of Massoane and Madjanjane regularly saw their crop devoured by elephants and hippos. One of the few concrete activities carried out by BME was the erection of a wildlife fence designed to prevent these animals from invading the fields of the farmers of these two communities. At the end of 1997, construction started just north of Massoane (see map below). In January 1998, the construction workers reached the Futi River near the main entrance of the Reserve and close to the centre of the community of Madjanjane. When the workers started to erect the poles for the fence at the western side of the river, the community came into action and threatened the workers with their machetes. In the past, an earlier fence, then long gone, had passed on the eastern side of the river Futi. Nobody had ever discussed the alignment of this new fence with the communities. The BME and environmentalists wanted the valley for the elephants while the people of Madjanjane had always assumed that the valley would remain theirs, and that the new fence would follow the alignment of the old fence, east of the river Futi. Putting the new fence on the western side would mean that the population of Madjanjane could no longer have access to the river valley. This valley plays an important role in the livelihood of much of the Madjanjane community since it is a major source of water, reeds, fish, and land with residual moisture for cultivating maize and horticultural crops in dry periods. The local people saw it as "BME is stealing our land".
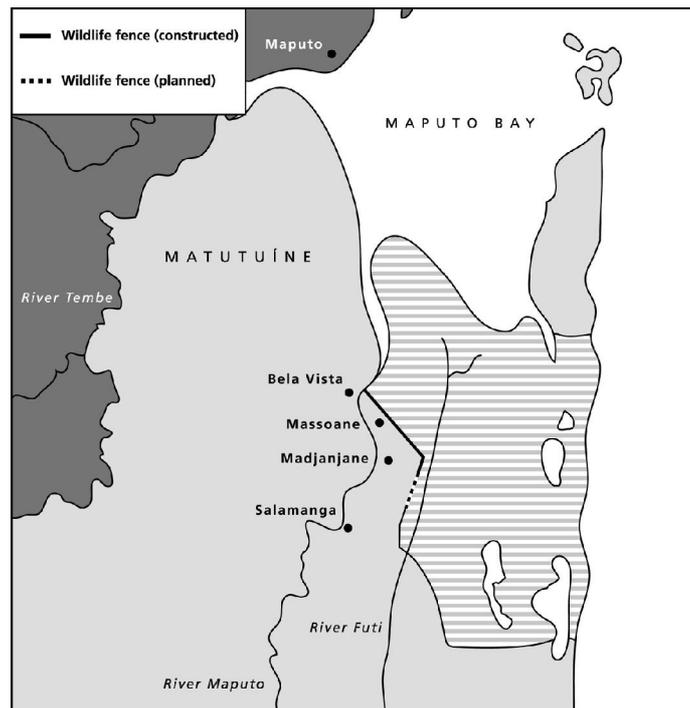
Map 3 Route of the wildlife fence

The fence also generated a conflict within the community. Only the residents living close to the Futi use the valley. Although those residents living further to the west do not use it, they do bear the brunt of the raiding elephants. So the residents further away from the Futi wanted

to have the fence completed as soon as possible while the ones living near the Futi were strongly opposed to the completion of the fence on the western side of the valley.

The protest of the residents of Madjanjane was successful in that the work was held up for more than a year. However, the problem of the raiding elephants remained. In early 1999, a representative of BME re-negotiated with the community. BME wanted to go ahead with the fence on the western side and offered compensation to the people who would lose their fields. They agreed that each household would receive a bag of rice, 20 kilos of beans, 15 kilos of sugar, 5 litres of cooking oil, and 5 packets of soap. In July 1999, a BME representative came to distribute these items but he did not have enough for all the families. He promised that he would arrange for the rest later. The people refused to receive anything and the representative of BME was sent home with all the provisions. He was told he could only come back when he had enough goods so that all beneficiaries would all receive the same quantities on the same day. According to one villager: "We refused because if we had accepted, he would have told the government that we had already been compensated".

The way in which the construction of the wildlife fence was blocked demonstrates how people can successfully organise themselves to defend their interests. On the other hand, the fact that the process remained in a state of deadlock for such a long time was rather frustrating for all actors involved. In fact, it created a lose-lose situation; the fence was not completed, so elephants and hippos continued to devour the crops, and people remained uncertain as to whether they could continue to cultivate in the valley and have access to the park. BME was unable to finish their fence. When Helvetas did its first PRA in Madjanjane in January 1998, residents asked the NGO to assist in preventing the construction of the fence on the western side of the river. The fence issue was reported but not taken up seriously by the NGO. In December 1999, the resident representative of Helvetas described the case of the wildlife fence as a sad example of a missed opportunity. He regretted the non-involvement of his NGO and acknowledged that the conflicting interests at stake could have been used as a point of departure for serious negotiation between the local communities, the Reserve, and BME. Instead, the 'solution' in the end was a buy-out of the residents with some food and some soap. The fact that the population did not want to receive part of the goods demonstrated further the deep distrust towards outsiders.

7.3   Project discourses of Helvetas

In January 1998, the NGO Helvetas started a project in the concession area in order to empower local communities by building local capacities so that local people would be in a better position to negotiate with the investors. I will briefly describe the history of the NGO in the district before elaborating on the discourses of this 1998 project.

Helvetas in Matutuíne

Helvetas, a Swiss NGO, has been working in Mozambique since 1984, and in Matutuíne district since 1994. 1994 was the year in which the first multi-party elections were held, and the country was slowly recovering from the devastating effects of the war. Parts of Matutuíne were still under control of RENAMO or—as they say in Mozambique—under 'double administration'. Between 1994 and 1997, the majority of Helvetas' activities took place in the area west of Maputo river, and were concerned with the rehabilitation of social infrastructures such as schools and health posts, animal re-stocking, registering land for farmers' associations, and giving seminars on the land law. In the area under study, east of the Maputo River, Helvetas concentrated initially in the area around Zitundo. The NGO renovated the health post, the dipping tank, and the school in Zitundo, and distributed cattle and goats. In 1996, Helvetas also undertook a series of rapid appraisals to obtain a picture of the socio-

economic situation in different communities, and to define development priorities. The NGO started in Zitundo and in the surrounding communities. It spent one day per community, and in that day a quick inventory was made of the infrastructure, economic activities, local leaders, etc. Project staff also performed a ranking exercise, making a *'matriz de prioridades'*, a priority matrix that materialised in a list with items such as school, health post, employment, transport, seeds, cattle, shops, building material. The report mentions that this raised many expectations (Palalane, 1996a).

The activities undertaken by Helvetas between 1994 and 1996 in Matutuíne were internally criticised in two reports by Adam, a social scientist and professor at the Eduardo Mondlane University. The reports state that the activities were merely "spending the budget and leaving something physical", its sustainability was questioned, and the involvement of the local population was nothing more than "beautiful words, declarations of intentions and fashionable ideas" (Adam and Coimbra 1997; Adam and Silva 1997). Adam played an important role as a back-stopper to the program of Helvetas - Mozambique, and in the formulation of new project proposals. He emphasised the need for capacity building and empowerment of the local population. He argued that Helvetas should build "viable partnerships with the community". It was then 1997, the year in which BME unfolded its plans and the year that the new land law was being discussed and approved; both important developments that directly inspired the formulation of the new project that will be described below and that was the main focus for this study.

The Community-Based Natural Resources Management project

This new Helvetas project was started in January 1998. The full title of the project was "*Capacitação das Comunidades Locais e Gestão Communitária dos Recursos Naturais*" (CCGCRN), which means Capacity Building of Local Communities and Community Based Natural Resource Management. The project was justified as follows. The concession granted to BME would "put the existence of local communities in serious danger" (Helvetas 1998a, 3). Furthermore, it was stated that local communities would know very little about the concession and their land rights. If these communities were to get no assistance, "it is most likely that these local communities will be exploited, that will possibly create conflicts between the communities and the immigrants" (Helvetas 1998a, 3).

The principal objective of the project in the final 1998 project document was as follows:

> *"The development objective of this project is to contribute to the capacity building [the 1997 version used the English word Empowerment] of the local communities of Matutuíne district so that they can participate equally in the development in the district and so that conflicts between the communities and the private sector can be avoided. This objective complements the general objective of the TFCA project and intends to reinforce the efforts of the government to promote decentralisation and community participation." (Helvetas 1998a) (author's translation).*

These objectives were quite ambitious. Part of the justification was that without the project, conflicts would certainly emerge, whereas if the project went ahead such conflicts would be avoided. Empowerment of local communities would furthermore enable the local population to participate in the development of the district. We see that both 'participation' and 'empowerment' are central concepts.

According to the final project document, Helvetas intended to undertake the following activities in order to achieve its objectives:

- Inform the population about their rights in light of the new land law;
- Map the land actually being used by the communities;
- Start up a dialogue between investors, government, and communities;
- Reinforce institutional structures at community level;
- Assist in the development of income-generating activities (especially related to the use of natural resources and in the field of tourism) (Helvetas 1998a).

There are two versions of the project document, a version dating from 1997 (Helvetas 1997) and one from 1998 (Helvetas 1998a), which is the final and official version. There is much overlap but it is also interesting to highlight some differences. One of the differences is that the later version places more emphasis on the project being in line with government policies. The last part in the objective of 1998 "intends to reinforce the efforts of the government to promote decentralisation and community participation" had been added to the 1997 document. In the 1998 document, there is also a secondary objective: "…the right implementation of the rights of the communities that have been established in the new land law…". It seems that Helvetas wanted to stress how the project would function within official governmental policies and legislation.

I observed another difference between the two documents. In the 1997 version, the document stresses that; "all activities will be realised in the context of the TFCA project". This was replaced in the 1998 document by: "The project will actively seek the dialogue and collaboration with other relevant institutions of government, private sector, and NGOs. Helvetas will be member of, and coordinate with, the regional TFCA committee" (Helvetas 1998a, 7). So while Helvetas initially had envisioned being more part and parcel of the TFCA project, they later took a more autonomous position with respect to the TFCA project.

Thus the project document contained an explicit aim "to contribute to the empowerment of local communities of the district". The concept of local community is repeated often in the document but it is not further elaborated or defined and seems to be considered as an entity in itself.
On the question of how to achieve empowerment, there is again a major difference between the two documents. The earlier 1997 document has a section on methodology that was omitted the 1998 document. The 1997 document states that:

> *"the most effective ways to realise empowerment in this situation are: 1) secure equal land rights, 2) strengthen community institutions so that they can effectively negotiate with the private sector and the government, 3) support income-generating activities and develop human resources, 4) exchange visits to other CBNRM projects". (Helvetas 1997)*

On the strengthening of community institutions, the document is, however, rather vague:

> *"Helvetas apelará portanto à tecnologia especializada com experiência no fortalecimento institucional local e criação de capacidade institucional para dirigir esta componente." meaning: "Helvetas will make use of specialised technology with experience in local institutional strengthening, and the creation of institutional capacity to lead this component." (author's translation)*

Further on, the importance of improving the capacities to negotiate and to mediate and resolve conflicts is highlighted. Another point that is mentioned is the establishment of associations. The 1998 document does stress that:

> *"the success of any community-based programme depends on the creation and/or reinforcement of community institutions. These representative*

> *institutions have to be responsible, transparent, and democratic."*
> *(Helvetas 1998a, 7)*

It furthermore notes that:

> *"...it will be necessary to establish a close link between Helvetas and the local community. This will be achieved by an approach based on sensibility, patience, and transparency." (Helvetas 1998a, 7)*

The 1997 document was also more specific on the PRA as part of the methodology. Initially, they claimed to do a round of PRAs with the objective of getting a general vision of the livelihoods, use of natural resources, and community institutions. In a second round they would do more extensive PRAs that would be combined with expositions on the project, the new land law, and presentations by representatives of the government, BME, and TFCA projects.

7.4   A closer look at project practices

Between 1998 and 2000, NGO staff undertook the following concrete activities. A series of 16 PRAs (of the 18 that had been planned) were held in the main population concentrations of the project area, the BME concession area, east of Maputo River. In these PRAs, Helvetas presented itself, the basics of the new land law were explained, and information was collected on social organisation, the use and management of natural resources, and opinions about the plans of BME. Furthermore, an assessment of the needs and maps of the area were made.

Another important activity of the project was the organisation of three regional seminars to which in each region, ten representatives of some four to six communities were invited. Topics that were discussed during these seminars were: - land rights, development and local organisation, principles of ecotourism, and the possibilities for the economic activities based on the use of natural resources such as the production and marketing of reed mats, other crafts, and honey. These seminars served to strengthen links between communities and promote discussions of issues that concerned them. It also served to continue the dialogue between the NGO and local leaders that had been initiated with the PRAs.

The NGO was, in addition, a pioneer in the country for testing and implementing the technical annex of the new land law regarding the delimitation of community land. Soon after the first PRAs, in early 1998, Helvetas started with community land delimitation. They didn't have much time to lose; it had to be done before BME started their multi-million investments. On the basis of the limits provided by community members and assisted by technicians of the Provincial Services of Land Registration, several communities were mapped in this way. In fact, these early exercises in Matutuíne were part of the so-called pilots, and provided part of the material on which the final methodology of community land delimitation was based.

I will now briefly describe the PRA and the land delimitation exercise that took place in Madjanjane in 1998. Madjanjane is a community adjacent to the Maputo Elephant Reserve, and its population of a few hundred people was constantly feeling the devastating effects of elephants raiding their crop fields at the time of my study. I will also describe the problems that Helvetas encountered while working in the community Muvukusa. This community has only some dozens of inhabitants living widely dispersed from each other inside the Reserve. The descriptions of the events in these two communities is followed by some general observations on the activities of the NGO in the concession area.

The PRA in Madjanjane

Two of the initial activities of the new project were the PRAs in Madjanjane and in Santa Maria in January 1998. The project manager had invited us—lecturers and students of the Eduardo Mondlane University—to co-facilitate and implement the fieldwork. The PRA in Madjanjane began with a courtesy visit to the local leaders, where the objectives and the intended activities of the project were explained. The NGO staff had brought along a big bottle of wine and the local *secretário*, who also performs many ceremonial functions, baptised our work with it during a small ceremony to wish us good fortune. In the first plenary meeting, to which all community members were invited, some 75 people—including about 50 women—appeared. This was a good turnout considering the fact that the total population of Madjanjane is estimated to be between 200 and 300. The team was introduced and the objectives of the work were explained. We then started with a small role-play whose message was that only the local people themselves are able to resolve their problems and that they should avoid becoming too dependent on outside organisations. Next, some of the articles of the new land law, which were considered to be important for the farmers, were explained. This was done in the form of a lecture by a staff member of Helvetas. After that, local people were given time to express their concerns. These mainly revolved around the issue of the new wildlife fence (see section 7.2). The debate became rather heated as local residents expressed their concern about access to the Futi valley. They became quite emotional and said: "*Se nos tiram o rio Futi, nos tiram a vida*", "If they take the river Futi they will take our lives". It became clear that access to land was indeed a most relevant topic in this community, especially at that moment when residents were involved in a severe conflict over the wildlife fence and its proposed route.

At a certain stage of the meeting, an old man demanded to see our credentials. Apparently, the man did not trust us. The Helvetas staff member showed him an official letter that seemed to satisfy the audience. Someone said: "*Já não sabemos acreditar a quem hoje vem pessoas, amanhã venham outras*", "we do not know anymore who to believe, today these persons come, tomorrow others will come". This incident illustrates the ignorance among the local people about the many organisations working in the area, and the measure of distrust in general towards outsiders.

At the end of the meeting the local people were split up into three groups; local leaders, (other) men, and women. The local leaders designed a Venn diagram to indicate the local power structures. The men and the women drew maps indicating the limits of the community and the use of natural resources. Furthermore, six local guides were selected to accompany the teams in the visits to the individual households.

In the following three days, small groups of our team went from house to house conducting individual interviews on topics such as the use of natural resources, the farming system, access and control over land, opinions on the plans of BME. On the last day, we made transects describing the land use along the river Futi since access to this river valley had emerged as an important issue in relation to the wildlife fence. We also drew up daily routines in order to establish division of labour between men and women. The diagrams were made on the ground using local materials. After completion, these were copied onto paper.

At the end of the week, no meeting was held with community members in order to report back the results. Helvetas had decided to do this at a later stage, after the report had been written. This, combined with the fact that the three days in the middle consisted of household interviews at the homes of individuals, created less scope for (mutual) learning by the villagers. The team of researchers, Helvetas staff, and students did, however, perform this sharing and analysis of results internally in the evenings. Thus, the exercise was rather extractive in the sense that the week consisted mainly of data collection while for the local people there was little opportunity to learn.

Community Land Delimitation

In April 1998, Helvetas staff returned to Madjanjane. The results of the PRA were presented in a meeting with the community of Madjanjane. During this meeting, local people were given the opportunity to comment on the findings, and Helvetas decided to present a discussion on the principles of ecotourism, as well as presenting their plan to start the delimitation of the community of Madjanjane. This clearly created an atmosphere of unrest in the meeting; people were making a lot of noise. Most of them said that they did not want to hear about these new concepts or any new activities at all until their existing problems had been solved; the elephants and the wildlife fence.

Nonetheless, the Helvetas staff went ahead with their plans for community land delimitation (see section 6.4 on the concept of land delimitation). Four months later, in August 1998, the NGO held two meetings, one with the village leaders and one with about 100 members of the community. Despite the fact that many doubts continued to be raised about the delimitation and the fence, a few days later, the NGO started the delimitation with the help of civil servants from the provincial department of geography and land registration.

This exercise of land delimitation was the source of confusion on several occasions. Many local residents were simply not aware of what was going on and expressed fears that Helvetas was measuring the land so that they could sell it, and the NGO was accused of just being part of all those commercial investors who were after their land (Helvetas 1999b). Helvetas was also accused of collaborating with BME. There was suspicion that local residents would be expelled from the area or that the delimitation would block investors from outside. Helvetas also reported the lack of co-operation of local people in this activity. This can be explained by a lack of consciousness of what was at stake and, again, by a general distrust on the part of many of the local residents as to the real intentions or objectives of Helvetas. In addition, the guides who were supposed to indicate the frontiers of their community requested payment—another sign of lack of ownership.

Not Welcome in Muvukusa

Back in 1996, a team from Helvetas had been doing a rapid appraisal in the Muvukusa and Tsalombane communities. These areas are considered to be located inside the Reserve (see map 2). The representative of Helvetas had been accompanied by representatives of the Reserve. An added objective of this mission had been to "sensitise the population so that they will withdraw themselves from the Reserve" (Palalane, 1996b). It appeared that the population of Muvukusa was convinced that their community lay outside the boundaries of the Reserve. Some people who had lived their whole lives in Muvukusa had never heard that they would be living within the Reserve and they referred to the limits set in colonial times. They added that if the government had set other limits, they would prefer that somebody from the government would come and explain the case. They apparently did not consider the personnel of the Reserve as representatives of the government. They warned the mission that they had been born there and that "forced removal will mean war" (Palalane, 1996b). Although forced removal never actually took place, this signalled the beginning of a kind of cold war.

To complicate matters further, by mid-1998, another conflict had emerged between residents of Muvukusa and representatives of the Reserve. Nkomati Safaris, a commercial tourist company, had built a campsite in the dunes near Muvukusa. However, the locals considered this area as a sacred forest. BME, as the concession holder, and caretaker of the Reserve had granted Nkomati Safaris permission to build this camp and, without consulting the local residents of Muvukusa, Nkomati Safaris had selected this spot in the dunes. Not surprisingly, this had angered the local people and the incident served to intensify the feelings of distrust towards outsiders.

In August 1998, a team from Helvetas travelled to Muvukusa to do the PRA in that community in the context of the CBNRM project that had started in early 1998. The local leaders were informed in advance of the planned PRA. During the first meeting, the population of Muvukusa recognised the staff member of Helvetas who had accompanied the representatives of the Reserve in 1996. Consequently, the population did not allow the Helvetas PRA-team to carry out any work. They were not prepared to talk any further and the team left the same day they had arrived.

Doing fieldwork in Muvukusa remained an extremely difficult task. In an attempt to find out why Helvetas had failed to do the PRA in that community, I went back in 1999 with one of my students. However, my student was not allowed to work in the area. We asked permission from a local leader for my student to reside and work for a couple of days in the area. The man went away to consult some other heads of families. After some hours, the local leader came back and eventually told us that we had better leave because nobody would talk to us. We left.

The people of Muvukusa had developed a deep distrust towards outsiders. This distrust can be explained when you look at the history of threats of, and actual forced removals, as described in the first section of this chapter. Both Helvetas and, later, my student and myself, failed to convince local people we had come with other intentions; locals simply just refused to co-operate.

General observations on the project activities of Helvetas

The PRAs that Helvetas undertook in the communities such as the one described above, and the other 15 that followed, in fact consisted of a combination of extension meetings (explaining the land law) and an exercise of data collection (on the use of natural resources, local leadership, history, economic activities, infrastructures, and the major problems of the community). The main function of this series of PRAs was for Helvetas to become familiar with the situation in these 16 areas and, consequently, was of a rather extractive nature. Comparing the reports and how the PRAs evolved over time, I observed how the quantity and quality of the information diminished over time. The duration of the PRAs also decreased from one week for the first PRAs to about two to three days for the ones conducted later. There were clear cases of repetition; with the exception of the local history, the reports on the different areas became very similar in content. This was a sign that routine had set in. The problems that were listed in the reports were not critically probed or analysed and became more of the type: "there is a lack of…." and thus became more like a wishlist. In the recommendations of the reports there was a tendency to recommend delivering services or infrastructures to satisfy this fairly common wishlist of the residents, such as the request for schools, wells, livestock restocking, and credit. During this process, aspects that had been prominent in the original objectives of the project such as the "organisation of the community" became less so. Over time, the NGO shifted to these more "visible" interventions. Adam also reported of the fact that the PRA was used in a very superficial form, and he detected increasing fatigue among the PRA facilitators (Adam 1998).

In 1998, community land delimitation was a new activity; in fact, Helvetas was one of the pioneers in this kind of work in Mozambique. Testing the methodology may therefore have been a more important objective than empowering the local residents via the actual demarcation of the land they were using. Secondly, the NGO was obviously in a hurry. BME had started their fencing project, which had already resulted in a severe conflict in Madjanjane. Helvetas wanted to delimit especially those areas where the chance of conflicts was relatively high. It soon became apparent that NGO had possibly rushed into this activity too hastily. This resulted in the whole idea and the implementation of land delimitation being imposed on the communities. Staff of Helvetas admitted when concluding in their reports that: "the land delimitation is not yet seen by the communities as a weapon to protect their

interests" (Helvetas 1999b, 8). Local people were not really involved in the land demarcation, neither did they seem to be aware of what was at stake. A colleague of mine joined the land delimitation exercise carried out by Helvetas in Santa Maria, a community on the peninsula of Machangulo, and reported how the limits had been set. It was a hot day in January and the two civil servants carrying their GPS equipment were not too keen on walking long distances. They complained of the heat and at times asked whether they had reached the limit yet. At a certain moment the community members, who acted as local key informants, and who were supposed to indicate the limits of their community replied yes (that they had reached the limits of the community). However, my colleague tried to ascertain whether this was really the limit. It appeared that it was not the case and the team had to continue walking (Roland Brouwer; pers. comm. January 1998). If it had not been for my colleague, but up to the civil servants and the key informants alone, the community would have ended up much smaller on the map that appeared some weeks later in the reports.

"Ainda não vimos nada": contradictory perceptions on the intervention

Our interviews with the residents of the project area revealed that they felt quite positive overall about the work of Helvetas. Local people told us that they appreciated the NGO's interactive way of working. At times, the information on the impact of the intervention, or on its advantages as perceived by the local population seemed to be contradictory. People stated that they learned from Helvetas, that the NGO was "as a school" to them, that the work of Helvetas "*abriu nossas cabeças*", literally "opened our heads" meaning it had opened their eyes. At the same time, sometimes even within the same interview, people also stated that "*ainda não vimos nada*", "we have not seen anything yet". What they meant was that they had not seen the hardware, material benefits such as wells, schools, and health posts. This is clearly linked to the expectations that local residents have of the NGO, which is known to have provided such things in the past and still provides them in other areas of the district.

7.5 Practices of co-operation

In this section, I want to look at the relationship Helvetas had with two other important actors in the field of the management of natural resources and development of the district—the TFCA project and the District Administration. I will therefore first have to provide some information on the TFCA project. At first glance, Helvetas, TFCA, and BME seemed to have similar objectives, but collaboration proved to be difficult in practice. Also, the relationship with the district administration appeared to be problematic, notwithstanding the interdependence that existed between the two.

Helvetas and TFCA: similar objectives, different perspectives

The Trans Frontier Conservation Area (TFCA) initiative started in 1996 and was financed by the Global Environment Facility of the World Bank. Three such trans-frontier areas were identified in Mozambique: one in Gaza province on the border with Kruger Park in South Africa, one in Manica province bordering a park in Zimbabwe, and one in Matutuíne that has been named as either the Maputo, the Limbombo or the Futi Corridor TFCA. This last trans-frontier area was to link Maputo Elephant Reserve in Matutuíne with two parks just across the border with Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa.

The project had three main areas of intervention:
-    Capacity development and policy development by human resource development;

- Habitat and wildlife management by rehabilitating protected areas, including staff houses, roads;
- Community mobilisation, empowerment by raising awareness of new laws and by building capacities for community-based natural resource management.

The philosophy of TFCA was also based on the philosophy of Community Based Natural Resources Management, namely that local communities would be managing their natural resources. For that purpose, the project envisaged the establishment of Joint Management Committees (JMCs). These would consist of village leaders with the competence to negotiate, receive, and distribute the benefits of the management of the natural resources and of private investments, and to determine quotas for hunting. However, these committees were never started up. In fact, very little happened in the district under the auspices of this TFCA initiative.

What did the TFCA actually do? At the end of 1999, the TFCA project was still pre-occupied with obtaining high-level political support in the different countries in order to get memoranda of understanding signed so that their initiatives could really be made 'trans-frontier'. In other words, they were mainly working at high political levels. The project also co-ordinated regional meetings with representatives of BME, the World Bank, TFCA, Land Tenure Center, the Forestry and Wildlife Department, and the NGOs Helvetas, Mozambique Foundation, and EWT. The TFCA project hardly ever intervened directly in the field. They were physically located within the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture in Maputo. The third area of activities of TFCA—the mobilisation of communities—was intended to be achieved by working through NGOs. For the Maputo TFCA, Helvetas was the most obvious candidate. Helvetas was crucial for the success of TFCA; the Swiss NGO figures abundantly in the work plan of the TFCA Futi corridor project .

The implementing agency for TFCA is the National Directorate of Forests and Wildlife at the Ministry of Agriculture. For the one in Matutuíne, the Futi Corridor TFCA, the implementing agency was the Provincial Directorate of Forestry and Wildlife of Maputo Province. This directorate was poorly staffed and poorly equipped. The TFCA project would have liked to see Helvetas working with this directorate. However, Helvetas was not financially dependent on TFCA and had another stance. Helvetas saw its project as complementary to the TFCA initiative but not as being part and parcel of it. Helvetas had been working with the rural population of Matutuíne since 1994 and first and foremost they wanted to gain the confidence of the local communities and defend its interests. They were aware of how difficult it was to build up a relation of trust with the local population in Matutuíne, and they definitely did not want to be identified with any government department, the Reserve, TFCA, or private investors such as BME. Helvetas made this position clear in a letter in October 1997 to the regional TFCA meeting. Staff of the NGO wanted to co-ordinate their activities and share information but did not want to intervene in the field in combination with other actors. Helvetas preferred to maintain an independent position in order to defend better the interests of their target group. This stance led to several conflicts. On one occasion in 1998, while a team of Helvetas was in the middle of a seminar with the local population, a joint mission of TFCA, the World Bank and BME appeared unexpectedly on the site saying that they wanted to "observe the meeting". The team of Helvetas did not want them to join. A tough discussion ensued, resulting in the visitors leaving and remaining angry with the NGO for many months after.

It is clear that BME, TFCA, and Helvetas used rather similar wordings regarding the empowerment and involvement of local people in the management of the natural resources. Judging from their documents alone it would seem that a common agenda or platform would have been simple to arrange. However, we witnessed many conflicts between these three actors. The participation-speak of BME was soon laid bare as hollow rhetoric when all that happened in the field was the creation of unfulfilled expectations. As early as January 1998,

when we did the first PRAs in Madjanjane and Santa Maria, it became clear that local people were annoyed with the promises that had been made—without any follow-up—by representatives of BME and the NGO MFEH, that had been established by BME (see section 7.2). TFCA had virtually no capacity in the field and had reckoned to be able to depend on NGOs such as Helvetas to form the joint management committees. But, as mentioned earlier, Helvetas preferred to remain autonomous in order to be able to defend the interests of the local people. The three actors also had diverging interests. When it came down to it, BME was a commercial company that wanted to lure private investors to invest in—and therefore finance—their plans. The TFCA initiative was basically inspired by the idea of nature conservation. For Helvetas, the interests of the inhabitants of the area came first.

Both TFCA and Helvetas accused each other of not doing their work properly. TFCA criticised Helvetas for not co-ordinating and collaborating sufficiently, allegedly being against BME, and for not doing a good job in explaining the land law. The national TFCA co-ordinator stated that he would therefore have preferred to work with other NGOs[12]. Helvetas maintained that they have always been co-ordinating with TFCA, sending reports and attending all meetings. Helvetas, in turn, blamed TFCA for not showing up at meetings with the communities when they had been invited to do so. Helvetas also blamed TFCA for delays, and for not being very productive; "we decided to go ahead because those discussions there (in Maputo, BP) took a lot of time and were not very productive"[13].

Helvetas obviously worked closest to the rural population. Senior staff of BME and TFCA, the large majority being foreigners who did not have much working experience in Mozambique and who did not speak Portuguese, remained in their offices in Maputo and had hardly any implementing capacity in the district. They were probably barely aware of how difficult the fieldwork was, especially in terms of gaining the confidence and collaboration of local people. Their notions of the possibilities of PRA and community based approaches were quite optimistic. For example, the notion that one can build local institutions for Natural Resource Management with PRA[14]. The TFCA project co-ordinator complained that Helvetas had not been able to explain the land law, while in my view this had been one of their most successful activities.

The local population had become impatient after all the promises they had been given by MFEH—the NGO created by BME. The plans of "*o Americano*" triggered many expectations but much uncertainty too. Very little happened. The most concrete activity of BME—the wildlife fence—appeared to be more of a threat than an opportunity. The fence was eventually seen by locals as a means of keeping people out of the Reserve rather than of keeping animals inside it. Soon, local people around the reserve had developed a very negative attitude towards BME. Representatives of BME accused Helvetas of setting up local people against BME. On several occasions, Helvetas invited representatives of BME and/or TFCA to attend meetings with the local population so that these organisation could explain and dialogue directly about their plans. However, they rarely showed up.

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[12] Interview with project leader TFCA, 13/12/99.
[13] Interview with program officer of Helvetas, 27/8/99.
[14] "The Futi corridor should be directly managed by local communities. To enable communities to fulfill this role, community institutions for managing land allocation and natural resources need to be strengthened"…."Project staff should investigate representative systems using participatory rural appraisal techniques and facilitate the development of appropriate local institutions for CBNRM." Boyd, C. (1996).

Uncomfortable Interdependence, Helvetas and the District Administration

The district administrator told me about his frustration about the way in which the concession had been granted to BME (the concession had been negotiated directly with the central government in Maputo). The district administrator complained of what he called 'governance by satellite', meaning that he had been completely excluded from the negotiations between BME, the Reserve, and central and provincial governments. He complained of things happening in his district without being informed or involved.

Similarly, he did not like NGOs doing things in his district of which he had no knowledge. The relation between the district administration and Helvetas was therefore a difficult one. Although Helvetas had been working with the same administrator since 1994 in this district, at times they both had to re- establish their roles with respect to each other. They could not ignore the fact that each of them needed the other, there was a degree of interdependence. At times, the NGO needed the collaboration or approval of the administrator to obtain sufficient legitimacy for their activities. But at other times, the administrator also needed the NGO, since the administration itself had virtually no funds for investments in the district.

Helvetas came into conflict with the district administration several times. The first conflict emerged when the NGO submitted a copy of the report of the PRA in Massoane in May 1998. This report reflected the opinion of the people of Massoane that the district administration was not doing enough to resolve the problem of the elephants that had destroyed the crops of the locals. The administrator was furious, and it was only through the mediation of the Provincial Governor that he re-opened 'dialogue' with Helvetas. He called for a meeting with the whole district executive and representatives of Helvetas. The meeting consisted of a monologue of one hour whereby the district administrator went through the report, criticizing it. After the meeting, the project co-ordinator of Helvetas thanked him politely and subsequently, relations improved. But not for long; at the beginning of 1999 (election year) the district administrator revived previous allegations implying that Helvetas supported RENAMO. Again, the support of outsiders, high up in the FRELIMO hierarchy, had to be called in by Helvetas to defuse these new tensions. Later that same year, the district administrator once again blocked the work of Helvetas when staff of the NGO were working in Massoane, delimiting the community land with the help of the provincial services of geography and land registration. According to project staff, the reason was that this organisation happened to be using the same type of car as RENAMO had used for their electoral campaign. The fourth example is the initiative by Helvetas to create a 'District Development Forum' with representatives of the district administration, NGOs, and private sector who were active in the district. It was agreed that the district administrator would chair the meeting and send out invitations for it. However, after the first few meetings the district administrator stopped calling new meetings and the Forum stopped.

As a well-funded international NGO, Helvetas had considerable resources and qualified staff. However, the very fact of being an international NGO was also a drawback. Helvetas was under pressure, in this case from their donor IDRC, to work in partnership with Mozambican organisations since a long-term presence of an international NGO could not be justified from a sustainability perspective[15]. This issue, the legitimacy of the presence of international

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[15] Helvetas worked together with two national NGOs: LDH and ANAMAT. LDH stands for the *Liga dos Direitos Humanos*, a national Human Rights organisation. ANAMAT stands for *Amigos e Naturais de Matutuíne*, people born in Matutuíne and their friends. The latter has emerged to a large extent from initiatives of Helvetas. Also, the work of LDH in the district was done to a large extent thanks to support from Helvetas. Representatives of these two NGOs were presented during the seminars as the ones that "will continue the activities of the project, after Helvetas has withdrawn". These organisations are however very weak in terms of resources and manpower, compared with Helvetas.

NGOs, was a crucial one. Mozambique had seen a boom in NGOs during the 1980s and 1990s and the question of their legitimacy and transparency had been the subject of much public discussion. Also, the district administration in Matutuíne thankfully exploited this situation to compromise the NGO by reminding the staff of the NGO that their presence in the district was only temporary.

From the above we can see that, on several occasions, the district administration had stood in the way of a smooth implementation of the work or the initiatives of Helvetas. It was as though the administrator wanted to remind the NGO who was in power. On several occasions, the district administrator expressed his preference that Helvetas should revert to the types of projects it had been doing in the past, such as delivering social infrastructures, instead of "stirring up people", i.e. the empowerment objectives. For example, during a seminar organised by Helvetas in April 1999, the district administrator, in a speech, clearly expressed his expectation and desire that the NGO would continue to build infrastructure and support agricultural production.

7.6   Summary and preliminary analysis

Up till now, I have answered the first three research questions for the case in Matutuíne; project context, project discourses, and project practices. Further analysis and synthesis of gaps between discourses and practices will follow in chapters ten and eleven. In this chapter, we have seen how the local population of Matutuíne had been pushed around in both colonial times and after independence. The lives of its residents have been turbulent and full of uncertainties. The policies for keeping the Reserve for animals alone and the policy of *aldeias comunais* caused people to move several times in the last 70 years. Labour migration across the South African border and the flow of refugees as a result of the war (1987 – 1992) also scarred the area. Population numbers decreased. The people now living in the area are relatively old, poor, and badly educated compared to other rural areas in Mozambique (Pijnenburg, Ribeiro et al. 2000). The younger generation built up resources in South Africa and is not eager to return to the area.

In addition, the 'legitimate' community leaders or those of 'royal blood' of the old Tembe Kingdom are often still living across the border. Leadership structures are not uniform and often not very clear to the outsider. Still, in all communities there are men or women who are considered to represent the community. In some cases, however, they are not considered as being the legitimate leaders, resulting in different respondents being designated by different people as their leader. In some areas, people complained of poor leadership and of a "lack of unity". However, the cases of the protest against the wildlife fence and the way in which the fishermen of Lake Phiti are organised demonstrated that people do take up collective action when the need arises. In both cases, the local people did not need any outside help to defend their access to natural resources; neither did the NGO Helvetas play any role in these initiatives.

The history of brutal top-down interventions and expulsions also led to a relative distrust by local people towards outsiders. The events of the period between 1996 and 2000 added to the state of confusion. The concession to allow the company Blanchard Mozambique Enterprises (BME) to invest in the tourist industry and rehabilitate the Reserve resulted in the status of the area remaining unclear for several years. Local people knew about "*o Americano*" (Blanchard), but nobody really knew what it would imply for the district. One can say that everybody in the district was keen on new investments since it gave them high expectations

of being able to benefit either via employment or via improved infrastructures. Many promises were made, but people also experienced that very little was happening at grassroots level. The fact that the company Moza-Florestal was kicked out because of the concession to BME—despite the fact that they had in fact already started planting the Eucalyptus trees, and had actually started to employ people—was therefore an extra bitter pill to swallow for local residents. For most people it remained unclear and uncertain what was happening and they did not know who or what to believe. The fact that the area became a concession area raised all kinds of other uncertainties; can we still kill animals? Will we have access to the Futi valley after the fence has been constructed? Do we need permission to cut reed? Where do we go for a licence? Can we keep cattle near the Reserve? Ultimately, very little happened on the terrain in terms of the planned investments or employment opportunities, and the perceptions of the local population were confirmed (once more) regarding outside interventions not bringing much more than false promises.

At first sight, it would seem that the company BME, the World Bank-sponsored TFCA initiative, and the NGO Helvetas shared similar objectives, since they all embraced the concept of empowering local people. But behind these objectives they had highly diverging interests; BME wanted commercial success and TFCA wanted nature conservation. Helvetas was the most serious in attempting to defend the interests of the residents of the area. Conflicts between these three also emerged as a result of different perceptions of the role that Helvetas would have and the working methods it would use (see also Pijnenburg 2002). Even in cases where two actors had similar plans, they failed to co-operate. For example, both Helvetas and TFCA had planned to organise joint management committees or other effective platforms for the management of natural resources, but these never materialised. Instead, each accused the other for not doing what they were supposed to do. This again neither helped in making things clear nor reduces the uncertainties among the local people in the villages of Matutuíne.

Helvetas also had several conflicts with the district administrator. On several occasions, the administrator blocked the work of the NGO. One of the mechanisms used by the administration was to accuse the NGO for working for the opposition party RENAMO. The typical reaction of Helvetas staff was always to try and appease the situation and re-establish good working relations with the administration, for which at times a high level of political support from FRELIMO had to be sought.

The intervention of Helvetas was geared towards the capacity building of the local people so that they would be empowered to negotiate with the investors. The NGO started off quite optimistically when they stated in their objectives that in this way "conflicts will be avoided". They organised PRAs and seminars, explained the new land law, and undertook community land delimitation.
Results of our interviews showed that the work of the NGO was in general positively perceived by local people. Especially the explanations on the land law during the PRAs caused people to say that: "Helvetas has opened our eyes". This was however not a typically participatory activity; the highlights of the new law were explained in the form of a lecture. The rest of the PRA was mainly dedicated to collecting information from the community in the interest of the NGO. This happened without much sharing and joint analysis, and was therefore rather extractive. Reviewing the PRA reports revealed that the sequence of PRAs led to routines and lack of creativity; signs of 'bad' PRA practices. Both the PRAs and their reports became shorter over time and the tendency to end up with a wishlist of the type "there is a lack of…." became stronger.

In the seminars that Helvetas organised later, there was more scope for joint analysis and discussion. Agenda setting remained however in the hands of project staff. Thus, ownership by local people remained at a low level.

Although Helvetas staff invested much time and energy in gaining the trust of the local population, considerable suspicion was still felt, especially concerning the activity of community land delimitation. For example, staff of the NGO taught local people that, according to the new land law, land could not be sold. This was a basic premise in the 1997 Land Law. But in the eyes of the local people, the concession granted to BME was seen as a sell-out by the government. Some local people therefore doubted the reliability of the story told by Helvetas. Land delimitation was rushed through and was thus imposed on the local people since Helvetas needed to test the methodology in a pilot and present the results in a National conference on the issue of land delimitation. In several cases of community delimitation, it became clear that residents who were involved in the exercise were not aware of the potential importance of the activity and considered it to be an activity that they were doing for the NGO rather than for the community—yet another sign of lack of ownership.

When the work started in January 1998, Helvetas reported on the conflict over the wildlife fence but the project did not get involved. Project staff were too afraid to become involved in conflicts. The NGO preferred to involve itself in the rather 'technical' and more politically neutral—because sanctioned by law—technology of community land delimitation. By 2000 —too late as it turned out, since BME was no longer active—project staff acknowledged that the case of the wildlife fence had been a missed opportunity to start up a process of negotiation between local people and the investor BME.

Most of the plans of BME and TFCA were drawn up on desks in offices far away from Matutuíne. There was hardly any involvement on the part of the local population. Even district authorities complained that they were barely consulted in the planning and implementation of these projects. Helvetas was physically present in the District, and their plans were much more rooted in hands-on experience of working with the local people of the communities in Matutuíne. But still, to a large extent, the same could be said for the CBNRM project of Helvetas as for the BME and TFCA initiatives, in that the project was too top-down in terms of planning and implementation. The rural population had never invited Helvetas to come and empower them or to facilitate dialogue. Community land delimitation especially was—to a large extent—imposed, and observations in the field showed that the local people were not really aware what this implied.

We can conclude that the interventions by Helvetas led to an increased awareness but not to any observed collective action among the local people, and even dialogue improved only to a very limited extent. Though people did get involved in a learning process, it is unlikely that local people also increased their say in the institutions affecting their lives as a result of the intervention. When asked for their opinion on the Helvetas project, local people complained that they had not seen any material benefit. They knew Helvetas built schools and performed animal re-stocking in other areas, and they expected their community to receive the same. These expectations dovetailed with the pressure from the local administration to stick to the more 'visible' activities such as providing schools and wells. Staff of Helvetas also expressed finding it difficult to create the envisioned 'partnerships' between the relatively rich NGO and the poor rural people. These facts caused the project staff to give in to these desires of others and, in the long run, empowerment objectives of the project became diluted through a shift from the invisible activities (training and capacity building) towards the visible activities (building infrastructures and providing hardware). When finally BME ended their

involvement at the end of 1999, Helvetas continued with the project. From 2000 onwards, they added on a component that could provide funds for building basic infrastructures such as schools on a self-help basis. In terms of defending the local residents' rights to land, they concentrated on regions where the land was being subjected to high pressure, such as along the coast, where smaller tourist enterprises had started their activities.

8 Decentralised District Planning in Nampula

This chapter describes a project in the northern province of Nampula with decentralisation, good governance, and civil society participation as central components in its objectives. Project staff promoted forums at different levels such as District Development Councils (DCCs) at district level and Local Development Committees (LDCs) at community level. PRAs were used to identify priorities at village level. After a short description of the province (8.1) I will describe the project and its related development discourses (8.2). Then I will present project practices by describing episodes of PRA (8.3), DCC meetings (8.4), and the establishment of LDCs (8.5) that we as members of the evaluation team were able to observe. Each section also includes some more general observations and critical remarks on these specific project practices. This is followed by a section (8.6) that reflects on some other incidents and observations I made as a member of the evaluation team, and which refer to both project discourses and project practices.

8.1 Nampula Province

Nampula is the second largest province in Mozambique in terms of population. The National Institute for Statistics estimated that Nampula had 3,2 million inhabitants in 2000. It is the province with the highest population density with 40 inhabitants per square km. The province enjoys relatively favourable agro-ecological conditions, and the large majority of the people make their living from small-scale agriculture. Important cash crops are cashews and cotton. Fishing is an important economic activity along the coast. The towns such as Nampula, Nacala, and Monapo thrive on agro-industry and trade. There is a railway that connects the Nacala port to Malawi in the hinterland. Along the same corridor runs a road that is partly gravel and partly tarmac. The north-south link from the Ligonha River to the River Lurio is also tarred, in contrast to almost all other roads in the province, which are not tarred. Other infrastructures such as schools and health posts are minimal; by 2000 most of what had been destroyed during the civil war had been more or less rebuilt. Considering that even before the war not many such buildings existed, and given the increase in population, there is still a huge need for basic social infrastructures in the Province.

The administrative system at provincial level is headed by the provincial governor, who is appointed by the President of the Republic. He presides over a provincial Executive Council that includes all provincial directors of most central ministries. A similar structure is found at the district level where a district administrator presides over an Executive Council, which is mainly composed of district directors. Not all line departments are represented at the district level, but, generally speaking, at least the ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Health are present. These district directors have a dual subordination; towards their provincial director and towards their district administrator. The districts normally have two or three administrative posts, *posto administrativo*, with a *chefe do posto,* who is the lowest in the ranks of the paid state administrative system.

Map 4 Districts of Nampula Province covered by the UNCDF project

Support to the opposition party RENAMO is strong in Nampula province. In the elections of December 1999, they obtained 43 % of the votes as against 40 % for FRELIMO. For the presidency, the candidate for the opposition obtained 57 % of the votes as against 43 % for president Chissano. Support for RENAMO is stronger in the rural areas as compared to the towns, and stronger in the districts near to the coast as compared to the western districts of the province. RENAMO accused the FRELIMO government of rigging the parliamentary election results of 1999 and the political tensions remained high throughout 2000. The district administrators cannot be considered as impartial since they had led the electoral campaigns for FRELIMO in their districts.

8.2   The project and its discourses

The full title of the project under study is "Support to Decentralised Planning and Financing in Nampula Province". It was a project initiated by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). The central mandate of UNCDF is poverty reduction. Since 1995 the policy of this UN organisation has been geared to two instruments; Local Development Funds and Eco-Development. The Local Development Fund (LDF) involved a local decentralised planning process whose approach was based on the assumption that decentralised governance means improved governance, and that this would have an impact on poverty reduction

(Romeo, Shotton et al. 1999, 2). The approach wanted to "enhance capacities of local governments to finance and manage budgets with a strong emphasis on inclusive participatory planning at the local level" (Romeo, Shotton et al. 1999, 2). It tried to avoid the mistake of working on decentralisation alone without having the resources required to implement the plan. The LDF and the setup of decentralised finance mechanisms were regarded as a necessary condition for improving decentralised planning practices. Decentralised planning was intended to:

- increase popular participation in planning and development;

- make plans more relevant to local needs;

- facilitate coordinated or integrated (multi-sectoral) planning;

- increase the speed and flexibility of decision-making and implementation;

- generate additional resources and encourage more efficient use of existing resources (Romeo 1999, 17).

The three immediate objectives of the project in Nampula were: "1) to provide essential small-scale socio-economic infrastructure through decentralised planning and the operation of a Local Development Fund, 2) to strengthen the capacity of the provincial administration, district administrations and communities to plan, finance, implement and monitor small-scale rural infrastructure; and 3) to promote active popular participation in the district planning processes" (UNCDF, 2000 Evaluation results, 132).

The implementing agency of the project was the provincial directorate of planning and finance. This department was supported by two internationally contracted, and five nationally contracted project staff. The total budget was just over five million US dollars for three years. The donors are UNCDF (2.4 m US dollars), the Dutch government (1.95 m US dollars) and UNDP (0.7 m US dollars). The project provides for a Local Development Fund. Each district has an annual 'ceiling' of around 65,000 US dollars that they can draw from this Fund to use for public investments. The Dutch organisation SNV provided additional technical support for four of the districts (Moma, Angoche, Mogincual, and Mogovolas) from a regional planning unit based in Angoche.

The History of the Project

The project document of the project (phase 1998-2001) is a redesign of an earlier project that had started in early 1996. This earlier project (phase 1995-1997) was identified between 1992 and 1994 and its project document was signed in 1995. It was deemed necessary to re-formulate this previous project for four reasons:

- to accommodate political changes;
- changes in the policies of UNCDF;
- to allow for the Dutch government to participate;
- to make possible an increase in the number of districts.

These four reasons are explained as follows. As we read in chapter 6, soon after the peace agreements of 1992, the government announced the elections for local governments. The writers of the earlier project document assumed that local governments would be elected in all districts by 1996. But by 1996, it had become clear that there would be only elected bodies in 33 towns and thus no representative elected structures in the rural areas. This became an important justification for UNCDF to propose other ways of involving civil society in order to promote good governance. UNCDF also wanted to support those allies within the government who wanted to experiment with decentralised district planning. The policy changes of UNCDF, which took effect in 1995, made the concept of Local Development Funds (LDF) a cornerstone of their intervention policies (UNCDF 1995). The 1995 project document that had proposed a credit scheme became largely obsolete; in practice, the project had already adopted the LDF approach. The re-design also made it possible for the Dutch

Government to participate as a donor to the project. It also allowed the scaling up from three to fourteen districts in the province (see map 4 for the districts that were covered by the project in 2000).

It is important to describe these changes since it is difficult to understand the project (1998-2001 phase), without knowing its predecessor (1995-1997 phase). Since my colleague and I were involved in both phases of the project—in 1997 and in 2000—we were able to observe the differences and changes that took place. In the 1997 situation, the emphasis was on doing PRAs in rural communities of three districts. These PRAs ended up in a list of priorities for certain infrastructure for that community. In addition to that, government staff at district level were trained in Objective Oriented Project Planning. The project also wanted to "facilitate dialogue between district government and civil society". The district administrators were asked to organise the so-called District Consultative Councils to do this. There were, however, many delays in the process and ultimately these councils were never started within this earlier phase of the project. It was only after the reformulation, in 1998, when the concept of the District Development Plan was launched, that large public meetings were organised and these were deemed to fulfil the role of 'District Consultative Councils'. In the second phase, more attention was paid to institutional embedding. The newly planned investments were taken up in the national investment programme, the PTIP, and local staff had to do the work. Project staff also wanted to make this visible by no longer having a separate office in the building of the provincial department of Planning, and stickers with the UNCDF logo were removed from the cars.

The concept of the project (phase 1998 - 2001)

Decentralisation and participation were key words in the project document:

> *"The basic assumption underlying the project's design is that the key for a successful rural development effort leading to poverty eradication and sustainable human development is the improvement of local governance, to which, in turn, political, administrative and financial decentralisation and genuine popular participation are essential and critical dimensions" (UNCDF 1998, 24).*

The project's aim was to stimulate 'good governance'. Most project efforts were invested in capacity building of provincial and district government staff ,and in setting up the procedures for the planning mechanisms and the disbursement of the money. It was based on the assumption that the devolution of administrative and financial responsibilities to district level and community participation in the process would lead to more effective and more efficient planning. Each district was obliged to write a strategic, multi-sectoral, 5-year 'District Development Plan'. Project staff assisted a team of government officials at district level to write this plan. This was done in three steps that corresponded with the elaboration of three documents:

- The District Profile
- The Strategy
- The actual District Development Plan

The Profile is a base-line document that was compiled on the basis of existing data and maps and mainly provided statistics such as the number of schools, number of teachers, location of cattle dip tanks, agricultural production. The purpose of the Strategy document was to reflect on a vision for the district for the five to ten years ahead. It had to make an analysis of existing problems and to indicate which sectors and which geographical areas of the districts should receive priority. Information gathered during the PRAs was intended to be part of the input for the Strategy document. The District Development Plan, which was in fact the output of the whole process, would combine information from the two earlier documents, the Profile and the Strategy, and would specify it further with concrete investment projects, timetables

and division of responsibilities. The plan was to be re-written every five years. It was to be the responsibility of a team of district government staff to write these documents. Project staff supervised the work closely. Each document was discussed in open meetings with around 50 to 100 participants who were supposed to represent the population of the district. These meetings were baptised as constituting the so-called District Consultative Councils (DCC).

The planned activities in the District Development Plan would then be negotiated with the relevant line departments at the provincial level, and finally the plan was to be presented to the provincial government for approval. The province was obliged to include the planned investments in the national investment plan, PTIP, *Plano Tri-annual de Investimentos Públicos.*

Discourses around 'civil society participation'

The 'popular participation' component in the planning process was intended to be guaranteed by the setting up of District Consultative Councils (DCCs) and by organising PRAs in selected communities (UNCDF 1998, 25). Since 2000, the project had also started to establish Local Development Committees at the village level. The project documents were not specific about the role of the DCCs, the PRAs or of the LDCs. The DCCs were intended to be "institutional platforms for a dialogue between local administration, civil society organisations, and traditional authorities and other community structures" (UNCDF 1998, 33). The initial idea of the DCCs was to create relatively formal institutions with members from certain groups or organisations. In this way, they would be a representation of civil society in the district or in the *posto*.

The proposed 'civil society structures' or platforms, as the District Consultative Councils are referred to in project documentation, were justified as follows. The project document states that;

> *"The implementation of the District Planning Process relies on the establishment and progressive strengthening of a network of local institutions allowing representation of community interests and active community participation at all stages of the planning process".*

It also mentions the fact that there will be no elected bodies in the rural areas of Mozambique (because municipalisation had been limited to urban areas) and that this "adds another urgency to the need to develop such institutions" (UNCDF 1998, 33).

During the reformulation of the project in 1997, the advisor for participatory development of UNCDF in New York visited Nampula on two occasions. She observed that the project area "is challenged by a dearth of existing civil society structures" (Luche 1997, 5). She was furthermore concerned about whether the proposed District Consultative Councils would represent the concerns of the rural population and whether the communities would become full partners with the government in the planning exercise. She organised a workshop in September 1997 with, amongst others, representatives of some of the communities where the project had worked. The purpose of the workshop was to brainstorm on how to bridge the gap between community level and the proposed district District Consultative Councils and how to come to representative 'civil society structures'. Councils, similar to the DCC, were proposed at different levels such as at posto administrativo, locality and/or community levels. Her work resulted in five recommendations that were taken up in the project document:

- The DCC members representing civil society should be chosen from the bottom-up and not be chosen at the district level;
- The formation of the DCC should parallel the formation of other relevant civil society structures to ensure a dialogue and an appropriate consolidation of decision-making power;
- Women need to be adequately represented, between 30 and 50 %;

-       Linkages related to function and representation need to result from dialogue between the emerging civil society structures and DCCs rather than be determined at the district level;
-       Leadership in the DCCs and civil society structures should be in the form of rotational chairs and membership should be for a fixed term (UNCDF 1998, 34).

With hindsight, we can conclude that these recommendations were too ambitious, since none of them were fulfilled. As we will read in section 8.4, DCCs did not become councils based on fixed membership but rather a public meeting of people invited by, and chaired by, the district administrator. No other institutions or civil society structures emerged that were linked up with the DCC, and the actual representation of women in the DCC meetings remained at 15 - 20%[16].

The project document was not specific on the subject of PRAs. In the course of the annual reports of the project, the concept of PRA popped up at times while in other reports the concept was replaced by "consultative meetings at community level" or "meetings under the tree". The PRAs seemed to be a remnant of the previous phase of the project (1995-1997) where there was a stronger emphasis on using it as a means to identify an investment project in a pre-selected community. As we will read below in section 8.3, the project never really defined clearly the role and function of the use of PRA, and the methodology lost its importance in the course of the project.

Different perceptions on community participation among UNCDF staff

As previously stated, project staff always remained rather vague about what kind of community participation it desired. This may be explained by the fact that there were clearly different views held by the different staff members of UNCDF on the PRA and on the desired level of participation. When we discussed our report in August 1997 with staff from UNCDF headquarters in New York, an interesting debate emerged. According to the technical advisor on participation, the ultimate goal would be that community members are trained so that they will have the capacity to perform the problem analysis, priority setting, etc. themselves without outside intervention or facilitation. The community should eventually be empowered and be able to present their concerns to higher levels of authorities, demanding proper and efficient functioning of government and other service institutions. In other words, her wish was that PRA would become an empowering and self-sustaining process. However, the technical advisor on planning had quite an opposite opinion. He stated that decentralisation from provincial to district planning was already revolutionary in the Mozambican context and that it was much too early for decentralisation beyond the district level. He would have liked to abolish the use of PRA altogether. The wide divide in opinion among close colleagues in UNCDF's New York offices was a major source of frustration on both sides. And this was in the period in which they were reformulating the project document. One can imagine that these conflicts resulted in less precise formulation and/or inconsistencies in the document. It is very likely that this is the reason why the project document is at times highly ambitious yet rather vague, and lacking ideas on how to operationalise participation.

Achievements of the project

In 1997 the project covered only three districts. By July 2000, fourteen of the twenty-one districts of Nampula Province were using the methodology of District Development Planning as promoted by the project. Two of the fourteen districts had managed to complete their District Development Plan. Provincial and district staff had been trained in methodologies for planning. The machinery of the planning cycle and disbursement procedures had been

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[16] Data provided by the project for the Mid Term Evaluation June-July 2000

streamlined. Much care had been taken to align them with the procedures of the government. For example, the money for the Local Development Fund (LDF) was transferred from New York to the national treasury. The treasury transferred the money, in Meticais, via the normal channels to the districts. The LDF provided investment resources to district administrations for the financing of small-scale infrastructure. By mid-2000, nine public investments had been completed, while another 21 were under construction thanks to the LDF. These are mainly investments such as primary school buildings, health posts, wells, roads, and bridges. The position of district administrators improved when they gained access to discretional funds. District officials started to think in a more integrated way on district development and developed an attitude of negotiation with provincial line ministries instead of simply implementing orders from above. Project staff also started to upscale the concept of decentralised district planning. The experiences of this project in Nampula were feeding the wider debate on decentralisation in Mozambique (UNCDF 2000). The project managed to demonstrate to central government that district planning and finance was possible with existing local staff (Jackson and Lambo 2002).

8.3   Project practices; PRA

In July 1997, I attended a PRA in the community Massaua in the Muecate district. The evaluation team attended three PRAs in 2000. Below, I will describe in more detail the two PRAs that I personally attended; the one in Massaua (1997) and a PRA in Mavili (2000). Thereafter I will reflect on the role of the PRA in the project and how this changed over time.

The PRA in Massaua, July 1997

The district administration of Muecate had assigned Massaua and three other communities as "*zonas carentes*", needy areas, lacking basic infrastructure. Upon arrival, we wondered why Massaua had been chosen since we surprisingly found ourselves working in a community that had just benefited from the construction of a brand new school building and a new health post, built by (different) NGOs. Massaua is a rather remote area in the North of the district. The residents, less than a thousand in number, live dispersed, with their houses and fields scattered in the forested area.

What happened?

In the previous week, the local working group (three men and one woman from Massaua) had taken part in a three-day training course on the use of the seven PRA techniques; mapping, calendar, Venn diagram, timeline, daily routines, transect, matrix ranking. The team consisted of three Mozambican consultants, one district official and the four members of the local working group.

On the day of our arrival, we set up camp at the school and we had a first meeting with the *régulo*. The next day we had a meeting with about 200 people (± 70 men, 55 women and 75 youth) in which the program and its purpose were discussed. Later, the group split up in to three groups and an interview/discussion with these groups was held on the basis of a checklist. In those same meetings, a preliminary identification of problems was carried out. After these interviews, the women and the youth made a community map. These maps showed the roads, schools, health post, bridges, rivers, and so on. The men made a Venn diagram to illustrate the local power structures. Volunteers (10 to 20 in each group) were found to work with the PRA team during the next two days.

The next day, the women made agricultural calendars and the men made a timeline to describe the history of the area, using stones. The youth made daily routines of men and women. The next day was used to make four different transects. Four groups each walked in a different direction. On returning, they made the transects on the ground, which were then

transferred to paper. On the last day, the PRA team discussed the problems that had been identified on the first day and brainstormed possible solutions. This led to the following shortlist of 'problems': lack of water wells, lack of a maternity ward at the health post, and lack of medicines in the health post. These items were symbolised with some simple graphics on a flipchart and a ranking exercise was done. Twelve men, twelve women and twelve young people were allowed to score the different problems. In this way, this PRA prioritised the problem 'lack of water wells'.

Some remarks on the Massaua PRA

The team was very well received by the community and the team received all the support of the local leader, *régulo* Massaua. Despite the dispersed settlement of the community, every day a sufficient number of people turned up. Participation was voluntary; all the work, except for the transect walks, was done around the school and people would come on their own initiative. 'Handing over the stick' worked well and also the local facilitators gained confidence and took more responsibilities during the fieldwork. One of the local facilitators said: "I never realised during the training that it would be possible to do this with the local population". The work was also positively perceived by the local people. They expressed that they had never experienced such a work in which the information was immediately shared. They also indicated it as positive that their participation was being valued and that people were treated with respect and in a friendly manner.

During the PRA exercise, the 'problems' that had been ranked were not properly analysed. In fact, the problems that appeared on the flipchart for the ranking exercise on the last day were the ones that had already been raised during the meetings on the second day. But in between, hardly any effort was made to study these problems, looking for the causes and underlying problems, nor discussing possible alternative solutions. For example, in relation to the 'problem' of the maternity ward, nobody took the effort during the week to talk with local midwives and the representative of the health post about what the problems in relation to pregnancy and birth were. The team was too much involved in conducting the seven visual techniques that they had been taught in the training sessions and that had become like a standard recipe.

Furthermore, most problems were defined as "a lack of....[a thing or an investment]". This means that these 'problems' are in fact perceived solutions for certain problems; so the people may state 'lack of a well' as a problem while the actual problem may be better formulated as: 'not having sufficient access to water at the end of the dry season'. Respondents who had taken part in the ranking process said that they had chosen "what they would like". One man who had just scored the column with the red cross in the matrix said: "I have chosen for the health post". So instead of ranking the problems (what problem is affecting us most) it was a ranking of the intervention (what kind of infrastructure do we want in the village). That is why I have referred to these types of lists of 'problems' as wishlists. These wishlists may reflect genuine needs of the community, but other possible solutions to an underlying problem may be excluded. Taking the same example of the 'problem' of the lack of a maternity ward; if it is phrased like this it is difficult to find underlying root causes for a lack of a maternity ward. However, if the problem is phrased as infant mortality or complication around pregnancy and/or birth, it is easier to find the causes of these problems. Once these causes have been specified, one can think of many alternative solutions that are probably more concerned with the software (knowledge and improved practices) rather than in the hardware (new buildings). Such discussions would also provide much more scope for social learning by all participants in a PRA.

Instead of making the PRA an iterative process, thereby deepening the analysis and dialogue, the team merely applied a sequence of seven different techniques. Thus, the different techniques became ends in themselves rather than tools for joined learning or for the analysis of priority problems. The PRA seemed to be reduced to a fixed set of diagrams that had to be 'filled in'. As

a result, the link between the information generated by using the different techniques and the definition of 'priority problems' of the community was not always clear. Neither were explanations always given as to why a certain exercise was done. In some cases, it was also observed that the visual techniques were not used to maximum effect because the results were not discussed after the diagram had been 'filled in'.

The PRA in Mavili, May 2000

Mavili in Ribáue district is located along the road to Malema, about a half an hour's drive west from the district capital Ribáue. Mavili, lying along the main East-West road of the province has a considerable population density. Its population is estimated at over 2,000 people.

What happened?

The PRA in Mavili was extremely short, taking up only half a day. The district staff had a car available for only one day so the exercise had to be squeezed into that day. On the previous day, the district staff had asked the local *régulo* to mobilise the community to participate in the meeting. When we arrived, 5 women and about 20 men were present. Soon after the start of the meeting, at about 9.30, these numbers increased to 15 women and 27 men. Most of the community members that were present fulfilled some function such as *cabo terras*, a kind of assistant to the *régulo*, *secretário*s, church elders, etc. The team of facilitators consisted of two civil servants from the district administration, and one junior health worker. One of the civil servants acted as the main facilitator, leading most of the meeting while being assisted once in a while by the health worker. They were seated behind a small table, on high chairs, some of the community members sat on low benches while most sat on the ground. The facilitator introduced the meeting by saying, amongst other things, that: "the government wants to know the needs of the people"; "we are making a plan and we have to inform the district what is needed"; and "our brigade came to witness the real situation and we will channel the problems and see how they can be resolved". The health worker added that the meeting should not only discuss the needs but also assess what the people could contribute. He added that the people should not expect solutions for all their problems by tomorrow; "We want strategic planning, which means we have to define what has to be done in the next five years". He then continued by saying: "I have a small questionnaire here that I have to do;… What are the boundaries of your community?" What followed was a question and answer session on the basis of a list of questions. Answers were hardly probed; after each answer the health worker just looked at his list and continued: "Then the next questions is …."

After completing all the questions—it was by now about 10.30—it was explained to the people that they would now work in groups. The groups had to discuss "the problems that make life difficult in Mavili". They also had to "indicate how the villagers were going to help the government". The facilitator then gave examples of maintaining the roads or helping in the construction of a health post. The following groups were made: women, young men, other men, leaders (all men) and religious leaders (all men). All groups were given coloured cards and were instructed to write each problem on a separate card, and a possible solution and the contribution of the population on the back of the same card. When the women walked away to sit under another tree, two men shouted after them: "don't forget the lack of a health post and school".

After this exercise, the groups came back for a plenary meeting and the facilitator made a summary by sticking the cards on a big flipchart on the ground. In this way, he summarised that all five groups had mentioned the lack of a mill, lack of a health post, lack of an improved school, and the lack of water wells. Three groups complained of the lack of shops and the following problems were mentioned by only one group: lack of employment, lack of a football, lack of tractors, animal restocking and improved churches.

Two of the items mentioned were then discussed briefly. On the subject of the mills, the facilitator asked the people: "what would a mill resolve?" Somebody said it takes a lot of time to either take the maize to the nearest mill or pound it in a mortar. People were aware that this was not a government responsibility as somebody proposed that the "government should create the conditions so that somebody would invest in a local maize mill". On the subject of the health post, the facilitator asked what kind of health post they would require and what advantages it would give. The people answered that the distance to the nearest health post was too far. (In fact there is a mission hospital only seven km from Mavili.)

After this short dialogue, the facilitator introduced the next step. He asked: "What is the most urgent problem? We are going to vote" He then explained the procedures. A flipchart was made with all ten problems in the rows, symbolised by rough but unclear sketches drawn by the health worker. The facilitator gave the instructions: Everybody was to receive twelve grains of maize. Each person had then to put six grains in the row of the problem that he or she considered as most severe, and the other six could be divided over other problems.

Just as the women were starting a ranking exercise, it began to rain. Women were in a hurry, there was chaos, some ran for shelter while others still tried to throw in their seeds on the flipchart. After the rain stopped, the other groups did the ranking exercise. At 12.45 the 'votes' were counted, and at 13.00 the results were presented in a plenary session. To close the meeting, the facilitator stressed once more that this exercise did not mean any promises. It would provide an input to the district plan; "we came to listen to you" and "it will not happen tomorrow". The health worker explained further: "Our country lives on the basis of support from NGOs. We need a brochure to assist the organisations with their money. When somebody comes who wants to invest in health, the population can help to build the walls and we can direct that organisation to the community". The meeting was closed and we were invited to have lunch at the house of the local *régulo*.

Some remarks on the Mavili 'PRA'

The PRA in Mavili was far too short and too rushed to be really considered as a PRA. The objectives were explained but methodology and agenda was not explained at the start of the meeting. The questions were also rushed and answers not sufficiently probed. Some questions did not seem to be relevant and all questions were posed in a mechanistic way, as if the facilitator wanted to finish as fast as possible, without probing and not showing much interest in the answers. This PRA took less than four hours. Still, within such a short time an output was achieved similar to the one achieved at the end of a one-week PRA such as the one in Massaua; a ranked wishlist of 'problems' identified by the community members. The fact that the facilitators were cautious about raising expectations and that they asked for what the community was able to contribute were positive factors. Still, this PRA also led to the typical 'wishlist'. There was no attempt—and no time—to delve into the real problems and their causes. The groups were not asked to justify their shopping list.

Some general observations on the use of PRA in the project

In 1997, we had written a report containing some critical observations in relation to the PRA we had attended in Massaua. Although some things definitely improved, much of the criticism in that report would still apply to the way in which the project did PRA in 2000. My main argument in 1997 was—and remained so in 2000—that the project never clearly defined the role of PRA in the whole process of district planning. Its link with both the District Consultative Councils and the elaboration of the District Development Plan was very weak. The PRA exercise remained largely an extractive exercise and seemed merely to function as the formulation of a wishlist to prioritise what kind of infrastructure should be built in that community rather than as a process to learn, analyse problems, or to mobilise the community.

Secondly, this raised questions regarding how these communities—which would consequently benefit materially—were selected. Finally, the emphasis of the work was on several tools that seemed to become ends in themselves and that were used in a rather uncritical manner. I will elaborate these three points further.

The apparent role of PRA; identifying 'bricks-and-mortar' solutions

It is important to distinguish the 1997 situation from the 2000 situation. In the 1997 project, the emphasis was on selecting rural areas that were considered as being relatively less endowed with basic rural infrastructures, doing a PRA and identifying what to build in that community. The LDF was set up in order to finance the projects thus identified. The PRA in Massaua was typically such a PRA. By 2000, the project had changed its discourse considerably, emphasising the formulation of the District Development Plan and the organisation of the district District Consultative Councils as described above. There was however hardly any link between the PRA on the one hand and the Plan and the DCC meetings on the other hand. When we questioned project staff on this link, they said that the results of the PRA were intended to feed the formulation of the plan and/or the debate in the District Consultative Councils. However, according to the vision of almost all the actors we interviewed in the districts, the PRA remained a stand-alone activity to identify some new infrastructure of bricks and mortar. In other words, in practice, the PRAs remained to fulfil very much the same the role as they had done in the 1997 project. In the end, the output remained the same; the wishlist of the community.

This brings us to the typical interventions that the LDF covers; it is an investment fund, and both staff and local people had pre-conceived ideas for selecting a 'bricks and mortar' solution (the building of schools, health posts, roads, bridges, water supply, etc.). This limits the scope of the possible interventions to this type of 'hardware' of development. If one were to analyse the problems of the rural population in more detail, and discuss the possible solutions with them, one might conclude that more investment was necessary in the software, in other words, in education, training, sensibilisation, and mobilisation. So while there may be a need for the hard-ware (e.g., a school building) it always will need the software (e.g., a committed teacher or active parents who maintain the school, demand quality and send their children to school). But the PRAs were neither used to identifying gaps in the software, nor to training or mobilising the local people. The project never adopted a self-help component to the building projects. The PRA could easily have been used to mobilise the community and to be more involved this way. Many other projects in the Province possess wide experience in involving the local communities in the building, monitoring, and maintenance processes. This could have greatly increased ownership of the investment. Building with local materials and building on the basis of self-help would have enabled much more infrastructure to have been built with the same amount of money. But this was out of the question. Both provincial government and the donor wanted only infrastructures of high standards, built by contractors.

This situation of using PRA mainly as a means to identify a suitable 'building project' is partly due to the way in which the project had been formulated and/or reformulated, and partly a result of spending pressure from the donor. So while it is more logical to make a plan first before starting to make money available for infrastructure, in this case the reverse occurred. The first phase placed the emphasis on the LDF, with funding for infrastructure identified via a PRA, while the planning mechanisms and formulation of district plans was only started in 1998. As long there was no plan, the PRAs functioned very much as a means of identifying projects on which to spend money from the LDF. But even after 1998, this remained the main function of the PRA; the 'shopping list' seemed to be the most important output. As long as this remained the case, there was also no real need for the local people to mobilise themselves or to initiate a learning process.

Selection of communities and political interference

In other words, choosing an investment to be built in a specific community seemed to be the main function of the PRAs. The question of how this community was selected is then pertinent. Our questions about the criteria for selecting the next community to benefit were never answered satisfactorily. All actors gave the same answer, namely that the "*zona mais carente*" was selected. Translated, this means something like "the area lacking most", "the area with the least infrastructure". How this was being defined never really became clear to us. Besides, it is rather a relative concept; an area with less population is likely to need little infrastructure while densely populated areas obviously require more. This means that the variable population density would have to be considered in the definition of "*zona mais carente*". The impression we got was that choosing which community would get the benefit of a PRA (and thus implicitly, for building something) was a rather subjective affair. In their evaluation of the project, Condy and Negrão (1999, 6) had the same impression. This decision as to where to do the next PRA was taken by the district administrator. We were surprised to learn that Massaua had been chosen despite the fact that this community had just benefited from a new school, health post, and house for the health worker, added to the fact that the area lay on a relatively good road. Massaua was a stronghold for RENAMO during the war and it is likely that the FRELIMO administrator wanted to attract popular support in that area. Keeping the definition of "*zona mais carente*" vague allowed for flexibility and made co-optation for political reasons possible.

In addition, it appeared that the choice for a community in another case—the health post of Necata in Malema district—clearly had a political character. It was in fact the project staff that hinted to me that the district administrator had his own hidden agenda in choosing Necata as the next area for an intervention. For many years this had been an area ravaged by problems in terms of security. The area lies on a crossroads of the N8, the national road in the Nacala corridor to Malawi and a south-north route between Niassa and Zambézia provinces. Crime was rampant here. The administrator wanted to win the collaboration of the local population in order to be able to improve the security situation. To do so, he had promised the area either a school or a health post. So when the project came along and when a choice had to be made for a community in which to do a PRA, the district administrator did not have to think twice before assigning Nacata . The population chose for a health post and the Department of Health approved. However, there was a huge gap between the time of the PRA —July 1998—and the completion of the project. Building only started in February 2000. During 1999, election year, the district administrator came to the office of Public Works in Nampula several times asking when building would start. He also asked whether they could at least bring some material to show the people of Nacata that something was happening. The population, used to false promises, was allegedly losing hope. This is a clear case of how the district administrator co-opted the intervention to obtain political support. This is not necessarily a negative or pessimistic statement. In the end, the administrator used the intervention for solving a genuine problem—that of crime. It does show the highly subjective nature of the expression "*zona mais carente*" and thus the subjective nature of the choice regarding which community will benefit from being assigned a PRA.

Mechanistic and uncritical use of tools and poor problem analysis

The PRA in Massaua consisted of a predetermined and fixed sequence of tools. The facilitators merely followed a recipe of a plenary meeting, six diagrams in smaller groups and a final plenary meeting with a ranking exercise. The information that was gathered was hardly inter-linked with the other information and, as such, making the diagrams often became an end in itself without being very useful for the rest of the process. The problem analysis was rather weak or almost non-existent; the issues that were mentioned during the

plenary on the first day only re-appeared on the last day when the ranking exercise had to be prepared. The diagrams that were made during the days in between seemed to be completely detached from the initial list of issues mentioned on the first day. This meant that the problems mentioned were hardly investigated in more detail during the week. No problem trees were made. Instead; shopping lists were made. For example, in Massaua, on the first day, people called for a maternity ward to add to the recently constructed health post. During the week, nobody from the team took the trouble to establish what problems were related to reproductive health.

Hardly any effort was made to study the issues raised, or to try to define the core problems, or their causes, or to discuss possible solutions. Most 'problems' were defined as: "there is a lack of….". This means that these 'problems' are in fact perceived solutions for certain (implicit) problems, although these may not be the most appropriate solutions. An example may make this clear. During a PRA in a community in Monapo district, the people complained of an infectious eye disease (conjunctivitis) and of diarrhoea, and stated their problem in terms of a "lack of a health post". However, the spread of both diseases can be explained to a large extent by a lack of sufficiently clean water. In other words, another solution may have been the access to clean water instead of the presumed lack of a health post. But according to the perception of the community, a health post would give them much more status than a well.

I discussed the issue of the poor problem analysis with the facilitator of the PRA in Massaua. He agreed and he had no difficulty whatsoever in actually making a proper problem tree, but he just did not regard it as necessary to pay much attention to it. As long as he satisfied the project by returning to Nampula with a shopping list ranked by the community, he had done a good job.

8.4   Project practices; District Consultative Council Meetings

According to the project document, the District Consultative Councils were supposed to provide platforms for facilitating dialogue between district administration and civil society. The project had launched this idea in the earlier phase of the project but it had never materialised. When we did our first evaluation in July 1997, the district administrators said they supported the idea of forming the councils, and they had started making lists of people to be invited. However, the start of the meetings had been postponed several times. In July 1997, their reason for the delay was the population census that was due for August of that year. But even after that date, the councils were never started up. The delays led me to believe that the administrators were not too keen on starting these platforms. In fact, there was no formal obligation for them to start such councils since there was no official policy or legislation, and District Administrators regarded the establishment of these councils very much as a project initiative.

By the time the new phase of the project started, in early 1998, project staff were able to refer to a document that gave the 'Guidelines' for the elaboration of the District Development Plan that had been published by the Ministries of State Administration and of Planning and Finance. This document "recommends the establishment of consultative forums" and that the "process of the elaboration of the District Development Plan will be launched publicly" (MPF/MAE 1998). According to these Guidelines "*Orientações*" the functions of this forum are (MPF/MAE 1998):

-    To contribute to the planning process by identifying major problems for the development of the district;
-    To define the strategy and prioritise actions to take;
-    To coordinate the actions of different intervening agencies in the district;
-    To collaborate in the dissemination of information on the Plan and to mobilise civil society to participate in its implementation;

- To monitor the implementation and propose solutions for the identified problems.

In fact, the British project manager had written this brochure in his previous post as an advisor to the Ministry of Planning and Finance. The brochure turned out to be extremely useful; project staff referred to this document, thus prescribing the district administration to 'launch' the process of district planning by organising a public meeting. This 'launch meeting' was then deemed as being the first meeting of the District Consultative Council. In this way, the project staff forced the district administrations to start such meetings.

I will now describe in detail two meetings that I attended by presenting parts of the reports I made during the evaluation exercise; these meetings are the first 'launch' meeting of the DCC in Memba, and the second DCC meeting in Monapo. These reports are followed by some more general observations regarding the District Consultative Councils and their place and role in the process of participatory district planning.

The first District Consultative Council meeting in Memba

The first meeting of the District Consultative Council of Memba, also referred to as the 'launch meeting' of the district planning process was scheduled to start at 8:00 a.m. on May 31, 2000. We arrived at 8:15 in the district and we were first invited by the district administrator to have breakfast at his home (in the *palácio*). A former provincial director who was planning an investment in the tourist industry in Memba and a colleague administrator of the neighbouring district Nacaroa, but at the same time an important businessman in the province, joined us at breakfast. After breakfast we went to a big hall on the beach. Around 100 people were already seated when we entered the hall at 9:10. The district administrator and project staff took their places behind the table with the red tablecloth. The walls were decorated with the flipcharts prepared by the technical team and most of the key persons such as the *Chefes do Posto* had been assigned their seats (indicated with small labels on the best chairs). There were not enough chairs for everybody but reed mats had been laid on the floor of the hall for those without a chair.

The meeting started with a roll call. There were only two women in the hall, one of them was a member of the technical team and the other was a white catholic nun. In terms of urban/rural distribution, a more representative sample of the population was present—about half of the people present resided in rural areas.

The administrator started by apologising for the delay in starting the meeting. He then introduced the staff from the province seated at the table and read his speech. In his speech, the administrator welcomed everyone and told them that the plan was a tool for permanent dialogue in the search for the best strategies for the development of the district. He stressed once more that the participation of all actors was crucial and called for a "*aproximação*" (literally = come closer together) of all layers of society.

The program was read out and then a cultural programme started in which a group of women dressed in colourful dresses sang and danced. This programme ended at 10:00, after which the members of the technical team presented the district profile. The presentation was done in Makua, the local language. The members of the technical team took turns in presenting. They presented on the basis of the tables and maps: the localisation of the district, the origin of the name of the district, the administrative division, number of government employees, receipts of the district, names of the *régulo*s, population density, health indicators, natural resources, rainfall, mineral resources, agricultural production, livestock, fisheries, industry, commerce, tourist potential, roads, water, electricity, health services, schools, crimes, and judicial system. For many of these items statistics were shown covering the previous four or five years. This took about an hour and at 11:00 this was followed by a summary in Portuguese lasting some ten minutes.

At this point, the floor was given to the project manager, who spoke in Portuguese and whose contribution was translated into Makua. He explained the objectives of the planning process, the character of the plan being territorial, multi-sectoral, strategic, realistic, and involving local dialogue. He then went on to explain how it would be made and who should be involved. Around 12:10, the following groups were formed: political parties, traditional authorities, NGOs, government and representatives of religious organisations. They had to answer two questions: Is the district plan worth the effort?, and: What can we contribute? The first question was a typical leading question, almost an 'open door'; all groups confirmed that it was worth it. Both questions had the function of gaining the collaboration of the people. All groups committed themselves by offering different possible contributions. Representatives of governmental departments said they could contribute transport, accommodation, and human resources. The political parties said that they could contribute by "co-ordination amongst us". The NGOs (Save the Children-USA and MS) said that funds in their current projects were already committed to certain activities but that in future projects they would be happy to support the initiatives of the district government as much as they could. In the meantime, they could help with photocopies, for example. The traditional authorities said they could contribute by "obeying the orders of the district government". The religious leaders said they could contribute by mobilizing people. Project staff reiterated that the elaboration of the plan was a task for the district, and that the provincial Department of Planning and Finance could provide some technical support but not on a full-time basis. Both the administrator and the project manager expressed their satisfaction that all had agreed to collaborate.

After a second cultural program with dances and songs, the meeting was closed at 14:00 by the district administrator, stressing once more the involvement of all in the process, the "full participation of civil society" and stressing that "Memba is of us all".

Both during the coffee break and at lunch after the meeting something interesting happened. While the district administrator talked of "coming together" in his welcome speech, he now seemed to want to underline the differences between the commons, the *povo,* and the more important people. When he and other VIPs walked out of the hall, everyone stood up and waited for them to leave first. Outside the hall we were taken with a group of about 20 other VIPs to a viewpoint about 100 meters from the hall, where we were invited to a coffee table and lunch. The rest of the audience had their break and lunch in the hall on the beach.

A representative of an NGO told us that relations between the district administration and the population were tense in this district. RENAMO had won the majority of the votes in the district and the district administrator was the frontrunner in the electoral campaign for FRELIMO. In a way, this type of meeting could have been useful to somehow minimise such tensions. And although the district administrator stressed the collaboration and talked of "getting together", this was not put into practice when the elite of the district took their rather copious lunch at a separate venue. When I commented that this was "a missed chance" to come closer to the "*povo*", the same NGO representative commented that alternatively it could equally be explained as a good opportunity for the district administrator to underline that he was in control. On the other hand, this initiative from the district administrator to pamper his guests could also be explained as a positive sign of ownership.

The second District Consultative Council meeting in Monapo

The second meeting of the District Consultative Council of Monapo took place on the May 30, 2000. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the strategy for the development of the District. The list of people invited contained 30 district government employees (either district or municipality), 16 representatives of NGOs and donors, nine district-capital based non-government employees (such as representatives of banks and the national telecommunications enterprise), nine representatives of the private sector, six provincial government staff, four *régulo*s and three church representatives. Of the 80 guests who were

invited, only seven came from the rural areas of the district. The *régulo*s, considered by many as the representatives of the rural people, hardly talked during the meeting. This was partly due to the fact that the entire meeting was held in the Portuguese language. Monapo has some major industries but the representatives of these companies did not show up. There were also very few women. Instead there were relatively many representatives of NGOs, mostly Nampula-city-based. Considering this list of people, the meeting appeared to be more a kind of donor conference than a consultative meeting with the civil society of the district. The administrator's interventions also showed that his agenda for this encounter was more to ask for support from potential donors rather than to discuss the supposed presented strategy with local actors. The sentence "we are still lacking funds and we need your help" was repeated several times in his speeches and in the invitation letter.

The majority of people had received a copy of the strategy that was summarised as "Development through better access and equilibrium". The document assigns priority to food security and improved road access. Furthermore, it prioritised the north of the district where the majority of the people live.

The meeting was scheduled to start at 8.00 a.m.. By 9.00 nothing had happened and the people that were present chatted and waited. At 9.00 the district administrator walked in, sat behind the table and opened the meeting. When the meeting started there were some 55 people present, four of whom were women.

The administrator apologised for the delay and read his speech. He talked of the history of the district planning process, the achievements made up till then ("five wells, two schools and two health posts"), the need to involve the civil society to "implement the strategy", and he called for support to "increase the ceiling" since the annual allocation from the LDF was not enough.

After that, a staff member of the project explained more about the history and the process of district planning, stressing the importance of the plan for the district and the fact that it should not be seen as a plan of the government alone but as a plan of the district.

Then all the people present introduced themselves by stating their name and the institution they represented. After this, a member of the technical team read out loud the strategy document that had been distributed beforehand. While the strategy was intended to present a vision and indicate priority problem areas in terms of sectors and geographical areas, the document was more a list of specific projects. There was even a budget for the rehabilitation of a road included as an appendix to the document. Winding up the presentation, the administrators added that the district capital would need a secondary school and that the cashew crop needed promotion, issues that were not clearly reflected in the strategy paper.

The participants were then divided into the following groups; traditional leaders, private sector, religious representatives, NGOs, and government staff. Each group then discussed the central question: What is lacking in the strategy? After about one hour the groups came back to the plenary session, where each group presented their results. What followed was a wide range of complaints, wishes, and suggestions. Many of these items were the result of brainstorming and a wide variety of issues were aired. Instead of a discussion of the strategy, the exercise resulted in a new 'shopping list' of desired new infrastructures. Many of the desired items would have benefited the district capital and not the rural areas, such as water supply and a secondary school. It was also apparent that many people tabled things in their (sectoral) interest without linking them to the document or to a kind of analysis or priority problems for the district. For example, the representative of the centre of sustainable development in Nampula brought up the point of pollution. The representative of an NGO that supports primary education wanted to draw attention to the low numbers of girls attending school, and the NGO promoting cashew trees complained of bush fires.

110

There was also severe criticism of the document. Some argued that the document was not really strategic because it should give a direction and not merely a list of projects. Several people thought the strategy lacked detail and that more work was needed on the document. It was weak in that it was not properly based on a thorough analysis of priority problems. Several people complained that the members of the technical team did not really empathise with the problems of the rural people. The document also contained several mistakes such as on the issue of land conflicts in Netia. The *chefe do posto* of Netia admitted that were many conflicts in his area but that these were not about land issues. The document was also criticised for stating that cotton production was the cause of hunger in the district. However, when we asked a member of the technical team the next day what they intended to do with the strategy document, he was wary of the criticism and he assumed that the meeting had endorsed the strategy.

General observations regarding the District Consultative Councils

The concept of a District Consultative Council (DCC) as it was presented in the project document implied a relatively formal organ that would contribute actively to the development planning. It was also implied that the DCC would provide for an independent council with members to represent their 'constituency'. In practice, this was not the case; the 'councils' were in fact public meetings during which the plans of the administration were presented. The role of the people who attended was rather passive. The DCC had no formal status and no decision-making powers.

The first ('launch') meeting was relatively unilateral; the major part was used to present the district profile and to explain the concept of the planning cycle. To a large extent, it served to gain support for the concept. The contributions from the people invited to this meeting was to answer the question of whether the plan would be worthwhile and what their contributions might be. There was no scope for an in-depth debate; the first meeting was rather a means for informing people and for obtaining their approval and agreements on future collaboration. Thus, it was more an effort to legitimise the actions of the technical team and the district administration. In the meeting in Monapo, we observed that, even though the team received severe criticism on the strategy paper, this criticism was not taken seriously. This made me wonder what the purpose of the meeting had been.

Project staff wanted the district administrator and the technical teams at the steering wheel. The administrator invited the participants and chaired the meetings. The technical team, composed of district officials, prepared the documents and the meetings. They presented the document, and the main flow of information during the meetings was from the team or from the administration to the people attending the meeting.

The people we interviewed and who had attended District Consultative Council meetings shared the view that the purpose of the meeting was to inform and consult civil society. Almost everyone who had been invited to the DCC and who we interviewed saw their role as either to inform or mobilise the group of people they represented but in a rather top-down manner. A *régulo* in Memba said: "We are ready to work with the government, we represent the people. When the government needs us, we will obey their orders". The religious leaders and some of the representatives of the NGOs perceived their role in a similar limited way; informing and mobilising the people they worked with. In addition to this, NGOs felt they were invited as potential providers of financial support.

The above means that the District Consultative Council was not perceived by the participants as a platform for making demands, as a way to demand transparency or certain services and/or information. Instead, communication was predominantly one-way, from the administration and project staff to the other participants. Generally speaking, the invitees to the DCC adopted a wait-and-see attitude. In some cases, there was little follow-up and those who had been present at the first meetings did not know what would happen next. In Malema

and Ribáue, more than a year had lapsed after the first 'launch' meeting. The people we talked to and who had attended the first Council meeting did not know what was going on. They also did not seem to be eager to find out or to demand a new meeting. Some said: "we are waiting for the invitation for the next meeting"[17].

The meetings were intended to represent the 'civil society' of the district. From 1997 onwards it had been assumed that this civil society would be properly represented by inviting *régulo*s and representatives of political and religious groups, NGOs, and the private sector. It is, however, rather difficult to get a clear picture as to the extent to which the interests of the rural population were being represented. As described in chapter 6, the position and status of the *régulo*s varies widely from place to place, and it is difficult to ascertain whether rural people would be properly represented in this way. From the beginning, the project struggled with this question of representation. In 1997, the project organised a stakeholder workshop to reflect on the possibilities to "create civil society structures" in order to bridge the gap between the activities of the project in the communities, the PRAs and the proposed District Consultative Councils at the district level. The idea that emerged was to create structures similar to the District Consultative Councils at the community level, the locality level, and the *posto administrativo* level. These are also outlined in the project document. Considering the fact that organising the DCC was already a major effort for the project, the project document appeared to be too ambitious in this respect. But it also meant that the gap between the work at the community level (PRAs) and the work at the district level (DCC) remained. Every now and again, questions regarding the representation of rural people popped up.

In the District Consultative Council meetings that we attended in Memba and Monapo, the level of participation of women was very low. In Monapo, the level of participation of the traditional leaders and other rural people was also very limited, but here the district administration had clearly used the meeting for another purpose—the agenda was not consultation of civil society but raising funds.

In many districts in Nampula, the political party RENAMO enjoyed strong support. This support is stronger in the rural areas and even more so in the districts near the coast. Political tensions were running high. In May 2000 for example, political tensions resulted in the death of five RENAMO supporters in Angoche. According to the national media, they had been killed by police bullets. The district administrators were spearheading the electoral campaign for FRELIMO, so there was no doubt as to their political allegiance. Relations between rural people and the district administration need to be seen in this context. In Monapo, no representatives of political parties were invited to the District Consultative Council. We talked to Monapo's RENAMO representative and he said that the district administration deliberately had a policy of "*ocultar*"—not informing—RENAMO and of excluding it from important issues.

The District Consultative Council could be used to reduce such tensions and to promote dialogue. But there is in fact little initiative for this from the side of government officials. In the rural areas district, administrators are firmly in command. In general, their attitudes are not conducive to improving dialogue; there often remains a clear divide between the 'elite' and the '*povo*'. The manner in which the two groups were kept apart during the coffee break and lunch in Memba was a good example of this attitude. On the other hand, this behaviour should be seen in the Mozambican cultural context in which hospitality and providing good food for important guests is considered important. The project definitely wants the district administration in the driver's seat, and the generous treatment of the guests in Memba was an

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[17] Interviews May 11, 2000, Ribáue

initiative of the district administrator. This could also be positively explained as a sign of ownership by the district administration of the process.

While there remains a wide divide between the governors and those being governed, and while civil society does not seem to be coming forward in a forceful way, the crucial question of course is whether the initiative contributes to an empowerment of the rural people. Does the establishment of the DCC create any new space? And if so, do people want to use this space? Both sides seem to remain extremely cautious. The district administration was cautious in giving any space, keeping the process firmly in its own control. But people attending the meetings were not very keen to use the space made available to them; they remained rather passive. Empowerment was rather limited since learning was limited, the process did not lead to any agenda setting, mobilisation or action by local people to change their existing situation. The way local people participated can be better described as participation as a means; local people were at most consulted in an effort to make better district plans.

8.5 Project practices: Installing an LDC

The project concentrated on planning and disbursement mechanisms for the use of the Local Development Fund, and less was done in terms of empowerment and civil society participation. Although representative structures were planned at the *Posto* and locality levels, in the end only the DCCs materialised in the way described in the previous section. Throughout 1999, attempts had been made by project staff to create structures at *Posto Administrativo* level, similar to the District Consultative Councils. The few meetings that took place, however, remained a one-off activity. For such a meeting, project staff invited local people, they explained the idea of the project, and at the end the meeting the people who were present were told that they would now form the CCPA—the Consultative Council of the *Posto Administrativo.* No follow-up was made to these meetings.

However, there was still a wide divide between the work at the district level with the technical (governmental) team on the one hand, and the work in the communities, and the PRAs on the other. The question of representation of rural people was brought up regularly. Every now and again, project staff struggled with the question of how to bridge the divide between the residents of rural communities and the district administration. The project had worked well on the institutionalisation within the government system, but community participation had been given lower priority by project management. Compared to similar projects in Mozambique, Condy, and Negrão we can conclude that the project achieved a closer rapport with the authorities but less so with the local population and civil society (1999, 14). The District Consultative Council was intended to represent 'civil society' but as we read in the previous section, many doubts about its representativeness remained unanswered. Especially the Mozambican project staff was concerned with these issues of representation, referring to it in several internal memos. In the first years of a project whenever a PRA was done, a so-called local working group was selected and trained to join as facilitator in the PRA. This group had more the character of a contact group and as a group helping to facilitate the PRAs rather than being a representative body of that community. One of the suggestions of the Mozambican staff was to transform these members into agents for community development, which could then gradually evolve into a local (Community) Consultative Council. Another suggestion was to give traditional authorities more recognition and power.

But in 2000, project staff decided to take another direction; the formation of Local Development Committees (LDCs). The NGOs SNV and CONCERN were already working with this concept in the province Nampula, and the project decided to adopt it and start

"installing LDCs". I will now describe two similar events in which project staff set up such an LDC.

The formation of the LDC in Napacala

In June 2000, a team of project facilitators and district staff set out for Muecate district to—as they formulated it—"*montar um CDL*", to install, or to set up an LDC, the first in the project area. This was done after the completion of a PRA. The team organised a regular three-day PRA. During the PRA the concept of LDC was not discussed with the local population. On the last day of the PRA, four interest groups (leaders, men, women, and youth) were formed to do the ranking exercise (see section on PRA). Only 22 men and 7 women attended this last day. After 'voting' the priorities in each of these groups, the facilitator asked each group to choose four members amongst themselves. Little or no explanation was given; the only advice they received was to choose people who "are able to defend the interests of your group". In the group of young people, no one seemed to come forward as a volunteer but after some finger pointing four were selected. The other three groups also selected four people. A plenary session followed, in which the facilitator presented the results of the ranking exercise. According to the ranking exercise, the leaders and the women had the maize mill as priority number one while the youth and adult men had "commerce" as top priority. In the totals, the "maize mill" came out as the first priority followed by "commerce" and "health". "Water" was sixth on the list. However, during the plenary a discussion emerged between the women and some of the men, who argued that in fact water should be number one[18] while the others maintain that the maize mill should remain as top priority. The discussion became tougher and the facilitator cut the discussion short by saying that the community now had an LDC and this committee would have to resolve this. He then asked the people who had been selected in the sub-groups to stand up and present themselves as the LDC, being the "people who will now work for the well-being of the community". This was followed by applause. The facilitator closed the meeting and asked the newly established LDC to remain behind. Within this smaller group, the facilitator explained what their main tasks were to be: ensuring a harmonious development of the community and helping the government structures in finding ways to resolve the problems that affect their community. The facilitator added that this committee was not created to replace the existing structures of governance but that they were intended to work together with the local leaders. Although the *régulo* was not 'elected' as a member of the LDC, he remained present at this extra meeting. When the question arose as to who the chairman should be, the *régulo* intervened and appointed the chairman for the LDC.

The formation of the LDC in Nequessa

The LDC in Nequessa was also formed at the very end of a PRA, this one lasting five days. Here again, it was hardly explained what the LDC would involve and what its role and responsibilities would be. Here we witnessed that the *Presidente da Localidade* heavily influenced the composition of the committee.

The PRA had ended with the usual matrix ranking of priorities in four groups, leaders (men), other men, women, and youth. The facilitator asked these same groups to select four members amongst themselves to "discuss the community development plan". In the group of women, it was proposed that it would be better to have an anonymous vote using a list of candidates, putting it behind a tree where each woman could go and vote. However, the facilitator rejected this idea. The men discussed two options; a community leader would appoint the

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[18] It could be that some men (leaders) voted for the maize mill since they simply followed the *régulo* who gave most votes to the mill. In the plenary the same men later argued that water was the most important priority.

people or they would ask for volunteers. In the end, four men presented themselves as volunteers. In the group of leaders, the *presidente da localidade* appointed the four people.

The facilitators compiled a list of names of the sixteen people who had thus been selected, and handed it over to the *presidente da localidade* for approval. He made several changes, replacing some names with others. He justified this by saying that some of the people selected were not capable of solving community problems. For instance, in the list of men, the *presidente* removed one of the names. One of the facilitators asked: "What should I put here to replace this name?" and a member of the local working group and thus co-facilitator said "put my name". In this way, 16 people were eventually selected and in the end all four members of the local working group or local facilitators became part of the LDC.

A member of the project staff closed the session. He explained that it was the end of the PRA and that the people now selected would form the LDC and would keep the matrices and maps produced during the PRA. He also explained that LDC would work directly with the community in terms of planning. He added that the constitution of the LDC did not imply that the already existing structures or institutions would lose their power. Finally, he asked the *presidente da localidade* to close the meeting. The *presidente* addressed the newly selected LDC saying that, "you have been chosen to organise people and not to promote confusion. Who does not feel able must say it now. This is not party-political work". He thanked the PRA team and stated that the community was now ready to work together.

Some observations regarding LDCs

With the 'installation' of LDCs, project staff hoped to close the gap between the community and district levels. In a UNCDF document, the LDC was justified by stressing "the need for the establishment of more permanent representative community structures (such as an LDC) to provide an on-going interface between civil society and the district government" (UNCDF 2000, 137).

The whole idea of setting up an LDC was the idea of project staff, and the 'how' and 'when' was in the hands of the outsiders. People were selected because the participants on the last day of the PRA were told by project staff to do so. 'Volunteers' were hardly aware of what they were being selected for. The explanation of what their tasks would be only followed after the selection of the committee. People obeyed the instructions of the facilitators but it is unlikely that the outcomes were representative and self-governing institutions. The extent to which the people were motivated to form this LDC is highly questionable since the persons were designated by others, and in most cases did not come forward as volunteers. No checking was done to assess whether these people, selected in four separate groups, would be willing and able to work together. We can therefore say that these committees were largely imposed on the communities.

The project staff facilitating the PRA used the newly established LDC cleverly; A difficult debate in Napacala, on what 'the priority' should be, water or the mill, was simply bounced back to the LDC by the facilitator. In other words, this type of devolution to the LDC was handy in the sense that it freed the project staff from having to deal with difficult discussions and conflicts.

But the facilitators apparently also felt awkward by this imposition, especially on touching the sensitive issue of power structures. They were quick to add that the formation of the LDC did not imply replacing existing local leaders. Local leaders, in Napacala the local *régulo* and in Nequessa the *Presidente da Localidade,* did indeed take action in order to show who really was in charge. In both cases, these powerholders undertook efforts to maintain their control over these new 'representative bodies' or 'civil society structures'.

8.6 Other observations on discourses and practices

What happened to our 1997 report?

In our 1997 report, we recommended that the project should define better what they wanted to do with the PRAs. We argued that a PRA could be used to achieve much more than just a ranked shopping list. We criticised the rather uncritical manner in which the visual techniques had been used. Our report also discussed the dilemma of the need for qualified staff if the project were to decide to improve the quality of the PRAs. By expanding to 14 districts, almost by default the project chose to increase quantity instead of quality. The responsibility for doing the PRAs shifted from project staff to district staff, who were in general less qualified and less experienced.

Although our report was presented to UNCDF in July 1997, for a long time no attention was paid to it. It was only when I was interviewed by the mission that was evaluating the Mozambique program as part of the overall evaluation of the global UNCDF program in March 1999 that the report popped up again, although the document appeared to be difficult to find in the Maputo and Nampula offices of UNCDF and DPPF. The evaluation of the UNCDF programme in Mozambique turned out to be quite negative and, amongst other things, the project was blamed for not having addressed much of the criticism in our 1997 report (Condy and Negrão 1999). The project was criticised by the evaluation mission in 1999 in that staff should have been more open and honest on the difficulties it encountered:

> *"....insufficient attention is given to obstacles and constraints in establishing DCC, and problems raised concerning the role of PRA in planning. We do fully recognize the difficulties UNCDF faces in promoting participatory decentralised planning in the present political context in Mozambique, but feel that the organisation would do better to address these problems more openly and strategically" (Condy and Negrão 1999, 18).*

This addressing the problems more openly led to a more reflective and more critical annual report of 1999. Still, via the evaluation of Condy and Negrão it had become clear to headquarters in New York that the new phase of the project had paid little attention to the objectives directed to "popular, or civil society participation". Headquarters asked critical questions and the project manager undertook several activities to pay renewed attention to the participatory aspects of the project. He was however in a difficult position in trying to satisfy both the Mozambican government, which was interested in the building of more infrastructures, and the demands for good governance and civil society participation made by the donor (Jackson, pers. comm. February 2003).

PRA new style?

In a response to the above, the project manager set out to launch a new-style PRA. After an internal debate and training sessions, the whole project staff set out to the district Nacala-Velha to test the new methodology. The main innovation was that the fixed recipe of seven tools was abandoned in favour of a toolbox approach. The range of tools was widened to more than 20, and staff were taught to make a more cautious and selective use of these tools depending on the situation and information needs.

This did in some ways improve the quality of the PRA in that it forced the facilitator to reflect on what he or she might be doing. In both the PRAs we attended later in Nepacala and Nequessa, project staff did use this toolkit approach to some extent by making reasoned choices for using a particular technique. What did not change was the whole way of doing PRA in a largely technique-driven fashion. Furthermore, all exercises remained rather extractive and the 'problems' were still hardly problematised. Although in Nequessa a clear effort was made to

deepen the analysis of the problems, in the end the ranking exercise did not differ much from the uncritical manner of 'problem' definition as it was done in 1997. For example, problems related to school attendance had been discussed but in the end, it was only the "lack of improved school" that appeared (again) in the ranking exercise (Cavane 2000).

PRA: what's in a name?

The role of PRAs and community participation in the decentralised district planning process remained unclear, and it was doubtful whether the PRAs would have a role to play in the future. Once districts were able to finalise their District Development Plan, this plan would indicate the priorities. To what extent PRA would then still be used to update the plan was not yet clear. Very little reference to PRA was made in the project document . Neither was it clear who would pay for the PRAs after the project stopped. The work depended on technical and logistical support (vehicle and allowances) from the project.

In fact, the number of PRAs was already decreasing, only six PRAs took place between June 1999 and June 2000. Other tendencies were that the PRA became shorter and district staff became more and more responsible for the PRAs. In the 1997 situation, the PRA lasted for one week, while in 2000 the PRA took on average two or three days. The one in Mavili (see section 8.3) took only half a day.

In some of the project documents, the concept of PRAs was abandoned altogether. Instead it referred to "meetings under the tree". So when I asked the project manager whether the PRAs had been abolished, he replied:

> *"PRAs have not been abolished. The PRA toolbox has been dissembled and made available to the districts as a planning tool for them to use in their everyday work. It is better to think of all the sub-district level meetings as PRAs of some form or another. They all use these tools to a greater or a lesser extent. The investment programming meetings in the first part of the year still resemble a classic PRA. The strategic planning meetings, around the district plan, use many PRA tools but look at strategic issues."*

In other words; what's in a name? It was assumed that district staff would use the PRA tools and in doing so, all meetings in the district from then onwards were considered to be a PRA. This made the definition of what a PRA should be very broad. By broadening the definition of PRA, they could still argue that they were doing PRA. Later, the project manager explained that it was like making a choice between high quality, but time-consuming and expensive PRAs, and accepting lower quality and having (parts of) the methodology incorporated into the normal procedures of district staff. He opted for the latter so that the consultation was better institutionalised giving the local officials the opportunity to establish a "habit of dialogue rather than having a definite PRA methodology" (Jackson, pers. comm. April 2003).

The paper by the UNCDF planning advisor

It is interesting to note that many concerns that I have raised in the previous sections were also reflected in a paper written by a senior advisor working at the headquarters of UNCDF in New York, and who had advised, amongst other LDF projects, the Nampula project (Romeo 1999). The intention of these papers was to get UNCDF staff to reflect on practice without any predetermined format, and outside the formal reporting procedures of monitoring, evaluations, and technical reviews. It seemed that only then did it become possible to voice certain concerns, critical observations, and personal opinions that are not found in the more formal and standard reporting cycles.

For example, he acknowledged that concepts such as 'local', 'participation', 'community' and 'planning from below' are contested in that several actors may attribute different meanings to these concepts. The paper furthermore acknowledges how difficult it is to

effectively build-in participation, and use methods such as PRA. He writes how local leaders or politicians often have an aversion to participatory planning since these this may generate a high demand and expectations from the local population.

Romeo also writes about the risks of allowing the local elite to capture the decentralisation process and thus highlighting the need for a better understanding of the local power structures and dynamics. For this and other reasons, Romeo is in favour of talking of "maximal feasible degree of grassroots participation" (p.34). For him, this means that the lowest planning unit will probably be the district and not the community level. He foresees "platforms for dialogue" (such as the DCCs in Mozambique) and hastens to write that the potential of these structures should not be overstated (Romeo 1999, 33). Other limitations of grassroots participation are mentioned: 1) lack of clear and legal mandate, 2) lack of trained staff and, 3) lack of financial resources.

Romeo also considered the fact that such processes are donor-driven as a "powerful obstacle" (Romeo 1999, 19). Donor projects are too often perceived as "temporary exercise to access one-time benefits of external origin". "This may try to push too much money too quickly through a still weak locally run system, and replace the emphasis on capacity building with a focus on infrastructure delivery" (Romeo 1999, 19). Finally, Romeo underscores the political dimensions of decentralisation efforts and stresses the commitment and ability of the central state, and the attitudes of local political leaders as important success factors (Romeo 1999, 17).

However, I do not agree with all observations made by Romeo in his paper . He cites Mozambique as a positive example where the central authorities have a clear commitment to develop and institutionalize local district planning. One could also regard the commitment so far as only consisting of lip service, since by 2000 no official policies or legislation were in place to support the decentralisation process. Perhaps more importantly, the central government had not allocated any financial resources to district level that would give a clear signal of such commitment towards decentralisation. Instead, the (donor-funded) LDF funds remained the most important incentive for the provincial and district administration to collaborate.

How seriously dedicated towards community participation?

Romeo touched on some critical points that had not been expressed in official project documentation. The project manager in Nampula was also rather critical—or one can say rather realistic—about the possibilities of participation by local people. At least this is what he confided to me when I talked to him in a more informal setting, outside the official, project-related meetings. On that occasion, it appeared that his personal opinion differed from what he espoused on more official occasions. In the 4th Progress Report however, his critical stance towards PRA also emerged. He writes that "PRA has become a mantra for some" and, "If handled badly, this approach further weakens government legitimacy whilst actually disempowering people". He states that poor people do not have time to participate, and that when projects start doing PRA directly in communities, like NGOs tend to do, the government is left out (UNCDF/DPPF 1999, 19).

Just as with the paper by Romeo, it seemed that the official project discourse as, for example, presented in the project document, did not necessarily coincide with the opinions of the senior staff members of the organisation. Romeo found it more important to get the training and procedures for the planning and finance mechanisms at the district and province levels in place (Romeo 1999, 46: footnote 5). The project was successful in terms of institutionalisation; the procedures were well aligned with existing government procedures. Additionally, they did not want to work in an NGO mode by stressing community

development and community empowerment, they would rather try to open up government structures.

There were several signals that less attention was paid to the participatory work on community level. Our report of 1997 was 'mislaid' and only taken seriously after another evaluation mission got hold of it and when headquarters posed questions. The recruitment of a member of staff responsible for participation took place a year later than planned. Since this person was under-qualified for the demands of the position, we were asked to provide backstopping for this person but this eventually never materialised. Project management provided little backstopping in the PRAs and other activities below district level. The project manager participated only once in a PRA that was supposed to overhaul the methodology.

This may also explain why the link between the PRA work, which continued in the communities, and the strategy and District Development Plan, that were formulated by the technical team and the district administration, remained weak. On the other hand, the project manager could not stop with the PRA work at the community level altogether. First there was the inheritance from the previous project in which the PRA was the only mechanism for identifying infrastructural projects and thus for determining the spending of the LDF. Secondly, evaluation missions and officials in the headquarters reminded him to pay more attention to community participation issues (Wambold-Liebling and Stanley 2000).

Delays and lack of commitment by government staff

In 1996, the project started as a pilot project in three districts. By 2000, 14 districts were applying the methodology of the project. District staff, organised in a technical team, spearheaded the elaboration of the District Development Plan. The project envisaged that making such a plan would take about nine months but in practice it took much longer. In this section, we will look into some of the possible reasons for these delays and especially to the issue of ownership of governmental staff at various levels.

In 1999, the project started using an 'assimilation index'. It was used internally to measure the extent to which individual government staff, or even the whole district, had grasped the concept of decentralised district planning[19]. A scale of 1 to 5 was used, ranging from 1 meaning not worth investing in, to 5 meaning that the project could withdraw support since staff was able to do it without outside assistance. There was no objective yardstick for measuring this; it was based on the qualitative impression by project staff working in that particular district. From the table below, which was made by the project in August 1999, we can observe that progress in the districts has been far from uniform; some districts that started only recently are ahead of districts that had been covered by the project since 1996.

Table 7 Assimilation index of the different districts

District	How many years has the project been active in the district?	Assimilation Index
Mecuburi	3	4
Muecate	3	2
Monapo	3	2
Malema	2	3
Ribáue	2	3
Lalaua	2	2
Angoche	2	3

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[19] In a technical Review mission report by UNCDF-HQ staff, it was proposed to change assimilation into appropriation since the concept of assimilation implied too much of a passive way of doing what they are told to do.

Mogincual	1	2
Mogovolas	1	3
Nacala a Velha	1	3
Nacaroa	1	2
Memba	1	2

Key: 1 = "not worth investing in any further" , 2 = "District government staff show an interest but do not understand the rules of the game" , 3 = "District staff understand the nature of the programme and the rules of the game, district is on the right track", 4 = "District staff do have more or less the capacities, so that the programme would not suffer seriously if project staff were to leave now" , 5 = "District staff understand everything and project staff can leave"

By mid-2000. only two districts had managed to produce a District Development Plan—Angoche and Mecuburi. Angoche did not organise the three meetings of the Consultative Councils, so only Mecuburi went by the book. Mecuburi district was different from many others in that there were several important actors involved in development activities such as Care, the Catholic church, a Swiss project, and a Canadian NGO. In addition, they had already created a kind of forum before the DCC started.

A typical explanation given by government staff for the delays in the other districts was the lack of time available. Work on the district plan was often seen as an extra task. Staff transfers were another recurrent explanation; in many districts progress was hindered because members of the technical team who had been trained by the project were transferred to districts outside the area covered by the project. The presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of 1999 were also often mentioned as a cause for delays.

Project staff however added another cause for the delays—a lack of commitment, interest and ownership on the part of district governments in many districts. In many cases. the blame was put on the attitude of the district administrator. Again the picture varies for each district. Monapo and Muecate were examples where the district administrators were not active at all and where the process met with severe delays . These administrators regarded district planning mainly as an initiative of the project and waited for the project staff to take initiative and give the answers. According to the project official responsible for Monapo district, the administrator was after financial gain. He said; "the administrator of Monapo first saw the project as a source of money, but when he realised later that the system of disbursement was very transparent, he lost interest". Another sign that district staff did not consider the activities related to district planning as their task but rather as a project activity was that, on several occasions, district staff asked for allowances.

Malema and Ribáue were examples of districts that adopted the concept of district planning much faster. The administrators of these two districts also made it explicit that the project helped them politically; they felt that thanks to the project, they could do something meaningful for the people in their district.

There were however also serious doubts as to the extent to which the central and provincial governments were really committed to decentralised district planning, and thus towards the sustainability of the project (see also Condy and Negrão, 1998). There was no clear commitment from national government to deploy the necessary human and financial resources to guarantee the sustainability of the decentralised district planning. Especially the Ministry of Planning and Finance paid lip service to decentralisation, with concrete actions constantly being delayed. Local elections were limited to bigger towns. Even decentralisation from national to provincial level is minimal. Between 1994 and 1998 the provincial discretionary investment grant had steadily increased from 8 to 16 billion MT[20]. The project

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[20] Early 2000, one billion MT was the equivalent of around 70,000 US dollars.

had envisioned that these funds would allow additions to the LDF funds, in order to guarantee financial sustainability. However from 1998 to 2000 these funds plummeted back to 10 billion MT (Jackson 2000). By 1998, the World Bank and other donors had embraced the Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs) and, as a consequence, more money was channelled via the line ministries. Provinces had less money to spend on investments and districts also saw their discretionary funds diminish.

The project did have the full support of the provincial director of Finance and Planning, however. Project staff suggested that they had support from the rest of the provincial government but it appeared that this support was also highly ambiguous. For example, the project had difficulties obtaining the collaboration of the provincial department of State Administration. The project especially needed more collaboration of this department of State Administration (Department of Support and Control) since this department directly supervised the district administrators. The project wanted their support to 'enforce' the administrators to collaborate in the district planning process or to replace the ones that did not collaborate. According to project staff, this department only contributed 'on paper'. The department of State Administration was very sensitive to anything that encouraged representation. This would stir up the debate on the sensitive role of local leaders such as the 'traditional authorities', *régulo*s and secretaries. This was also probably the reason that, by 2000, the promised legislation on local organs, proposing the creation of a District Consultative Council had languished for years in draft form[21].

In 1999, the provincial governor wrote a paper on decentralisation but this paper remained rather vague. He wrote about the municipalities that were already in existence, and mentioned the possible involvement of traditional power (referring to the *régulo*s), but he did not make any concrete suggestions as to how to proceed with the decentralisation process. Neither did he mention the experience of DPPF at all (Mualeia 1999). It appeared that the level of ownership of the project initiatives by the provincial governor was rather low.

The use of the Guidelines; constructing 'ownership'

Aware of the lack of ownership and commitment of large sections of government bureaucrats, project staff had to justify and legitimise their project constantly. The booklet "*Orientações*" or "Guidelines" was instrumental in doing so. It describes the methodology for arriving at a District Development Plan. This booklet had been published with the consent of the Ministries of State Administration and of Planning and Finance, and bore the logo of the Mozambican Government on its cover. While no legislation or official policy regarding the formulation of the District Development Plan and/or the consultation of civil society existed, the document was presented by project staff as being the 'policy' of the Ministry. Thus, it was used to legitimise the intervention and to give the idea that the concept was owned by the Mozambican government. In fact, the booklet had been written by two British nationals, one of whom was the project manager. The co-author told me: "Let's face it, if this thing is pushed along so far, it's because he and I sat down and wrote those guidelines and had the persistence enough to push until somebody produced and authorized it"[22].

UNCDF headquarters copied this discourse of the project manager; "….the DCC is an organisation that has been established with guidance from the Guidelines of the Ministry of Planning and Finance…. There is general acceptance of their relevance to the Mozambican decentralised planning process. No one has argued against having DCC as advisory bodies to the District Administration" (Wambold-Liebling and Stanley 2000, 22). In the compilation of the evaluations of several UNCDF projects in 2000, can be read: "In 1998, the government of Mozambique established guidelines for district development planning…" (UNCDF 2000, 36). The text of the country-specific section starts with: "In September 1998, the Ministry of Planning

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[21] Only early 2003 a bill on local representation was passed by parliament.
[22] Interview with the co-author Mr. Fozzard, 8/12/99.

and Finance and the Ministry of State Administration issued a set of Orientations…" (UNCDF 2000, 132). UNDCF documents often stressed that the project procedures would be in line with government policies; "…partner governments (e.g. Mozambique) have recognised these participatory development interventions as legitimate and effective tools (e.g. PRA)" (Luche 1998, 5). Thus, the Guidelines were presented as a sign of ownership of the district planning concepts by the Mozambican Government.

Project staff also generated publicity for their project stating that the National Government wanted to upscale the methodology used in Nampula. Amongst others, the technical review mission stated that the Ministry has asked the project to edit and publish the training manuals that were being developed in the project (Wambold-Liebling and Stanley 2000, 7). In fact, I discovered in the project correspondence that this 'request' was in fact an answer by the Ministry to a letter from the project with a request to do so (edit and publish the training manuals). In other words, project and UNCDF staff made it appear that the government had taken the initiative while in fact it was the project that had taken the initiative. As also shown with the Guidelines booklet, project staff knew how to manipulate such documents in order to obtain approval of ,and create ownership over, the ideas by government representatives.

On several occasions during the evaluation exercise, project staff stressed the issue of ownership, making the project look like a Mozambican project. On two occasions, the project organised so-called 'National Stakeholder Workshops' for the preparation of the mid-term evaluation. The stakeholders were the Mozambican government (Ministries of State Administration and of Planning and Finance) and donors (UNCDF, UNDP and the Dutch Government). I was present on both occasions. The Mozambican representation was rather poor, they either did not show up or came late, and in most cases junior staff were sent who hardly knew the project and who had little or nothing to contribute. In fact, these 'National' workshops turned out to be no more than meetings attended almost exclusively by expatriates. However, when depicting the Monitoring and Evaluation exercise, project staff presented the evaluation as a process in which the Mozambican Government was "fully involved".

UNCDF staff showed that they did not mind bending the truth in order to make the project sound more politically correct or in order to satisfy headquarters. While preparing the evaluation, I had commented on the draft Terms of Reference that talked of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). Since I understood that the Terms of Reference proposed a rather extractive exercise, and since there was no plan to do any sharing and analysing of the results with the target group, I suggested calling it simply M&E instead of PM&E. The UNCDF desk officer in Maputo replied to me in an email stating: "I see your point, however, UNCDF Headquarters is really into PM&E. What do we have to change minimally, according to your perception, to be able to call this PM&E?"

8.7   Summary and preliminary analysis

Considering the extremely difficult context of a history of top-down administration, high political tensions, and low human capital at the district level, it is remarkable what the project did achieve in terms of training government staff and in the formulation of district plans. Still, it was far from what had been proposed in the rather ambitious project document. The achievements consisted mainly of getting the planning machinery going at district level; the hardware, technology of planning, and the procedures for spending funds for investments. The project had a rather active and inspiring project manager. In fact, he was to a large extent the designer of the district

planning procedures in Mozambique and he knew how to sell the concept. He legitimised the approach by referring to a booklet written by himself as if it were official Mozambican policy. In this way, he made it appear as if government owned the process. But the governmental support that existed was largely limited to showing interest or paying lip service. This support was not translated into providing the means (staff and money) for decentralisation to district level.

Commitment to the process by governmental district staff varied widely per district. Delays and the lack of commitment in some of the districts may have had something to do with the fact that the concept was largely regarded as project—or donor—driven. The money in the LDF functioned as a carrot to lure district administrators into starting the process of district planning.

The project document and the way in which the project was presented were highly politically correct in aiming for good governance and promoting 'civil society participation'. This was the donor's agenda , but opinions varied regarding the extent to which local people would be enabled to play a role. Relatively more attention was paid to the institutional embedding at the provincial and district levels. Community participation below these levels received less attention. For example, there had been little effort to define the precise role of PRA in the process. There was even outright confusion among UNCDF staff of what its role should be. PRA seemed to be a remnant of the previous project phase and, as long the district plan had not yet been finalised, mainly seen as a tool for identifying new investments, typically buildings for a school or a health post or a water-well. The PRAs served as an extractive tool for deriving a wishlist, and it is unlikely that these practices would lead to empowerment or mobilisation of local people. We also observed what could be called 'bad' PRA practices. The PRAs consisted of a sequence of tools that were used in a rather uncritical manner and problems were often framed in the form of: "there is a lack of…". These 'problems' were hardly probed or further investigated. The PRA methodology was revamped through the range of PRA techniques being broadened and the choice for a certain technique or tool better justified. However, the results were not much different to what had happened before the revamp in that the major outcome of the PRA remained the ranked wishlist of what kinds of infrastructures of bricks and mortar should be built in that specific community. Since there was no proper analysis of root causes and no review of alternative solutions, it is questionable whether the investments were actually tackling the really urgent problems.

According to the discourses of project and local government, the process of identifying the area and the local priorities for investments seems to be objective and politically correct. However, we observed that the selection of the *'zona mais carente'*, the most needy part of the district, and thus the community that would benefit, was not transparent. The decision as to where to work next was taken by the district administrator, and on several occasions the interventions were used to obtain political support in those areas.

The idea of a District Development Council with formal membership was abandoned. Instead, public meetings were organised in which initiative remained in the hands of the district administration while those invited had a rather passive attitude towards these meetings. The question of how representative these forums actually were kept recurring. Women were poorly represented in these meetings. In some districts, RENAMO representatives were invited but in other districts they were not. We also observed cases where district administrators used these council meetings to show who was in charge by underlining the distance between the local elite and the "*povo*", the locals.

In an effort to close the gap between the community and district levels, the project started to install Local Development Committees (LDCs). These were intended to be representative community structures but were in fact largely imposed by the project and immediately co-opted by the people already in power.

9 Three Other Cases

In this chapter I will present three other cases of participatory development interventions in rural districts in Mozambique. The three projects concerned were all implemented by NGOs. This chapter is somewhat different from the previous two chapters for two reasons. In the first place, my involvement in these cases was much shorter and less intensive. These cases are more snap-shots in time while the two major cases described in the previous two chapters were projects that I was involved with over a period of several years. Secondly, each of these three minor case studies highlight a special issue; they therefore add extra (unique) value to my thesis. This also means that not all the research questions for these cases were answered. I have deliberately limited the amount of information to avoid making the text too dense.

The first section (9.1) describes one of the first experiences in Mozambique with community land delimitation, an exercise whose objective it was to enable communities to obtain a more formal control over the natural resources in their area. The uniqueness of this case is that PRA was made official procedure as part of national legislation around the new land law. This case also shows how 'bad practices' are related to a lack of commitment, flexibility, PRA training/experience on the part of many NGO staff members. These 'bad practices', especially poor problem analysis and a method of ranking/voting that raised high expectations, are also a theme in the second minor case. This case (in section 9.2) describes the experiences of the NGO CONCERN setting up local development committees (LDCs) that were to play a role in the decentralisation process of Machaze district. This case is however especially unique for the way in which the NGO imposed these LDCs. It also highlights how CONCERN staff and the LDC members have completely different perspectives on the role and function of the committee. The third minor case (9.3), about a PRA that Save the Children Fund (UK) wanted to organise in Mepinha, is unique in that the PRA never took place, since it was obstructed by local power-holders alleging that the team had come to install FRELIMO party structures.

9.1 Community Land Delimitation in Nicoadala

As discussed earlier in chapter 6, the intention of the new land law of 1997 was to achieve two apparently contradictory objectives; to attract (foreign) investments and to safeguard the rights to land and other natural resources of the millions of rural dwellers. To achieve the latter, the law made a provision for communities to delimit their land and obtain a kind of certificate. Within this delimited land, customary right would continue to provide the mechanisms for regulating access to natural resources. The aim of community land delimitation is to enable the community to negotiate 'partnerships' with outside investors on the use of natural resources. The methodology of community land delimitation was tested in different locations in the country throughout 1998 by different organisations.

The concept of community was a new concept in Mozambican legislation and this provoked much debate. The definition of community that was eventually adopted in the law was rather broad and vague since it had to cover the wide Mozambican diversity. It did however also mean that many questions remained unanswered such as: How can communities be delimited? Who will determine these limits? How can equitable land access be guaranteed within the communities? Who are legitimate and representative leaders? Who should manage the natural resources in the community, and who is supposed to negotiate then with outside investors? All these questions were simply pushed aside by the assumption that customary law works well and by the statement that "communities should auto-define themselves". And PRA was assumed to be the ideal method for performing this 'auto-definition' (see also section 6.4). By the end of 1998, the technical annex associated with the land law was

published. This document defined methodology for community land delimitation in which PRA played a central role. It was at this point that several NGOs in the country started to work with communities to delimit their land.

ORAM and the land tenure project

One of the organisations that had been involved in community land delimitation since the beginning of the discussions on the new land law is ORAM; *Organização Rural de Ajuda Mútua* (Rural Organisation for Mutual Help). ORAM is a Mozambican NGO that was established in 1992. Its central objective is to support rural communities, and more specifically to secure the rights of smallholders to land and other natural resources (ORAM 1999b). ORAM is one of the organisations that played an active role in the discussions during the formulation of the land law and, after it had been approved, was active in promoting and disseminating the new land law. As one of the few larger Mozambican NGOs, the organisation experienced a rapid growth in its short life span, mainly thanks to a number of foreign donors willing to support its activities. In 1995, ORAM started activities in Zambezia. In 1998, the NGO initiated a collaborative project with a multi-million DFID-funded World Vision project on Agricultural Development and the provincial Services for Geography and Land Registration. According to the log frame, this project had the following objectives:

1) increased community awareness of the new land law;
2) systems and procedures established that enable rural communities to secure tenure to their land [by far the most important considering the list of activities under this second objective, BP];
3) improved co-operation between government, NGOs, and the private sector;
4) partnerships established between communities and investors (World Vision/ORAM 1999, 3-6).

One of the outputs as defined in this project document was to delimit the land of 48 communities in a period of three years. ORAM was to do the fieldwork with the communities. In order to achieve this, the NGO had to employ dozens of new staff to do the job. Most of these people lacked any prior experience with land delimitation or PRA. Two colleagues of mine and myself were invited to help out in the training of the staff on PRA. Since ORAM had already started with community land delimitation we decided to adopt a two-step approach. We first observed a PRA; this was the one in Terepano in November 1999. About four months later, in April 2000, we gave a classroom-based training course followed by a PRA in the community Mucelo-Novo. Below I describe both PRAs and the events that took place in the period between them.

The PRA in Terepano

Terepano is both the name of a *regulado* and the name of a *círculo*. Regulado is the Colonial administrative entity while the *círculo* (circle) is part of the (post-independence) structure of FRELIMO. The actual *régulo* is also the *secretário*. With these perfect overlaps, the case seemed to be straightforward and ORAM staff also went to the area with the intention of delimiting the whole of what is considered to be Terepano. It is however still quite a large area covering some 25 km from one end to the other. Terepano circle consists of five *células* (cells). These five *células* are like five concentrations of houses. One *célula* would typically have between 100 to a couple of hundred inhabitants living within it. In four of the five *células,* ORAM had disseminated the new land law and had 'sensitised' the local people on the issue of community land delimitation. During the PRA, however, we discovered that the case was not so straightforward as ORAM had expected. We were barred from working in one *célula* (Manta) and in another *célula* (Roque) it appeared that people preferred to delimit the *célula* instead of the whole of Terepano.

In the Manta *célula* our team was received by the local leaders, *secretário* and elders, and some six women. The men withdrew and had a heated discussion amongst themselves for about 15 minutes. When they came back to us, they told us that we could not have a meeting. At first they said that we could not have a meeting since not enough people had shown up. After some discussion, other—seemingly more important—reasons emerged. They said: "You outsiders are always like this; you come in with good manners and after that you put a fence around us or forbid us to hunt". They were referring to MADAL, a large company with extensive coconut plantations in the area. Another thing that raised their suspicion was that the earlier work in August had been done by an ORAM team and now we had arrived with new elements on the team, including one white person and one of mixed race. They alleged that in the time between the dissemination in August and the PRA in October, ORAM had found some investors (us!). They now feared that we had come to buy or take away their land. The team explained its intentions again but we did not want to insist so we left.

In a group discussion in the Roque *célula,* the question arose as to whether the whole of the Terepano *círculo* would have to be delimited or only the Roque *célula* . When I asked them what they would prefer, they told me that they preferred to have their own *célula* delimited rather than the bigger *círculo*; "That will be better for our children. If we join with Terepano, we will have conflicts later on" and "It can not be the case that the people from Terepano central will send the logging companies to us". It was clear that they wished to keep control over a smaller area in their own hands and that they were not comfortable with delegating these powers to the leaders in Terepano central.

Roque was also the *célula* that the ORAM team had not been able to visit during the sensitization phase because the place had been cut off as a result of the rains. However, some people from Roque had attended the meeting in a neighbouring *célula* and these were responsible for spreading the word in Roque. When we arrived in Roque, two months after the sensitization meetings, the district coordinator of ORAM failed to do a proper introduction. She only said: "We are a team of ORAM. Last August we were in the area but we did not manage to work here. In August we explained the land law and we agreed to come back in October. That is why we are here" She continued by inviting all the people to introduce themselves. After this, the coordinator continued: "What we will do now is to get to know the history of Terepano. We want to make a book of the community of Terepano, that is our goal. Who knows the history of Terepano?" As the local people did not seem to come forward, she added: "It is something for you! You have to talk without fears". There were 25 men and 16 women present. Still, no one seemed to be eager to speak. Since I was concerned about this very short introduction I wanted to find out how many people were aware of why we were here so I first asked how many people were present at the August meetings. It appeared that only three of them had been there and the others looked relatively blank. This forced the team to take a step back and first explain about ORAM, the land law and the objectives of our work. The district coordinator was not happy with this situation and reluctantly started to explain ORAM. The assistant of the *secretário* of Terepano, who had joined our team, also showed his annoyance and blamed the three persons who had attended the meeting in the neighbouring *célula* publicly for not having spread the word. After a better introduction, there seemed to be more understanding about why we were there. One local leader of Roque drew the conclusion that: "We will not allow anybody in with documents, even when it has stamps on them, not even something of the *secretário* of Terepano; we will not accept it. It is better to sit down with the whole community". In this way he made it clear that the community has a say in the use of their natural resources. But at the same time he stated his preference for staying autonomous from Terepano central and of taking decisions in plenary meetings instead of delegating these decisions to local leaders.

This was followed by interviews in smaller groups of between 10 and 15 persons. The project coordinator had made a list of 70 questions. On top of the paper was the word 'questionnaire' and this was in fact used in this way. Some of the facilitators had received this list that same day and thus had not had the time to study the list. They read out the questions faithfully in the sequence in which the questions were formulated on the two sheets of paper. Answers were not probed, the first answer was written down and the next question was read out. Only one or two of the people in the group were actually answering. This question and answer process was boring for most of the listeners and some of them walked away. People were still not really aware of what was going on. They answered all the questions politely and at the end of the meeting asked us: "But why are you asking all these questions?"

One of the groups was asked to collaborate on making an agricultural calendar. One of the facilitators drew out the calendar in the sand. He wrote the names of the months in Portuguese. Because of the sandy soil the words were hardly legible. The letters were written in such a way that the facilitators were able to read them the right way up, while their respondents had to read them upside down. The whole exercise remained in the control of the facilitator. The facilitator posed the questions and only one or two of the local people answered them. Consequently, the exercise became a continuation of a tiresome, extractive interview. Only a few local people acted as respondent by filling in the blanks of the calendar designed by the outsiders.

Each *célula* was visited just once during this week. In between the meetings with the local population—which took two to three hours per day—there was no sharing of information, other form of feedback or discussion among the team members. The team remained in the camp and most of the time was spent in preparing the next meal.

On the last day, the team had a meeting with the local leaders. There were 30 men and no women present. The majority was from Terepano central but there were at least two persons from each *célula*, most of them also local leaders such as *secretário*s of the *célula*s. This time, ORAM staff did an extensive introduction and again elements of the new land law and the phenomenon of community land delimitation were explained. The issue of the *Comité da Terra* was also briefly touched upon; ORAM staff proposed that there should be two members of each *célula* and that such a committee would then be able to negotiate with investors. This issue was however not discussed any further. Again the question was posed as to whether they wanted the delimitation and the consensus was a 'yes', they wanted to continue. During our contacts in the *célula*s we had observed that many people were not aware of what was going on and that many people in fact opposed the delimitation of Terepano as a whole. However, this was not discussed any further. It seemed that the leaders at the central level, the *secretário/régulo* and his close allies, were very much behind the process, and that both they and ORAM project staff wanted to go ahead with the delimitation of the whole of Terepano.

Finally the important activity of making a map of Terepano had to be carried out. ORAM staff had already made a (poor) map during their work in August. Only one staff member of the NGO had this map on one A4-size sheet of paper. The participants were then asked to make a new map. The local people expressed their preference for correct the existing map instead of making a new one. The ORAM facilitator 'read' out the limits indicated on the map, for example: "river X is the limit with community Y", and then asked for confirmation. Except for one correction, the map was endorsed. By doing it in this way, the advantages of

using visual techniques such as allowing all participants to join in and discuss, and of creating ownership were ignored.

PRA regarded as a necessary step in a bureaucratic process

During the PRA in Terepano and, shortly after, in discussions with ORAM staff during a three-day seminar, it appeared that PRA was very much perceived as a necessary bureaucratic step in the process of community land delimitation. PRA appears in the technical annex written by the Land Commission and is therefore imperative in the process. The PRA was seen as an extractive data collection exercise; "in the PRA we only need the community to answer the questions". The data were needed to accompany the map for the registration of the land as prescribed by the technical annex. This resulted in the methods being used in a rather extractive and mechanistic way. Some of the ORAM staff considered PRA a necessary evil. A senior ORAM staff member told me: *"o DRP é a parte mais chata",* "the PRA is the most annoying/difficult part". Such an attitude towards the method may partly be the cause of the uncritical attitude towards the quality of the data—hardly any probing and/or triangulation was carried out. Any answers to the questions in the lengthy questionnaire were sufficient. There was no sharing or triangulation of the results, neither was there any moment of critical reflection. Facilitators often did not know why they were doing what they did. In most cases, the work was often poorly introduced and the tendency was to finish as fast as possible. It was also characterised by an absence of dialogue, often without any genuine empathy from the side of the NGO staff. This again explains why local people often demonstrated signs of research fatigue. The visual techniques, intended to allow for full participation, were used in a way that minimised involvement, enthusiasm, and ownership.

The training in PRA

We wrote our report for World Vision and ORAM based on the observations we had made during the PRA in Terepano, some of which are outlined above. The management of World Vision was happy with the report, but ORAM staff were not. In addition, the anthropologist from World Vision who had joined the fieldwork in Terepano was annoyed with our critical report. I was called to Quelimane to discuss our draft report with staff from ORAM and World Vision. ORAM (field) staff and the anthropologist found our report so negative and were so offended by the criticism that they tried to bar us from completing the second part of the job: the training. ORAM staff raised doubts as to whether my colleagues in the faculty would be the right persons to do the training. After some discussions, it was resolved that a team of four would provide the training to ORAM staff; two people from ORAM, a colleague of mine and myself. We opted for a one-week classroom training followed by a one-week PRA in the field, to be conducted in Mucelo-Novo.

The classroom-based training was held in the agricultural training centre in Quelimane and 28 people participated. The objectives of the classroom-based training were rather ambitious. Based on our experience in Terepano, we wanted to stress how PRA was much more than a mere extractive exercise to satisfy bureaucratic procedures. Considering the objectives of the ORAM organisation, PRA should be seen as part of a development process where the NGO and local communities can forge a partnership. Additionally, we had to work on a range of interviewing skills, skills in the use of visual diagrams and, most important, we had to work on attitudes and behaviour.

In the meantime, our co-trainer—a senior ORAM staff member based in Quelimane— had joined a national training in PRA for community land delimitation that had been organised by the Land commission. On the basis of this, she had written a good training manual for this training in Quelimane. It reflected the discourse of existing international PRA training manuals, with PRA being presented as a method for research and interaction, and as a

catalyst for capacity building. It stated that research should not be extractive; instead, knowledge should be created with local people. PRA should "create new mechanisms for action in the community" and in this way PRA should initiate a form of self-development. On the role of facilitators she wrote that: "the facilitator should not in any form interpret, judge or de-value the collected information". The manual furthermore stressed several PRA principles such as: triangulation, its dynamic and iterative character, the why and how of the use of visual techniques, optimal ignorance, its integrated and multidisciplinary character and the dos and don'ts of PRA. As concrete activities in PRA in the light of community land delimitation she proposed the following activities: historical profile (timelines), social organisation (Venn diagram), use and management of natural resources (transects and matrixes), different kinds of mapping, and the identification of conflicts.

We started the training with a refresher, and new developments on the national policies regarding land. This started with a brainstorming session on "what is land and what does it mean". Then we discussed rights to land and the question of open borders (allowing outside investors to operate within the delimited community land) and closed borders (not allowing investors) with a simulation in which some participants had to argue in favour while others had to argue against closed borders. This served to remind the participants of the central objectives of the land policy, and to stress the importance of open borders and community land delimitation.
After this, we had a session on PRA. We first asked the participants their definition of PRA and its role in the process of land delimitation. This exercise produced indeed a picture of PRA being merely an extractive method, although done in conjunction with the community in order improve knowledge on the limits and the possible conflicts.
We did puzzles to stress the need for collaboration and information sharing and from there we discussed several principles and techniques of PRA. Then we had some practical sessions. Some groups made timelines, others made Venn diagrams or matrix rankings on the use of natural resources. Then we had sessions on skills for semi-structured interviews. We made a new checklist and did simulations; one interviewing the other. Others observed and gave feedback on skills, attitudes, and behaviours. We emphasised once more the importance of explaining the objectives of the work and of making allowances for what local people might think of us. It was difficult to have participants giving constructive feedback to their fellow participants, for example on their attitudes and behaviour; often, only the trainers and senior ORAM staff were prepared to give such comments.
The group made several visual diagrams and discussed the advantages of these techniques. We discussed that these techniques should allow the perspectives of the local people to be captured and that it was not a matter of local people filling in our sheets. Diagrams should be a means for discussing and deepening analysis rather then a result in itself. We discussed again the question of why PRA should be done, in order to emphasise that it can be much more than an extractive exercise. We forced participants to think of what the farmer's interest farmer could be in participating, and how we could use PRA in the empowerment of local people, helping them to defend their land rights. From there they had to re-think which of the techniques could be useful to attain such objectives. Compared to the first and second days, the participants became more aware that PRA is intended to be more than simply an extractive exercise and that mutual learning should be a basis for good PRA. On the last day, we discussed attitudes and behaviours once more on the basis of a video that depicted a team doing PRA. It was stressed that we should learn from errors. We also discussed that it was easily to run into conflicts with politically instigated work, and this led to a discussion on possible political and ethical considerations of PRA work. This was deemed extremely relevant for ORAM dealing with land rights.

The PRA in Mucelo-Novo

For the fieldwork we worked with a selection of 20 ORAM staff members in the community of Mucelo-Novo in Nicoadala district. The group consisted of 'motivators', district coordinators and three trainers—the ORAM co-trainer, my colleague and myself. The purpose of this exercise was not simply training; it was one of the community land delimitation exercises as planned by the project.

Mucelo-Novo is an interesting case where community land delimitation is probably more relevant than the Terepano case, since there have been recent conflicts over access to natural resources. But the case is also more complex and potentially more conflictuous. The area south of Mucelo-Novo is a river valley with floodplains suitable for rice production and pasture land (see map 5). In colonial times, a Portuguese Company had explored this area. Mucelo-Novo was built as an *aldeia comunal* after independence. It is relatively densely populated and I estimated population size to be above 1,000 inhabitants. The provincial governor helped to re-settle the people by providing a bulldozer to clear the trees in part of what is now Mucelo-Novo and what used to be forest area belonging to Mukaia. Its residents started to use the floodplains and now consider the plains to belong to Mucelo-Novo. There are however also many residents belonging to the communities of Mukaia and Botão (which lie respectively north and east of Mucelo), who make use of these same floodplains. In addition, there are people from Mucelo-Novo who cultivate maize and cassava on the more sandy soils considered to be part of Mukaia, and even north of the Caia-Nicoadala road since these soil types are scarce within Mucelo-Novo (see map 5). This has never been a problem. The conflict that had emerged in 1996 and 1997 was with a non-resident cattle owner who had kept his livestock on the grass-plains. This conflict had already been resolved in 1998 through the mediation of the district agricultural officer.
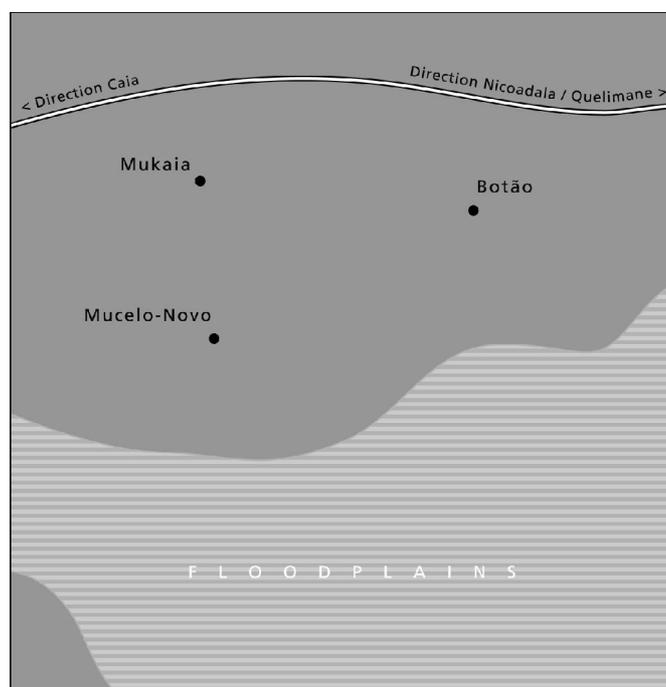
Map 5 Surroundings of Mucelo Novo

According to my colleague and myself, such a complicated situation could be made less complicated if we talked with representatives of these neighbouring communities. This idea was however immediately rejected by the district coordinator staff and our (ORAM) co-trainer. We were told that in the technical annex, the confrontation with the neighbouring communities was a separate step, and not part of the PRA. Another argument was that it would require going back to the district administrator to seek permission since we had only asked for permission to work in Mucelo-Novo. Our arguments fell on deaf ears; the ORAM district co-ordinator told us: "a whole series of procedures have to be followed before you can work in a community. I know my district"

Throughout the week, the work went quite smoothly. In general, interviewing and making visuals went much better than in Terepano. Most of the facilitators were able to 'hand over the stick' and in some instances farmers told us that they were also learning. Some problems were encountered, however, with the use of the diagrams. The timeline was not used as a visual tool. The facilitators conducted the interview with questions and answers and made a timeline on paper back at camp, based on the information from the interview. The Venn diagram soon started to look like a map or a chart of resource flow. This became apparent when one group started with the five *bairros*, neighbourhoods, as an important division of Mucelo-Novo. So the Venn diagram started with five circles too. And from there the neighbouring villages were drawn and the diagram became more like a map. It therefore generated spatial information rather than organisational information. Another problem was that the team started to repeat itself by making almost identical Venn diagrams every day. During the previous week, the team had been trained in making Venn diagrams with circles that were inter-linked with arrows. One day, I proposed doing something else and had the people make a Venn diagram with overlapping circles and, in order to be able to specify— and as a way of zooming in—we took one of the *bairros* as a unit of analysis, instead of again taking the entire Mucelo-Novo. When this diagram was presented in the feedback meeting in the team, our team was heavily criticised for doing something different. The most irritated reaction came from our ORAM co-trainer; the one who had taught the team how to make Venn diagrams the previous week—with arrows! The innovation was not at all appreciated by the senior ORAM staff member/co-trainer. My point of view was that we have to prevent routines creeping in, we have to adapt our tools to the situation and may need to innovate with these tools. The point of view of our co-trainer was that ORAM needed uniform methods in order to prevent such flexibility and adaptations confusing her staff too much.
Another example of what I would call lack of flexibility and lack of a critical attitude was the way in which the matrix on the use of natural resources was copied. The format of the matrix we had used during the simulation in the previous week in the classroom had been copied from a PRA done in another province. The rows contained the different types of natural resources and the columns contained the people using them. One of the columns was entitled "foreigners". A group had used this matrix on Mucelo-Novo and at the end of the day, they presented the results to the rest of the group, with this column empty, since there are no foreigners in Mucelo-Novo. It showed once again how the recipe had been followed blindly; nobody had thought of adapting the matrix to the local situation by deleting the superfluous column (or adding new ones).

On the last day of the meeting, we organised a plenary meeting and people from all *bairros* were invited. Over 200 people showed up. After explaining the procedures, we started making a map of Mucelo-Novo in three groups. The map-making was also a big improvement compared to the same exercise done in Terepano; large maps were drawn out in the sand with the use of all kinds of leaves, grasses, and sticks. However, the groups were

still quite large and only a few people were participating actively. The facilitators were also very enthusiastic and started frantically copying maps onto their small note pads before the maps were ready. This caused problems, since on some occasions, the course of a river still had to be changed, or a tree had been placed wrongly. When the confusion reached such a level that the facilitator could no longer understand his own drawing on his small note-pad, he asked people to stop and help him out. So in the end, the facilitators and the two or three active residents who had been drawing the map on the ground were now all busy discussing and correcting the small map on the note pad instead of the diagrams in the sand. In the meantime the rest of the public took a stroll or were chatting about other things.

Another interesting thing happened during this last meeting. Because Mucelo-Novo is former *aldeia comunal*, its dominant administrative structures are the former FRELIMO party-structures; the *secretário*s. There is a *secretário da aldeia* for the whole of Mucelo-Novo, and a *secretário* for each of the five *bairros*, neighbourhoods. Apart from the *secretário* da aldeia, there is a *secretário do grupo dinamizador,* and another important man is the judge of the community tribunal. These men were considered to be the village leaders. They were also the ones who welcomed us and accompanied most of the fieldwork in the *bairros.* When, at the end of the plenary meetings, we presented copies of the diagrams to one of these leaders, a man stood up and started referring to the committee of nine persons (*comité de terras*); a concept that had been discussed as part of the process of delimitation. He said: "we have to select many candidates, maybe 15, and then we have to vote". Other men and women started to speak up: leaders have to be good at heart, the actual leaders only draw benefits to their own *bairro*, look at the wells, they are all in the centre". Others said: "we have to choose new leaders, they have to be managers of the community and not of the government". After this had been said, the crowd applauded and cheered while the *secretário da aldeia* shook his head.
It became painfully clear that there was a major problem with the legitimacy of the actual village leaders. It was alleged that in earlier interventions the village leaders had pull the benefits towards themselves. We also made the mistake of handing over the sheets of paper to the *secretário* assuming that the local leaders were the legitimate representatives of the community. Both our facilitator and the *secretário* who received the copies of the diagram tried to appease the people stating that the posters were not the final document *"isto não é nada"* meaning: "this is nothing". The village leaders tried to cover up and it seemed as though they were trying to make the apparent conflict seem less important. They tried to comfort us by stating that this was an internal problem; "we are grown up, we will resolve this internally".

While writing the report in the afternoon, we had a discussion on whether to include this vote of confidence against the *secretário*s in the document. While I argued that the case provided very important information, senior ORAM staff refused to include this information in the report. Their arguments were; "it is political", "it is an internal issue" and "it is not important". It appeared that ORAM staff were afraid of burning their fingers in the conflict.

I also proposed including a paragraph on lessons learnt regarding the methods used. But this suggestion to embrace errors, and learn from them was also rejected. This lack of a critical attitude also became apparent during the report reading. Hardly anybody made additions or corrections. The report was relatively dry, providing the diagrams and the information as required according to the technical annex but contained little background information on the specific context.

These events also called into question the positions of my colleague and myself. Why did many of our suggestions fall on deaf ears? Ours was a rather strange position; we were co-

trainers but at the same time we were guests of ORAM. There was no clear division of responsibilities. At times, we took initiatives, and at other times the senior ORAM staff member, our co-trainer, did. She was also ultimately responsible for the report and she was the one who vetoed our initiatives to make the report richer in terms of content and more critical in terms of (methodological) lessons learnt. During the evaluation, one of our differences in approach emerged clearly. Several times during the training and the PRA, we had called for principles such as having a critical attitude, embracing error, and triangulation using a diversity of tools and sources of information. We had upset her by, amongst others, using a different way of making a Venn diagram. Such diversity was undesirable in her eyes. She said: "*Temos que sair daqui uniformizados*", "we have to leave here in a uniform way", meaning that her staff had to be told exactly what to do. Her argument was that most of the staff had only had basic primary education, and that recipes were therefore better than vague principles. She wanted to keep it simple because she was convinced that her staff would not be able to handle more flexible and more critical methods.

It is also likely that our ORAM co-trainer still felt some resentment over the first report on Terepano that, in the eyes of ORAM staff, had been too critical and too hard on them. Later, I realised that the NGO ORAM was very sensitive to criticism. In Zambezia province, the organisation had several conflicts with the provincial administration. On several occasions, the NGO had criticised the provincial authorities on its policies on licensing wood logging companies. Also, in the case of community land delimitation, the organisation had had difficulties in the collaboration with the administration; in October 1999, the district administrator of Guruè district had barred ORAM from doing a PRA. Similar to what we saw in chapter seven in the case of Helvetas, a typical tactic was used by government officials: to blame the NGO for cooperating with RENAMO. This contributed to the fact that ORAM staff were very sensitive to criticism from outside. This was also most likely the reason for not wanting to include the problem of the legitimacy of the (FRELIMO) *secretário*s of Mucelo-Novo in their report.

Summary and preliminary analysis

The use of PRA as part of the methodology of community land delimitation is unique in that PRA became prescribed procedure in national legislation. We read in section 6.4 how the land law and its technical annex came into being via an impressive consultation process, but only thanks to expatriate advisors, externally funded NGOs, and political pressure by donors. In the project discourse of these agencies supporting community land delimitation, little or no mention was made of the fact that such a delimitation exercise also has the potential to increase conflicts in the short run. Instead, there were many elements of 'wishful thinking' in the philosophy of the new land law. It was assumed that people would be willing and able to agree on partnerships between local people and external investors. Community land delimitation would prevent or resolve conflict and lead to consensus.

PRA became central in the process of land delimitation. PRA was also regarded as an ideal method for communities to 'auto-define' themselves. In fact, this was a way out of a difficult debate on what the community should be. By presenting a seemingly neutral method (PRA), the thorny question of how to define a community was resolved. But when we take a look at what transpired in practice, we see that there was hardly any question of auto-definition. The team that went out to Terepano had rather pre-conceived ideas about what they were going to delimit. Our observations in Terepano showed that there were also people who had different ideas of how big or small their 'community' should be. Delimiting the whole of (the old

regulado) Terepano was mainly an idea imposed by NGO staff and supported by village leaders.

Community land delimitation and PRA were especially favoured by the many NGOs working in the area of natural resources and agricultural development. The fact that the method was based on legislation seemed to help in legitimising their activities. On the other hand, we also saw that PRA turned out to be regarded as a bureaucratic step by NGO staff. It was seen as a boring/annoying part (*"a parte mais chata"*) to extract information to satisfy the requirements set in the technical annex. Routine set in as NGO staff wanted to reach the target of delimiting 48 communities in three years. Thus, delimitation became a goal in itself. Community members and their leaders were persuaded by project staff in believing that delimitation was a necessity. Consequently, the original objectives of ORAM of defending the interests of poor farmers and their empowerment became watered down or forgotten in the process.

We observed many bad practices such as poor introductions, extractive interviewing, no probing, no critical use of visual diagrams. It must also be said that ORAM were forced to employ many new staff members, the majority of whom had little or no previous PRA experience. Many of them improved their skills after the training but the lack of flexibility and critical attitude remained.
ORAM staff wanted to reduce complexity and avoid (possible) conflicts. PRA techniques had to be standardised so that staff would leave in a 'uniform' way. Innovations were not appreciated. Conflicts that emerged were brushed aside. The question of the legitimacy of the village leaders was demonstrated very clearly in the fieldwork in Mucelo-Novo where the public demanded new leaders. However, the NGO staff did not want to deal with this conflict and refused to take it up in their report because it would be too 'political'.

9.2   The Local Development Committee of Sambassoca

The project of the NGO CONCERN in Machaze started in early 1999 and dealt with the decentralisation of government planning. It wanted to support district planning by promoting an active involvement of the 'civil society'. The objectives were similar to the UNCDF initiative in Nampula described in chapter 8. The difference is that the project in Nampula emphasised the collaboration with the provincial and district government, while in Machaze CONCERN laid more emphasis on creating structures at the community level, the so-called *Comités de Desenvolvimento Local*, in English, Local Development Committee (LDC).

Machaze district

Machaze is one of the most isolated districts of Manica Province; the distance to the provincial capital is about 600 km and it is tucked away in a corner formed by the Save River and the Zimbabwean border (see map 6). According to the census of 1997, the district had almost 76,000 inhabitants and, considering its huge size, the population density is relatively low. There are two main linguistic groupings; Ndau and Shangane.

So far, CONCERN has only worked in Save, one of the two *Postos Administrativos,* which is divided into four localities. A locality is still quite large and can contain many *'povoações'*, which can be translated as either villages, or groupings of houses. Within the Sambassoca locality for example, it can take many hours to walk from one village to the other, or as a villager expressed: "You have to carry maize meal with you if you want to go to the other side of Sambassoca". The road network is badly maintained and very few cars pass through the district since it is located in an outer corner of the province. There are few commercial

links with the provincial capital. During the war, many people fled across the Zimbabwean border and some of them still maintain links with relatives on the other side of the border. There are also many households with family members—mostly male—who work in South Africa. Besides the remittances these people may send, people make a living with agriculture and, to a lesser extent, through fishing and hunting.

The interventions of CONCERN in Machaze

The NGO CONCERN, with its headquarters in Ireland and an office in Maputo, has been active in Manica province since 1992. Its activities in Machaze district only started in 1999.
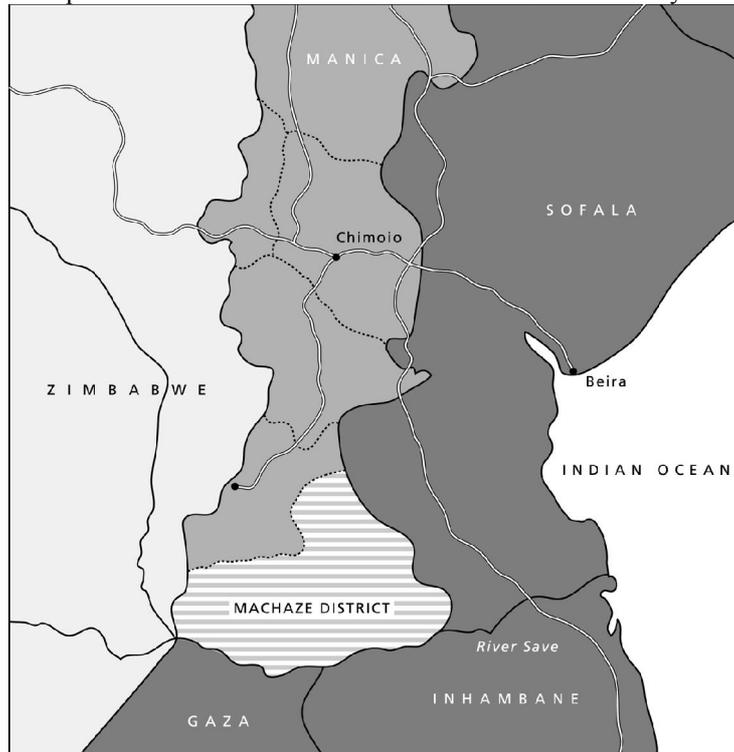
Map 6 Machaze district

CONCERN had learned from its experiences with community development and from experiences of other development agencies working in the field of district planning in Mozambique. The NGO formulated the following goal for the project:

> *"To build poor people's capacity to participate in and influence decision-making in the government decentralised planning process, in a way that contributes to sustainable poverty alleviation and democratisation. This will be achieved through creation of Local Development Committees (LDCs) comprising elected representatives of each locality, whose main role is to express the development needs of their constituents"* *(CONCERN, 1999).*

The expected outputs according to the project document were:

- *a Local Development Committee (LDC) in each locality with the capacity to express the needs of their constituents;*

- *a District Development Committee (DDC) with the capacity to manage and monitor the expenditures in Machaze district and to negotiate support with donors and government;*
- *a District Development Plan approved by the provincial authorities;*
- *the implementation of community-led micro projects;*
- *documentation of the process (CONCERN, 1999).*

According to the proposal of CONCERN, each LDC would have one representative on the District Development Council (DDC). Besides these representatives, the DDC would consist of representatives of the district government and the private sector. The project document of CONCERN asserts that rural communities "lack opportunities to negotiate" and that the "absence of representative community structures and insufficient staff trained in participatory methodologies marginalises them" (CONCERN, 1999). This is the justification for their strategy of creating the LDCs. The project document deals at length with the need and the concept of LDC. The aim of these committees was to provide such legitimate representative structures that would work in the interests of the community. The project proposal mentioned that the project would use PRA but it did not justify why they chose this method. Nor the meaning of PRA explained—only the techniques to be used are mentioned.

Selection of the LDC members

In March 1999, CONCERN started with the identification of local leadership and a kind of baseline study on poverty in the four localities of the *posto* Save. In this phase, the LDCs were formed consisting of five people: three men and two women, in each locality. These twenty CDL members, together with the district planning team, underwent a two-week training in PRA by CONCERN staff. They were split into two groups and each group did two PRAs of a week each in order to cover the four localities in Save.

The reports of CONCERN stated that the members of the LDC were 'elected'. I could not verify how this election took place exactly. According to CONCERN staff, this election of the LDC members was done in public meetings where the people gathered were asked to appoint their representatives. Later I asked one member of the Sambassoca LDC how he had been 'elected'. He told me that he had been appointed by fellow community members while he had not even attended the meeting; he was informed later that he was a member of the LDC. In this case, it was more a question of being 'selected' than being 'elected'. He is young, around 20 years old. There are several young people in the LDCs who did the PRA in Sambassoca. This probably has something to do with the fact that both CONCERN staff and local leaders prefer to select people who can read and write. Even so, the literacy skills are low. There were also some middle-aged persons in the LDC. These were more outspoken and tended to dominate discussions in the team. At least two of these older members of the Sambassoca LDC were affiliated to RENAMO.

The PRA in Sambassoca

The PRA in Sambassoca was done in June 1999. The material in this section is based on the videotapes that registered the PRA (see methodology chapter 4) and on interviews afterwards with CONCERN staff, the film director, and members of the LDC. The locality of Sambassoca is quite large and the PRA was done by spending one day in each of the major concentrations of houses. Thus, the team spent an average of three hours working with the local people at every location. The exercise mainly consisted of group discussions to identify any constraints or restrictions the local people had. Typical problems included: few local employment opportunities, difficulties selling agricultural produce, lack of health services and other basic infrastructures. The next step was to rank these issues; the different items were listed on a paper and each individual 'voted' for the issue that was a priority for him or her. In almost all locations, the 'problem' that was prioritised in this way was "lack of a

health post". After this, a problem tree was made of this 'priority'. The exercise closed with a plenary meeting.

Since the team stayed in every community for just a couple of hours, the exercise became a kind of 'hit-and-run' type of PRA and in this process all kinds of expectations were raised. Since problems or community needs were phrased as "there is a lack of....", the 'voting' exercise became more like making a decision on what was to be brought to that community. CONCERN was presented as an organisation, in the local language translated as "*company*", that would be different from all the other interventions that had passed through the area because those others had made so many promises that never came true. Thus, the team already implicitly made a commitment; CONCERN is different because it does not make false promises. But several observations demonstrated how easily such false promises were made. In a plenary session in one community, the people were asked beforehand to indicate where the health post should be built and the people were asked whether they could contribute by making bricks. In another community, where they discussed the lack of markets for local handicrafts (reed mats) the team registered the names of the people who were making these mats. Local people were not really aware of what the project of CONCERN involved, and many must have thought that "as long we prioritise a health post, CONCERN will come and build a health post". The NGO is however not in a position to build health posts in every little village and the low population density would certainly not justify such investments.

The LDC under fire

Very soon after the LDC started its work, a conflict broke out between the committee members and the local administration. The problematic relationship with the *Chefe do Posto* had already existed before the PRAs even began. In the first round, when CONCERN had gone to the villages and when the LDC were created, local people had been complaining about high taxes. Another complaint was the use of the whip (*Shamboca*) by the police.

The *presidente da localidade* is responsible for tax collection. They hand over the collected money to the *Chefe do Posto* and he or she hands over the money to the district administration, and so forth. In one locality, the *presidente da localidade* had charged 2000 MT instead of 1500 MT per person (1000 MT = 7 US dollar cents in 2000). The issue of the illegal taxes was also raised in the PRA. So when these authorities found out that CONCERN was making a report on this subject, the local administrative machinery rolled into action. According to the members of the LDC, they had been strongly warned to "shut up". Police officers were sent into several communities to find out who had talked on the issue of taxes and the use of the whip. The local authorities felt threatened and the issue soon reached the offices of the district administrator. During a public meeting, in the absence of CONCERN staff, the administrator started to talk negatively of the work of the NGO. He allegedly said that; "the LDC is collecting false information" and that "CONCERN is destroying our laws and is not doing what we had agreed to do". There were also charges that CONCERN staff were allegedly supporting RENAMO. However, in the presence of representatives of the NGO, the administrator remained very amiable. The *Chefe do Posto* was also very nervous about the video that we had made. On the last day of filming he tried to intervene and confiscate the material on tape.

This case showed how local authorities reacted and how they tried to corner the NGO in order to prevent them from becoming too much of a nuisance. Threats, public scolding, and accusing the NGO or the LDC of supporting RENAMO were typical examples of this strategy. According to an LDC member, the police commander had threatened the members of the LDC by saying that police had a right to use the whip (*shamboca*), to take the belongings of a person and even a right to kill.

Different perceptions on the role of the LDC

The field staff of CONCERN were proud of the quality of the work of the LDC, "especially considering the fact that they are volunteers[23]". But in the course of the PRA, the members of the LDC started to complain. They had been away from their homes for a long time and they could not return home with "not even a piece of soap[24]". They started to ask for (more) remuneration[25]. CONCERN did not intend to pay the LDC members. However, they brokered a way out. They had planned to slaughter a cow at the end of the work as a kind of celebration. They decided not to buy the cow, save the money, and divide it amongst the LDC members. Besides, the LDC played another card. They knew the project was going to provide for micro-projects derived from initiatives from the communities. So one evening, just after supper, the members of the LDC gathered all their courage to present their plan for the first micro-project in Sambassoca; "We, the LDC ask to start our fishing project next month, to be a demonstration to the community". They asked for the provision of boats, nets, and licences. They had listened well to the CONCERN official when the latter had explained that a viability study was required for the approval of a micro project. So, to make matters easier for CONCERN, the LDC members presented the plan including a viability study: "four workers will be involved in this job, every worker will receive 200,000 MT per month and we are going to divide another 200,000 MT each month for the LDC members[26]".

This brought up the issue of remuneration and of ownership. It showed clearly the different perspectives of CONCERN staff and LDC members. This is how CONCERN wanted to see things; LDC is a community organisation and not a CONCERN entity. But the local people involved clearly had another view; they considered themselves as working for the NGO and they expected remuneration for their 'work'. These different perceptions came out strongly when, a few weeks after the PRAs, I was witness to a discussion between the Brazilian, Maputo-based program officer of CONCERN and two members of the LDC of Sambassoca. It became clear how these people had completely different interpretations of the position of the LDC in relation to the NGO. The two really wanted to find out how CONCERN saw the role of the LDC. They had already invested six weeks of hard work in the LDC, created by CONCERN, and they wanted to know: "what is this LDC?". The program officer talked in general on the need to involve the communities in making a District Development Plan. He evaded the question, even bouncing it back to the two, saying rhetorically: "What is the LDC? Where do you want to go? Who do you work for? The LDC has to define its own function", meaning that the LDC is a structure for and by the community and that the 'community' would have to define the role and function of the LDC. He continued: "It depends on you, CONCERN is not going to do anything for you, it depends on your interest". Referring to the issue of illegal taxes, the program officer told the two: "You have a right to know what the government does with the money they collected. You should ask your district administrator". This seemed to be a very remote option; the two laughed and said: "That's impossible. What is the power of the LDC to do that?[27]"
In a conversation I had later with the same program officer, he told me: "The LDC has to prove itself and show its leadership. For example, they could go and complain to the provincial authorities on the issue of the illegal taxes. In this way they would gain the confidence of the people and they can show they can make a difference for the community."
The program officer reflected neatly in the content of the discourse of their project document; the LDC is a representative and legitimate structure of the community that is able to defend the interests of its constituents.

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[23] Project coordinator CONCERN, video Sambassoca
[24] Interview with LDC Members, 2/9/99
[25] CONCERN paid them 30.000 MT per week to pay for sundries
[26] Video Sambassoca
[27] Evaluation fieldwork, 27/8/99

However, the LDC members could not see the committee in any way other than being set up for and by CONCERN. After the conversation with the program officer of CONCERN, the two members of the LDC were outraged. They felt used and cheated by the NGO; "CONCERN made a trap". They called the program officer a "*mentiroso*", a liar. They had worked so hard. Now they felt they had been left to fend for themselves, they felt abandoned by the NGO. The situation was worsened by the fact that the LDC members were now involved in a conflict with local authorities. If CONCERN had dropped them in this way, who would protect them? The LDC members now felt in danger. Considering that CONCERN had no permanent representation in the district, who could they turn to? They asked me my opinion. I tried to console them by telling them that as long they had not done anything illegal they should not worry and that there would be other institutions to turn to, if not at the district level then maybe at the provincial level. I do not think this comforted them very much. They said: "I do not have any proof of who I am. How are they going to know that I am representing my community? Who is going to take care that the LDC is recognised by the government?" He touched on a crucial point here that the LDC does not have any legal status.

There was still another side to the unclear position of the LDC members; their relation with traditional authorities. In a meeting during the PRA in Sambassoca, the facilitator introduced the local members of the LDC to an adolescent named Nyanze, calling him the ultimate person to turn to;

> "By the way, do you know Nyanze, the one you chose as a member of the LDC in this area? (does not wait for a reply) Anything that comes up, by law, you have to go to the chefe da zona. If the chefe does not resolve the problem you have to direct yourself to the presidente. In case the presidente does not resolve the problem, Nyanze will show you the ways so that the problem will be resolved[28]".

Thus the young man was placed above the much older local leaders whose families had been in power for generations. His facial expression clearly revealed that he was not at all happy with the way he had been introduced to the gathering.

The two LDC members who had come to Maputo came to help out in the translation of the 25 hours of videotapes. While reviewing this material, they had increasingly become aware of the expectations their work had raised among the villagers of Sambasoca. When they had started the fieldwork with CONCERN they had not been really aware of the intentions of the NGO:

> "We thought they had come to build roads and health posts. We explained to the people that this organisation works like tsima[29]. This means that the community had to clear the land where the water pump or school was to be placed, and CONCERN would bring the material.[29??]"

Now they had slowly become aware that CONCERN would not be able to build a health post in every corner of the district, they feared going back to Sambasocca and facing their fellow villagers;

> "it will make us fall hard on the ground. We will have to explain them that the promises we made were an error, a misunderstanding[30]."

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[28] Video Sambassoca

[29] *Tsima* is a common practice in Mozambique whereby an owner of a field invites people to work on his/her land and provides food and/or alcoholic beverages as a reward.

[30] Interview with LDC Members, 2/9/99

Summary and preliminary analysis

CONCERN started this project to initiate participatory district planning in Machaze. They did this by forming Local Development Committees (LDCs) at locality level. The formation of the LDCs was justified in the project document by a presumed lack of representative structures. But the whole idea of forming an LDC in every locality during a first meeting between NGO staff and whoever had been mobilised for that meeting was imposed externally.

The members of the LDC were trained in PRA by project staff. They did the PRAs together with staff of the NGO. The project document did not justify why they used PRA. CONCERN had been working with PRA for some years and it seemed as if PRA was perceived as standard. One can however question whether it should have been called PRA. The meetings with the communities only lasted several hours since the population was scattered and every day another village was visited. The exercise consisted of making a list of needs, phrased as "there is a lack of…". In other words, perceived solutions or wishes were listed rather then problems per se. Then these 'solutions' were ranked via a kind of scoring or voting system. This way of working made people perceive this exercise as a decision-making exercise and this probably contributed to high expectations by local people. In most cases "lack of a hospital" came on top of the list. The wishes that were ranked were highly unrealistic in terms of the chance that they would be honoured in such a sparsely populated area.

The exercises also raised sensitive issues such as the alleged illegal taxes and the abuse of force by the police and this led to serious conflicts between the LDC and local authorities.

This case also clearly showed the different views on the role of the LDC. The Maputo-based program officer of CONCERN saw the LDC as an institution for the community and created by the community. This corresponded with how the LDC had been envisioned in the project discourse; as a legitimate and representative community structure. The members of the LDC saw their committee as an institution for, and created by, CONCERN. In the eyes of local people the concept of the LDC was an idea of the NGO and the members of the committee had done what the CONCERN staff had told them to do. After the discussion with the program officer, in which these different views were expressed, the LDC members felt frustrated and abandoned by the NGO.

9.3 "You are to dirty my yard", the PRA that went sour

In July 1998, two colleagues of mine and myself trained a team of Save the Children Fund-UK (SCF) and their counterparts in PRA. After a week of classroom work we went into the field with four different teams to put the PRA to practice. My team went to Mepinha, a community in Morrumbala district in Zambezia province. SCF had worked for several years in Mepinha and had built the local school, amongst other interventions. The team consisted of SCF staff of the provincial capital, staff of counterpart organisations (departments of health, education and social action). One of the team members was Joana. She was born in a neighbouring village and was now a resident and working as a teacher at the local primary school at Mepinha. We had planned to do a one-week PRA. This was discussed and planned in advance in a meeting between SCF staff and the local *régulo*. It seemed that SCF had done all the preparatory groundwork. The purpose of the PRA was two-fold; train SCF staff and their counterparts in PRA and identify local problems and propose possible solutions with local people. The NGO hoped that the work would help to orient their future work in the district. However, the work was completely obstructed by the local leaders and we never managed to do the PRA. What happened?

On our arrival, Sunday afternoon, we installed ourselves in the school and went to talk to the *régulo*. We were received by the *régulo* and his son. As they had already been informed by Save the Children two weeks before on our intended work, we repeated the objectives of the PRA: to hear the concerns of the local population and the local ideas on how those problems could be resolved. We wanted to organise a meeting with local people for the next morning. The son was not satisfied with our explanation; he said he wanted to know "our real objectives". He also asked us why we had chosen Mepinha; "don't the other areas have problems?" We explained our objectives again and we told him that Mepinha had been chosen because SCF had already worked with the community. In the meeting two weeks previously, SCF had already asked for a meeting with the whole community on the following day, on Monday. The *régulo* told us that that would not be possible; he needed at least one day to inform the population. So we agreed to have the meeting on Tuesday and asked whether we could at least begin with some interviews with key informants on the Monday. His son intervened; we could not work; in this way, the Tuesday meeting would be superfluous. We did not want to force anything and although this meant a lost day, we accepted. The whole team was disappointed.

Joana, the resident schoolteacher and part of our team told us about two recent attempts by the FRELIMO party to install party structures in Mepinha. On both occasions they had failed. So she now wondered whether the *régulo* thought we had a political agenda. After debating this subject within the team, we decided to remove the two posters of FRELIMO that decorated the walls of the school where we were staying; we wanted to eliminate all possible reasons for suspicion.

The following day, Monday, we had a meeting with the *régulo*, his son and the *presidente da localidade*. The *presidente* is the administrative link to the district administration. It is locally known that both *presidente* and the *régulo* support RENAMO. The *presidente* had a small shed made of poles and thatched with grass. He did not want to sit down on the benches until some of his assistants had brought a chair and a table. When this had been done, he sat behind the table. We sat with the *régulo* and his son on the wooden benches in front of him. Then, the *presidente* started his long monologue on our great mistake of not having informed him on our planned PRA: "I am the government"… "we are the only entrance door"… "I have to inform my subordinates"… "I have three *régulo*s in my locality." He continued explaining the importance of his position: "The fact that I do not have an office of cement walls and zinc roof does not mean that I am not important. What is important is my head; my head is my office."

Through his attitude and action, he placed himself way above the *régulo*. We apologised for our oversight for not having informed him as well. We explained our objectives once more, and the importance of the work. The three— *presidente*, *régulo* and the son of the *régulo*— asked us again as to what our "real objectives" were. They also barred us from working from house to house and said: "why is it not enough to have one meeting?." Again the son of the *régulo* was the most fierce and started to threaten us: "if you start working from house to house, you will be in trouble" and, "if you are going to talk to people in the village, you can go but you won't be coming back". These threats had their effect since some of the team members became afraid.

Joana was one of the team members who had attended the training in PRA the previous week in the provincial capital. The son of the *régulo* insinuated that she had gone for a political training and that she had received money. The *régulo* complained that he had not had breakfast that morning. According to the colleagues in the team this was a hint from him asking for money.

During this meeting we became more and more aware that these leaders thought we had come to gain political support for FRELIMO. We explained endlessly that we had nothing to do

with any political party, that we were representing an international NGO, but nothing seemed to help. We suggested several options to eliminate the distrust. The leaders could assign guides to accompany our work visiting the families in their houses. We could also do all the work in a central place (for example at the school or at the house of the *régulo*) so that they could observe all the work themselves. The *presidente* proposed organising a meeting on Wednesday. We informed him that we only had five days (until Friday) and that Wednesday would be too late. Then, the *presidente* decided to have the meeting on the following day, Tuesday, at 10.00 a.m. at the house of the *régulo*. The *régulo* was to invite the population.

The following day at 10.00 o'clock, the team arrived at the *régulo*s homestead, full of energy, and hoping to finally start working. There were about 40 people and we decided to wait a while as more people were expected. At 11.30, we started by explaining the objectives of the work. Soon the same allegations and discussions started again: "what are your real objectives"… "what did you do in your training course last week?"... "who are you?."
The discussion heated up. At times the son of the *régulo* interrupted Joana's words and insulted various team members. We spent at least an hour explaining our intentions as openly and as honestly as possible. At last they allowed us to start. We explained that we wanted to start by making a map. One of us started the drawing with some landmarks, such as the house of the *régulo*, the road, the school, and we handed over the stick. The same *régulo* became enthusiastic when he took over the stick and began to fill the map with the rivers. One of the team members shared this enthusiasm and he brought in ash to mark the rivers (something he had seen in a video on PRA in India). It seemed the work had finally started and everybody seemed to get into the groove! People started to draw and brought in stones and leaves to mark important points in the area. Suddenly, a new outburst by the son of the *régulo*: "You are to dirty my yard!" referring to the lines of ash and leaves that were lying in front of us. In the upheaval that followed, one team member started to sweep up the ash. This time the *presidente* intervened. He stressed that he was attending like an ordinary villager, being at the house of the *régulo*, but he did somehow order us to continue with the exercise. But his intervention did not stop the confusion. Again we had to hear that we supported FRELIMO, that there was even a white from Maputo amongst the team (me!) to install FRELIMO in Mepinha, that we were going to cheat them, and that we were there to remove the local leaders from power. More threats followed. Others observed that we must have a lot of money and that we did not drink their water, referring to the fact that some of us consumed bottled mineral water. Drinking bottled water apparently may be a sign of our richness but also of our fear of being poisoned.
After this new discussion, accompanied with a lot of shouting, the *presidente* ordered us to continue with the work. At last, it seemed that everything had been cleared up and we managed to make a rough map. We were gaining the impression that the people were willing to collaborate and that they had been persuaded that we were not there to install any political party. But in the meantime it was almost 14.00 hours, many participants still had not eaten and we proposed to continue the following day. We agreed to meet the next day, Wednesday, in the afternoon, again in the house of the *régulo*. After this meeting, the *régulo* offered us lunch and the team was back in high spirits. The work had finally begun; we had done the map and we were convinced that we would make good progress in the coming days.
The following day at the scheduled time, we arrived with an enthusiastic team to continue with the diagrams and interviews. The *régulo* and his wives were there. We waited and waited, nobody else appeared and the team spirit plummeted. The previous day we had agreed with at least 100 people to return and nobody appeared! We politely said goodbye to the *régulo* and his family and left the community.

Chapter 9

Summary and preliminary analysis

This case tells us a variety of things. We as a team were very eager to do our thing (the PRA) and we were very disappointed when we were not able to do so. As outsiders and do-gooders we assumed that we were welcome and that everybody would like us. We had not been flexible; the team had scheduled that week and so the work could not be postponed; it had to happen and there and then.

It made clear that the PRA was an imposition. SCF wanted to train its staff and counterparts, and Mepinha had been selected as the place to do this. The local people had never asked for a PRA; they had merely been informed by SCF to welcome us.

This case also tells us something about the deep distrust that rural dwellers feel towards outsiders. Although we made many attempts to deny the allegations that we were representing FRELIMO, we did not succeed in convincing them. We proposed a variety of things to overcome the distrust, but all in vain. Although Joanna lived in the community, she was also seen as an outsider and was thought to have been bought in by the FRELIMO apparatus. People on the government payroll are easily identified with this party.

The case can also tell us something about how easy this distrust can be exploited by those in power. One could argue about the extent to which they seriously believed that we were there to install FRELIMO and to what extent this was merely being used to bar our work. From two observations we understood that it had been the *presidente* who had spread the news that we had come to do party-political work. One reason could be that the *presidente* did this out of frustration for being passed over since SCF had not asked his permission to work in Mepinha. Or was it a sign of political strife between the *régulo* and the *presidente*? Yet another explanation could be that one of the three (*presidente*, *régulo* or the *régulo's* son) had an interest in barring us from talking to the local people. Unfortunately, we were not given the opportunity to find out. The fact that nobody showed up on the last day while we had agreed with a large number of people to hold a meeting, showed clearly that at least one of the power-holders was well in control. It again showed that we, PRA practitioners, believe ourselves to be neutral while in fact often we are not, and how easily our work is drawn into political strife.

10 Synthesis of the observed project discourses & practices

In this chapter I have drawn together the issues that emerged when I compared the discourses around participatory development and the observed project practices. I will look at the tensions, and the incongruencies or gaps between discourses and practices. One can ask the question whether discourses around PRA and participatory approaches are 'inherently correct but poorly implemented' or is there something fundamentally wrong with the ideas and concepts themselves. In this chapter we will see that it is not a question of either/or. I observed 'bad' PRA practices but I also distilled three other 'gaps' between discourses and practices in which the inherent assumptions and the way in which project discourses are framed play an important role.

I will first look at project practices of PRA and compare these with what—according to the discourses of the advocates—is considered to be 'good PRA practice'. This refers to research question four and this is dealt with in section 10.1. In the three following sections (10.2-10.4) I return to research question five. These sections will summarise three gaps between project discourses and project practices that emerged clearly from the empirical work and revolve around the following issues: politics of participation; questions around empowerment; the top-down character of project activities.

10.1   PRA principles versus PRA practices

As we read in the previous three chapters, all projects used PRA. What makes good PRA practice? In this section I want to highlight the following principles (see section 5.9) and compare them with my observations in the field:

- Establishing good rapport; outsiders have to 'unlearn', relax, listen to the poor, learn from local people, and hand over the stick;
- Flexibility and optimal ignorance, learning should be iterative, only useful information and relevant tools should be used, recipes should be avoided;
- Sharing information and triangulation, one should look for complexity and diversity, and information should be cross-checked;
- Embracing error; criticism should be handled in a constructive manner;
- The use of tools and techniques should not be ends in themselves, all the work should contribute to the empowerment of the local people;
- PRA is not an extractive research method but should be an action-oriented process leading towards empowerment.

Establishing good rapport, learning from local people and handing over the stick

Good PRA practice depends for a great deal on the attitudes and behaviour of the people who are facilitating PRA. Much will depend on a good 'rapport' and a relation of trust with local people. The facilitators should 'unlearn', relax, and listen to the poor. Via direct contact, they should learn from the local people and allow them to learn from fellow locals. They should ideally hand over the stick; the outside facilitator should only initiate the process and then sit back.

In practice, many facilitators found it difficult to establish good rapport, create the 'equal partnership' and rural people probably experienced the same problem. Helvetas staff complained of the difficulty in bridging the wide social divide between (educated and urban)

project staff and the (poor) rural people. But the expectations local people had of development projects also played an important role. The outsider often remained the outsider. In some cases, there was not even a good opportunity to establish good rapport since the PRAs were often very short and of the hit-and-run-type; both in the case of CONCERN, ORAM, and of UNCDF we observed rushed 'PRAs' that only lasted a couple of hours. In the case of ORAM, we witnessed how badly the work was introduced. In the sequence of 16 PRAs by Helvetas we saw how, over time, ruts and routines crept in.

We saw that, in practice, the facilitators maintained tight control of the PRA. They determined the programme and what technique was to be used next. Of course, some two-way learning did take place, and local people were able to learn from each other to some extent while doing the group interviews, elaborating a diagram, or during a discussion. Still, overall the PRAs were largely extractive in that they were geared to data collection. The major output seemed to be the wishlist (UNCDF & CONCERN) or the map (community land delimitation). The facilitators would draw the matrix and local people were only allowed to fill in the blanks. They did not discuss purpose the matrix. Sometimes the extractive and routine way of working of the facilitators led to 'research fatigue' and local people dropped out or walked away.

Flexibility and optimal ignorance

PRA should involve a flexible way of working. There should be no fixed recipes. Learning should be iterative so that knowledge can accumulate fast. Only useful information should be generated and shared. Such flexibility would make optimal learning possible. Care should be taken that only useful information is collected; this is also referred to as striving for 'optimal ignorance' and 'appropriate imprecision'.

In practice, we have seen many examples in which such flexibility was lacking. Facilitators tend to stick to cookbooks and recipes, procedures and fixed routines of techniques, and questionnaire-type lists of questions. An example is the questionnaire used by ORAM during the fieldwork in Terepano. For the diagrams, formats were copied from elsewhere. The diagrams were not adapted to the local situation even when this format was known to be not relevant. Proposals to change the way of making the Venn diagram in order to zoom in and refine the data were not appreciated because it deviated from what had been taught in the classroom. In the case of UNCDF, we saw that—in the early stage—the PRA consisted of a fixed sequence of seven diagrams. After being criticised on this point, they did change their approach in that the choice of a tool had to be well argumented. Still, the PRA continued to be used as a method to produce a wishlist of the community, and was not directed towards a learning process.

Triangulation

An important principle of PRA is to critically examine the information that is generated and shared. The sharing itself is part of the good practice of crosschecking information. Triangulation can be done by using different sources, and by using different methods. Related to this, one should actively look for complexity and diversity.

In practice not much effort was made to triangulate and crosscheck information. The first answer was often considered as the one and only right answer. Answers were often not probed or discussed. One example of this is how, during the first days of the PRAs in Nampula, a list of 'problems' was established and how these problems were not further investigated during the PRA. Then on the last day the list re-appeared for ranking. The results of the diagrams were often taken as they were and not further discussed or shared, neither in the team of facilitators nor with (other) local people.

Embracing error

PRA principles call for a critical attitude. One should 'embrace errors' because one can learn from them. Criticism should be handled in a constructive manner.

However, in practice, since there was so little opportunity for sharing and discussion, there was also not much time and space for evaluating the work. The criticism that we had given in our feedback was often neglected. Our evaluation report of 1997 to UNCDF was 'mislaid' for some time. After evaluating the first PRA in Terepano, ORAM staff at first tried to bar my colleagues from doing the second part of the mission because there were not happy with the criticism. Our suggestion to add a section on lessons learnt after the PRA in Mucelo-Novo was also put aside. Helvetas staff were also nervous of us becoming too critical. There were many examples where staff intentionally brushed aside criticism and thus demonstrated the opposite of embracing error.

Tools and technique are not ends in themselves

PRA tools and techniques, or even the entire PRA, should not become ends in themselves. There is the risk that the link will be lost between the means and the goals. The activities in the context of a PRA are intended to contribute eventually to the ultimate objective of empowering local people, or whichever group is regarded as the clients or beneficiaries of the intervention. The techniques such as, for example, a diagram should not end once the diagram has been made. The process of making the diagram may be even more important since the discussions that emerge may raise new questions and allow for (more) learning. The diagram may need to be 'interrogated'; the diagram may simply be an entry point for further discussion or for further learning. According to the advocates such as Chambers, PRA and the techniques incorporated into it should contribute to a grander objective of learning, transformation, and empowerment.

Again, what happens in practice does not match the theory. The clearest example was the case of ORAM staff who considered the PRA as a nuisance, as just a requirement in the procedure of land delimitation. In this case, the map seemed to be the major output of the PRA. In the early phase of the UNCDF project, we saw how most tools were not linked to an analysis of the 'problems'. I have called this 'today-is-Wednesday, so-today-is-transect-day-type-of-PRA' because they used a fixed sequence of one technique per day. In almost all cases of PRA that I observed, when the diagram was finished, when all the blanks in the matrix or calendar had been filled in, the only activity undertaken was to copy the results—no further discussion took place, and no conclusions were drawn from the resulting diagram. This was often a missed opportunity to deepen the analysis or crosscheck certain information with local people. Only in few cases was there a specific effort to devolve or share the results of the PRA with local people, for example by leaving copies of the diagrams in the community.

Not an extractive research method but action-oriented towards empowerment

The most important difference between RRA and PRA is that RRA is more like a research method while PRA is much more action-oriented and has as its ultimate goal the empowerment of a certain group of (often poor or relatively marginalised) people. This means that PRA is about learning, and it is about getting local people involved in setting the agenda, in the mobilisation of resources, changing their own behaviour, enabling them to change the situation of poverty or marginalisation—in other words, transformation.

In practice, we observed that project staff had far less ambitious objectives with PRA. The objective was often data collection, and consequently, what was called PRA would have been more correctly labelled as RRA. It was not made specific what the project intended to achieve with PRA, and in most cases it was not clear to what extent the PRA was supposed to lead to transformation. For the case of UNCDF for example, I have described how throughout

the period under study (1997-2000) the role of PRA was not clear. In one annual report, the concept PRA was removed completely and substituted with 'meetings under the tree'. The link between the PRA and the rest of the planning tools at the district level, specifically the writing of the District Development Plan, never became clear. The importance of PRA seemed to diminish as less attention was paid to the PRAs by project staff; the number of PRAs per year went down and their duration was shortened. It seemed that the only purpose of continuing with the PRAs was to select certain infrastructural projects of bricks and mortar to be built within that community. The major outcome of the PRA therefore became the list of priorities that I have called the wishlist. This way of working could potentially contradict what was laid out in the District Development Plan.

In the Helvetas case, it eventually appeared that the PRAs had been done only as a preliminary introductory exercise. Over time, the PRAs tended to end up more often with similar wishlists while this was not the case in the earlier PRAs. This must also be seen in the light of the expectations local people had of development projects and NGOs. The people in Matutuíne told us that they had learnt from participating in the PRA (referring mainly to the explanations during the lecture on the new land law) but added: *"mas ainda não vimos nada"*, "but we did not yet see any results". The local people were still waiting for the NGO to 'deliver the goods' such as schools, wells, health centres, livestock restocking schemes. Helvetas did continue organising regional seminars that provided further opportunities for learning and sharing.

Project staff amongst themselves often differed in opinion over the role of PRA and over the extent to which PRA should lead to empowerment. In general, the programme officers—staff from headquarters or donor representatives who were further away from the everyday field practice—who had higher expectations in terms of empowerment or transformation. This often led to confusion or conflicts, as was the case in the discussion between the UNCDF headquarter staff and the discussion between the Concern programme officer and LDC members.

It is ultimately questionable as to what extent staff were committed to the empowerment of local people. Especially lower cadres were, in general, rather opportunistic in that they just did what they were asked to do as long they got paid for it, as was the case with many of the ORAM staff. Facilitators who were not paid, such as the members of the Sambassoca LDC, did try to obtain remuneration in one way or another. They did not work voluntarily in the interest of the community, as the NGO would like to portray them as working.

Conclusions

In this section, I compared the basic principles of 'good PRA practice' with observed project practices. It seemed that many project staff members, especially the higher educated and the ones from urban backgrounds, encountered difficulties in establishing good rapport. Project staff often considered PRA as a largely extractive exercise, lacked the flexibility to adapt the method to the context, did not triangulate sufficiently, treated the tools as ends in themselves and did not take criticism in a constructive manner. In general, PRA was not considered as a process of mutual learning, mobilisation, and empowerment. The role and place of PRA in the project was often not clearly stipulated. In practice, its role turned out to be to provide a first reconnaissance of the area and/or to make a so-called wishlist or map. This information was in general a (bureaucratic) need of the project to enable the project to continue with the next step or the next intervention of the project. Much of what was called PRA in Mozambique in the 1990s could have been more correctly labelled as RRA, in that the work was in general oriented to data collection. Most of the PRA work was rather extractive and it was therefore not likely that this contributed to the objectives of empowerment of local

people. As such, much of the PRA practices as described in the previous chapters could easily be labelled as 'bad practice'.

The above would imply that the philosophy and principles of PRA and participatory approaches are fine but that implementation is slack for a variety of reasons including a lack of training, and inappropriate attitudes and behaviour of staff. These are often cited by the advocates in their explanation of poor or 'bad practice'. In the following three sections I will distil three 'gaps' between discourses and project practices that emerged during the analysis of the empirical material. This will answer research question five. By doing so, the gaps also highlight the fact that the discourse of participatory development itself may be blamed for its naivety and optimism.

10.2   Politics of Participation

A-political discourse

As we read in chapter three, 'participation-speak' often assumes that consensus and win-win situations are possible and that all actors agree on the need for interventions, their objectives and the methods chosen for reaching those objectives. Since 'empowerment of the poor', 'participation', 'PRA', 'good governance' and 'decentralisation' were popular buzzwords in the 1990s regarding development, nobody seemed to contest them. Although these terms played a prominent role in the project documents, they were hardly specified further.

Although transformative development interventions geared to empowerment are, by definition, highly political, we observed that projects were presented in an a-political and neutral way. I distinguished five different strategies that were used to do this.

In the first place, there was a tendency in the project discourses to downplay the more emancipatory sides of the objectives, and the possible conflictive nature such projects may have. Instead, it was stressed that the project would help in establishing dialogue and in resolving conflicts. An example is the project document of Helvetas that stated that the empowerment of the local communities would contribute to "avoiding conflicts between them and the private investors". It was presented as quite simply that conflicts would be avoided by "starting up a dialogue" (Helvetas, 1998). The discourse around the land law also stressed that conflicts could be avoided via dialogue. The law was based on the premise that new partnerships between investors and local communities would be created. The establishment of new fora such as Local Development Committees (LDCs), and District Consultative Councils were proposed in the project discourses as elected bodies that were intended to be legitimate representations of the civil society. Their aim was to facilitate dialogue and help in consultation. It was assumed that the members of the LDCs would selflessly defend the interests of their community.

Another way to stress the neutral and a-political character of the intervention is to present the methodologies in a rather technical way. Decentralisation for example, was reduced to procedures for planning and reporting with some short periods devoted to consultation. PRAs were reduced to a sequence of visual techniques, rather than a method that can stimulate joint learning and mobilise local people. In much the same way, community land delimitation degenerated into a series of steps in a procedure, as stipulated in the technical annex of the land law, to get the map registered.
PRA was presented as an objective and neutral method. PRA was 'modern' and its use as the preferred method in rural development projects was not contested. Its inherent 'good-ness'

legitimised the use of PRA and its outcomes. The voting exercise via scoring in a matrix that was used by both CONCERN and UNCDF during PRA to determine priorities for the community is another example of sterile decision-making procedures. The selection process for choosing the community in which to hold the next PRA in Nampula was also presented as a neutral decision since this would be 'the most needy area', the so-called, *'zona mais carente'*. It was however hardly specified how this was determined and, in practice, the district administrator was the one who decided. The PRA would then lead to the identification of bricks and mortar solutions (social infrastructure such as schools, wells, roads and health posts) as a way to alleviate poverty. This kind of investment is seemingly politically relatively neutral.

Thirdly, there were high expectations of what the PRA method and the community would be able to do. Consequently, politically sensitive issues were expediently delegated. For example, the difficult question of how community should be defined in the making of the land law was simply trusted to the community; via PRA the community would auto-define itself. PRA was also to lead to legitimate and representative community structures (Boyd 1996). In other cases it was already assumed that the LDCs would form such representative structures. When, at the end of a PRA in Nampula, a discussion emerged over what should be the highest priority, the UNCDF staff simply delegated the resolution to the LDC that had been established a moment before. This way project staff neatly acquitted themselves from a difficult discussion. The programme officer of CONCERN was not too concerned with the worries of the members of the LDC about their role in the community since he regarded the LDC as an institution by and for the community. He simply returned the questions by copying the politically correct discourse that the community should define the role of the LDC. By doing so, project staff did not have to decide for the community when this was not convenient for them. In those cases, the project staff would ask the members of the community to decide for themselves so that project staff remained safely on the sidelines upholding their neutral status.

A fourth significant way used to keep the project discourse a-political was to stress that what the project was doing was in line with government policies and procedures. All projects, both in their project documents and in public presentations, made explicit how their activities fitted in, or were done according to, the policies and regulations of the Mozambican authorities. Good examples are the way in which the 'Guidelines' booklet was used by the UNCDF project in Nampula and the technical annex in the cases of community land delimitation.

Finally, an important strategy used by project staff was to distance the project from any party politics. Especially when project staff introduced their activities in the rural areas, it was stressed that the work had nothing to do with either FRELIMO or RENAMO. They wanted to stay as neutral as possible.

Project Practices: dealing with conflicts

Conflicts are linked to politics since conflicts are manifestations of differences in opinions, values, and interests between different actors. In the course of this study, I came across many latent and manifest conflicts. Some conflicts had existed already but flared up, and others were a result of the intervention. It is obvious that different interests and different expectations clash when different actors have to work together. And there is of course nothing wrong or strange in this. One can say that any meaningful process of change involves

conflicts and thus a conflict can be a signal that something is changing. Whether such change is good or bad will depend on the views of the observer.

In the case of Helvetas, we saw how the different actors had very different expectations of what the NGO should do. The local population hoped that Helvetas would continue to do what they had done before—provide benefits such as infrastructure and agricultural inputs. The District administrator also would have preferred that the NGO continued with such interventions. The TFCA had envisioned that the NGO would assist them with the formation of Joint Management Committees for the management of natural resources, thereby helping in achieving TFCA's conservationist goals. The BME had hoped that Helvetas would help in getting their ecotourism investment off the ground. These different perceptions led to various conflicts between these actors (see chapter seven and also Pijnenburg 2002).

The case of the LDC of Sambassoca showed how the programme officer and the members of the LDC had very different opinions on the role of the committee. But also within a project itself, it was possible that staff members had very different opinions on how to conduct the intervention. The discussion we witnessed between senior UNCDF staff on what the role of PRA should be was a good example of how wide the divide can be even within one organisation.

All cases demonstrated that the project came into conflict with local power-holders, mainly with District Administrators but also with higher or lower level authorities. In the case of Helvetas, the conflict started after the NGO had voiced the opinions of local people that the administration would not be doing enough to mitigate the crop damage caused by elephants. Helvetas invested a lot of effort in building up a relation of trust with the residents of the area. One example was the trouble they took to understand and defend the values and interests of local people. In the seminar in Gala, the NGO discussed the concerns of local people about the loss of traditional norms, values, and ceremonies. Later, several residents told us that they believed that one of the objectives of Helvetas was to "make the people return to their traditions". This may have contributed to the allegations by the district administrator that staff members of the NGO would be supporters of RENAMO, the party that is generally believed to be more linked to the *régulo*s and to the revival of traditional authorities and ceremonies. The district administrator was not happy with the emancipatory objectives of the project and would have preferred that the NGO kept to the more visible activities such as building and rehabilitating infrastructures.

The case of the LDC in Sambassoca showed similar problems whereby the *chefe do posto* and the district administrator were upset with the type of work the NGO was doing. Especially the reports that authorities collected too much tax money and the abuse of power (use of the *shamboca*) by the police led to many accusations and threats at the address of the NGO and the LDC. Here too, power-holders blamed the NGO for working for the opposition RENAMO[31].

The case in Mepinha showed how the *presidente da localidade*, the *régulo* or his son blocked the PRA that the NGO Save the Children had planned. In this case, the allegation was that we had come there to install FRELIMO party structures.

The UNCDF project faced problems with some district administrators who caused delays in the programme. Project management eventually used the calibration of the size of the allocation from the development fund to either reward or punish the collaboration of the district. But even at levels above the district level, projects had to struggle with resistance of various kinds. The UNCDF project for example wanted more support from the provincial level to get the district administrations moving. But at the central level too (in the capital Maputo), the project was working on changing the resistance and lack of support. The same can be said about the new land law and the opportunity for community land delimitation.

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[31] Here the allegation was more obvious since the LDC in Sambassoca indeed contained two members who were also RENAMO members.

There continued to be widespread doubts in Mozambican society as to whether this was the right way forward, and projects supporting it had to struggle to defend their approach, philosophy, and their position.

Finally, I witnessed several conflicts within communities themselves. I mention here only briefly four examples of conflicts that emerged during my fieldwork. The first was the conflict between the *régulo* and *presidente da localidade* in Mepinha. Another example was the uprising by villagers against the *secretários* in Mucelo-Novo. A third example was the difference of opinions on what to delimit in Terepano. The fourth example was the difference of opinions on the wildlife fence in Madjanjane.

In short, the participatory development interventions that were studied did not only resolve and avoid conflicts, as their project discourses promised. They also generated many conflicts. It is extremely interesting to analyse how the different actors reacted, since we can see that their behaviour was in fact highly political, in that all actors tried to defend their interests (individually, as a group or as an institution). I discovered certain typical patterns. Below, I will look at the ways in which district administrators tried to delay or control the interventions. This is followed by what I analysed as being typical reactions of project staff.

Reactions of local power-holders: delay, block, control, and accuse

How did local power-holders react to interventions with emancipatory objectives? Here again, I especially refer to the behaviour of district administrators. We can summarise by saying that they either tend to delay, block, or control the intervention, or accuse the project staff. Cases of delays or blocking interventions were, for example, the delays by the district administrations in the decentralisation programme in Nampula. Other examples are that of both district administrators in Matutuíne and Guruè preventing teams from, respectively, Helvetas and ORAM from working on community land delimitation. Local leaders prevented the PRA in Mepinha.

There are also many examples of how administrators attempted to remain in control of the intervention. The DCC for example remained under the tight control of the district administrator and did not evolve into independent and representative civil society organisations as was promised in the project document. The district administrator convened, and chaired these meetings. In some districts, representatives of RENAMO were invited and in others not, depending on the willingness of the administrator. The extent to which the comments of the DCC were taken seriously also depended on how the administrator and his staff dealt with this. Thus, the DCC effectively had very little power. District administrators also controlled by co-opting the interventions. I have already mentioned the example of how the decision to build a health post in Necata was made by the district administrator for political reasons. We also saw how, during the composition of the Local Development Committees in Nampula province, local power-holders—in one case the *régulo* and in another the *presidente*—took immediate charge over these newly formed groups.

Another strategy used by district administrators, which we observed in all the cases in which an NGO was running the project, was to accuse the NGO or its staff that they would be supporting the opposition party RENAMO. While Mozambique has a multiparty democracy, with RENAMO occupying almost half of the seats in the national parliament, being accused of membership of this completely legal party is apparently considered as a major offence. In fact, it was an effective strategy to neutralise or to influence the work of the NGO, as we will read below.

Reactions of project staff: defuse, avoid, and brush up

How did project staff deal with resistance and such conflicts? Continuing with the accusations by district administrators that NGOs would support RENAMO, it is interesting to see that NGO staff were extremely sensitive to such criticism. They were very nervous and tried to defuse these allegations as much as possible. The first time, Helvetas called in high political FRELIMO support and had a long meeting with the administrator to settle the conflict. In the introductions at the beginning of the fieldwork too, the NGO staff stressed that they did not have any party political links. Party politics was forbidden terrain for the NGOs since it was exceptionally sensitive, and they wanted to remain neutral. Still, as we saw above, many conflicts (whether party political in nature or not) did emerge. Project staff either avoided or brushed aside conflicts. In the first year, Helvetas did not want to get involved in the conflict over the wildlife fence between the residents of Madjanjane and BME. Helvetas regretted this later. ORAM, confronted with the conflict between residents of Mucelo-Novo and the secretaries, decided not to mention this in their report since it was considered as 'an internal, political problem'. Also, the issue of the different opinions within Terepano on what community, or part of the community, to delimit was swept from the table; it was potentially too conflictuous. The NGO CONCERN seemed to wash its hands of the conflict that the LDC members had with the district administration and local police. According to the programme officer, the NGO did not have any responsibility for the LDC and thus left the resolution of the conflict to the LDC members.

Conclusions

So while the project discourses tend to present the interventions and the methods used as neutral and a-political, the interventions showed that the different perceptions on development and on the projects led to resistance and many conflicts. It is interesting to see how power-holders and project staff dealt with these conflicts. The ways in which power-holders either block or control the intervention, and the ways in which project staff try to appease others and avoid conflicts in themselves, show how politically active they were in manoeuvring to push their agenda through.

So we can say that there is a gap between the a-political and neutral way in which the approach is being presented in the project discourse and what actually happens in practice, in which many conflicts emerge. In fact, we can distinguish a second, related gap. Project staff attempt to avoid or defuse these conflicts. One way to do this is to present their project as neutral, as generally accepted, and in line with government policy. Thus, one could say that they try to bring practice back in line with the a-political and neutral project discourse, in an attempt to close the gap. But the way they do this is highly strategic and political and not at all neutral or a-political.

10.3   Who is empowered?

Project discourses: the empowerment word but not its definition

It was striking that all projects contain the word empowerment in their project discourse but none of them defined what they meant by it. The word is used— albeit not too often and not too extensively—but none of the project documents made an attempt to analyse or forecast what impact empowerment would involve or for whom. There were no analyses made of inequalities or causes of poverty. In the case of Helvetas, the residents of the district had to be protected against unscrupulous (foreign) investors. But even these commercial investors had adopted the concept of empowerment of the locals in their plans.

Because there were no clear statements on empowerment as to what it would be and what it would involve for the project, at times very different views of it surfaced. For example, in the

discussion about what the role of PRA was in the Nampula project, one UNCDF advisor had the idea that eventually the PRA would lead to self-development, while another advisor saw the PRA merely as a way to consult local people. Different people involved in a project could have very different views and very different ambitions in terms of empowerment, while they continued using the same concept in their discourse. Another example is the LDC of Sambassoca, which showed how the programme officer of CONCERN and the members of the LDC had completely different views on the roles and responsibilities of the committee.

In the project discourses of the projects in Nampula and Machaze, 'empowerment of communities' was justified by the assumed 'lack of civil society structures'. In other words, the assessment in the project documents was that there were no clear formal bodies at the village level that would guarantee legitimate and transparent representation. The discourses assumed that empowerment would be generated via the establishment of new institutions such as DCCs and LDCs.

All projects shared the high expectations of their activities in terms of enabling local people to have a voice. If this did not happen via the newly-established organisations such as DCCs and LDCs, local people would be furthermore empowered via: PRAs (all projects), starting dialogues (Helvetas), mechanisms for consultation in the planning machinery (UNCDF), community land delimitation or establishing partnerships (land law; Helvetas, and ORAM).

Another remarkable thing was that all projects referred constantly to communities or 'the community' but that this word was hardly problematised in the project context. The concept was widely debated in the discussions that led to the new land law, but not in project documents. In the project discourses, no reference was made to possible internal power struggles and differences in access to, and control over, resources by different groups living in that community.

The project discourses, either expressed in project documents or in discussions with project staff, assumed that communities would be able and willing to resolve their own (internal) problems. This is explicit in the new land law, which was based on the assumption that customary law works well in organising access to land. The same was expected immediately from the newly established community organisations such as LDCs. Once they were 'installed', it was assumed that these committees would be able to solve all the problems. In fact, the discourse of participatory development that stresses ownership and self-development also provided an easy way out for the project staff since they could—when it proved convenient for them—delegate or bounce back difficult choices. The view of the programme officer of CONCERN, who said that "the community should define what the LDC should do" and that "the LDC should prove itself" are good examples. Another example is that during a PRA in Machaze, the facilitator introduced a local LDC member to the villagers as the person to turn to in case where the traditional leaders would not be able to resolve the problem. Thus, the young man who thought he would be doing a job for the NGO suddenly got thrust upon him a status higher than the old men who, for years had been considered by the people as local leaders.

Empowerment in practice?

It is difficult to say something on the project practices in terms of empowerment on the basis of the project discourse on empowerment since the projects did not define what they meant with empowerment. In other words, it is not possible to evaluate the projects on the basis of their own definition or by criteria set out by the project. Secondly, empowerment will probably entail a long-term process and it is difficult to set a target of how much empowerment would be desirable. In other words, we would need a process evaluation.

I refer back to the theory on empowerment outlined in chapters three and five in order to assess whether project practices are likely to contribute to a process of empowerment by local people. In the World Bank definition, empowerment is about enabling poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable, institutions that affect their lives. According to the definition by Crawley, empowerment is about enabling people to understand their situation, reflect on factors shaping that situation, set their own agenda, and take steps to change the situation. It is also about transformation, which implies a learning process and changes in behaviour. Finally, it is about mobilising groups of people and collective action (see sections 3.3 and 5.9).

I will first look at learning, making an assessment as to what learning took place as a result of the intervention, and how this learning could possibly play a role in the empowerment of local people. Secondly I will look at the extent to which people were enabled to set the agenda and to what extent they were able to influence 'the institutions that affect their lives'. Then I will look at how projects did, or did not, deal with intra-community issues. Finally, I observe how projects tended to evolve over time, whereby the objectives and activities directed towards empowerment seemed to become less important.

Empowerment via critical learning by local people

According to the definition of empowerment by Crawley, learning is important since local people will have to understand their situation (of poverty) and reflect on factors that shape this situation. So while one of the important principles of RRA and PRA is that outsiders learn from local people, learning by local people is just as important in the case of PRA when the objective is empowerment. What kind of learning took place during the interventions?

In most of the cases that I observed, PRA was something new for local people, and the way the information was shared via diagramming techniques was highly appreciated. And we can definitely say that some mutual learning from fellow-villagers and/or from project staff or facilitators took place in the process of working together. We can also talk of learning in the cases in which the project provided information that was deemed relevant by local people. For example, the explanations of the new land law by Helvetas and ORAM staff were highly appreciated by local people. In Matutuíne, many people spoke of the explanations as: "*abriu nossas cabeças*", meaning that it had opened their eyes (literally: it opened our heads). Apparently, the explanations of the land law had been rather relevant for the farmers in Matutuíne, and this enhanced information did therefore contribute to—or rather, was a first step towards—empowerment. Other meetings, seminars, and PRAs, as long as they also provided relevant information, also provided local people with opportunities for learning.

However, we saw in section 10.1 that the PRAs were rather extractive in nature. PRA was mainly used as a method of data collection. Little or no advantage was taken of the potential of PRA as a way of establishing rapport and confidence with local people, raising the consciousness of local people, and mobilising them. In the case of community land delimitation, ORAM viewed PRA simply as a necessary bureaucratic step. It served to provide data as required by the technical annex and to enable a map to be drawn. We also saw here that staff, once they got started with PRA, had preconceived ideas of what land to delimit, and little or no attention was spent on discussion with the community about why it should be delimited or why it should be delimited in this way. In other cases, obtaining a 'wishlist' was the major objective. I also regard the PRAs as imposed since it was the outsiders who determined the agenda and the outsiders who would pose the questions. Project staff and/or the facilitators would determine the topics to be discussed and the issues to be ranked. This meant that it was mainly the outsiders learning from local people instead of local people learning from others.

Of course, whether people were able to learn depended a lot on the way in which the method was applied. In the cases of bad facilitation, the diagrams or the interviews were not accessible or not interesting for a large number of the participants such as in the case of the

PRA in Terepano in which diagrams were too small or the wrong way up for the participants, and in which the writing on the ground was unreadable. In those cases, people would lose interest and turn away.

We have also seen that the lists of 'problems' that were identified during the PRA were, in fact, often wishlists. These were hardly questioned, and no analysis was made as to whether they really needed a particular item on the list, or why it had not already been provided. For example, in Nampula no analysis was made as to what kind of health problems were affecting the community when the community indicated that the "lack of a health post" was a problem. Thus, there was little reflection or attention paid to underlying relations and factors that might be serving to perpetuate certain problems.

There was some scope for learning by local people, and this varied from case to case. Overall, it was mainly the outsiders who were learning, since they were the ones who determined the topics to be discussed. The 'problems' brought up by local people were often not sufficiently probed or analysed by the facilitators. In other words, the extractive and imposed character of the interventions resulted in a relatively limited learning process for local people. As learning is seen as a necessary step in the process of empowerment, but by no means the only one, the potential for transformative development was equally limited.

Empowerment by influencing and changing institutions

Looking at the second important part of our definition of empowerment, we have to ask ourselves whether local people were enabled to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable, institutions that affect their lives. We should first pose the question of what institutions we are actually talking about. Uphoff defined institutions as "complexes of norms and behaviour that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes" (Uphoff 1986, 9). In addition, I use a useful distinction between formal and informal institutions; the formal ones being those that are supported by written sources either by contracts, bylaws, statutes, etc. (North 1991). First, there are of course myriads of local informal institutions that affect people's lives. These may range from certain patterns of behaviour, taboos, norms that regulate access to resources, market relations, ingrained power relations and inequalities in society. Secondly, there are formal institutions such as laws, procedures, and the formal bureaucratic organisations such as the courts, governmental agencies, and service providers. These formal institutions do not, however, always function according to their (written) regulations, bylaws, and procedures. Especially in the African context, although many rules and regulations may exist on paper, informal rules may be equally important, or even more important for much of the functioning of formal institutions.

As discussed above, project discourses were often not very explicit on the subject of empowerment. If at all any mention is made of institutions, it is normally referred to the more formal institutions. In the project discourses, it is often implied that people have to organise themselves and that existing bureaucratic organisations should become more pro-poor or be more open to the voice of local people. In other words, while changing informal institutions is likely to be more important for the empowerment of rural poor, the emphasis in project discourses was on creating new formal organisations. This may seem easier and more visible in the short term. It is also likely that project staff may obtain easier collaboration from governmental institutions for these activities. In his book "Seeing like a State", Scott described how governments have an interest in making society more 'legible' (Scott 1998). Making maps and having people organised in administrative structures such as LDCs may greatly enhance effective governance. Creating uniform and formal institutions is crucial in gaining and maintaining control.

The projects of UNCDF in Nampula, CONCERN in Machaze, and ORAM in Nicoadala all attempted to create new institutions. The UNCDF project established the District Consultative Councils and, later, the Local Development Committees (LDCs). CONCERN also established LDCs and ORAM the so-called land committees. To what extent did these new organisations empower people? To what extent did it enable (poor) people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives?

The District Consultative Councils were originally envisioned as relatively formal bodies that would represent the civil society of the district. In the project document, it was anticipated that members would be chosen from the bottom-up—with women making up 30 to 50 %, and that the chair would rotate. In the course of the project, however, the DCC became a public consultative meeting in which the district administrator was firmly in charge; the administrator convened and chaired the meeting. Very few women participated, and many doubts regarding its representativeness remained. The powers of the DCC remained limited. The extent to which the DCC was taken seriously depended very much on the willingness of the district administrator and his or her team. It is difficult to say anything meaningful about the experience with the LDC since the UNCDF project started just as I was completing my fieldwork. However, the way in which they were established did raise many doubts. They were largely imposed (see also section 10.3). The risk is therefore high that these will remain highly artificial organisations. The case of the LDC of Sambassoca in Machaze showed how —in the perception of its members—the committee was established by the NGO. In other words, level of ownership was very low. The LDCs were perceived as being an organisation by, and for, the project rather than as an organisation by, and for, the community. Experience teaches us that such organisations cease to exist when the project stops (Pijnenburg 1998). These organisations are not backed up by any formal legislation or policy that desires or requires their existence. The district government has no obligations whatsoever to consult either LDCs or a DCC, thereby making it unlikely that the setting up of these formal bodies will , of itself, contribute to empowerment by influencing relevant institutions.

So is this different for the case of land delimitation, which is backed up by national legislation? Even here we have seen that, on the issue of community and its land committee especially, many questions concerning representation persisted. There were serious flaws in the delimitation process and as late as 2002, insiders were still anxiously waiting for a first example of a successful partnership between a community and an investor (Norfolk and Liversage 2002; Tanner 2002). The envisioned empowerment that would be achieved via brokering a partnership appeared to be largely based on wishful thinking.

Helvetas was the only organisation that (consciously) decided not to set up new organisational structures, since they were wary of creating artificial organisations. They did organise regional seminars and left the decision of whom to delegate for these meetings to the community. In these seminars, participants could voice their concerns to staff of Helvetas. Thus, apart from these seminars and PRAs, which were organised by Helvetas, there were not many opportunities for local people to influence the more formal institutions. It did provide an opportunity for the NGO to learn a lot about the concerns of the residents of the area, and Helvetas functioned at times as an advocate for the local people, for example in the TFCA coordination meetings. In this case, the local population was able to influence action, albeit in an indirect way. The drawback was that they were dependant on a foreign NGO.

Helvetas made serious attempts to bring local residents in direct contact with the investors with the aim of bringing about the intended dialogue. Unfortunately, they failed due to the fact that the other parties concerned—the investor BME and to a lesser extent the TFCA project—failed to cooperate. Also, the idea of setting up joint management committees with community representatives, as proposed by the TFCA project, did not materialise.

The case in Matutuíne also showed that local people do have the capacity to undertake collective action and organise themselves when the need arises. The protest against the

building of the wildlife fence in Madjanjane, and the organisation of the fishermen at Lake Phiti are striking examples of this. These local initiatives were ideal opportunities for organisations to link up with. But Helvetas did not do so. The NGO did not pay specific attention to these organisations. Two years later they regretted not having involved themselves earlier in the protest against the wildlife fence.

We have seen that projects prefer to work with formal organisations and do not pay attention to the many informal local institutions—especially socio-political relations—that may be much more relevant when the objective is empowerment of the rural poor. Secondly, there is the tendency to create new organisations instead of working via existing institutions, or linking up with existing conflicts that may provide a good opportunity to work directly towards negotiations.

Legitimacy of the newly established organisations is low for various reasons. They are perceived as a temporary project initiative. There is low ownership by local people since the projects are largely imposed. There is no formal link with formal institutions that influence the decision-making that affects rural people's lives.The most that ever happened during the PRAs was that the local people were consulted and no further. The extent to which this consultation is taken seriously depends largely on the willingness of those who take important decisions. Finally, projects such as the ones in Matutuíne and in Nampula did also try to work with provincial and district governmental staff in order to achieve a change in attitude so that they would listen better and become more open towards the needs of the rural poor. This is definitely a long-term process and I have not been able to investigate whether this is in fact already happening. Overall, for the reasons I have just mentioned, the potential for empowerment via influencing institutions was rather limited.

Intra-community issues

Very little attention was given to conflicts and differences of interests within the community. In both discourses and practices, the community was often assumed as being a harmonious monolithic whole. There was hardly any explicit attention paid to differentiating dimensions within the communities. One thing that was common during the different PRAs was to have separate groups of women and men during the various visual diagramming techniques. This can in itself be a good way to look at differences between men and women but nothing was done in terms of making an analysis of inequalities within the communities. Moreover, it is possible that other dimensions within the community such as lineage, length of stay in the village, religion, have a far greater relevance for intra-community inequalities. It cannot be assumed that women as a category per se have less power than men (Waterhouse and Vijfhuizen 2001). Rich women or women of certain families may have different rights and obligations compared to women in other positions.

We saw in the previous chapters and in section 10.2 that many conflicts emerged, including intra-community conflicts, indicating the differences of interests within communities. It also became obvious that project staff tended to avoid such conflicts and were reluctant to write them up in their reports.

In project practice, no distinction was made as to whom to empower. In all cases the recurring question was: who will represent the community best? It became clear that there is a real risk that the powerful in a community are empowered further. Examples are the land delimitation process in both Terepano and Mucelo- Novo. In Terepano it appeared that the land delimitation was mainly in the interest of the local leaders. In Mucelo-Novo, residents wanted a new committee, expressing that they had no confidence in the existing leaders. This protest was waved aside by both the existing village leaders and ORAM staff. In another example, in the cases of the establishment of the LDCs in Nampula, described in chapter

eight, we saw how local power-holders immediately co-opted the new committees. In all projects, many doubts about representation remained unanswered; doubts that persisted even after the LDC had been established. Added to this, the members the LDC were not without their personal interests. The members of the LDC in Sambassoca asked for more remuneration for what they considered as work they were doing for the NGO. Especially when working with relatively poor people, it cannot be assumed that they work selflessly, in an altruistic manner for the interest of the rest of their community.

Watering down empowerment objectives

The attention paid to the objectives of empowerment may also change over time. None of the projects had empowerment as the sole objective. Helvetas made a distinction between its 'visible' activities (providing material benefits, for example by building infrastructures) and 'invisible' activities (the activities directed to the empowerment of local people). The project struggled to find a balance between these 'visible' and 'invisible' activities. Over time, the more visible activities became more of a focus, relegating the 'empowerment' objectives to a minor status. It seemed that the project gave in to demands to provide material benefits from both local administration and the rural people. Senior project staff also justified this by arguing that "It makes no sense to talk to people about laws and rights when their bellies are empty". Another argument given by staff of the NGO was that building schools would equally contribute to empowerment since it would provide more opportunity for school education.

I observed a similar shift in the UNCDF project in Nampula, as the role of PRA and community participation became less visible. Especially after the first District Development Plan had been written, the work tended to focus more on the district level, and the planning and finance mechanisms. This also meant less explicit attention to empowerment of the rural poor. It is also possible that resistance of, for example, district administrators had its effect and that project staff had to water down the empowerment objectives.

Conclusion

In the project discourses, empowerment was never properly defined, and neither was the issue of whom to empower made more specific than "the community" or "local people". The setting up of organisations such as DCCs and LDCs was justified by a presumed lack of organisational structures in their working area. Learning by local people was limited since most of the work remained in the hands of the outsiders, and the PRAs were rather extractive. It remains unclear to what extent local people were further enabled to influence existing institutions as a result of the intervention. With the exception of Helvetas, projects attempted to create new organisations. These were largely imposed and had no formal link to decision-making bodies. Little attention was paid to intra-community power relations. Over time, the projects tended to deviate away from the emancipatory objectives. Thus, while the discourses stated that empowerment was an important objective, little evidence exists to show that project staff genuinely strived for this objective, and it is rather unlikely that the activities of the projects facilitated a serious transformative process among local people.

10.4   Imposed Interventions

The concepts on which the interventions were based were developed and applied in the project documents in offices far away from the field. If we look at the basic philosophies on which the projects are based, we can say that many of the approaches have been borrowed from outside the country. In the case of district planning, we have seen how one British national had an enormous influence in getting the process in Nampula off the ground. In his

previous function, he had written the guidelines, got them distributed though the Ministry and is now selling the concept as being government policy. Not without success , one has to say; some elements within the Ministry now refer to Nampula as an model for decentralisation. UNCDF organized several so-called 'national' stakeholder workshops, but representation of the Mozambican ministries was minimal and these meetings were dominated by expatriate experts. The project in Matutuíne is based on the principles of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), an approach that was used widely in the 1990s other countries in Southern Africa. In Mozambique, this approach has been largely donor-driven. By mid 2000, there were more than 40 donor-funded projects in the country using this approach. One could argue that Community Land Delimitation is a Mozambican concept since the land law and its regulations regarding land delimitation have been widely debated in the national platform organisation *Campanha Terra* and prepared by the Inter-ministerial Land Commission. But Land Delimitation is very much based on the CBNRM approach. But both in the *Campanha Terra* and in the technical secretariat of the Land Commission—both instrumental in pushing the case for community land delimitation—expatriate experts and NGO representatives played an important role.

Apart from the empowerment objectives, the project discourses shared principles such as ownership by local people and bottom-up approaches. Helvetas talked of equal partnerships with local people and, in the eyes of CONCERN staff, the LDC was an organisation by, and for, the community. However, when we look at project practices, we can see that basically all activities on the ground were initiatives by project staff. It was never the members of the communities who invited the projects to do a PRA, to establish an LDC, or to delimit their land.

In all the PRAs we observed, the outside facilitators planned the exercise and the only information the community would receive was arrival date of the team. Similarly, the agenda and procedures of the PRA were in the hands of the outsiders. PRA was often not considered as part of a process of empowerment, for mutual learning and for the mobilisation and organisation of local people. ORAM staff considered the PRA as a cumbersome bureaucratic step in the procedures of community land delimitation. Project staff, including myself when I went out to do the PRA in Mepinha, considered themselves as do-gooders and easily assumed that the PRA team would always be welcome. The Mepinha case showed clearly however that the PRA team is not always welcome. Again it was an NGO initiative to start a PRA, in the interest of the NGO, i.e. training their staff, but apparently the local leaders had other opinions of the work and barred us from doing the PRA.

Other examples of imposed interventions include the way in which community land delimitation was pushed through and the way in which the Local Development Committees (LDCs) were implanted in the communities by project staff. These last two examples are discussed in the following two sections.

NGO's zeal to delimit the land

The cases of community land delimitation demonstrated that this activity was mainly the idea of the intervening agency. In none of the cases we attended had the local communities asked for such delimitation. The NGO would first 'sensitise' the community to the need for the land delimitation. The observation of how ORAM did this showed how the staff of the organisation induced local people to agree to delimit. Community land delimitation had been enthusiastically embraced as a new tool by ORAM. New staff had been recruited for this activity and the project document obliged them to delimit 48 communities in three years. Helvetas also had little time to lose for the implementation of community land delimitation because they were in a race with the commercial investors. They wanted to delimit the

community land before the investors started staking their claims. All these aspects—the enthusiasm and zeal of the NGOs, their haste, and the targets they had set—caused the activities centring around community land delimitation to be very much pushed by the NGOs. The fact that the land delimitation was often imposed on the community led to situations whereby local people were not even aware of what was happening, and at times induced outright obstruction by local residents. In Madjanjane, people expressed their fears that the exercise of delimitation would lead to their expulsion from the area. For the actual task of demarcation, the locals demanded remuneration, a signal that the initiative to delimit their area was not their own but rather an activity for and by the NGO. On other occasions, fears were expressed that the delimitation would bar outside investors from coming in while the local people were clamouring for employment opportunities that investors might be able to supply. Helvetas maintained that delimitation was in the interest of the community. Apparently this view was not shared by all, since every now and then some local people continued to express concerns and doubts about the intentions to delimit (Helvetas 1999b).

The way in which the delimitation took place also reveals that this exercise was rather imposed and not critically evaluated. The team of ORAM entered Terepano with pre-conceived ideas of what area to delimit; it was to be the whole *regulado*, in other words all the five *células*. Within the *células* however, some people would have preferred to delimit a smaller area and not be subjected to the *régulo*. This was however never investigated further and ORAM persisted in going ahead with the job of delimiting the whole of the *regulado*.

Imposing local organisations

All projects were in need of a 'representation' of the local population. One problem was that outsiders tended to look for organisations that demonstrate similarities to western/formal structures and institutions. We made a similar mistake when we were looking for local institutions for the FAO study. Although we had used Uphoff's broad definition of institutions being "norms, rules, and patterns of behaviour", field workers turned up with data predominantly on the more formal organisations such as church congregations, political parties, and at times a defunct farmers' association. Consequently, the study did not unearth many local informal institutions. Local people use all kinds of local institutions and organising principles that may not be easily visible to outsiders. Local organisations are in general informal and ad-hoc. Collective action emerges when the need arises, as we have seen with the protest against the wildlife fence, or with the organisation of the fishermen of Lake Phiti in chapter seven. Local leadership may not be clearly delineated to the outsider but, when asked, all local people will be able to point out their leader, although the answer may differ according to the person who asks and for what reason.

All projects struggled to find 'representative structures'. They tended to look too much through their own spectacles; they looked for what they regarded as "an organisation or local representative institutions". A consultancy firm advised Helvetas to work with "representative institutions that should be accountable, transparent, and democratic" (Impacto 1997). If projects do not find the local institutions they would like to see, they tend to "create representative structures". In fact, in all the projects, except for the Helvetas case, activities were undertaken to create new organisational structures at the community level. Helvetas was rather pragmatic in relation to community representation; as long there was no direct need to create formal representative structures, the project did not encourage any new organisations. We saw in chapter nine how CONCERN justified the creation of the LDCs by stating an "absence of representative community structures". The project document of the UNCDF project contained similar concerns: "a dearth of existing civil society structures" and the "need to develop such institutions". The project in Nampula also adopted the idea of establishing LDCs. The argument was that local organisations either did not exist or, in that cases where they did exist, they would not be representative. And thus it was assumed that new institutions needed to be created by the project. In the previous chapters we read how

these LDCs were implanted in the communities. The facilitator of the UNCDF project first told the local people to select representatives amongst themselves, and only after people had been assigned were they told what they had been selected for, and what they were supposed to do. The project reports of CONCERN report that the members of the LDC were elected. However, the LDC member I interviewed was appointed in his absence.

Elsewhere, writing on Zambia, I distinguished 'interest groups' and 'service groups' (Pijnenburg 1998). Interest groups have the purpose of defending the interests of their members. Service groups are established because an outside intervention wants to channel goods or services to these groups. While the interest group emerges from an awareness of the need to organise and from collective action, the service group emerges because the outside intervention asks local people to do so, and often made it a condition for receiving further support. Today, one can find many (remnants of) service groups in rural Africa, and where outside support has dried up, they are more dead than alive. Although the projects that tried to establish LDCs intended to create interest organisations, the way in which those LDCs were formed made them in fact service organisations. Installing a LDC became an end in itself, and the committee often only existed by the merit of the intervention. It provided a channel and a body for meeting the requirements of the project.

In Machaze, we saw how the NGO CONCERN used the LDC to do PRA. Consequently, the members of the LDC considered themselves to be working for the NGO and they also regarded remuneration for their 'work' as no more than normal. The LDC is seen as existing by virtue of the NGO. The programme officer of CONCERN saw things differently and told the LDC members that the LDC should "define their own role" and "prove themselves" since they were not part of CONCERN but an organisation by, and for, the local community. This resulted in a major clash and loss of confidence in the NGO.

The UNCDF project conducted several internal discussions on the role of traditional leaders, the *mwenes*, or *régulos*, as representatives of the rural people. This was, however, politically sensitive since these traditional leaders are often regarded as having stronger links with the opposition. It was also often questioned as to what extent the *mwenes* could be considered as legitimate and representative. So the project also opted for the approach of "installing LDCs" believing them to be politically more neutral. Knowing how these LDCs were created, we strongly question whether they can be regarded as representative, legitimate, or sustainable.

In all projects—even in the case of Helvetas where the project did not ask the local people to create new organisations—project staff wanted all kinds of things from the local communities. Whether structures were new or existed already, the aim of the projects was to strengthen the local community institutions. Again, it was the desire of the outside project staff and not necessarily the wish or a need perceived by the local people. The risk inherent in this approach is that the establishment of the 'civil society structures' becomes an end in itself. In that case, the establishment alone of such organizations is seen as a success, irrespective of whether this would contribute to an empowerment of (poor) people. This is of course similar to the PRA, or the wishlist as the output of a PRA, or the map with the limits of the community that are too often regarded as goals in themselves. In these cases, no further investigations are carried out a to whether this has contributed to the higher goals of, for example, poverty alleviation, empowerment, or equality.

The illusions of partnerships and ownership

The purpose of projects such as the one by Helvetas in Matutuíne was to support the interests of the local people. The project discourse was quite optimistic about creating partnerships. For example, various documents of Helvetas envisaged "equal partnerships" with the local communities. In their objectives, it was envisaged that these communities would be enabled

to negotiate with investors, that "communities, in co-ordination with investors, have to be the implementers of the development process" and that: "the relations among communities, investors and government will be more horizontal" (Helvetas 1998b). By the end of 1999, a program officer of Helvetas identified "the inequality in terms of power and resources" as a major difficulty in achieving these envisaged partnerships. Helvetas remained the one that 'does good', has the resources while dealing with very poor people. The program officer: "When we want to sit down with the target group to have an honest discussion on the possible errors, the only thing people say is: yes and thank you". Although Helvetas undertook many efforts to explain its objectives and prevent false expectations, project staff concluded that there was a need to further "establish the link with the communities, transform the relation donor/receiver", "be more transparent" and "harmonise according to the rhythm of the communities"[32]. It is another sign of how unequal the relations were and how difficult it was to establish 'partnerships' between the staff of a relatively well-resourced developmental NGO and the rural poor. There was often a wide social divide between (educated, urbanised) outsiders such as project personnel on the one hand, and local people on the other.

Another signal that most of the concepts and activities were donor-driven or project-driven, is the lack of ownership by local people. Although many efforts were made in the project discourses to make it appear as if both local people and Mozambican authorities 'owned' the process, there were many signs that in fact they did not do so. We have already mentioned the delays in the process in Nampula. Other examples are the passive attitudes of local people involved in the activities, and the request for remuneration in the cases of the LDC in Sambassoca and in land delimitation in Matutuíne. The fact that local people did delimit their community land to an area smaller than the actual land being used by the community was another sign that the informants apparently were not aware what was at stake. In many cases, local people merely did what they thought was expected of them.

Sharing the same objectives?

Although the project document of Helvetas clearly stated the defence of the interests of local people as its objectives, the ideas of the NGO staff about what would be necessary did not always correspond with the priorities of the local population. The management of natural resources was for example not a major concern for the majority of the rural population in Matutuíne. During a seminar organised by Helvetas in the village Gala, the participants were asked what 'development' meant to them. The answers from the working groups almost unanimously expressed amenities such as schools, health posts, shops, animal traction, and employment. Employment was seen as essential because if there was employment, as an old lady from one of the villages explained: "our sons would come back from South Africa". Access to land or control over natural resources did not appear on this list. One can therefore question whether there was a need for a project working on capacity building for CBNRM. Helvetas justified its activities by claiming that Matutuíne, given its location and its 'virginity', would always attract investors, with or without BME. Helvetas may be right that the need will definitely arise one day but this need was not being felt by the local population at that moment, and that is one of the reasons it remained very difficult to mobilise them on the issues of community-based management of natural resources. It was only in the case of a direct threat such as in Madjanjane, where the wildlife fence would block their access to certain resources, did people undertake concrete action. Community members' interest in wildlife management may fade away when they realise that the outsider/initiator is more interested in wildlife than in them (Songorwa 1999). The people of Madjanjane indeed wondered whether the fence was erected to keep the elephants out of their fields or to keep them, the villagers, out of the Reserve.

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[32] Interviews with senior project staff, 1999

Conclusion

Many of the concepts on which the interventions were based, such as PRA or community-based approaches, were developed as a reaction against the former more top-down and directive development approaches. But the way in which these participatory approaches have been introduced and implemented was still very much donor-driven and project-driven. In the project discourses, efforts were made to make the approaches seem national and Mozambican. They were presented as bottom-up approaches and project staff tried to achieve 'ownership' by, and partnership of (local) authorities and local people. In practice, the project activities remained largely imposed. The cases of community land delimitations and the establishment of 'civil society structures', such as LDCs and DCCs, were in particular examples of how these activities, respectively organisations, had been implanted. In the majority of cases, local people were not consulted on whether they thought it would be useful; they were rather induced into believing that it was necessary.

11 Conclusions

In this chapter I refer back to the theoretical notions from chapters three and four. It describes how the discourses around participatory development were framed or translated at different levels and at different moments within the project context. Furthermore I will attempt to answer research question 6, explaining the gaps that were presented in the previous chapter. In order to do that, we will first look at the specific Mozambican context. But we will also study the inherent assumptions and weaknesses within the participatory development discourses. I will then focus on the position of project managers, who have a tremendous task on their hands to bridge the 1) demands imposed by the donor and the project document and the 2) demands by other stakeholders. In order to do this, project managers have to muddle and juggle and, as I discerned, they have to 'keep the discourse vague' as one of the main strategies to keep the different actors on board.

11.1   Framing participatory development discourses

The approach of participatory development as promoted in the 1990s is a good example of a discourse, in the sense that we can talk of a dominant system of representation that governed the way we talked about and wrote about interventions in rural development. PRA evolved from a method into an approach and appeared in many project proposals for rural development projects. When put into practice, however, the discourse undergoes a translation process that I have referred to as framing.

Discursive characteristics

In chapter three, I wrote that the concepts of 'participation' and 'empowerment' are not uniformly defined and consequently have many different meanings attributed to them. They are often presented in a neutral and a-political way. For many people, the words have a highly positive connotation. Others write about the 'feel-good' character of participatory development or its 'hurrah-status' (Nelson and Wright 1995; White 1996). The vague nature of the concepts has also been depicted as a 'smoke-screen'. This, in combination with the hurrah-status of the participatory development approach, has been depicted as an effective way to block criticism (Crawley 1998; Guijt and Shah 1998). The meaning that was generally attached to the concept of participation by professionals involved in rural development was almost uniformly positive during the 1990s. The approach based on participatory development was largely accepted without much criticism and this ensured that it did not require much justification or legitimisation. The fact that the approach is open to different interpretations ensures all the different actors involved can feel some affinity with it. I would describe these two characteristics of the participatory development discourse—its vagueness and its positive connotations—as discursive characteristics. These discursive characteristics serve to reinforce the dominance of the discourse since they uphold the positive connotations of the approach and impede its critical assessment.

Discourse coalition

The concept of discourse coalition is also relevant here. A discourse coalition is a group of actors—often trans-national—who share a social construct. The coalition is characterised by a common language. This language changes over time and if one wants to be taken seriously, one has to keep track of the new language and the new concepts (Hajer 2000, 24). While participatory approaches were originally more in the hands of NGOs, in the 1990s the approaches and their related methods— such as PRA—became mainstream as many bilateral

and multilateral donors embraced the concept and philosophy of participatory development. My view is that donors and development agencies were in dire need of a new approach. After countless failures of more directive development interventions in Africa, they were clearly in search of a new language that could provide new hope and a move away from the dominant 'gloom and doom' thinking about development interventions, especially in Africa. They had to show that development aid could work and they needed to show positive results. In the beginning of the 1990s, a new era seemed to be dawning, also for Africa. The cold war was over and the 'peace-dividend' was to be invested in the South. Political changes in Benin and Zambia were promising a wave of democratisation on the African continent. The agendas of good governance, participation, and empowerment seemed to dovetail nicely with these developments. Host country governments in Africa were equally in need of success stories. Besides, they were also under tremendous pressure from donors. Donors played an extremely important role in pushing the agenda through, including participatory development among the African governments and their bureaucracies. But it was not a question of donor pressure alone. Many parts of the African civil service, organisations, and intellectuals also adopted the philosophy of participatory approaches without donor pressure. For them, the discourse had many attractive aspects such as the valuation of local knowledge, the instrumental aspects of the approach (involve local people in order to increase efficiency) or indeed the emancipatory elements. Again, we see that the approach was sufficiently broad that many different groups could select from the approach whatever they regarded as useful or appropriate.

Duality of discourse

We read in chapter four that in fact it is conceptually very difficult to separate discourse from practice. I referred to the duality of discourse; discourse and practice recursively shape each other. Discourse is both the medium and outcome of practice. We can take the development project as an example. The concept of 'project' and the meanings attributed to this concept about what a project is, or should be, influences the practice of the actors involved. These project practices influence in turn the opinions that people may develop on what a project is, or should do. We could replace the word 'project' with other concepts such as PRA, Venn diagram, land delimitation, report, LDC. They can all serve as examples of the duality of discourse.
The idea of the duality of discourse is an important modification to the more structuralist way of looking at discourse, in which discourse determines practice. It allows agency back into the definition and it also highlights the dynamic character of the discourse concept. Different people are likely to have different interpretations and attribute different meanings to the discourse. These meanings may vary over time and according to context.

Framing

This brings us back to the concept of framing, which I have defined as the process of filtering and selection of elements in the discourse that leads to either new (meanings of) text and talk, or new social practice. We have already described several examples of framing. For example, what a PRA should be or should do was also framed differently by different actors. For some, it could be establishing a process geared to empowerment via building up trust, mutual learning and collective action. For others, PRA was an activity geared to producing a wishlist for interventions (Nampula, Machaze, and Matutuíne), a consultative "meetings under the tree" (Nampula) or a necessary step in a bureaucratic process (land delimitation in Nicoadala). We also saw that the empowerment objectives were often watered down during the course of the project. The project of Helvetas shifted towards the more 'visible' activities, like the construction of infrastructures. The 'civil society structures' such as District

Consultative Council (DCC) were envisioned in the UNCDF project document as rather formal bodies. In practice, DCCs turned out to be large public meetings. The case of the Local Development Committees (LDCs) of Machaze also showed how the programme officer framed this LDC completely differently from the way in which the committee was perceived by its own members. Note that framing is likely to be more than simply having different perceptions; framing also refers to the practice of twisting words and changing the meaning of words so that they will fit better in the actor's frames, i.e. rationalities, priorities, beliefs, etc.

Framing happens both downwards and upwards

Framing is likely to happen at certain interface situations where different actors, with potentially different meanings, meet. I therefore presented table 2 in chapter four depicting different levels. Between and within these levels, such framing is likely to take place when discourse cascades down from western capitals to rural villages in communities in Africa. In reporting upwards, another interesting phenomenon took place that can equally be referred to as framing. We have seen that when project staff had to report their activities upwards, the political correct discourse of the project document re-appeared more vigorously. It seemed that superiors and the donors had to be convinced of how much had been achieved through the 'participation of the local population' and how much 'ownership' the local people or local administration had shown. So, in official reports and in presentations and meetings in which the projects were presented, a more rosy picture was given in this respect than was actually the case. Examples were the ways in which the ownership by districts, province, and national government over the decentralisation project in Nampula was suggested by project staff, making use of the 'Guidelines' booklet and referring to the 'National' stakeholder workshops. This was then repeated and emphasised in books and reports written by staff of UNCDF headquarters. The ORAM reports did not mention any of the conflicts in the community with which they had been confronted during the fieldwork. This was considered as 'too political' and they would rather have it appear that the land delimitation had been achieved in an atmosphere of complete harmony in the whole community. In other words, the higher the level of reporting, the more in line the reports were with the dominant discourse. As we move up, successes—that is to say, results that were more in line with the outputs of the project document—were applauded, while disappointing results—events that did not correspond to the dominant discourse , or conflicts that emerged—were played down. So figure 2 in chapter four can be expanded to:

Operationalisation	Levels	Reporting
	Academic advocates	
	Donors and development agencies	
	Project managers	
	Field staff	
	Local facilitators	

Figure 3 Different interfaces where discourses are framed - expanded

People tend to frame the discourse in such a way that it will fit in with their needs and wants. However, many of these needs and wants remain implicit. The framing then takes place within this process in which different people interact and have to make trade-offs to balance the different interests of the different actors. I will elaborate this further in the final section (11.5) of this chapter.

11.2 How appropriate is participatory development discourse in the Mozambican context?

Mozambique is in many respects unique. In chapters six through nine, I described some of the periods in history—both national and region-specific. These are characterised by violence and discontinuities in policies that led to widespread distrust and a breakdown of institutions. With the formation of a new constitution in 1990, the peace agreement of 1992, and the first multiparty elections in Mozambican history, it seemed the country had become more stable. Still, considerable party-political tensions persisted. RENAMO boycotted the local elections of 1998. They accused FRELIMO of rigging the parliamentary elections of 1999 and seem to have reduced the role of opposition to a strategy of obstructing the government and the party in power as much as possible. Decentralisation and local elections were limited to (urban) municipalities, leaving the rural areas under the administration of the—FRELIMO-appointed —District Administrators. This makes the work of administrators especially difficult in those districts where a majority of the people support RENAMO. Rural local leadership structures are often unclear, consisting as they do of combinations of remnants of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence institutions with differing degrees of legitimacy. The divide between urban and rural, educated and non-educated, rich and poor, is immense. All the aspects mentioned above imply that there is often a considerable social distance and distrust between project staff and the target groups of the rural development interventions.

Rural people have certain expectations that donor-funded development projects should provide material benefits. This may have been reinforced by the many years of emergency and relief aid during the war, and the first years after the war. Many of the staff employed in the development projects described in this study had gained their experience doing 'development work' in this period of relief work. Some of them developed skills and attitudes that are far removed from those desired in a participatory way of working. Many project staff members had a pragmatic attitude towards their work. Working for a development project is relatively well paid and may include many other benefits. Informal discussions showed that for many staff members, this was their prime motivation, rather than having made a choice to dedicate him or herself to the empowerment of the rural poor.

The factors summarised above raise the question of whether participatory development approaches, geared towards empowerment and transformation of the rural poor, is an appropriate approach in rural Mozambique. One would say that rural Mozambique lacks some crucial elements for successful participatory development interventions and for avoiding 'bad practices'. I will list some elements that in my view were lacking on the side of respectively rural people, project staff, and local power-holders.

With respect to rural people, I often observed many, sometimes unrealistic, expectations about development projects and rather opportunistic attitudes towards maximising possible benefits. The distrust I have mentioned on several occasions affected the interventions in two ways; people often did not trust the intentions of outsiders, and the representation of local people was often a problem. Internal collaboration was often hampered by a lack of clear leadership. Many people were not able, or not willing, to speak out in public, to go against the local power-holders, project staff or even their neighbours. More literacy skills would also probably have helped improve participation in the analysis and sharing of results.

With respect to project staff elements, there was a lack , most notably, of certain attitudes and behaviours that facilitators of participatory processes are generally required to possess. Ideally, such facilitators would be non-dominating personalities who are able to establish rapport, listen and learn, respect, be patient, enable others to define, express and analyse their situation, facilitate, 'be nice', know when not to speak and when not to be present, be (self-)

critical, flexible, etc (Chambers 1997, 207-208). Perhaps even more important is a certain dedication and commitment towards the empowerment of local people, and a degree of selflessness or altruism. I have to admit that this was often found to be lacking. Instead, most project staff had a rather pragmatic attitude towards their work; they were mainly in the business for the salary or other forms of remuneration. Many did not have the inquisitive and critical attitude for furthering the causes of the 'problems' that were mentioned by local people, or for simply investigating an answer or a diagram further. Project activities often tended to become goals in themselves, and project staff often failed to think how such an activity would contribute to the overall objectives of the project. Finally, some facilitators simply lacked basic skills such as being able to draw a calendar or a problem tree together with local people.

With respect to local power-holders such as local leaders, village-level leaders, or government staff on higher levels such as at the district administration level, several factors hindered a transformative participatory process. Some power-holders felt threatened, some of them felt that they had been passed over or feared losing control. I described typical reactions of these power-holders as delay, block, control and accuse in section 10.2. In this way, they showed that they were not willing to be dis-empowered. Instead, we saw how district administrators co-opted interventions to underline or reinforce their position. If they supported any participation, it would only be the more instrumental side of it—participation as a means. Many institutional changes would have to be implemented to achieve this group support participation as an end, with a genuine commitment towards the empowerment of rural people. It would require changes in the administrative systems in the rural districts, which have so far been directed in a top-down manner by political appointees. District finances are not transparent. There is hardly any enlightened administration in the districts and the educational system has been based on repeating what the teacher says and following instructions, rather than on critical reflection and problem solving.

If transformative participation are to become reality, considerable role reversals and institutional changes are required. In fact, all actors would have to find a new role. Especially after being subjected to directive top-down policies, interventions, and the period of emergency relief period, Mozambicans—be they rural people, government staff or even project staff—are not (yet) used to these new roles. Trust and perceived mutual dependence is necessary for collaboration. The need for role reversals and institutional change is of course often stressed in the literature of the advocates of participatory development approaches (Chambers 1997). One can say that role reversals and institutional change is especially difficult in the Mozambican context because of the history of top-down administration. The question we must then ask ourselves is therefore: how much role reversal would be minimally necessary to be able to start with participatory development interventions? Another related aspect is that it will be difficult for a project to influence role reversals and institutional change at the community level or at the level of the power-holders. The training of personnel is something that can be directly influenced by the project. The question then becomes one of whether the training of project staff would be sufficient to create the minimum conditions to continue with a participatory approach in the Mozambican context? And if so, how much training is sufficient?

I pose these questions since I found that many project staff were not sufficiently prepared or trained to do the job they were hired to do. This also has to be placed in context, since all projects were relatively 'young' projects and staff had little experience, as well as often lacking self-confidence. Many projects were still training their staff while I observed their work. Skills and certain principles can be taught easily, changing behaviour may take more time, willingness, and effort. We are also talking of a process of transformation here.

So how did project staff deal with this? Did they learn from errors, did they see the incongruencies between discourse and practices and the problematic or contradictory sides of

their project? Project staff, and especially project managers, were undoubtedly very much confronted with the contradictions in their work. However, they were so busy with the day-to-day activities and, consciously or unconsciously, so busy with balancing the different interests, that very little time was left for critical reflection or improvement. To what extent were practitioners learning? Citing Senge, the gaps between discourse—being the vision—and the practice—being current reality—potentially provide the ingredients for the 'creative tension' that allows for learning (Senge 1990). Significant differences could be observed between the projects in terms of their willingness and capability to learn. The two major cases, the Helvetas and the UNCDF project, dedicated relatively more time and space to critical reflection. These were also the projects that were relatively better endowed in terms of staff with an academic background and in terms of resources spent on outside expertise. The Helvetas project did evolve considerably thanks to internal sessions of reflection and thanks to external backstopping. One example is that they realised over time that the case of the wildlife fence had been a missed opportunity, and consequently developed training sessions on conflict management.

On the other hand, in both cases, the project managers were easily upset when confronted with criticism from outside. They were especially concerned that negative information would leak to the outside world. These two project managers were also outstanding in presenting the achievements of 'their' project both in public meetings and in their reports. But when asked directly, they were very much aware of the contradictions in their work and of the limitations of the objectives as formulated in the project documents. We can therefore say that these project managers experienced 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger 1957). One of the strategies they adopted to reduce this dissonance, especially to the outside world, was to cover up conflicts and to hide critical reports. Another important strategy was to frame project discourses—either consciously or unconsciously. Concepts and visions were translated in a pragmatic way; project managers had to find an appropriate way to implement what was written in the project document, avoiding too much resistance from others. When reporting, they would frame the actual activities again in the appropriate discourse to suit the readers at the headquarters of the donor. But as we mentioned above, project managers hardly had time to reflect on this consciously; first and foremost they had a project to run. Defending and nurturing 'their project' was difficult enough. In order to do that, they tended to conceal the problematic and intricate power dimensions of their projects.

11.3   How appropriate and possible is participatory development discourse as promoted by the advocates?

In the previous chapter, I described the project discourses and compared them with everyday project practices. We saw that these two do not always correspond. We can talk of certain incongruencies or gaps between discourses and practices. We can blame these gaps on the 'bad practices' of project staff (see section10.1) or on the difficult Mozambican context (previous section), but I view that as only part of the explanation. One can also question inherent assumptions and philosophies embedded in the participatory development discourse as promoted by its advocates. And this is a perspective that has developed only recently. In their book entitled *Participation: The New Tyranny*, Cooke and Kothari argue that there are fundamental problems with the discourse of participatory development (Cooke and Kothari 2001). They talk of naivety with regard to ignoring the complexities of power relations. We have seen in this thesis that, given the way in which discourses were used within projects, these power dimensions were indeed often covered up, consciously or unconsciously. Cooke and Kothari also mention the "quasi-religious associations of participatory rhetoric" (Cooke

and Kothari 2001, 14). We can link this with the criticism by Leeuwis (2000) of the wishful thinking dimensions of participatory approaches and the one-sidedness of basing development interventions on the philosophy of communicative action alone. It presumes that people are willing and able to collaborate, and that overcoming conflict is simply a matter of joint learning. It furthermore assumes that a (power-free) 'ideal speech situation' can be created. The underlying assumption in most discourses of participatory development is that politics can be banned, and that strategic action (in the Habermasian sense) is simply rendered undesirable. This thesis demonstrates that this is rather naïve. Strategic action is very much part and parcel of the everyday realities in development interventions. In fact, the reason that these power dimensions are downplayed are in fact highly political; they serve to get the intervention approved, to avoid resistance, and to keep as many actors as possible on board.

The approach of participatory development is furthermore based on the view of the human being as an autonomous, able, and conscious actor. This reflects a philosophy that has become the norm in western society since the 1960s. This philosophy of subject-thinking is all-pervasive and is also strongly evident in the discourse of participatory development. It assumes that each individual knows what is best for himself or herself and is able to act according to that knowledge. While these are laudable ideals, this way of thinking also ignores three things. First, it ignores the fact that people can simply be unaware of certain problems or possible solutions. Secondly, it ignores the social nature of humans; everybody is very much influenced by other actors and thus not completely autonomous. Thirdly, it ignores the importance of routines and habits; people may continue to display certain behaviour even when the original reason for doing so is no longer valid.

In addition to these philosophical drawbacks of the participatory development discourse, I came across two other inherent conceptual dilemmas or contradictions during this study. These are: 1) dilemmas around empowerment and disempowerment, and 2) how the very nature of flexibility and embracing error can also limit quality and constructive criticism. I will now discuss these two contradictions.

Can empowerment be 'done to them'?

There is a basic dilemma in having empowerment of rural people as an objective of a project. Such an objective is extremely difficult to achieve. Firstly, people are only able to empower themselves, nobody can do it for them. This is a weak spot inherent in participatory approaches; the outsiders want local people to do something that the outsiders cannot control directly. Secondly, power is of course not an entity that people have or do not have. It is not something that can be transferred from one person to the other. Power is always relational; power is social. This also means that local people cannot do it alone; when we talk about empowerment, we are talking of new relations between different actors. Empowerment of one person or group happens with respect to another actor or group of actors. When we talk of empowerment in the context of the cases in this study, we are talking, for example, of empowerment of local people with respect to 'investors' or 'local administration'. This means that, ultimately, the other party (the more powerful) must 'allow' this to happen or be forced to allow this to happen. Or in the words of Chambers (1997), the 'uppers' should disempower. Those 'uppers' are however not willing to do so and this is one of the main reasons why empowerment objectives often remain largely illusory.

Flexibility and embracing error: the strength is also a weakness

One can say that a gap between theory, policy, legislation, and everyday practice is normal in any sphere or sector in any part of the world. So can the gaps—as described in the previous chapter—between the participatory development discourse and the project practices be equally described as 'normal project practice'? One could say that it is normal for a project

document to tend to be optimistic as to what can be achieved and that (monitoring) reports tend to paint a somewhat rosier picture than that which has actually been achieved. I would argue however that in the case of participatory development interventions, the gaps are potentially much wider. The very advocates who are influencing the discourse tend to leave the approach, by its own principles, open and flexible. Errors should be embraced. There is an aversion to manuals since these have the effect of fossilizing something that should have the freedom to evolve. Practice should be judged by the actors themselves using their 'best judgement'. But these very principles leave open the question of what 'good' or 'bad' practice is, thus rendering the approach hard to evaluate, and even harder to measure its results. In the project discourses, we observed that concepts such as participation, empowerment, and PRA were often not defined further, nor was their role clarified. This of course makes it extremely difficult to evaluate. In fact, this flexible and fluid character makes the whole approach difficult to criticise. By keeping it vague and flexible, and by embracing the errors continuously, criticising the participatory development approach is like trying to hit a moving target. Because the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings often remain covert, it is difficult to criticise the approach. It also results in PRA being easily misused or abused (Kapoor 2002).

11.4 How appropriate and possible is participatory development in a project context?

Participatory development discourses are typically implemented in project contexts. All cases in this study are examples of projects. Projects have certain characteristics: they are by definition temporary and deviate from normal (government) procedures. Projects are furthermore managed in a certain way and often have certain 'strings attached' to the donor. This leads to four drawbacks, limitations or contradictions in promoting transformative participatory development within a project setting; 1) the temporary character of projects versus the aim of sustainable and transformative development, 2) lack of legal space and formal backing 3) fitting principles of participatory approaches into strict project planning procedures and 4) local dynamics versus the tendency to create new organisations. I will now discuss these four issues separately.

Sustainable development versus projects

Projects are by definition temporary events. The duration is in most cases limited to three years, and donors would like to see concrete results achieved within this period,. This contrasts highly with the idea of sustainable development and achieving empowerment objectives that will most probably require processes that stretch across longer time periods. Much has been said and written on the need for longer-term involvement and commitment of donors and development organisations. The recent move towards Sector Wide Approaches is a move in the right direction in this respect, were it not for the fact that such programmes again often consist of smaller projects, so that at the grassroots level, nothing much will change. Especially with regard to processes geared to the empowerment of the poor, long-term involvement and commitment is essential.

No legal backing

Projects tend to undertake innovative activities, activities that are new or that go beyond 'normal' government interventions. These new activities may often lack official backing in terms of policies or legislation. Examples in this thesis were the setting up of DCCs and LDCs, the consultation of rural people, and the writing of a District Development Plan. We

also saw that project staff tried to present these activities as though they were government policy. The bottom line is that project staff are dependent on the goodwill of others in order to participate. Project staff often do not have any 'legal' means to enforce district administrators, for example, to engage in a serious dialogue with local people about the development of their district. In those cases, it is tempting to attempt to buy in the support of local power-holders, in this case district administrators. When project activities are not backed up by forceful supporting policies of the government, there is a high risk that project activities will persist in being perceived as outsider-imposed, and that the legitimacy of the actual project activities will remain low.

The tyranny of project planning versus the flexible bottom-up approach

All projects used some kind of logical framework to plan their activities. Although the rigid models of the project approach have been widely criticised (Brinkerhoff and Ingle 1989), such planning models remain dominant in development co-operation. Projects have to be effectively managed and be accountable to their donors. Therefore, projects have to adhere to certain procedures; they are put in log-frames with their objectively verifiable indicators, time planning, responsibilities, and budgets. Ideally, participatory interventions would be flexible; involving a learning-by-doing approach and being a process whereby local people take more control over their lives. This is something that is very hard to plan beforehand. A participatory approach and conventional project management are therefore diametrically opposite in character. In practice, projects tend to be more 'managed' than 'participatory' (Craig and Porter, 1997). While participatory approaches have been developed explicitly as a reaction to the former top-down planning models, the way in which participatory development is put into practice still reflects these former planning and decision-making models. Leeuwis points to three elements that confirm this; 1) the typical phasing in participatory trajectories in separate stages, often ending in some form of decision-making, 2) differentiations in levels or modes of participation tend to be based on the distribution of decision-making authority in the different key functions of the intervention, and 3) the use of ranking exercises in, for example, PRA also underlines the salience of the decision-making model (Leeuwis 2000). In other words, the approach is strongly imbued with the notion that development can be rationally planned. In the cases of UNCDF and CONCERN, we clearly recognised these planning methodologies. The district planning process was defined in distinct phases, and the PRAs concluded in a ranking exercise that would determine the priorities for a new investment in the community. But in the cases of land delimitation too, it seemed that there was little time and space for negotiation in the proposed steps. The way the intervention was planned by project staff did not really allow a process to take place locally; the boundaries of the communities and the composition of the land committee had to be determined there and then, often heavily influenced by the pre-conceived ideas of project staff.

New or old organisations?

Development is very much about the emergence of (new) institutions, being norms and patterns of behaviour that serve collectively valued purposes. Mutually beneficial collective action that persists over time can be considered as an institution. It is unfortunate that apparently so little has been learned from the many years of development studies that argue that the existing local socio-cultural situation and local institutions should be taken as a point of departure. So far, very little has been done to build from local dynamics (Hounkonnou 2001). This thesis has described a few examples that showed that when the need arises, local people are very well able to take collective action and forge new institutions to resolve certain problems—the cases of the protest against the wildlife fence and the organisation of the fishermen at Lake Phiti. It was also apparent that project staff did not work much with existing local institutions. There was even an atmosphere of aversion to working with them,

in an effort to remain as neutral as possible. Instead, we saw many examples of imposed organisations such as the DCC, LDCs, and community land commissions. The ideas of what these local organisations should look like are imbued with all kinds of (exogenous) success criteria. The good-governance discourse prescribed that such organisations should be inclusive, representative, and transparent. Also in this respect, it seemed that donors and development organisations were still adhering to the perception of a malleable society, since many of their representatives had high expectations of new local organisations and of the possibilities to "craft new institutions" (Ostrom 1992). Experience teaches us that initiatives such as 'creating new community organisations' often lead to rather artificial organisations that crumble as soon as project support ends.

11.5   The need to muddle and juggle and to keep it vague

Approaching the end of this thesis, I will now bring together what I have described and discussed above and draw my main conclusions in this section. We can speak without doubt of an all-pervasive development discourse in the 1990s that has pushed participatory approaches as a dominant mode in interventions for rural development in Africa. But 'participation' and 'participatory' are container-concepts or plastic words, which can cover almost any kind of involvement. This results in these concepts being easily moulded and used in various contexts. In development discourse, there has been a tendency to opt for maximum participation. For many practitioners, distinguishing levels of participation implied that the more participation, the better. Also, the distinction that Chambers made in 1992 between the old RRA, as a more extractive research tool and the new PRA, as a process leading to empowerment, resulted in most actors embracing, in words at least, the new PRA and the maximum level of participation. Many donors and development agencies highlighted the words of empowerment and PRA important vocabulary in their project proposals.

Different interests at stake

In each development project, there are many actors involved, who are all likely to have different interests and perspectives. It is impossible to describe them all. This section mentions just a few examples by way of illustration. NGOs have a vested interest in organisational survival; after all, they have to stay in business. They do this by satisfying donors and politicians and by justifying that continued support is necessary (Craig and Porter 1997). The case where the facilitators of ORAM induced community members to go ahead with the land delimitation is illustrative; this work is now bread and butter for the staff of the NGO. This applies to many of the staff of the projects; it is their job to do participatory development, they are being paid for it.

Donors and development agencies arrive with their own agendas. These may not correspond with the immediate needs and wishes of their target group, however. An example is their agenda on the community-based management of natural resources with the objective of nature conservation. Local people may have very different views on nature. In some cases they have to work hard to keep nature from taking over. In Massoane and Madjanjane in Matutuíne, their top priority concern was limiting or eliminating the crop damage by elephants and certainly not nature conservation or biodiversity.

In the perception of rural people in Mozambique, projects and NGOs bring resources with them . It is hard to avoid expectations from running high when a project starts in an area, and all actors hope to gain access to these resources. Local residents may participate in the hope of having a school or health centre constructed in their community. Village leaders may want to legitimate their position as leader and try to assemble as many people as possible in the

meetings with the project. Local facilitators ask for remuneration and try to have access to project funds by other means, as we saw with the LDC members in Sambassoca. District administration also tries to gain as much political support as possible by co-opting and influencing the intervention. For example, the administrators in Nampula were very influential in the elaboration of the district plan and in the site selection for new investments. Project personnel want to get their project going in order to be able to report positive results to their superiors.

We have seen that different interests and perspectives clash in a project context. Any development intervention has political or power dimensions. Crehan and von Oppen refer in this respect to development projects as "arenas of struggle" (Crehan and Oppen 1988). Conflicts can in themselves be regarded as positive signs of meaningful change. We should be more concerned if there were no conflicts. However I found in both project discourses and practices a tendency to avoid and conceal conflicts. There was very little explicit attention for different interests and conflicts, and when these clearly emerged, they were ignored or brushed aside. Project discourses were non-political and neutral in character.

The significance of framing

Within the projects, many translation processes take place. I have referred to these processes as framing. Framing tells us something about how the discourse enters in the life-world of actors and how the actors undertake action. This is done on the basis of their own aspirations, their evaluative frame of reference, and the influence of others. Actors will try to optimize their (perceived) benefits from what a project might offer. When we want to understand the framing that is taking place constantly, we have to remain very much aware of the different interests and perspectives the actors have. Actors will use their 'best judgement' to make the intervention, in their eyes, a success. They all use their experiences and ideas to decide what they think is good or convenient. They will try to fit the activities they are involved in within their own context and agenda, within their own life-worlds (Long and Ploeg 1989). This framing happens in both directions, as the discourse cascades down from literature, to policy, to project proposal and the actual activities in the field, as well as when the results of these activities are reported back, upwards in the direction of the donors.

This also means that different actors see different projects, and have different interpretations of, for example, what a PRA should do or mean, and of what a concept such as empowerment means, and to what extent this would be desirable. Local situations and results are presented in such a way that they fit into one's rationalities and priorities.

While I referred above to a (dominant) participatory development discourse, one can also speak of many different discourses or multiple discourses. There are in fact as many different versions as there are actors involved. It is also conceivable that one person can make use of different versions, adapting his or her version each time to the audience and the context of interaction.

Position of project staff

If we focus more on the role of project staff, it becomes clear that, in many respects, the project members are in a strange and sometimes difficult position. Many factors make the role of development projects and their staff in the Mozambican rural areas rather ambiguous. Local administration in the rural districts is rather weak. They have few resources. Development projects often come with considerable resources, compared to the budgets available to the district administration. They may also come with some political backing from provincial or central level. As long as the control over these resources remains in the hands of project personnel, the district administration is relatively powerless, one could say. On the other hand, the project will need the collaboration of the district administration and others. Especially in the multi-actor processes that participatory approaches call for, the project depends very much on the collaboration of others.

Another important factor is that projects are temporary events. Both administrations and local people have seen various projects in the past that came and went. People know that discontinuities are likely. This can produce feelings of uncertainty and distrust, which may explain the wait-and-see attitude adopted by several actors towards the interventions that we have observed in the cases. People engaged themselves cautiously, and if asked to do more than that, they asked the projects for remuneration. The organisations and activities that have been imposed on local people, such as the LDCs and the ways in which communities' land had been delimited raised many questions regarding legitimacy and representation.

There was also the question of the legitimacy of the presence of international NGOs. The international NGOs such as Helvetas and CONCERN were forced to deal with this. It was argued that their long-term presence could not be justified. Government officials thankfully exploited this situation to corner the NGO by reminding project staff of their temporary and foreign character.

Project success depends on many other actors and this can again make project staff quite vulnerable. We have seen how sensitive project managers were to the criticism from the local administration. The managers know they would not be able to work well without the support of the administration.

Project staff are very well aware of the various contradictions their project work brings with it, some of which I mentioned in section 11.4. It is extremely difficult to achieve a sustainable development geared to empowerment while the project duration is just three years and while the control over the budget remains firmly in the hands of the project manager. It is difficult to manage role reversals and institutional changes in a short time and involving so many actors. Both local power-holders and rural people expect projects to provide material benefits rather than the more vague and less visible activities geared to capacity building and empowerment. The awareness of such contradictions on the part of project staff and others adds to the vulnerability and limited legitimacy of project staff.

Strategies: muddle and juggle

Projects have to be managed. There are all kinds of requirements from the donor. The project manager has to try to implement what has been proposed in the project document and report back results so that he or she will get a positive evaluation. But in many respects, the project manager often finds himself or herself caught between different lines of fire. Participatory development projects in particular will require the collaboration of many different actors. It is crucial to maintain good working relations. Obviously, the staff need good working relations with the donor (or its representatives), who either pays the salary or may be willing to fund the next project. Secondly, one needs good working relations with local power-holders, since they are able to either support or veto the work of the project. Thirdly, project staff need to build up a relation of trust and collaboration with what is generally regarded as the ultimate group of beneficiaries, often defined simply as "local people" or "the community". In some cases, there may be other actors, such as (other) NGOs with whom one wants or needs to collaborate.

Staff members of the projects in this study were, in general, committed people in the sense that they were trying to do a good job and satisfy all parties. The loyalty of project staff was not necessarily directed in the first place towards the local population; the donors and Mozambican authorities seemed to be at least as important. Especially project managers did a tremendous job in balancing the interests of the donors with that of the local power-holders. The project manager of the Nampula project wrote to me later about how the provincial government and the donor UNCDF had "totally opposed views on the project; "it was like two people are dancing, but each one is dancing to different music" (D. Jackson, pers. comm. February 2003). Project managers were politically very sensitive; they tried to avoid conflicts,

and if conflicts emerged, they made sure these were resolved as soon as possible. In this process, they actively contributed to the phenomenon of framing of the discourse. Project managers were key figures in this process; they had to operationalise the discourse into actual activities in the field and translate the results back into reports. They had to juggle and improvise to link the discourse and practice in order to make things work. Many development workers will recognise the picture that Zanen paints of how development bureaucrats of donors cook up the policy in distant capital cities, and how development professionals keep muddling, adapting, and improvising in the field in their efforts to satisfy the donors (Zanen 1997). At other levels, the same happened with project staff in the field. Facilitators did a remarkable job in trying to remain politically neutral, balance the different interests and obtain the collaboration of as many actors as were considered necessary.

Keeping it Vague

I discerned four interrelated strategies that were used by project staff to appease the different actors and obtain their collaboration. I have placed these under the banner of 'keeping it vague'. Keeping the discourse vague and not defining precisely what one means can be very useful. Keeping it vague allows more possibilities for framing. Everybody can pick whatever they need or want. It also allows using different languages for different audiences. The four strategies are: 1) using non-threatening language, 2) suggesting ownership, 3) brushing aside conflicts and 4) allowing ignorance.

Using non-threatening language

In chapter three I stated that participatory development is being portrayed as a neutral, a-political and inherently good approach. This 'hurrah-status' reinforced the dominance of the discourse in many parts of the world. Presenting the approach in a populist way, avoiding the mention of its possible conflictive nature, and stressing the possibility of creating win-win situations serves to maintain this positive image.

Suggesting 'ownership'

Another important strategy is to create and maintain an image of ownership. In the presentation of the project for different audiences, staff made many efforts to stress how their projects were aligned with government policies. They stressed for example how government approved, or collaborated with, the project. In the reports to the donors it was often suggested that projects were done with the full support and ownership of the local population. Thus, project staff sometimes bent the truth slightly to increase the legitimacy of the project activities.

Brushing aside conflicts

In addition to presenting the approach as a neutral and non-conflictive one, there was also the tendency to avoid and brush aside conflicts as soon as they emerged. And if this proved difficult to avoid—for example in the case of obstruction of the work by a district administrator—all attempts were made to defuse the conflict as rapidly as possible.

Allowing ignorance

Quarles van Ufford describes how ignorance plays a role in the process of translation to make the policy workable in practice. We have seen that there are inherent contradictions between a transformative participatory approach and the requirements to run a project effectively (Craig and Porter 1997), and that the objectives of the interventions do not necessarily coincide with the needs as perceived by the local population. Quarles van Ufford (1993, 142) writes in this respect that: "knowledge and ignorance are implicated in complicated ways in the attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable". Project staff have to avoid resistance by local

power-holders and create a more rosy picture in their reports to the outside world. He writes: "ignorance and bias are inevitable" (Quarles van Ufford 1993, 154). Project staff have to ignore conflicts and power relations. Images of local participation can only be upheld by keeping a certain distance from what is actually happening in the communities.

12 How to go forward?

How can we go forward with participatory development interventions in Mozambique? What can we learn from this thesis in order to increase the effectiveness of transformative participatory development approaches in Africa? I believe the following observations may be useful in a wide field of application and much of it is also applicable in the European context. This chapter is a kind of epilogue. These suggestions are not unique in that they may have been inspired by many other authors. Some of the ideas may go beyond the topics discussed in this thesis but I deem them important enough to be taken into consideration when thinking about meaningful interventions with transformative objectives.

Optimal instead of maximum participation

Participatory approaches are not the magic bullet they appeared to be in the way they have often been presented. The different levels of participation, for example from the more instrumental contractual, via consultative to collaborative and collegial, seem to imply that the more participation, the better. I believe that each level serves a purpose and is completely legitimate. What kind of involvement is required depends on the context and the objectives of the intervention or the activity.

Make the choice for PRA a critical one

Similar to the previous point, PRA has often been proposed as a panacea, a cure-all. What was called PRA, was often in effect an RRA, a rather extractive exercise, mainly to collect information. Perhaps the old term action research or the newer PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) should be used to refer to the transformative and emancipatory process that was originally envisaged by the advocates of PRA.

Furthermore, I believe that what is currently being done and achieved under the banner of PRA could be done in a much more efficient way. It may not always be necessary to do a one- or two-week 'PRA' with the whole sequence of standard tools in order to produce a problem ranking or a wishlist for the community. The same results can be achieved in one day. The identification of requirements in terms of basic infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities could be done in a more efficient and equitable way on the basis of basic census data. One needs to be much more critical regarding the justification of PRA/PLA for a particular purpose. It seems to be more appropriate when complex social problems need to be analysed and solved.

Take power relations and strategic action seriously

Man is neither an egoist nor an altruist. Different actors have different perspectives and different interests, and it is therefore not always likely that people are willing and able to work together. Power relations have to be taken explicitly into consideration in any intervention, especially in a multi-actor situation. I have distinguished power relations on three levels in the project context; 1) within the community, 2) between the intervening agent and the community and 3) the relations in the wider societal context, which includes the relations with other actors such as, for example, district administration, companies, other NGOs, markets. A good stakeholder analysis should be made at each of these three levels and should be done by making the different interests of the different actors more explicit.

We should also remain aware that a facilitator is not, and should not be, neutral. For example, it may sometimes be necessary to exclude some actors from the process and on other occasions, it may be necessary to form strategic coalitions.

We should not always consider strategic action as being something that is undesirable. Instead, it is better to anticipate that people do act strategically; actors contribute various power resources in their interaction with other actors in order to achieve their goals. I would argue that interventionists should make productive use of the different rationalities. Whenever possible, we should use communicative action and start up a process of social learning. In many cases, however, this will not (yet) be possible and it will be necessary to take either strategic action or instrumental action (e.g. fines and rewards) as points of departure for intervention. It would also be interesting to try to use instrumental and strategic action to create the conditions for social learning. Fines and rewards could be used to 'force' people to engage themselves in such a learning process. The protest by villagers against the wildlife fence described in chapter six is an example whereby strategic action provided an ideal opportunity to start up a mutual learning process. This possibility was, however, not exploited. In other words, in any intervention, the optimal mix of different coordination mechanisms (instrumental, strategic, and communicative) has to be found.

Be more explicit…

I have argued here for being clearer and more explicit about the objectives of the intervention, how one wants to achieve those objectives, and what one means with certain concepts. What the aim of the project is and how this will be achieved, especially with the concepts such as participation, PRA, and empowerment are questions whose answers often remain too vague. It should be specified precisely whom should be empowered and why. It should be specified clearly what should be achieved by doing a PRA, what level of participation the project is striving for in each activity, and which local people would gain from participating.

….while at some other moments it is wise to keep it vague

We have also seen that keeping it vague may at times be extremely useful and necessary. Especially when one needs the collaboration of many actors that may have very different interests, it may be crucial to frame the objectives in such a vague way that all can agree with them. I would say that at certain stages in the process, it is legitimate to keep the discourse vague in order to assemble different actors around the table. But once they are on board, one should try to reach broader agreement by defining terms and objectives more precisely. This should involve processes of mutual learning and integrative negotiation. It is fine to have different versions for some time but these versions should gradually come closer together. Still, it is not always necessary that all actors share exactly the same goals. Different actors are perfectly able to collaborate via strategic coalitions and arrange package deals without necessarily sharing exactly the same interests.

Use different roads to empowerment

As stated in the previous chapter, empowerment as such cannot be an activity of an intervention. A project cannot empower others, only the people themselves can do so. Empowerment can never be an achievement of the project alone. In that sense, the project is very much limited to capacity building and facilitation. Whether this will lead to empowerment of the envisaged target group will depend on the context, other actors, and the will and capacities of the intended beneficiaries. So, if empowerment is an objective of a project, one should remain aware that this is not completely within the control of the project. If empowerment is an objective, this should be stated explicitly and upfront. This also means that one should make explicit who should be empowered and why. I rudimentarily distinguish two ways of promoting empowerment; from above and from below. In the case of what I call 'enlightened leadership' it may be possible to tread the path from above. If there is a

willingness to open up decision-making, democratization and/or devolution of powers by power-holders, it is preferable to work via the power-holders and promote what Chambers refers to as disempowerment by the uppers. In providing genuine space, it is assumed that, over time, local people will come forward and make their interests public. This then has to be taken seriously by those in a position to effect a change.

In the cases where there is no 'enlightened leadership', in cases of stubborn leadership or even oppressive relations, it will be necessary to work in a more bottom-up fashion, towards a process in which local people ultimately make demands and for services. It is logical then to make an explicit choice about the people whose interests one intends to defend. With this group, one should build up a relation of trust, and work on conscientisation. This means that such work will be more along the lines of the action research as was promoted in the 1970s and 1980s. In cases of very extreme oppressive conditions, it may be necessary to work covertly. This way of working from below means that one has to be prepared for conflicts, including conflicts within the group of assumed beneficiaries.

In most cases, some form of combination of these two ways (from above and from below) may be most useful and necessary. It is always advisable to try and work first via the local power-holders. If they 'open up' first, voices from below will be heard more easily, whereas if one starts 'from below' while the 'uppers' are not prepared to listen, this may easily lead to more frustration and conflict.

Invest in education and trust

On the basis of this thesis, I consider that the success of transformative participatory development initiatives will depend a great deal on the following aspects. There should be a certain level of trust and cohesion amongst the various actors. These actors have to be consciously mutually dependent. The activities, platforms, and institutions should, as much as possible, build on existing institutions and be appropriate to the local socio-cultural situation. Critical (formal or informal) education is paramount; we will need people who have been exposed to various viewpoints, who are able to express themselves, and who can critically discuss alternatives. There should be an enabling institutional environment; this will require, amongst others, enlightened leadership at different levels and effective judicial systems. Finally, one will need committed and legitimate facilitators who are able and willing to act strategically and, when necessary, make political choices.

By far the most important elements in this list are education and trust. These are generally considered to be crucial ingredients for development. Economists have long established that human capital, mostly indicated by the level of formal education, is a determinant of development. Recently, they have discovered the importance of social capital, in which trust is the most crucial aspect. Higher levels of education and trust will also have a leverage effect on the implementation of transformative and emancipatory processes.

Training and working on commitment as 'éducation permanente'

I have argued that in some cases in this thesis, project staff were not sufficiently prepared to go out into the field and do PRA. Advocates have been stressing for many years that PRA is not only about tools and techniques, but more about attitudes and behaviours. These are things that are not taught in a one-week training course. Even more important, in my view, is commitment. Especially when we talk about empowerment, project staff will have to be committed to work towards this goal. It may well be that staff and facilitators are only able to do so when they themselves have attained a certain level of income, education, and security.

So it is extremely difficult to answer the question on how much training and transformation on the part of project staff and facilitators would be necessary in order to start with participatory development interventions. The question itself does argue for a more gradual approach. The interventions themselves should start with less ambitious objectives in terms of empowerment or transformation. The projects should themselves be learning processes in

which not only rural people are regarded as beneficiaries, but in which project staff and local power-holders are equally considered as clients. Training staff and especially working on their transformation, their attitudes and behaviours, and institutional changes should be a continuous process.

Working via local institutions and existing organisations

Projects tend to set up new organisational structures too easily. I believe it is better to work as much as possible on the basis of local institutions and via existing organisations. This should however be done without romanticising the local or the 'traditional'. Much of what is considered as 'traditional' is in fact a mixture of traditional and 'modern' influences. These so called traditional institutions are social constructions and thus in many respects outcomes of negotiations. It is better to try to adapt these existing institutions and organisations in an effort to make them more democratic and transparent step by step. This again could happen either via enlightened leadership, creating bottom-up demands for change, or a combination of the two.

Imposing completely new organisational structures should be avoided as much as possible. However, it may still be necessary to set up new organisations. If this new local organisation is in the interest of the government organisation or another (outside) organisation, it is reasonable that this other (outside) organisation should support the new local organisation by backing it with legislation, long-term policies, or subsidies. Preferably, they would have links with more formal organisations. The risk is that such policies become empty shells, not backed up by practice. The most suitable approach is therefore a gradual one, whereby changes in policies and implementation, the building up of these new organisations, are adapted to each other.

Need for solutions that are more structural than current project-thinking

The discussion of projects versus programmes versus sector-wide approaches is a recent one. Although this may be beyond the scope of the topic of this thesis, I do think this is an important point to mention here. Projects are in many respects an expression of increasing inequalities in the world. Rich countries try to help poor countries. Twenty-five years ago, a western development worker earned maybe five or ten times the salary of his or her counterpart. These days, their salaries probably differ by a factor of around thirty or more. Such disparities bring with them many contradictions and distortions to the development business. Development projects, often euphemistically called 'international collaboration' are often seen as a bag of money rather then a process of collaboration or learning. Therefore, I agree with the principles of moving away from the donor-driven projects and using development aid instead for budget support of developing countries. However, spending pressure by donors and lack of absorption capacity by host governments has led to slack performance and a waste of resources. Besides, the way in which current Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAP) are being implemented continues to be done through many different projects, much in the same old way with money that is earmarked.

I think that it is likely that project-based working will continue for some time to come. In that case, and especially in the case of interventions that have empowerment as their objective, it will be required that: 1) projects are able to have a long term involvement and commitment to the area and the group of intended beneficiaries, rather than the three or four years that projects normally take, 2) project planning and use of the budget should be flexible and 3) the project will need highly committed staff.

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Appendix 1   Involvement in projects / Moments of data collection

CBNRM in Matutuíne - Helvetas

Participant Observation

Dec. 1997	Meetings with Helvetas Project staff
May 1998	Meeting with Helvetas Project staff
June 1998	Correspondence with project manager
July 1998	Meeting with project staff
July 1998	Supervision Student thesis research
Oct. 1998	Visit to Massoane to prepare RRA
Nov. 1998	Visit to Massoane
April 1999	Seminar on the Helvetas Project
May 2000	Review archives

Other Fieldwork

Jan. 1998	RRA's Madjanjane and Sta Maria with Helvetas Staff, Faculty Staff and 18 Students
August 1998	Fieldwork Student Jeremias
Oct. 1998	RRA Massoane for FAO study
Jan. 1999	Survey for FAO Study
Feb/Mar 1999	Fieldwork Student Jeremias
March 1999	Fieldwork Student Limbau
July/Aug. 1999	Fieldwork by Eunice Cavane
July 1999	Fieldwork Gala

Transcribed Interviews

#	Date	Respondent	Where	Interviewer
1	15-dec-1999	Project staff	Bela Vista	bp
2	27-aug-1999	Project staff	Madjanjane	ec
3	13-dec-1999	TFCA project staff	Maputo	bp
4	07-dec-1999	Resident Representative Helvetas	Maputo	bp
5	sep-1999	School Teacher	Puzall	bp
6	sep-1999	Local leader	Puzall	bp
7	jul-1999	Local Resident	Ngomene	ec
8	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
9	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
10	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
11	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
12	jul-1999	Traditional Healer	Ngomene	ec
13	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
14	jul-1999	Traditional Healer	Ngomene	ec
15	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
16	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
17	jul-1999	Son of secretário	Ngomene	ec
18	jul-1999	Secretário Ntikalala	Ngomene	ec

19	jul-1999	Secretário	Ngomene	ec
20	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
21	jul-1999	Secretário Ntikalala	Ngomene	ec
22	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
23	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
24	jul-1999	Secretário	Ngomene	ec
25	jul-1999	Resident	Ngomene	ec
26	jul-1999	Local leader	Ngomene	ec
27	31-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
28	31-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
29	30-aug-1999	Secretário	Madjanjane	ec
30	29-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
31	29-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
32	28-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
33	29-aug-1999	Resident, works for the Park	Madjanjane	ec
34	28-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
35	27-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
36	26-aug-1999	Secretário	Madjanjane	ec
37	26-aug-1999	Resident	Madjanjane	ec
38	26-aug-1999	Group of residents	Madjanjane	ec
39	22-mar-1999	Resident	Sta Maria	al
40	21-mar-1999	Director of primary School	Sta Maria	al
41	20-mar-1999	Representative of Nduna	Sta Maria	al
42	20-mar-1999	3 Secretários de Mhala, Mapanga & Nhonguane	Sta Maria	al
43	19-mar-1999	Resident	Sta Maria	al
44	19-mar-1999	Resident	Sta Maria	al
45	19-mar-1999	Nduna of Mapanga	Sta Maria	al
46	18-mar-1999	Resident	Sta Maria	al
47	18-mar-1999	Resident / trader	Sta Maria	al
48	18-mar-1999	Resident / fisherman	Sta Maria	al
49	sep-1999	Fisherman	Gala	ec + sm
50	sep-1999	Fisherman	Gala	ec + sm
51	sep-1999	Resident	Gala	ec + sm
52	sep-1999	4 fishermen	Gala	ec + sm
53	sep-1999	Traditional Healer	Gala	ec + sm
54	19-jul-1999	Fisherman	Gala	ec + sm
55	19-jul-1999	'regulo'	Gala	ec + sm
56	14-jul-1999	Fisherman	Salamanga	bp
57	july-1999	Escrivão	Gala	ec + sm
58	16-jul-1999	Meeting with 8 men (local leaders)	Gala	bp + ec
59	sep-1999	Fisherman	Gala	sm
60	15-jul-1999	Fisherman	Gala	bp
61	sep-1999	Curandeira	Gala	ec + sm
62	18-jul-1999	2 residents	Gala	ec + sm
63	17-jul-1999	'immigrant' fisherman	Gala	ec + sm
64	15-jul-1999	Game scouts Park	Gala	bp

65	20-jul-1999	Fisherman	Gala	bp
66	20-jul-1999	Worker for fisherman	Gala	bp
67	20-jul-1999	Livestock tech. Dept of Agric	Bela Vista	bp
68	18-aug-1998	Project Manager	Office Helvetas	bp
69	17-sep-1999	Fisherman	Gala	ec + sm
70	17-jul-1999	Businessman Nkomati Safaris	Maputo	bp
71	22-jul-1999	Farmer	Gala	bp
72	22-jul-1999	Fisherman	Gala	bp
73	22-jul-1999	Escrivão	Gala	bp
74	17-jul-1999	Fisherman	Gala	bp

Interviewers

bp   Bart Pijnenburg
ec   Eunice Cavane
al   António Limbau (student)
sm   Silva Michaque (student)

RRA, January 1998
Participants: 2 fellow teachers, 2 staff members of Helvetas and 18 Students
Localities: Madjanjane and Sta. Maria
Semi-structured interviews, and meetings using role-play, mapping, transects and Venn diagrams
For Madjanjane; another 50 transcribed interviews

Supervision of student research

1. António Limbau
Title of thesis: Análise do 'Empowerment' das Comunidades de Machangulo no projecto CCGRN
    Participant observation in Seminar in Ndelane with Helvetas staff (July 1998)
    21 semi-structured interviews in Ndelane (March 1999)

2. Teodósio Jeremias
Title of thesis: Participação Comunitária no Projecto CCGRN da Helvetas em Matutuíne
    Participant observation in Fieldwork with Helvetas Staff in Muvukusa & Tsolomane (July 1998)
    Participant observation in PRA with Helvetas Staff in Zitundo (August 1998)
    24 semi-structured interviews in Zitundo (February 1999)
    48 semi-structured interviews in Muvukusa and Tsalombane (March 1999)

3. MSc Study by Eunice Cavane
Thesis Title: Towards Local Institutions for Joint Management of Natural Resources, MAKS, Wageningen, 2000

RRA in Massoane for FAO study
Observations, semi-structured interviews, diagrams, wealth ranking and village meetings
Report: Estratégias de Geração de Renda e Interacções com o Ambiente Institucional Local, Documento de Trabalho no.1

Survey in Massoane for FAO study
Structured interviews among 37 heads of households
Report: Estratégias de Geração de Renda das Famílias Rurais etc. FAEF, March 2000

Decentralised District Planning Nampula - UNCDF

Participant Observation

July 1997	PRA Training of Local Development Committee by project staff
July 1997	PRA in Muecate
Sept. 1997	Workshop on decentralisation, Nampula
Sept. 1997	Debriefing evaluation mission
Nov. 1998	Meeting with Program Officer and Project manager
March 1999	Meeting with UNCDF evaluation team
Aug. 1999	Workshop and meetings in Nampula
Oct. 1999	Stakeholder Workshop in Maputo
Feb 2000	Fieldwork for Mid-term evaluation (Nampula, Mecuburi and Muecate)
May 2000	Fieldwork for Mid-term evaluation (Nampula, Malema and Ribáue), Training of technical team of Malema, Mini-PRA in Mavili, Ribáue district
May-June 2000	Fieldwork for Mid-term evaluation (Nampula, Monapo, Muecate and Memba), 2nd Meeting of Consultative Council of Monapo District, 1st Meeting of Consultative Council of Memba District
June 2000	Meetings with evaluation team
June 2000	Fieldwork for Mid-term evaluation by Luís Artur, PRA in Muecate and installation of Local Development Committee
July 2000	Mid-term evaluation by rest of the team, PRA in Lalaua and installation of Local Development Committee (By E. Cavane)
Sept 2001	Peer review new project proposal

Transcribed Interviews

#	Date	Respondent	Where	Interviewer
1	08-dec-1999	advisor Ministry Planning and Finance	Maputo	bp
2	21-aug-1999	Project Staff	Nampula	bp
3	31-jan-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp + la
4	31-jan-2000	Staff DPPF	Nampula	bp + la
5	01-feb-2000	Staff DPPF	Nampula	bp + la
6	01-feb-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp + la
7	01-feb-2000	Staff DPAC	Nampula	bp + la
8	02-feb-2000	District Administration	Mecuburi	bp + la
9	02-feb-2000	NGO staff	Mecuburi	bp + la
10	02-feb-2000	NGO staff	Mecuburi	bp + la
11	02-feb-2000	NGO staff	Mecuburi	bp + la
12	02-feb-2000	Priest	Mecuburi	bp + la
13	03-feb-2000	Shopkeeper	Mecuburi	bp + la
14	03-feb-2000	Régulo/Local leader	Mecuburi	bp + la
15	03-feb-2000	Muslim leader	Mecuburi	bp + la
16	04-feb-2000	District Administration	Muecate	bp + la
17	04-feb-2000	Local leaders	Muecate	bp + la
18	08-may-2000	District Administration	Malema	bp + ec

19	09-may-2000	Police Officer, member of technical team	Malema	bp + ec
20	09-may-2000	local leader	Nacata	bp + ec
21	10-may-2000	local leader	Nacata	bp + ec
22	10-may-2000	worker at building site	Nacata	bp + ec
23	10-may-2000	District Administration	Ribáue	bp + ec
24	11-may-2000	Representative of Renamo	Ribáue	bp + ec
25	11-may-2000	Church elder	Ribáue	bp + ec
26	11-may-2000	Chefe do posto	Lapala	bp + ec
27	11-may-2000	Church pastor	Ribáue	bp + ec
28	11-may-2000	Church pastor	Ribáue	bp + ec
29	12-may-2000	Régulo/Local leader	Mavili	bp + ec
30	30-may-2000	substitute chefe do posto	Itoculo	bp + la
31	31-may-2000	Régulo/Local leader	Memba	bp + la
32	30-may-2000	NGO staff	Itoculo	bp + la
33	01-jun-2000	District administration	Monapo	bp + la
34	01-jun-2000	Representatives of Renamo	Monapo	bp + la
35	01-jun-2000	District administration	Muecate	bp + la
36	01-jun-2000	District Administrator	Muecate	bp + la
37	02-jun-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp + la
38	02-jun-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp + la
39	02-jun-2000	NGO staff	Nampula	bp + la
40	28-jun-2000	Director of School for Public Administration	Maputo	ec
41	02-jun-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp
42	01-feb-2000	Project Staff	Nampula	bp
43	Sept 1998	UNCDF Programme Officer	Maputo	bp

Interviewers:
bp = Bart Pijnenburg
la = Luís Artur
ec = Eunice Cavane

Mid-Term Evaluation team:
John Bardill (University of West-Cape, Cape Town)
Eunice Cavane (University Eduardo Mondlane)
Luís Artur (University Eduardo Mondlane)
Bart Pijnenburg

Survey in Netia for FAO study

Community Land Delimitation - ORAM / World Vision

Events
July 1999   Meeting with project manager

Oct. 1999	Interviews and literature study on land delimitation (by L. Artur and L. R. Cossa)
Oct. 1999	PRA Terepano with ORAM staff
Nov. 1999	Workshop with ORAM staff on land delimitation (by L. Artur and L. R. Cossa)
Nov. 1999	Meeting with project manager
Dec. 1999	Meeting with project manager
Feb. 2000	Meeting in Quelimane on report
Mar. 2000	Meeting with project manager
Mar. 2000	Preparation training
April 2000	Training of ORAM Staff
April 2000	PRA in Mucelo Novo

Interviews

18/10/1999	Sr. José Negrão, specialist on land issues, chairman of National NGO platform Campanha Terra
20/10/1999	Sra. Conceição Quadros, Inter-Ministral Land Commission (by L. Artur and L. R. Cossa)
21/10/1999	Sra. Shina, ORAM staff in Maputo
21/10/1999	Sr. Tanker ORAM staff in Maputo
21/10/1999	Sr. Nhancale, specialist in rural local leadership

Reports

- O Uso Diagnóstico Participativo na Delimitação de Terras Communitárias, Relatório de Avaliação, March, 2000, by: Licínia Raquel Cossa, Luís Artur e Bart Pijnenburg

- Primeira Formação em DRP no âmbito da Delimitação de terras communitárias para coordenadores e motivadores da ORAM-Zambezia, April 2000, by: Licínia Raquel Cossa and Bart Pijnenburg

Local Development Committee / Concern

Events

2/9/1998	Interview Programme Officer of Concern
feb. 1999	Contacts & planning for making the video
21/4/1999	Meeting with 3 members of Concern staff
June 1999	Filming of PRA by Bert Sonnenschein and Carlos Jamba
27/8/1999	Evaluation of fieldwork with 2 members of Local Development Committee, PO Concern and Filmmaker
2/9/1999	Interview with 2 members of Sambassoca Local Development Committee
22/11/1999	Meeting with 2 Field staff of Concern
18/4/2000	Première of Film "Sambassoca, uma Experiência em DRP"

Community Development / SCF-UK

Events

1997/1998	Several Meetings with SCF-UK Country Representative
May 1998	Preparations PRA training
17-21 June 1998	Training of SCF staff and their counterparts in Quelimane
22-26 June 1998	PRA's in Morrumbala
July 1998	Evaluation of training among participants

Reports

- Trainers' report, PRA training and Fieldwork, June 1998 (with Dan Owen)

- Síntese e Relatórios do Trabalho de Campo do PRA em Mopeia e Morrumbala, June 1998 (with PRA team members)

List of abbreviations

CDL	Comité de Desenvolvimento Local (see LDC)
CCD	Conselho Consultativo do Distrito (see DCC)
DCC	District Consultative Council
DDP	District Development Plan
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (political party)
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILEIA	Information centre for Low External Input Agriculture
ISNAR	International Service for National Agricultural Research
LDC	Local Development Committee
LDF	Local Development Fund
LWG	Local Working Group
MT	Metical, Mozambican currency (1 million MT = 70 US$, 2000)
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
ODI-AgREN	*Overseas Development Institute, Agricultural Research and Extension Network*
ORAM	Associação Rural de Ajuda Mutua (Mozambican NGO)
PACC	Posto Administrativo Consultative Council
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PTIP	Plano Trienal de Investimento Público (Public Investment Plan)
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (political party)
SCF-UK	Save the Children UK (British NGO)
UEM	Eduardo Mondlane University
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Summary

Since the 1980s, considerable changes have taken place in thinking about development interventions. Many donors, host governments and development organisations embraced the concepts and the related methods of participatory approaches. In an attempt to move away from an era of more directive and top-down interventions, the project proposals in the 1990s were dominated by concepts such as participation, decentralisation, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), empowerment, community-based development. In other words, the language of policy makers and practitioners in the field of development changed considerably. More significantly, the discourse of development changed. The discourse concept emphasises that language is not neutral. Discourse determines what can be said and written in a certain social group in a particular epoch. Discourse is not static; it changes as a result of its constant interplay with everyday practices and in social interaction. Framing is another important concept in this study. Framing refers to the process of filtering and selection of elements in the discourse that leads to new text and talk, new meanings and/or new social practices.

In chapter two, a summary is given of ideas and thoughts of some important authors who have been influential in setting participatory approaches on the development agenda. The popularity of participatory approaches during the 1990s did, however, generate criticism. Chapter three gives an overview of contemporary critical thoughts on these approaches. The advocates themselves, such as Robert Chambers, expressed concern over 'bad practices', which he regarded as a consequence of rapid up-scaling, insufficient training and 'use of the label without the substance'. In other words, the argument was that the ideas were good but that these ideas were not properly implemented in practice. More fundamental criticism was voiced by authors such as Mosse, Leeuwis, Cooke and Kothari. They pointed out the inherent contradictions and philosophical shortcomings of participatory approaches. The definitions of participation and empowerment are often vague, and the language used around these concepts tends to have a 'positive' connotation. This makes is easy to use these concepts in a rhetorical and populist way. In the discourse around participatory approaches, very little attention is paid to political dimensions of development interventions and existing social organisation. This study builds further on these critical reflections with the help of the concepts discourse and framing that are elaborated in chapter four.

The objective of the study is to describe and compare the discourses and everyday practices of five development projects in rural Mozambique. In doing this, the study hopes to contribute to the understanding of everyday dynamics of participatory development interventions. The following research questions were formulated at the end of chapter four; 1) What was the project context like? 2) What were the project discourses around the concepts participation and empowerment? 3) What were the everyday project practices? 4) How did PRA project practices compare with principles of 'good' PRA practices? 5) How did project discourses compare with project practices? 6) How can gaps between discourses and practices be explained?

Two major case studies and three minor ones were selected. The approach of the study is explained in chapter five. The methodology consisted mainly of participant observation and interviews. The involvement of the researcher in these projects either as an advisor, trainer or evaluator gave a good opportunity to have access to observations from within the project. For the two major cases, the researcher also had the opportunity to do research as an outsider, acting independently of any project involvement.

Chapter six provides important contextual information by describing the recent history of Mozambique. It specifically explores the events and facts that are important for the understanding of rural development in Mozambique in the 1990s.

The empirical chapters, chapters seven through nine, have the following structure: first the project context is described, then the project discourses, and finally some critical incidents and observations, thus answering the first three research questions. The other three research questions are dealt with in the concluding chapters ten and eleven.

The first major case study deals with various interventions in the most southern district of Mozambique, Matutuíne, in Maputo province. The aim of this project was to involve local people in the management of natural resources. The main focus was an initiative by the Swiss NGO Helvetas. The project was geared towards empowering the inhabitants of the district to confront commercial investors with interests in the area. In chapter seven, some of their activities—such as a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), community land delimitation and seminars—are described. This chapter also reflects on the relations of the project with various other actors in the district.

The other major case study is a project that promoted decentralised district planning in 14 districts of Nampula Province in the North of Mozambique. This project was a joint initiative of two UN organizations (UNDP and UNCDF), the Government of the Netherlands and the Mozambican Ministry of Planning and Finance. District administration was encouraged to write district plans. PRAs, the establishment of District Consultative Councils (DCCs) and Local Development Committees (LDCs) were the vehicles implemented to involve rural people in the development planning of the district. This project is described in chapter eight.

The three minor case studies, all based on projects run by NGOs, are presented in chapter nine. The first minor case was an initiative in the area of land rights and took place in Nicoadala district in Zambezia province. The project attempted to delimit land for communities, a possibility provided for through the land law of 1997. The second minor case took place in Machaze district in Manica province and is similar to the project in Nampula since its aim was decentralised district planning. The difference is that this project in Machaze placed more emphasis on the local level and started with the establishment of a Local Development Committee and a series of PRAs. The third minor case is about a PRA that was planned by an NGO to take place in Morrumbala district, Zambezia province, but in fact never took place.

All projects made use of PRA. In chapter ten, I first take a closer look at how PRAs were perceived and how the PRAs were conducted by project staff. I compare this with the supposed principles of 'good' PRA practice. Project staff largely regarded PRA as a tool for data collection or as a way to obtain a ranking of a wish-list or other information. The way in which data were collected and the way in which problems were analysed revealed a rather extractive and uncritical way of working. The level of probing and triangulation was minimal. There was little space for sharing, joint analysis or critique. The role of PRA in the intervention or in the envisaged development process was seldom made explicit in project documents.

Chapter ten continues to synthesize three gaps between project discourses and project practices. Firstly, project discourses tend to picture the intervention as rather a-political and its methods as neutral, while in practice many different interests and several conflicts surfaced as a result of the intervention. It became apparent how different power-holders try to either control or even block the interventions. In turn, project staff do all they can to appease all actors and keep their project running.

Secondly, all projects have empowerment as an objective. It is however apparent that, in the project discourses, this concept is not further elaborated and it is not clear who should be empowered in relation to whom, or how this could be achieved. Since the PRAs were rather extractive and uncritical, and as the interests of project staff differed often from the empowerment of local people, these exercises offered little scope for local learning or mobilisation. Projects tended to create new institutions rather than trying to change existing local institutions. Little or no attention was paid to intra-community inequalities and, as time went by, projects tended to water down their empowerment objectives.

The third gap that was identified is that whereas, according to the discourse of participatory development, processes should be bottom-up and local, observations showed that most interventions were largely imposed by donors and development agencies and their staff. The philosophies of the project rationale and approach are rather foreign. The influence of expatriates on project formulation and implementation was obvious. Moreover, agenda setting of everyday activities or determining the next step during a PRA was in the hands of project staff, with local people having virtually no say in the matter. New organisations such as Local Development Committees and District Development Councils were equally largely imposed by project staff and their durability is therefore questioned.

In chapter eleven an attempt is made to explain these gaps. The concepts of discourse and framing were very useful for doing so. We can talk of a discourse of participatory development; a dominant system of representation that governed the way policy makers and practitioners talked and wrote about development during the 1990s. This discourse was shared in trans-national discourse coalitions and often had rather optimist and positive connotations. When it came to putting this discourse into practice, formulating the project document, and operationalising this document in activities in the field, the discourse had to be actively framed or translated. The various actors do this in several ways so as to fit the discourse into their wants and needs. One and the same actor can also frame the discourse in different ways, depending on the audience and context. Project discourses were characterised by vagueness, thus allowing the many different actors to select only that which they regarded as being useful.

Several contextual factors may contribute towards explaining the gaps between discourses and practices. The following are distinguished; the brutal history of colonial and post-colonial top-down interventions in rural Mozambique, the consequent distrust towards outsiders, the lack of training and experience of project staff, party-political tensions, expectations of local people, and a lack of commitment towards the empowerment of local people on the part of project staff and local power-holders.

In addition, discourses of participatory development exhibit a number of conceptual and philosophical shortcomings that also contribute to the divide between formal discourses and everyday project practices. The most important (and most known) criticism is that participatory approaches are quite naïve since they often ignore power relations. It generally assumes that people are willing and able to collaborate, and are able to overcome conflict via mutual learning. Furthermore, the fact that certain concepts are not further specified, being kept vague, makes the approach difficult to criticise.

In the last section I turn my attention specifically to project managers who have to deal in everyday practice with: 1) the inherent contradictions of the approach, 2) framing the laudable but naïve ideas into activities and 3) the different actors with their various interests. Good project managers in Mozambique have to be highly politically sensitive and strategic. They often have to adopt a strategy what I have called 'juggle and muddle'. Keeping the discourse vague is not only an observation of this study; at particular moments it can also be a recommendable strategy in running a project effectively.

Samenvatting

Sinds de tachtiger jaren van de vorige eeuw, zijn er belangrijke wijzigingen opgetreden in het denken over ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Veel donoren, ontwikkelingsorganisaties en overheden van ontwikkelingslanden veranderden hun taalgebruik. Begrippen, gerelateerd aan participatieve methoden van interventies werden steeds meer gebruikt. In een poging om zich af te wenden van een tijdperk van meer directieve en *'top-down'* benaderingen van interventie, stonden projectvoorstellen in de jaren negentig bol van jargon zoals participatie, decentralisatie, *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), empowerment,* en *community-based* benaderingen voor lokale ontwikkeling. In andere woorden, de taal van de denkers over ontwikkelingssamenwerking en van de ontwikkelingswerkers in het veld veranderde. Sterker, daarmee veranderde het ontwikkelings-discours. Het discours begrip zoals gebruikt in dit proefschrift, benadrukt dat taal nooit neutraal is. Het discours bepaalt wat 'zegbaar' of 'schrijfbaar' is in een bepaalde groep in een bepaalde tijdperk. Discours is ook zeker niet statisch; het verandert in het voortdurend samenspel met de dagelijkse praktijk en in sociale interactie. Een ander belangrijk begrip in deze studie is daarom *'framing'*. Dit verwijst naar het proces van filteren en selecteren van elementen in het discours die leiden naar nieuwe taalgebruik, nieuwe betekenissen en/of nieuwe sociale praktijken.

Het tweede hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift geeft een samenvatting van ideeën van enkele auteurs die belangrijk zijn geweest in de promotie van participatieve benaderingen in ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Deze auteurs worden in deze studie 'de advocaten' (van participatieve benaderingen) genoemd. De pop005lariteit van deze benaderingen gedurende de jaren negentig riep echter ook kritiek op. In hoofdstuk drie wordt een overzicht gegeven van deze kritieken. Robert Chambers, één van de advocaten, is zelf ook kritisch; hij heeft het dan over '*bad practices*', slechte praktijk. Dit wordt gezien als een gevolg van een te snelle opschaling van de methoden, van onvoldoende training en van misbruik van het 'label' participatie. Met andere woorden, de argumentatie was dat de ideeën goed zijn maar dat ze in de praktijk slecht worden uitgevoerd. Er bestaat meer fundamentele kritiek op het werk van de advocaten en die zijn verwoord door mensen zoals Mosse, Leeuwis, Cooke en Kothari. Deze auteurs wijzen op de inherente contradicties en de filosofische tekortkomingen van participatieve benaderingen. Zo wijzen zij onder meer op de vaagheid van de begrippen participatie en *empowerment*. Verder hebben deze begrippen een positieve, haast onomstreden lading. Dit maakt dat deze begrippen heel makkelijk door verschillende mensen op een populistische manier gebruikt kunnen worden. In het discours rondom participatieve benaderingen wordt er over het algemeen zeer weinig aandacht gegeven aan de politieke dimensies van ontwikkelingsinterventies. Deze studie bouwt voort op deze kritische reflecties met behulp van de theoretische begrippen discours en *framing* die in hoofdstuk vier worden uitgelegd.

Het doel van deze studie is om het discours en de dagelijkse praktijk van vijf ontwikkelingsinterventies te beschrijven en met elkaar te vergelijken. Hiermee wil de studie bijdragen aan een beter begrip van dagelijkse dynamiek van ontwikkelingsprojecten die, in naam, participatief van aard zijn. Daartoe worden aan het eind van hoofdstuk vier de volgende zes onderzoeksvragen geformuleerd: 1) Hoe ziet de context van het project er uit? 2) Wat was het discours rondom de begrippen participatie en *empowerment* in het project? 3) Wat gebeurde er in de dagelijkse project praktijk? 4) Hoe vergelijkt de dagelijkse praktijk van PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) zich met de principes van 'goede' PRA praktijk? 5) Hoe vergelijkt het project discours zich met de dagelijkse project praktijk? 6) Hoe kan de kloof tussen discours en praktijk verklaard worden?

Er werden twee grote en drie kleine case studies gekozen voor deze studie. De aanpak en methodologie van de studie wordt nader beschreven in hoofdstuk vijf. De methode bestond voornamelijk uit participerende observatie en interviews. In verschillende projecten was de onderzoeker ook adviseur, trainer of evaluator. Deze betrokkenheid gaf een unieke mogelijkheid om participerende observatie te gebruiken. Voor de twee grote case studies had de onderzoeker ook op andere momenten de mogelijkheid om in het werkgebied veldwerk te doen als een buitenstaander, dit wil zeggen buiten de projectcontext.

Hoofdstuk zes geeft belangrijke contextuele informatie door een recente geschiedenis van Mozambique te beschrijven. Het kijkt speciaal naar enkele gebeurtenissen die belangrijk zijn om de specifieke situatie van het Mozambikaans platteland in de jaren negentig beter te begrijpen.

De empirische hoofdstukken zeven, acht en negen, waarin de projecten worden beschreven hebben telkens de volgende opzet; een beschrijving van de context van het project, een beschrijving van het project discours en de beschrijving van enkele kritische incidenten of gebeurtenissen die een goed beeld geven van de dagelijkse praktijk van het projectwerk. Op deze manier beantwoorden deze hoofdstukken de eerste drie onderzoeksvragen. De andere drie onderzoeksvragen worden beantwoord in de hoofdstukken tien en elf.

De eerste, grote case studie die beschreven wordt in hoofdstuk zeven gaat over de verschillende interventies in het meest zuidelijke district van Mozambique, Matutuíne in de provincie Maputo. De focus ligt op een project van een Zwitserde NGO, Helvetas. Dit project wilde lokale mensen mobiliseren om potentiële investeerders in de toerisme industrie tegemoet te treden. Enkele activiteiten zoals een PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal), seminars en een activiteit gericht op het afbakenen van land van het dorp (community land delimitation) worden in dit hoofdstuk beschreven. Ook wordt er ingegaan op de relaties van dit project met enkele andere actoren in het gebied.

De andere grote case studie gaat over een project dat gedecentraliseerde district planning wilde realiseren in 14 districten in de noordelijke provincie Nampula. Dit project was een gezamenlijk initiatief van twee UN organisaties (UNDP en UNCDF), de Nederlandse overheid en het Mozambikaanse ministerie van planning en financiën. De overheden op districtsniveau werden gevraagd om districtsplannen te maken. Belangrijke instrumenten om lokale mensen in dit proces te betrekken waren PRA en het in het leven roepen van consultatieve raden op districts- en op dorpsniveau. Dit project is beschreven in hoofdstuk acht.

De drie kleine case studies zijn alledrie projecten die werden gerund door NGO's. Deze zijn beschreven in hoofdstuk negen. Het eerste project was een initiatief op het gebied van landrechten in het district Nicoadala in de provincie Zambezia. Dit project maakte gebruik van een nieuwe mogelijkheid in de landwet van 1997 om dorpsland af bakenen (community land delimitation). Het tweede project dat is beschreven in dit hoofdstuk vond plaats in het district Machaze in de provincie Manica. Het lijkt op het project in Nampula (hoofdstuk acht) omdat decentrale planning het doel was. Dit project legde echter meer nadruk op het dorpsniveau en startte met het opzetten van lokale 'ontwikkelingscomités' en een serie PRA's. De derde case studie in dit hoofdstuk is niet zozeer een project maar meer een ervaring van een NGO die een PRA wilde organiseren in het district Morrumbala in Zambezia. De PRA vond echter nooit plaats door allerlei lokale (politieke) complicaties.

Alle projecten maakten gebruik van de methode PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal). In hoofdstuk tien wordt er eerst gekeken naar de percepties over PRA van project staf en naar de manier waarop de PRA's werden uitgevoerd. Dit wordt vergeleken met de veronderstelde principes die zouden gelden als 'goede PRA praktijk'. We zien dan dat de PRA exercitie vaak louter gezien werd als een manier om gegevens te verzamelen of een manier om een prioriteitenlijst samen te stellen. De manier waarop de gegevens werden verzameld en de manier waarop 'problemen' werden geanalyseerd duidde op een extractieve en niet-kritische manier van werken. Er werd niet dóórgevraagd en informatie werd niet gevalideerd. Er was weinig gelegenheid om resultaten samen met de lokale bevolking te delen of te analyseren. Ook werd de rol van de PRA in het project zelden duidelijk gemaakt in project documentatie.

Hoofdstuk tien gaat verder met het distilleren van drie breuken of verschillen (*gaps*) tussen het project discours and project praktijken. Ten eerste heeft het discours de tendens om de interventie en de methoden als neutraal, als niet-politiek, te presenteren. Maar in de praktijk loopt men juist tegen vele verschillende belangen. Vele conflicten kwamen naar boven als een gevolg van de interventie. Het werd duidelijk hoe verschillende (lokale) machthebbers proberen controle te behouden, de interventie proberen te beïnvloeden of de interventie zelfs proberen te blokkeren. Op hun beurt doet het personeel van de projecten er vaak alles aan om deze verschillende actoren tevreden te houden zodat zij hun project draaiende kunnen houden. De tweede breuk tussen project discours en project praktijk heeft te maken met het begrip *empowerment*. Alle projecten gebruiken dit concept in hun doelstellingen. Het is dan heel opvallend dat dit concept verder nooit wordt uitgewerkt in project documentatie. Het wordt nooit duidelijk wie *empowered* moet worden ten opzichte van wie en ook niet hoe dit dan bereikt zou moeten worden. Aangezien de PRAs vrij extractief en niet-kritisch waren en aangezien het project personeel vaak hele andere belangen had dan de *empowerment* van de lokale bevolking, gaven deze exercities weinig mogelijkheden voor leren door, of het mobiliseren van lokale mensen. Verder was het zo dat projecten de tendens hadden om lokale mensen te vragen om nieuwe organisaties te vormen in plaats van om mensen na te laten denken hoe bestaande instituties veranderd zouden kunnen worden. Er werd nauwelijks aandacht geschonken aan ongelijkheden binnen de dorpsgemeenschappen. Ten slotte was het vaak zo dat terwijl de tijd verstreek, de doelen van het project omtrent *empowerment* steeds meer werden afgezwakt.

De derde breuk die werd geïdentificeerd in deze studie is dat terwijl volgens het project discours participatieve ontwikkeling van onderop zou moeten komen, de observaties er op wijzen dat de meeste interventies worden opgelegd aan lokale mensen door donoren, ontwikkelingsorganisaties en hun staf. Projectfilosofie en benadering zijn vaak geïmporteerd en de rol van buitenlanders was groot. Maar ook het bepalen van de dagelijkse agenda of het nemen van de volgende stap gedurende een interventie in een dorp was in de handen van project staf terwijl lokale mensen nauwelijks een stem hadden. Ook het opzetten van nieuwe lokale organisaties zoals de lokale en district ontwikkelingscomités gebeurde door buitenstaanders en het is dan ook zeer de vraag of deze duurzaam zullen zijn.

In hoofdstuk elf wordt gepoogd om deze breuken, deze verschillen tussen het discours en de praktijk te verklaren. De begrippen discours en *framing* zijn daarbij heel bruikbaar. Er was duidelijk sprake van een discours van participatieve benaderingen; een dominant systeem van representatie die de manier bepaalde waarop we over ontwikkelingssamenwerking praatten en schreven in de jaren negentig. Dit discours werd gedeeld in transnationale discours coalities oftewel allianties van professionals en had een hele optimistische uitstraling. Wanneer dit discours in de praktijk gebracht moest worden, tijdens het formuleren van het project document en daarna in de uitwerking van dit document naar concrete activiteiten in het veld werd dit discours op een actieve manier *geframed*; er werd volop vertaald, geselecteerd en gefilterd. De verschillende actoren doen dit op een manier zodat het discours,

dat zij op dat moment gebruiken, van pas komt om hun doelen te bereiken. Een en dezelfde actor kan het discours op verschillende manier buigen of interpreteren, afhankelijk van zijn publiek en de context. Het project discours is vaak erg vaag, concepten worden niet duidelijk gedefinieerd. Dit laat het toe dat vele verschillende mensen datgene eruit kunnen pikken wat zij denken dat nuttig is.

Er zijn een aantal contextuele factoren die de verschillen tussen discours en praktijk mede verklaren. De volgende worden onderscheiden; de gewelddadige geschiedenis van zowel koloniale als post-koloniale interventies op het platteland van Mozambique, het mede daardoor veroorzaakte relatieve wantrouwen naar buitenstaanders, het gebrek aan training en ervaring van project staf met meer interactieve methoden, de spanningen tussen politieke partijen en een gebrek aan toewijding van zowel project staf als lokale machthebbers om serieus te werken aan *empowerment* van de lokale bevolking.

Daarnaast zitten er een aantal conceptuele en filosofische zwakheden in het discours rondom participatieve ontwikkelingsinterventies. Ook deze dragen bij aan de kloof tussen het formele project discours en de dagelijkse veldpraktijk van ontwikkelingssamenwerking. De belangrijkste kritiek is dat participatieve benaderingen vaak vrij naïef zijn omdat ze geen expliciete aandacht besteden aan machtsrelaties. In het algemeen veronderstellen ze dat mensen altijd in staat zijn en bereid zijn om samen te werken en om conflicten op te lossen via een goede dialoog en wederzijds leren. Een ander probleem is dat de benadering moeilijk te bekritiseren is omdat het discours vaak zo vaag blijft.

In de laatste sectie van het proefschrift wordt de aandacht specifiek gericht op de rol van projectleiders die in de dagelijkse praktijk van doen hebben met: 1) de inherente contradicties in de benadering, 2) het *framen* van de lovenswaardige idealen in concrete activiteiten en 3) de verschillende actoren met hun verschillende belangen. Goede projectleiders moeten in Mozambique politiek zeer sensitief zijn en strategisch handelen. Zij adopteren een strategie die ik omschreven heb als '*muddle and juggle*', aanmodderen en jongleren. Het vaag houden van het discours is dus niet alleen een observatie van deze studie, maar kan in sommige stadia van het project ook een belangrijke aanbeveling zijn om een interventie op een effectieve manier uit te voeren.

Resumo

Desde os anos oitenta, mudanças consideráveis aconteceram no pensamento sobre intervenções de desenvolvimento. Muitos doadores, governos e organizações de desenvolvimento abraçaram os conceitos e os métodos relacionados com abordagens participativas. Numa tentativa em afastar-se duma era de intervenções mais directivas e de 'cima para baixo', as propostas de projectos nos anos noventa foram dominadas por conceitos como participação, descentralização Diagnóstico Rural Participativo/Participatory Rural Appraisal, *empowerment*, etc. Em outras palavras, a linguagem de pensadores e praticantes no campo de desenvolvimento mudou consideravelmente. Mais significativamente, mudou o discurso de desenvolvimento. O conceito de discurso enfatiza que a linguagem não é neutra. Discurso determina o que pode ser dito e escrito num certo grupo social numa época particular. Discurso não é estático; muda como resultado da interação constante com práticas quotidianas e nas relações sociais. *Framing* (moldagem) é outro conceito importante neste estudo. *Framing* refere-se ao processo de filtração e selecção de elementos no discurso que conduz a novo texto escrito e falado, significados novos ou práticas sociais novas.

No capítulo dois, encontra-se um resumo de idéias e pensamentos de alguns autores que foram influentes na promoção de abordagens participativas nos programas de desenvolvimento. A popularidade das abordagens participativas durante os anos noventa gerou, porém, várias críticas. Capítulo três dá uma avaliação de pensamentos críticos contemporâneos sobre estas abordagens. Os próprios defensores, como o Robert Chambers, também expressaram suas preocupações sobre os '*bad practices*', as 'más práticas' que seriam consequência duma disseminação rápida, um treinamento insuficiente, e um uso não-crítico dos métodos. Críticas mais fundamentais foram expressas por autores como Mosse, Leeuwis, Cooke e Kothari. Eles mostraram as contradições inerentes e limitações filosóficas das abordagens participativas. As definições de participação e *empowerment* são freqüentemente vagas. A linguagem usada a volta estes conceitos tende a ter uma conotação 'positiva'. Isto faz com que seja fácil de usar estes conceitos numa maneira retórica e populista. Muito pouca atenção é dada às dimensões políticas de intervenções de desenvolvimento nem à organização social existente. Este estudo é construído na base destas reflexões críticas e, com ajuda dos conceitos de discurso e *framing* que são elaborados no capítulo quatro.

O objetivo do estudo é descrever e comparar os discursos e práticas quotidianas de cinco projectos de desenvolvimento nas zonas rurais de Moçambique. Fazendo isto, o estudo espera contribuir na compreensão da dinâmica quotidiana de intervenções participativas virada ao desenvolvimento rural. No final do capítulo quatro, foram formuladas as seguintes perguntas de pesquisa; 1) Qual era o contexto do projecto? 2) Quais eram os discursos no projecto a volta dos conceitos participação e *empowerment*? 3) Quais eram as práticas quotidianas do projecto? 4) Como é que as práticas de DRP se comparam com os princípios de 'boas práticas' de DRP/PRA? 5) Como é que os discursos do projecto se comparam com as práticas quotidianas? 6) Como é que se podiam explicar as lacunas entre discursos e práticas?

Foram selecionados dois casos (projectos) principais e três casos secundários. A abordagem do estudo é explicada no capítulo cinco. A metodologia consistiu principalmente em observação participante (*participant observation*) e entrevistas. O envolvimento do pesquisador nos referidos projectos como investigador, consultor, e, às vezes como treinador/facilitador, deu uma oportunidade única em fazer observações dentro dos projectos.

O capítulo seis dá importante informação contextual descrevendo a recente história de Moçambique. Especificamente explora os eventos e factos que são importantes para a compreensão de desenvolvimento rural em Moçambique nos anos noventa.

Os capítulos empíricos, capítulos sete a nove, têm a estrutura seguinte: primeiro o contexto de projecto é descrito, depois o discurso do projecto é descrito, e finalmente alguns incidentes críticos e observações na prática. Assim, foram respondidas as primeiras três perguntas da pesquisa. As outras três perguntas de pesquisa são exploradas nos capítulos finais dez e onze.

O primeiro estudo de caso principal trata das várias intervenções no distrito de Matutuíne, na província de Maputo. O enfoque principal era uma iniciativa da ONG suíça, Helvetas, que pretendia envolver as pessoas locais na administração de recursos naturais. No capítulo sete, são descritas algumas actividades como DRP/PRA, seminários e uma actividade denominada delimitação de terras comunitárias. Este capítulo também reflecte nas relações do projecto com vários outros actores no distrito.

O outro estudo de caso principal é um projecto que promoveu planificação distrital descentralizada em 14 distritos da Província de Nampula no Norte de Moçambique. Este projecto era uma iniciativa de duas organizações da ONU (UNDP e UNCDF), o Governo dos Países Baixos e o Ministério Moçambicano de Plano e Finanças. As administrações dos distritos foram encorajadas a escrever planos de desenvolvimento distritais. DRP/PRA, o estabelecimento de Conselhos Consultivos Distritais (DCCs) e Comitês de Desenvolvimento Locais (LDCs) foram os veículos para envolver as pessoas rurais no desenvolvimento do distrito. Este projecto é descrito no capítulo oito.

Os três casos secundários, são baseados em projectos implementados por ONGs, e são apresentados no capítulo nove. O primeiro caso secundário trata duma iniciativa na área de direitos de terra e aconteceu no distrito de Nicoadala na província de Zambézia. O projecto procurou delimitar terras comunitárias, uma possibilidade prevista na lei de terra de 1997. O segundo caso secundário aconteceu no distrito de Machaze na província de Manica e é semelhante ao projecto em Nampula desde que seu enfoque era a planificação distrital descentralizada. A diferença é que este projecto em Machaze colocou mais ênfase no nível local e começou com o estabelecimento dum Comitê de Desenvolvimento Local e uma série de DRP/PRAs. O terceiro caso secundário trata dum DRP/PRA que foi planeado por uma ONG no distrito de Morrumbala, província de Zambezia, mas que de facto nunca aconteceu.

Todos os projectos fizeram uso de DRP/PRA. Capítulo dez dá uma visão às percepções sobre DRP/PRAs e como os mesmos foram administrados no campo pelo pessoal do projecto. Isto foi comparado com os supostos princípios de 'boa prática de DRP/PRA'. O pessoal de projecto considerou o DRP/PRA em grande parte como uma ferramenta para a colecta de dados ou como uma maneira de obter prioridades duma lista de desejos ou outras informações. O modo como os dados foram colhidos e como os problemas eram analisados, revelou uma maneira de trabalho bastante extractiva e pouca crítica. O nível de sondagem e triangulação da informação era mínimo. Havia pouco espaço para compartilhar, analisar, ou criticar os dados, nem em equipa nem com as pessoas locais. O papel de DRP/PRA na intervenção ou no processo de desenvolvimento foi raramente feito explícito nos documentos de projecto.

Capítulo dez continua sintetizando três lacunas entre os discursos e prácticas de projecto. Primeiramente, discursos de projecto tendem a "pintar" a intervenção como um evento não-político e seus métodos como neutros, enquanto na práctica, muitos interesses diferentes e vários conflitos apareceram como resultado da intervenção. Ficou aparente que pessoas com

poder tentaram controlar ou até mesmo bloquear as intervenções. Enquanto isso, o pessoal de projecto faz muitos esforços para satisfazer a todos os actores de modo a garantir o funcionamento de projecto.

Em segundo lugar, todos os projetos têm *empowerment* como um objetivo. É porém aparente que, nos discursos de projecto, este conceito não é elaborado mais adiante e não está claro quem deveria ser empoderado e em relação a quem. Nem foi especificado como isto poderia ser alcançado. Uma vez que os DRP/PRAs eram bastante extractivos e não-críticos, e como os interesses do pessoal de projecto eram muitas das vezes diferente da *empowerment* de pessoas locais, estes exercícios ofereceram pouco âmbito para aprendizagem local ou para a mobilização de pessoas locais. Projectos tenderam a criar instituições novas em lugar de tentar mudar as instituições locais existentes. Pouca ou nenhuma atenção foi prestada a desigualdades dentro das comunidades. Finalmente, com o passar de tempo, projectos tenderam a diminuir a importância dos objectivos relacionados ao *empowerment* de pessoas locais.

A terceira lacuna que foi identificada é que enquanto o discurso de desenvolvimento participativo enfatiza processos locais e abordagens de 'baixo-para-cima', observações mostraram que a maioria das intervenções era largamente imposta pelo pessoal dos doadores e agências de desenvolvimento. As filosofias dos projectos vêm de fora. A influência dos estrangeiros na formulação dos projectos e na implementação era óbvia. A tomada de decisões nas actividades quotidianas estava nas mãos do pessoal de projecto; pessoas locais tinham virtualmente nenhuma voz no assunto. Organizações novas como Comitês de Desenvolvimento Locais e Conselhos de Desenvolvimento de Distrito foram igualmente em grande parte impostas através de pessoal de projecto e então a durabilidade destas organizações é questionada.

No capítulo onze encontra-se uma tentativa de explicar estas lacunas. Os conceitos de discurso e *framing* foram muito úteis para fazer isto. Podemos falar de um discurso de desenvolvimento participativo; existia um sistema dominante de representação que governou o modo em que falamos e escrevemos sobre desenvolvimento durante os anos noventa. Este discurso foi compartilhado em coalições de discurso trans-nacionais e frequentemente tinham uma conotação bastante optimista e positiva. Quando chegou a vez de pôr este discurso em prática, em formular documentos de projecto, e em operacionalizar este documento em actividades no campo, o discurso teve que ser moldado activamente. Os vários actores fazem isto de várias maneiras para ajustar o discurso aos seus desejos e necessidades. Um actor também pode moldar o discurso de modos diferentes dependendo da audiência e do contexto. Os discursos de projecto eram vagos e permitiam assim que muitos actores diferentes podessem seleccionar o que consideraram útil para sí.

Vários factores contextuais também contribuem na explicação das lacunas entre discursos e práticas. São considerados os seguintes factores; a história colonial brutal, a era de intervenções de cima para baixo nas zonas rurais em Moçambique, os erros no período pós-independencia, a consequente desconfiança, a falta de treinamento e experiência de pessoal de projecto, tensões políticas, expectativas de pessoas locais, e, uma falta de compromisso para o *empowerment* de pessoas locais por parte do pessoal de projecto e por parte de pessoas locais no poder.

Além disso, os discursos de desenvolvimento participativo têm várias negligências conceituais e filosóficas. Isto também contribuiu às lacunas entre discursos formais e práticas quotidianas de projecto. A mais importante (e a mais conhecida) crítica é que as abordagens participativas são totalmente ingênuas desde que elas ignoram frequentemente relações de poder. Geralmente assumem que as pessoas estão dispostas e capazes de colaborar, e que conflitos podem sempre ser superados pela aprendizagem mútua. Além disso, o facto de que não são especificados mais profundamente certos conceitos, sendo mantidos vagos, faz com que seja difícil de criticar a abordagem.

Na última secção a atenção é especificamente virada aos coordenadores ou gestores dos projectos. Eles têm que negociar na prática quotidiana com: 1) as contradições inerentes da abordagem, 2) moldar as idéias louváveis mas ingênuas em actividades concretas e 3) os diferentes actores com os seus vários interesses. Bons coordenadores de projectos em Moçambique têm de serem altamente sensíveis politicamente e estratégicos. Frequentemente eles têm que adoptar uma estratégia que foi chamada *'muddle and juggle'*. Mantendo o discurso vago não é apenas uma observação deste estudo, também pode ser uma estratégia muito efectiva para correr um projecto.

About the author

Bart Pijnenburg (1963) studied rural sociology at Wageningen University. He graduated in 1989. One year later he left for Zambia, where he worked till 1994 in the field of agricultural research and extension in a large Integrated Rural Development Project. From 1995 till 2000 he worked as a lecturer in Rural Sociology at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique. In addition to his work as a lecturer, he was engaged in several rural development projects either as a trainer, advisor or backstopper. This provided the case material for this thesis. Bart is currently employed as a researcher at Wageningen University and involved in various initiatives of renewal of the Dutch countryside. In 2003 he founded his own company, Mensenland, for the study and the facilitation of rural development; www.mensenland.nl. He can be contacted via bart@mensenland.nl