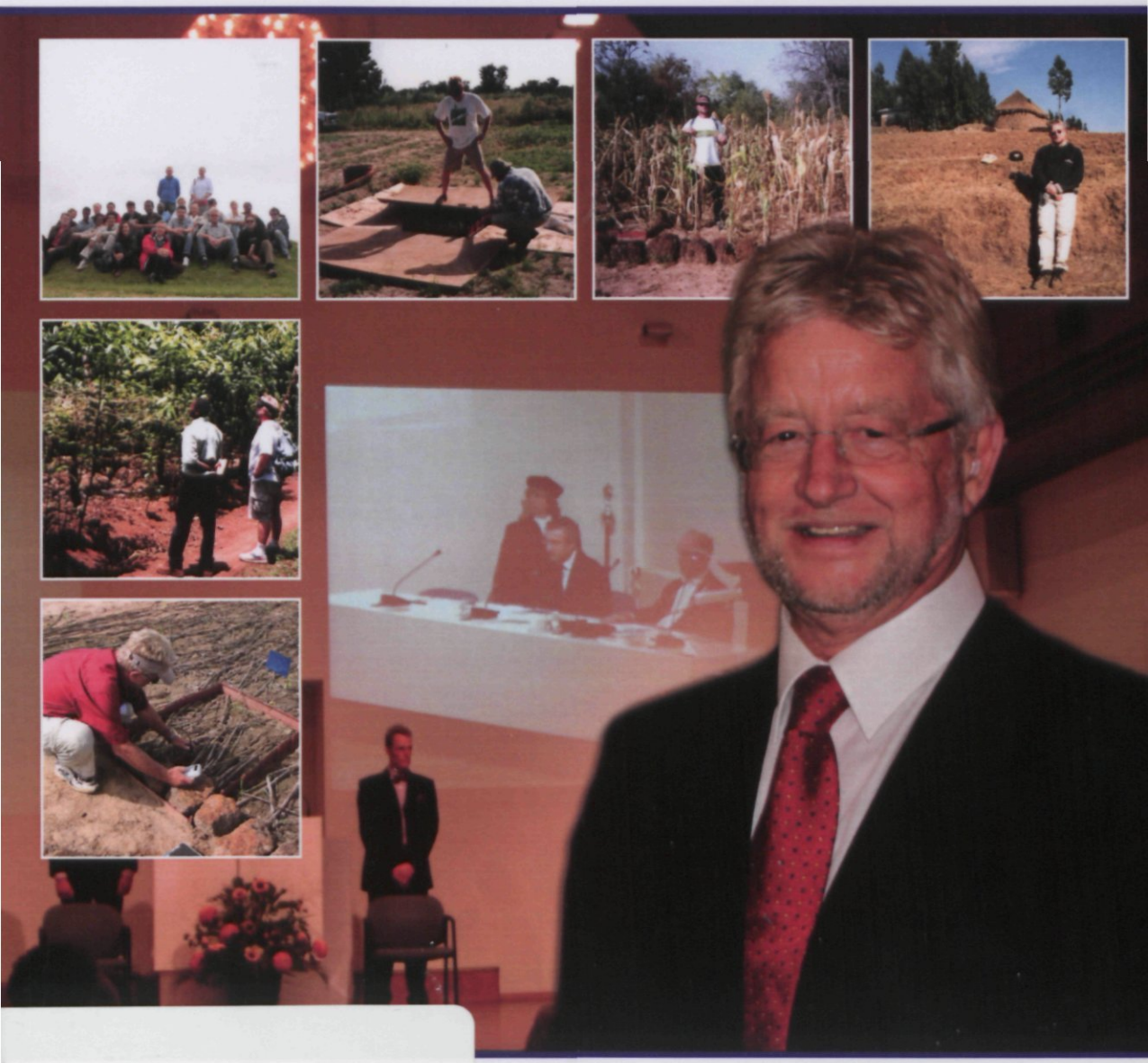
Academic Training in Tropical Resource Management

Special TRMP edition on the occasion of the retirement of prof. Leo Stroosnijder in May 2012

LDD group



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All correspondence related to this volume should be directed to the Wageningen address of the first author as mentioned on the side front cover of the volume

Tropical Resource Management Papers are published by Wageningen University and Research Centre (Wageningen UR). Main objective of this series is to allow a wider distribution than the circuit of international scientific journals for the results of research on (sub)tropical resource management obtained by researchers and graduate students working within the framework of Wageningen research projects. A broad range of research topics with respect to the (integrated) management of vegetation, fauna, soil and water may be included in these papers. Final responsibility for each contribution rests with the authors.

Les Documents sur la Gestion des Ressources Tropicales sont publiés par Wageningen Université et Centre de recherché (Wageningen UR). Cette serie a pour but principal de permettre – au-dela du circuit des journaux scientifiques internationaux - la diffusion des resultats de la recherche dans le domaine de la gestion des ressources naturelles dans les regions (sub)tropicales, tels qu'ils ont ete obtenus par les chercheurs et les etudiants de troisieme cycle travaillant dans le cadre des projets de recherche de Wageningen. Cette serie comprend en outre de nombreux themes de recherche, relatifs a la gestion (integree) de la vegetation, de la faune, du sol et des eaux. La responsabilite finale de chaque publication incombe aux auteurs en question.

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Academic Training in Tropical Resource Management

TRMP No. 101

LDD group

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Foreword

Ever since its foundation Wageningen University has been involved in academic education and scientific research for tropical regions. This is partly due to the colonial history of the Netherlands in both Indonesia and Surinam, but after the independence of these countries the Wageningen knowledge and commitment did not disappear. On the contrary the scope was broadened and research topics were chosen and carried out in almost every country in the tropical regions of the world.

Prof. Leo Stroosnijder has played an important role in this field and he has participated in modernizing education and research in this field. Most important development over the past years has been the increasing involvement of international scientists and students from the tropical regions. It has been a stimulating development for both Dutch and international parties.

The Tropical Resource Management Papers have played an important role in disseminating the knowledge in the professional and academic fields. An impressive number of 100 issues have been published and issue number 100 was supposed to be the final one in the series.

Fortunately and rightfully so it was decided to come up with a very special issue number 101, dedicated to the work of prof. Leo Stroosnijder. It is an impressive overview of an impressive career in which he has supervised over 60 PhD-students. It portraits him as a dedicated representative of the Wageningen approach: science for impact is our motto and science for impact has been the result of the work of prof. Stroosnijder.

I thank him for his commitment and I am proud to have worked with him and to have shared a joint commitment for enhancing Quality of Life through education and research.

Thank you Leo!

Prof. Martin J. Kropff,

Rector Magnificus, Wageningen University and Research Centre

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Introduction

A curious thing about the trademark "Wageningen" is that it seems to be much more well-known abroad, especially in faraway tropical countries, than in the Netherlands itself. During the almost 100 year existence of Wageningen University, many of its alumni have flown out to a large number of countries, initially particularly to the Dutch Indies, but later to countries of all continents. Subsequently specific MSc programmes (in English) for students from developing countries and later on the regular English MSc programmes have attracted large numbers of students from developing (and developed) countries to Wageningen. And many Dutch BSc and MSc students travelled to developing countries for their internship or thesis work. Over the years the number of foreigners that have come to Wageningen for their PhD study has sharply increased to record numbers. All these students have become excellent ambassadors for Wageningen.

Dr Leo Stroosnijder, at the beginning of his career with the university, also spent several years in developing countries (e.g. Mali and Indonesia); and since becoming professor has paid much attention to the academic training of students from and in developing countries, at both the MSc and PhD level. The most attention went to students from countries in Africa where students could get fellowships, and where his group managed to get involved in EU, NUFFIC and other projects with a training component.

During the period of the Sahel Station (« Antenne Sahélienne »), from 1992-2000, with its interuniversity and interdisciplinary research programme on "Sustainable Land Use in the Sahel", the Tropical Resource Management Papers (TRMP) series was established for the publication and dissemination of scientific research results obtained in Africa. Many PhD students of African, Dutch and other nationalities have published their thesis in the TRMP version, and results of other African research projects have also been published in this series. At the graduation of many of the approximately 60 PhD students that Leo has supervised so far, it could be mentioned that their thesis would reach many people and institutions in Africa. Recently the 100th TRMP booklet was issued on the occasion of the graduation of an Ethiopian PhD student. That was to be the last TRMP.

However, in honour of Leo's long term commitment to academic training of students in developing countries and to this TRMP series, we have decided to produce a very last TRMP, number 101, with the title Academic Training in Tropical Resource Management.

The booklet comprises first a number of short essays from current and former staff and PhD students of the previous Erosion and Soil and Water Conservation (ESW) group and the present Land Degradation and Development (LDD) group, in which they give their opinion about the importance of academic training in developing countries. This is also the topic which Leo has chosen for the day of his farewell. And thereafter more than 60 current and former staff members and PhD students show what role the academic training career of Leo has played in their own further career. These are all illustrated with a picture of their PhD thesis, pictures from their field research, from supervision by Leo, from their graduation event and/or other characteristic pictures.

We hope that this special TRMP issue will recall great memories and showcase many highlights of Leo's endeavours in Academic Training in Tropical Resource Management.

The Land Degradation and Development (LDD) group

PART 1

ESSAYS ABOUT ROLE OF ACADEMIC TRAINING FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

My vision about the role PhD level educational training has played and will/should be playing for capacity building in developing countries

Azene Bekele

My studies in Wageningen were tailored to finding an answer to the accelerated degradation and slow natural recovery of already degraded lands - even when set aside from human and livestock interference. After completion of my studies, I wrote a book on identification, propagation and management of useful trees and shrubs for 17 agro-climatic zones of Ethiopia; guided and co-authored a practical guidebook on Managing Land for development agents in Ethiopia; guided, co-authored and edited the book "Profitable agroforestry innovations for eastern Africa"; developed and co-authored the curriculum for in-service training of subject-matter specialists in Natural Resources Management for Zambia; received the Marketplace Award of the CGIAR in 2002, and the 1st Alumnus Award for Innovative Development from Wageningen Agricultural University. I have developed Timber grading rules and standards for the Guyana government in South America and many more articles in proceedings, publications and professional reports.

My PhD education at Wageningen Agricultural University, which was a successful continuation of my studies at Washington State University (B. Sc and M. Sc.), has given me a strong footing for getting senior level positions and career opportunities – both at home and internationally. I have become a writer of successful grant proposals which have helped countries to make a difference in land and water management. For instance, the Multi-donor Trust Fund for land-husbandry, water-harvesting and hillside-irrigation (LWH) project and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) funds that I spearheaded are making a difference in Rwanda. Thanks to my successful education conducted in reputable universities, I have become one of the recognized and highly paid fellows in the forestry, land and water management, and environment sectors. Too few people receive such opportunities, especially considering need for people in these fields in developing countries.

I know and strongly believe that Wageningen University can cultivate wisdom in peoples' minds. Many international students from developed and developing nations have benefitted from this opportunity. It starts by inviting students and giving scholarship opportunities or getting interested students who already have secured a grant. It is done on a somewhat on ad hoc basis and doesn't match what is required. In this regards, I suggest that the University develop a strategic action in which the University and its renowned professors link to the many universities in developing countries and are able to influence improved learning and teaching from within. I believe it is time for the University to systematically analyse the successful contributions it has made to life improvement in developing countries and secure grant fund for implementing an "Influencing Change from Within" program. Such a program would enable the University to add value to curricula, researching methods, teaching aid development, teaching and learning strategies and governance of universities of affiliated countries. The impact within a given period will be much greater than inviting and training students within Wageningen University alone.

Though it is natural to retire, losing strong teaching champions such as Leo from the frontline is big loss.

The role of educational training at the LDD group in capacity building

Vahedberdi Sheikh

Following four years of study and research, I have been conferred the PhD degree by the Wageningen University and Research Centre in November 2006. In December 2006, I returned to my home country and I started my job as Assistant Professor in the Watershed Management Department of the Gorgan University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. As a first task I have been asked to teach General Climatology course for BSc students of natural resources engineering. I accepted that task by hesitation, but later on I became interested to it and I still continue teaching that course each semester for junior students. One year later, I have been proposed to teach Soil and Water Issues in Arid Zones for MSc students of Arid-zone Management Department. In contrast to the first one, I accepted to teach this course with good grace, because during my PhD study Leo had asked me to prepare a review paper on soil and water management condition in Iran. Therefore, I had a good background and interest in this topic. Later on, two other courses, General Hydrology in BSc level and Principles of Hydrological Modeling at MSc level, have been added my teaching duties. In addition to giving lectures, which take about 50% of my time, I supervise BSc projects and MSc theses of a number of students in the Watershed Management and Arid Zone Management Departments. Until now, I have supervised more than 10 BSc projects, 10 MSc theses, and right now I have 6 MSc students under my supervision. I also play the role of advisor for two PhD students from other departments of our university.

In October 2007, I have been appointed as the Head of the university's Watershed Management Department and I still have this responsibility. In March 2008, I organized the 5th National Conference on Sustainable Watershed Management with the help of my colleagues in our department. We also organized a number local seminars and workshops trying to promote the idea of integrated watershed management and implementation of biological soil and water conservation measures instead of the construction of mechanical structures. During my PhD research I had used some high-tech soil and water analysis equipment and techniques and I had been introduced and linked to the Eijkelkamp Agrisearch Company by Leo. Therefore I accepted the responsibility of equipping the Watershed Lab of our department which now give services to MSc and PhD students and academic staffs of our faculty. As can be noted, I was more engaged in education and management than research activities. Despite that, I authored and/or co-authored publication of more than 15 journal papers and more than 50 conference papers. Generally speaking, our department graduates about 30 BSc and 15 MSc students each year. All these students take at least one course with me during their education, and at least for more than 10 percent of them I am involved as their supervisor either in their BSc project or in MSc thesis. I am indebted for most of these job opportunities and successes to my study at the LDD chair group of Wageningen University headed by Leo Stroosnijder. Therefore, I feel it is my duty to thank Leo for all I learned from him.

Postgraduate education and human capacity development: importance for developing countries

Wolde Amlak

General

Capacity is often defined as 'the ability of individuals, organizations, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives'. Capacity building thus describes all efforts and investments towards enhancing such capacity. Evident from this definition is that capacity building is a process that takes place at three different but interdependent levels: individual, organizational or institutional, and societal or systemic levels. Building individual level capacity is basically about human capital development. It is about investing for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and experience that as a result empowers and places them in an improved condition of capability to perform assigned tasks and functions. Organizational or institutional level capacity building refers to enhancing the capability of existing organizations to deliver on their missions and mandates. This could involve investing on the organizations' human capital; i.e. individuals within the organizations, and/ or supporting them to design more effective organizational structures and institute sound policies and working procedures or even providing physical resources like field equipment. These two pillars of organizational capability are referred to as 'hard' and 'soft' capabilities. Capacity building at the systemic or societal level is a bit elusive, as societies are any way composed of individuals, institutions and organizations over space and time. It generally refers to support provided to the development of improved policy, institutional and legal frameworks in which individuals and organizations operate and interact, sometimes also called institutional strengthening. More recently, the term "capacity development" is used more commonly than "capacity building", and a distinction is made between the two, which I shall delve into here.

Capacity development

The developing countries lack capacity at all the three levels, and this is well known to be their major development challenge and perhaps one of the fundamental reasons for their state of 'developing-ness'. Capacity constraints at the individual level are serious impediments to organizations to perform their functions in an effective and sustainable manner. The available limited capacity of individuals within the organizations is often further constrained by the limited capacity of the organizations themselves, as organizations. The aggregate of limited individual and organizational level capacities is then reflected in the overall capacity challenge at the systemic level. The individual level capacity thus constitutes the very critical first layer of national capacity. Here below, I note the important role individual capacity development support through postgraduate level education plays to the beneficiary individuals and societies of the developing countries. The specific case in point is the postgraduate education that I and my colleagues from Ethiopia have acquired from Wageningen University, but I will not be very specific and cite particular examples, or individuals as examples.

Postgraduate education and individual level capacity development -such as that myself and my colleagues have passed through in Wageningen- has addressed the important first layer of national capacity. It has been beneficial to the beneficiary individuals and families, the organizations we work for and the societies that we are part of. Postgraduate degree holders generally assume top-ranking and higher-paying jobs in the government as well as in many local and international non-governmental organizations. Many are also in leading research institutes or in high-level policymaking government bodies. To the beneficiary individuals, postgraduate education has brought about higher social status, improved income, personal empowerment and better options in life including international mobility and relocation. Better incomes mean improved well-being to the individuals and their dependents.

The postgraduate education from Wageningen has also benefited the organizations that myself and my colleagues have been serving. My University is currently presided by a Wageningen alumnus, and the Associate Academic Vice President is also from Wageningen. Obviously, individual capacity translates into organizational capacity as highly skilled, knowledgeable and experienced staff could develop more effective policies, programs, and operational systems and procedures. An analogy often made is between organizations and living beings; thus it is said 'individuals make up the tissues of organizations'. The better staffed an organization, the better equipped it is to deliver on its functions and thus the better will be its overall performance. I recognize, though, organizational capacities are much more than the sum of the capacities of individuals.

The collective set of capacities at individual and organizational levels ultimately constitutes capacity at the societal level. Hence, individual level capacity development through postgraduate education has positively contributed to the societal level capacity in terms of the graduates' contributions to improved national policies, laws, values and systems of governance, all of which are essential elements for sustainable national development. Referring to the importance of human capacity development for societal capacity, R. Goodland notes that inadequate of human capital development is "far graver than overcapitalizing education so that laborers have PhDs".

In summary, the human capacity development investments made through postgraduate level education- such as that by the LDD group- have had multiple benefits. It has benefited the beneficiary individuals, the organizations they are employees of and the societies they are part of. It should thus be continued, with a greater focus on demand-driven priorities and strategies to leaving lasting legacies. I would also recommend for Wageningen to consider establishing an Alumni Fellowship Program, WAFP, to support collaborative research projects and maintain continued interaction and lifelong learning to both parties.

Une solide compréhension, sur des bases scientifiques

Fidèle Hien

Ma formation doctorale, et les recherches qui y ont contribué, ont développé en moi une solide compréhension, sur des bases scientifiques, du fonctionnement et des conditions de durabilité des systèmes de production primaire (agro-sylvo-pastorale) des régions semi-arides comme le Sahel africain. Cela a forgé ma conviction qu'il est possible de rendre plus performants et plus durables les systèmes de production rurale dans cette région, à condition de respecter les règles de fonctionnement et les capacités de charge des écosystèmes dont ils dépendent.

Au long de ma carrière, j'ai construit une expertise diversifiée dans les domaines de l'environnement, la gestion des ressources naturelles et la sécurité alimentaire, à travers des dizaines de missions de consultation au profit d'Institutions sous-régionales africaines (CILSS, CEDEAO), et internationales (PNUD, Banque Mondiale, Union Européenne, FIDA, USAID, etc.). Mes domaines de compétence couvrent de façon pointue (i) les évaluations environnementales et sociales, (ii) les questions liées aux changements climatiques, (iii) les institutions et politiques de gestion de l'environnement, (iv) la gestion durable des ressources naturelles (eau, sol, biodiversité) dans ses liens avec la sécurité alimentaire et la réduction de la pauvreté, (v) le renforcement des capacités des institutions et des acteurs (vi) la Recherche Développement.

Mon expérience dans la Recherche scientifique, la Consultation et au Gouvernement de mon pays ont incontestablement élargi mon champ de compétence et m'ont outillé dans les approches globales et spécifiques du développement, en particulier dans les approches du milieu rural et la valorisation des connaissances et savoir-faire endogènes locaux. J'ai appris à maîtriser les concepts, les théories et les stratégies en matière de développement durable dans leurs rapports avec les réalités de l'environnement politique, économique et social des pays africains. Mon profil de chercheur m'a appris en particulier à appliquer à toutes mes entreprises la rigueur de l'analyse scientifique. De toutes ces expériences, dont la position que j'occupe en ce moment, j'ai aussi acquis des compétences dans l'organisation du travail dans les institutions utilisant les standards internationaux, la définition des missions et leur évaluation, la gestion des hommes, à des niveaux élevés. Leo a donc semé la graine, je l'ai fait pousser et grandir.

What could be the contribution of the LDD group to capacity building in developing countries?

Zacharie Zida

The main challenge regarding agricultural development in developing countries is to produce enough to support the high percentage of population growth. LDD could play an important role here. Indeed, since the 1970s, drought has created severe ecosystem damage and recently, the degradation trend seems to be worsening. To prevent the relating consequences, farmers have innovated by adopting several techniques of production integrating land management, water conservation practices (zai, half moon, stone and grass line) and cropping systems (rotation, fertilizer management, organic amendment, conservation agricultural practices) to improve the use efficiency of the limited water resources in the zone. For more than three decades, farmers' communities, agriculture practitioners and scientists have developed policies to implement these strategies. Projects to promote and to adapt these strategies to the local context and dynamics and design to address farm scale or watershed scale issues, were funded.

But hunger still continues to dramatically damage and reduce population growth and undermine developing-country economics. LDD contribution could be in the following domains:

1. Continuing in the capacity building of young scientists in the domain of land degradation MSc as well PhD students;
2. Collaborating with the Research Institute to undertake studies that could contribute to clarify hunger complexity.

"Educational training for all is an urgent need for awareness-raising and the development of sub-Saharan countries"

Robert Zougmoré

One of my thesis propositions was expressed as follows: *"Educational training for all is an urgent need for awareness-raising and the development of sub-Saharan countries"*. Indeed, it is never enough to emphasize that education of people is the basis for their active and effective contribution to the country's economic and social development. The fact that numerous PhD students from developing countries (e.g. Burkina Faso) that benefited from Leo's support to strengthen their skills and competencies, but also their personal development, in order to actively contribute to national research and development initiatives, is a sign that Leo was certainly aware about the role that education should play in these countries. The interuniversity project in Burkina Faso coordinated by Leo was certainly in line with this objective.

My thesis proposition was in fact my way of expressing my alignment with this view of Leo's. And I can be proud to have been one of the people that benefited from the educational training in Wageningen. Most of Leo's PhD students from Burkina Faso are or have been leading key national scientific and technical, and even political institutions; some are leaders at international level as well. This is a proof that Leo has contributed significantly to building the human resource capacity of developing countries. For that, I personally consider Leo as one of these Foreigners that deserves special and formal distinction from countries that benefited from his action. He can be already proud of having the recognition of each of us who consider him as our mentor.

My role in educational training if ....

Consuelo C. Romero

After graduation I moved to the U.S.A. for personal reasons. My husband was invited to work at the University of Florida in Gainesville. That was not part of my plans. My initial plans were to stay in Peru to continue working as a Lecturer at La Molina University, to create my own research program in soil erosion, to recruit my own students and to teach them what I had learned in Wageningen and from my dear Supervisor. But that was not possible. I would probably have served as a contact between my country and The Netherlands, in terms of potential cooperation for common projects related to Soil and Water Conservation. There is still a lack of well-trained personnel at the level of Ph.D. in my country, specifically in the area of Soil and Water Conservation. If I would have stayed in my country, I would have encouraged my students to pursue higher degrees, since that is a key to economic growth. However, there are always risks in developing countries. We want more graduate students but also good quality students. Our governments need to invest more in science and technology, and also give attention to the creation of jobs for new graduates, because otherwise these graduates may never get a chance to take full advantage of their qualifications.

The role of educational training for capacity building in developing countries (at personal, professional and national levels)

Valentina Mazzucato & David Niemeijer

There is no doubt that educational scholarships for candidates from the Global South to obtain training at Northern institutions has an important role for personal and professional development. Candidates from developing countries gain knowledge and skills that they otherwise would not be able to acquire. Yet how this training is obtained can have diverse consequences for capacity building at the national level.

The model that was prominent through the 1980s where candidates spent their entire training period at a Northern university was thought to provide the best quality education. Yet often students were trained in subjects that were irrelevant for their home country contexts. Consider, for example, a student from Burkina Faso going to a land-grant university in the United States to learn breeding techniques for hybrid maize, a crop that does not grow well in the sudano-sahelian agro-ecological zone. An alternative model often used at Wageningen University is the 'sandwich PhD' where candidates spend half of their time in their home countries conducting research for their thesis. This model is an improvement because it gives candidates more knowledge and skills relevant to their country. This can potentially lead to national capacity building. However, the weakness of both models is that in practice, candidates from Southern countries with degrees from Northern universities end up entering the global job market and are hired by international and Northern institutions. This leads to a 'brain drain' in Southern countries. Particularly in African countries, the brain drain can reach disastrous levels. In Ghana, for example, 61% of the doctors trained between 1985 and 1994 have left for the US and the UK, while there are not enough doctors to serve Ghana's rural population. This not only leads to a loss in capacity (too few doctors), but also a loss in capacity to build capacity in the form of too few doctors to train future doctors.

So what options are there for Northern universities who wish to help in capacity building? In a WOTRO-funded project that one of us has recently headed, the following opted for: two PhD scholarships— one for a Dutch PhD and one for a Ghanaian PhD. The first candidate obtains her degree from the Dutch university and the second from the Ghanaian university. A team of Dutch and Ghanaian co-supervisors was established to provide training to both candidates. The result is that both PhD candidates receive training from both countries but the Southern candidate, with a degree from her country's university, will be more likely to stay there and build capacity at her institution. There are some costs to this model: the Northern institution has to forego a PhD candidate, thus renouncing the money that it would otherwise get from the Ministry of Education for the completion of a PhD. The personal career and financial opportunities of the candidate with the Southern degree are also sacrificed somewhat. Yet capacity is being built at the personal, professional and national levels. For some time to come these kind of 'sacrifices' will need to be made if we truly want to contribute to capacity building through education in the Global South.

Teach to be analytical, show to be critical (continuously)

Emiel van Loon

More than anything else, we were similar! While studying together with foreign students from many places around the world in Wageningen enhanced my appreciation of cultural a linguistic diversity, it especially showed me that we (both Dutch and foreign students) were in many respects surprisingly similar. Yes, at the start of the curriculum we were a heterogeneous group due to significant differences in cultural background as well as previous scientific training. However, after a period of less than a year, the student population in which I dwelled had assimilated into a quite homogenous group. The same happened during my PhD, where soon the differences with regard to background knowledge, ambitions and attitude were in my view more at the individual level than at the level of cultural background or nationality.

And now I conclude that the same holds for the career paths that my fellow students from then, living in developing countries and the Netherlands alike, followed. We all tried to follow our dreams and maximize personal 'gain', given the opportunities to continue studies or find a job. By doing so, many of us have passed on knowledge and experience to new students or applied our knowledge more directly in the jobs for which we were trained.

Based on the insight that the student population and also the career paths are so similar, I conclude that the education or training that we consider most appropriate for Dutch students is equally appropriate for foreign students. This conclusion does however not imply that the story about scientific education ends here, nor does it suggest that our scientific education is perfect. On the contrary, I think that an active programme for continued (life-long) learning would be of great benefit to all of us. And in addition, there are several points where our science education can be greatly improved.

Let me start with a point where the Dutch MSc and PhD curricula can be enhanced. I think that there is far too little training in general analytical skills. Analysis (possibly but not uniquely quantitative) comprises a complex body of knowledge and a coherent set of skills. It encompasses the precise definition of concepts, establishing different types of relations, separating points of major importance from those of minor importance, choosing appropriately between deductive and inductive reasoning, selection and application of adequate techniques to conduct an analysis (etc.). Analysis is, next to synthesis, very important in all fields of science, from applied to fundamental and from the humanities to the physical sciences. So its value is not limited to specific activities or fields.

Next to analysis, we lack a formal and structured way in our education system to cultivate a critical attitude (towards scientific as well as societal ideas or developments) in our students. Different from analytical skills, a critical attitude can be exemplified but cannot be taught. However, when equipped with analytical skills, one is much better able to support a critical attitude.

Training in analytical skills and fostering of a critical attitude would, as a matter of fact, not only improve our current curricula, but could also form important components of a more permanent learning programme which all graduates would follow from time to time during their career. Such a life-long learning programme would refresh or enhance our personal professional qualities and at the same time maintain networks to effectively disseminate scientific knowledge.

The role of capacity building in Land and water management in developing countries – the position of the Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC)

Anton Vrieling

The following presents excerpts from the official view of the Faculty ITC (since 1 January 2010 part of the University of Twente - UT). It collates parts of the ITC Strategic Plan 2010-2014, which is the first strategic plan written under the rector Tom Veldkamp. The full version can be accessed online at: http://www.itc.nl/strategic-plan.html

One of humankind's greatest challenges is to achieve an appropriate balance between developing natural resources and maintaining a healthy natural environment. To meet this challenge, we need, among other things, detailed and reliable geo-information and geo-information management tools. ITC concentrates on earth observation, the generation of spatial information, and the development of data integration methods. Furthermore, we provide tools that can support the processes of planning and decision making for sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty in developing countries and emerging economies.

ITC's mission is to contribute to the sustainable development of developing countries. We do this by jointly creating and exchanging spatially explicit knowledge and by developing a sustainable organization, infrastructure, methods and human capital. ITC will not present solutions but will supply ingredients for the processes towards solutions. We consider research and education to be strongly interconnected activities, both of which are necessary and contribute to the capacity building mission.

From capacity building to capacity creation

The aim of ITC's international activities is the exchange of knowledge for capacity building and institutional development in developing countries and emerging economies. A main shift in the new thinking is the call for a more business-like approach, with emphasis on return of investment, whereby a larger role for the private sector is advocated. This means that every investment, be it time, student dedication or individually tailored approaches, should be evaluated for its returns and rewards.

In general, education and capacity building in the Netherlands are moving towards innovation and transition management. Innovation activities are organized into so-called knowledge or innovation platforms where different players representing different stakeholder groups collaborate. Currently in the Netherlands, knowledge institutions are encouraged to establish partnerships with partners in developing countries. Such collaborations should aim at spreading and implementing state-of-the-art and tailor-made knowledge and creating business opportunities by initiating business incubators. The capacity building goal is to organize this in such a way that the traditional brain drain is prevented and an effective brain circulation is established. It is not suggested that knowledge institutions in developed countries should develop knowledge and the partners in developing countries should implement this knowledge.

It is suggested that these joint collaborations should aim at joint knowledge development based on the specific context found in developing countries. Within this context, the UT slogan "high tech with a human touch" acquires an additional socio-cultural dimension: ITC will aim at high tech with a human touch in a developing context.

In order to join in with these current developments, ITC will gradually transform its capacity building effort into a capacity creation programme. We will use the most recent insights in innovation and transition management not only to co-create with KENGi partners context-specific knowledge but also to create a user market that will hopefully speed up local spatially explicit solutions to globalization problems. This will require not only research activities with local partners concerning the context-specific solutions but also training and education activities with non-university partners in order to build up the required local knowledge infrastructure and business opportunities. Only by establishing such a knowledge infrastructure can brain-drain effects be turned into brain circulation.

The importance of postgraduate training

Helena Posthumus

Agricultural research holds a vital key to improving food security, reducing poverty and sustaining broad-based economic development in developing countries. Postgraduate training is the cornerstone of agricultural research. Opening one's mind to new ideas, expanding horizons, and applying theory to practice and practice to theory, increases researchers' capacity to conduct relevant research and achieve impact.

Evaluations of capacity strengthening report that postgraduate trainees generally confirm the relevance of the training received and appreciate the increase in knowledge and research skills obtained through the training. Other positive impacts of postgraduate training that have been reported include scientific leadership and improvement of North-South research collaborations. Unfortunately, there are often constraints at organisational and institutional levels in developing countries that may limit the extent to which the researchers are able to utilise their newly acquired skills and knowledge. Postgraduate training is thus most effective when it is part of an integrated programme of capacity strengthening that targets capacity strengthening at all levels to improve the efficiency of agricultural research for development.

There is generally very little evidence on the economic impact of postgraduate training. This is mainly due to the complex, non-linear impact pathway between education, research and development. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that strengthening research systems is necessary to enhance agricultural development. Evaluations have found that the vast majority of trained researchers return to their home countries to work at universities, research institutes, NGOs or ministries, thus strengthening the national research and education systems.

Additional note: This short essay is based on parts of a systematic review on the impact of capacity strengthening of agricultural research systems for development; this review is currently being prepared for DfID by Helena Posthumus, to be published in 2012.

Educational training

Willem Hoogmoed

My experience includes being a staff member the Soil Tillage Laboratory (later: Farm Technology Group) as well as acting many years as a study coordinator for the study program "Tropical Land use".

My international activities showed me (a) that it is extremely important to have highly educated, motivated people to support and further the knowledge on agriculture in their country. Very often a serious gap was found between what was happening in the field and where research was done or decisions on government level were made. Graduates from Universities on various levels are strongly needed to bridge this gap. In the same time (as we can see in the careers of some of our fellow PhD graduates!) it became clear that (b) these highly educated people found jobs in organizations where they move away from "the field" or took important positions in government. I hope that in these positions they can continue to stress the importance of sound agricultural education.

As an advisor to the IFS (International Foundation for Science) I was also involved in proposal writing workshops for scientists with an MSc diploma and it showed me how difficult it is for talented young graduates to find funding for their research. I feel that this aspect ('finding funds; writing proposals') should be given more attention, also in our Wageningen curricula.

Should Wageningen remain the place where students from all over the world come to learn about agriculture, soils, soil degradation? For a big part, yes, as the university provides an ideal place to meet fellow students from other parts in the world where they can profit from each other's experience and where they can form a much better global view. On the other hand, when education can be offered e.g. at MSc level in the student's own country or region, this will give much better opportunities to allow the research component to be geared to the countries' needs. I was happy to be involved in the development of some MSc programmes in Africa in programmes funded by Nuffic.

The above has dealt with international students. During my years as study coordinator, I was in contact with many Dutch students seeking a career in developing countries. Quite a few of these students were motivated and idealistic, but when faced (e.g. through their internships) with the harsh and difficult living and working conditions in many developing tropical countries, they realized this was not their "cup of tea". Fortunately, this was a minority and many students after graduation found a "tropical" career and acted as ambassadors for Wageningen. The prospect, however, to find jobs in projects funded by Dutch organizations or the government, is dim now, and with the economic crisis may even get worse. In that respect, ending where we started about Leo's PhD graduates, it becomes more and more important to have the highest academic degree possible to compete for a job on the international market, no matter if you are Dutch or from a developing country!

On the role of educational training on capacity building in developing countries: an outsider view

Olga Vigiak

Being Italian, I may only offer an outsider's view on the issue, but one that was built on my experience in working in East Africa and Laos. I believe that educational training is essential for sustainable development. I have always appreciated local knowledge as a formidable source of information on environmental issues. Particularly for rural development, I think that ideas that may have been successful elsewhere need to be locally tested and adapted before adoption may occur. Also, a common cultural background between the promoter of innovation (e.g. a scientist or an extension officer) and the adopter (i.e. local communities and farmers) is essential for successful collaboration. Higher education and training of very capable people in developing countries therefore becomes the key to filtering environmental information and transferring innovation in a locally adapted way.

Needless to say, it is also a way to make the benefits of international cooperation last for a lifetime. In Laos for example, emphasis on local training and education is at the heart of international cooperation in rural research. This is essential, as international cooperation is bound to project timelines and to fade out. Capitals and equipment may also be removed, but capacity building will remain and spread itself, thus empowering the actors of rural development.

I'd like to add that educational training is by no means a one-way learning experience. On the contrary, the open exchange of ideas and knowledge that happens during a MSc or PhD training experience foster robust advance of environmental science. Open exchange occurs more easily once social barriers that may exist in a given society, e.g. due to different educational levels, gender, or other hierarchies, are overcome, which may often happen if the trainee travels abroad.

I admire the 'sandwich' PhD system that is in place at Wageningen University, which allows two periods of training in the Netherlands at the beginning and at the end of the PhD, because it creates the occasion of a very intense learning experience while keeping research relevant for the original country, with limited risk of 'brain drain' for the developing country of origin.

Investment in MSc or PhD: a potential local level loss but a national level gain

Ferko Bodnar

I remember the frustration of a few German development workers in Mali, who worked at district level, about their counterparts disappearing after they were given the funding to do an MSc abroad. Rather than strengthening the district team working on sustainable agriculture and natural resource management, the Germans found themselves stuck with a new, inexperienced counterpart, and had the feeling they had to start all over again. However, this local loss could well be a gain at the national level. The newly graduated MSc left the public sector in the bush and found more attractive employment in town, possibly working for a private consultancy firm. These firms undertake useful studies, for example German-funded evaluation of identification studies, that could result in better programmes in agriculture and natural resource management. Wim van Campen, during the first five years of the erosion control programme in southern Mali, developed a strategy around this loss and gain. By annually training a small group of young and motivated field staff in soil and water conservation, many of which were replaced and 'disappeared' into the larger extension service, the 'soil and water conservation thinking' gradually affected a much larger organisation than the smaller district-level team the German-funded project worked with.

Agricultural development requires transdisciplinary science, and the accompanying mindset

Luuk Fleskens

The Wageningen training programmes, of which the MSc in International Land and Water Management and the PhD in Land Degradation and Development are prominent exponents, are globally acclaimed for their relevance for development. Beta-gamma integration was already achieved in Wageningen in the early 1990s. The call for working across disciplinary boundaries has only increased with the need for understanding the entangled relations between provision of ecosystem services and rural development, and the multiple aspects of climate change, including adaptation and mitigation processes and feedback mechanisms. Professionals need to be able to critically assess (problem) statements, methods, hypotheses, assumptions, conclusions and recommendations from different disciplines. This starts with understanding the disciplinary vocabularies. Not only the science itself, but also learning how to communicate complex issues to local stakeholders, commissioners and policymakers are essential elements of the training programme.

Development is goal- and actor-oriented; it can only be undertaken by the acting entity (individual, community, institution, country) and can only be fulfilled when measurable (or at least perceived) progress is made. Providing knowledge (training!) and resources may help build the capacity of actors to develop. The problem with development problems is that they are multi-faceted and difficult to tackle. Thus, it requires the above described expertise and analytical mindset as well as dedication and leadership to address them.

In supporting development, one can take a very basic approach. For example, to my regret, while working in Mozambique in 1999, the Dutch government changed its development policy only to support basic education and health care. There was no support for visionary programmes for economic development, just assistance to fulfil elementary training and health service provision. While this helps in ticking some development indicator boxes, there is no plan for lifting people out of poverty (at the time Mozambique lacked the capacity to develop such a plan). While Mozambique's GDP steadily increased, the poor did not take part.

Luckily, after decades of neglect, African states committed to agricultural development, pledging a spending of 10% of GDP in 2008. I believe this could be a crucial step to rural poverty alleviation. The knowledge as contributed by individuals trained at MSc and PhD level in programmes such as those of the LDD group together with the financial resources should allow visionary policies to be designed. However, there are caveats: resources pledged have not been made available in the majority of countries; and the trained individuals might find encounter a non-conducive environment in poorly functioning governmental institutions and universities. Capacity building of these institutions should be a priority to fully unlock the potential although arguably some graduates can meaningfully contribute to development in policy and research roles in international organizations.

Development from within

Monique Slegers

What is the role of capacity building in land and water management for developing countries? The first thing that comes to mind is that it stimulates development from within, both from the perspective of the individual as from that of a developing country. However, I feel that the success of capacity building depends on the educational system in general, starting from the primary school level. Therefore, I will first look at education in a broader sense before referring to the more specific question posed above.

Education is important for socioeconomic development; it stimulates development from within. A large number of people in developing countries live off the land. Through education the dependency of the land decreases. The opportunity to work outside the agricultural sector is higher for those who are educated. Furthermore, a general understanding is that education plays an important role for the empowerment of women. An equitable educational system is, however, an important condition. Children from urban as well as from rural areas, from rich as well as from poor families, boys as well as girls should have equal opportunities to pursue an education.

Now let me return to the initial question of the role of capacity building in land and water management for developing countries. This is a difficult question for me to answer. I will explain my view, which may be somewhat naïve and romantic, by taking the MSc and PhD students at the ESW/LDD Group as an example. By following coursework at Wageningen University and performing field research in their own country of residence, the MSc and PhD students work on their own development from within. Not only by gaining knowledge and scientific skills but, I believe, also by learning from each other. Being in a mixed group of students - from different countries, cultural backgrounds, climatic and agricultural systems - one learns to see things from different perspectives. This also goes for the Dutch students. From my own point of view I can say that the experience of studying in an intercultural environment and performing field research abroad has been an enrichment.

Each MSc and PhD holder from the ESW/LDD Group will return to his or her own country where he or she applies the newly acquired knowledge and skills in the field. These alumni work with local agricultural professionals and farmers and teach a new generation of students. By passing on their individual development from within they contribute to that of their country.

Educational training for students from developing countries

Jan de Graaff

A German MSc student who just returned from his fieldwork in Ethiopia, told me that he was amazed at the number of Ethiopians he met with MSc and PhD degrees from European and American universities, and particularly from Wageningen. Most of them are now involved in national soil and water conservation projects and/or teaching at Ethiopian universities. Some of these people did their entire study abroad, others did it partly abroad (sandwich construction) and some did (almost) their whole study in their own country, with their foreign supervisors coming to visit them for shorter or longer periods of time.

The sandwich PhD construction has the advantage that the students become, in their first 6-9 months, well acquainted with international research agendas and the most recent research approaches and methodologies, which can subsequently be applied in their national research areas. During and after their study they continue to work with their original employers, usually universities or research institutes, which can also directly benefit from their research activities and results. This reduces the "brain-drain".

The same holds, although to a much lesser extent, for the MSc students. They get intensive training abroad for at least a year, after which they can undertake their MSc thesis research in their own country which may facilitate them obtaining employment after completion of their MSc. Students who have done their study completely abroad may have worked on topics and issues that are not so relevant for the study in their home country.

With the financial crisis in the Western world, and in particular Europe, the available budgets for fellowships for MSc and PhD studies are unfortunately decreasing. This is aggravated by increased fees and costs for individual fellowships, further reducing the number of fellowships. In addition there are also some more advanced developing countries that have become hesitant regarding the fellowships for sandwich PhDs, based on the argument that they contribute a large part of the funding for these students, while the students get their degree solely from the foreign country/university.

In many developing countries the present generation of top researchers, deans of universities and even some political leaders have greatly benefitted from their MSc and PhD studies abroad. In some countries there has been a certain concentration of alumni from certain foreign universities (e.g. Berkeley in Indonesia; Wageningen in Ethiopia), which can increase mutual understanding between them, however can possibly lead to less interactive relations with alumni from other universities. And in Ethiopia there appears to be an enormous network of ex-Wageningen students, that often advises applicants on how to obtain fellowships for MSc and PhD studies.

In the Netherlands the NUFFIC programme has played a major role in the provision of fellowships for MSc and PhD students from developing countries, and they are assisted by the embassies in those countries. Although it is also possible to obtain fellowships from universities and EU programmes and international organisations, it is generally more difficult and therefore more costly to obtain them. Therefore we should all strive for a continuation of the present NUFFIC programmes, in order to achieve what was called in the publication on the occasion of their 60th anniversary "Een wereld te winnen".

A short statement regarding the "important role of capacity building in Land and Water Management in the developing world"

Demie Moore

The role of capacity building in Land and Water Management – through MSc and PhD training and beyond – is absolutely fundamental to a viable future for the people in developing countries. Without it, degradation of land and water resources in those countries will escalate, the gap between food and water needs and supply will continue to grow, and advancements in knowledge which can help the situation will not be transferred. With it there is a much greater chance that local awareness of processes and practices behind problems can be raised, and innovations and infrastructure to slow down and reverse these trends can be effectively implemented. Indeed capacity building at multiple levels is the vital link - maybe the only real hope and certainly the best way – for developed countries to assist developing countries in becoming as independent and secure as possible.

People with confidence

Alma de Groot (a very Dutch researcher who never set foot in a developing country. But who greatly values the company of her international colleagues)

Many PhD students from developing countries come to Wageningen to take part in a sandwich PhD program. This means doing their fieldwork in their country of origin in a local institute, and writing their proposal and thesis in Wageningen. At the university, they are academically trained through supervision, courses and the interaction with fellow PhD students.

Throughout their PhD studies, the students undergo a transformation. The first time they come to the Netherlands, they experience a huge culture shock and generally give a fairly insecure impression. Then they go back home and do the bulk of their research. When returning in their final year, they know where they are going and move around with much more ease. So far, this is what many 'regular' PhD students experience as well. The difference for the sandwich PhD's is, in my opinion, that they can have the best of both worlds. They do their research in their own country, where they know the language and the customs (and therefore have an advantage above westerners who may not have a clue). Then they get academic training in a well-known institute that is part of the western world, and a paper and title to prove that. Academia in developing countries does not, generally, have a high profile, but these PhD's are part of the western world and succeeded in it. They have learned the pitfalls of the cultural aspects in science (e.g. the culturally-bound perception of plagiarism), and will have a much higher chance to succeed in the international playing field. So what we are creating here is not only well-trained academics. What we are creating here is people with confidence.

Some concluding remarks on the essays about role of academic training for capacity building in developing countries

The authors of the essays have shown the many facets of academic training for capacity building in developing countries. The former PhD students who look back on their training realise that it has brought them senior level positions in their countries and allowed them to compete internationally in obtaining grants and projects. One became a Minister, some became professors, and several got jobs at international research institutes. They have realised that the training has not only contributed to capacity building at the individual level, but also at the level of their organisations and society as a whole.

Some of the authors suggest that such contributions could be further enhanced if an institution like WUR would engage in longer term relationships with their research or education institute. Others also argue that continuous relations between universities in developed and developing countries could help to avoid brain-drain and instead, encourage brain-circulation. A broader knowledge infrastructure is also advocated by some fellow institutes such as ITC and DFID (UK).

Both the Dutch and the foreign alumni realise that the cultural exchange has benefitted them in the international playing field, and that the open exchange of ideas and knowledge during the training has also fostered advancement of environmental science. Some found it enriching to have worked across disciplinary boundaries in order to understand the relations between the provision of ecosystem services and rural development. While some state that agricultural development in fact requires trans-disciplinary science, others find that more emphasis could still be laid on basic training in analytical skills.

Sandwich PhD programmes were considered to have the advantage of on the one hand the very intensive learning experience in another cultural context, and on the other hand keeping the research as relevant as possible for the home country. In some cases they may lack some of the high level technology in their country, however they also got to know suppliers of such high tech equipment (e.g. Eijkelkamp) and are able to order it.

With the diminishing fellowship budgets due to the financial crisis, and the reluctance of some countries to accept sandwich constructions, there is a need to look for alternative solutions, such as perhaps linking the research of Dutch PhD students with that of local PhD students, with each graduating from their own university.

The foreign alumni suggest that the LDD group should continue its capacity building efforts for young scientists in developing countries in order to increase their knowledge about land degradation, conservation and development and to obtain a better understanding of the complexity of the climate change and food security issues in their countries. In that regard it is noted that scientific analysis is also important in a wide range of daily (often political) decision-making processes.

AMUSE

Half a piglet

Wim Spaan

One spring somewhere in the late nineties of the last century, along with Leo I visited the family Hien in Ouaguadougou. Fidèle Hien was Leo's first PhD graduate student. In a later stage of his career Fidèle became Minister of Agriculture of Burkina Faso. During our visit Leo told that he had very good memories of a visit in the past, to the parents - and the childhood home - of Fidèle. The conversation that ensued resulted in us, one week later, being on our way to the south of Burkina Faso, to where Fidèle was born and raised. In the extended compound, where traditional huts and granaries determined the image, Fidèle had built a stone house for spending holidays there. We as guests were housed in that stone house. We enjoyed the rural peace, the locally prepared meals and the freshly (on the compound) brewed local beer, which regularly went around in a gourd bowl. A wonderful weekend!

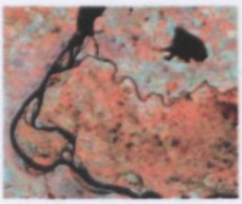
At the end of our visit we were invited by Fidèle's mother to come and watch her pigs in the pig sty. In the pigpen were some speckled and some brown piglets peacefully poking their noses into the mud. Fidèle's mother was very proud of her piglets. To test us she asked us to identify the best pig in the sty. We had to do some quick thinking because our observation would mean that we had to take the best one on our journey back to Ouaguadougou. We feared, however, that the piglet would not survive the long journey to the capital. Therefore we proposed that the piglet temporarily remain with his own kind, and that we would come back to jointly consume the piglet. The piglet stayed behind under good care.

In the autumn of the same year Leo came back to Burkina Faso with his family and traveled again, with them and Fidèle, to the south where they consumed half the piglet. The other half must be still walking around - and will by now be a "big" portion. I will eventually have to travel with my family to the south to eat the remaining half pig. **A tasty prospect!**

PART 2

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC TRAINING IN THE CAREERS OF (FORMER) LDD STAFF AND PHD STUDENTS

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT



Detecting changes in land surface properties - ***DESIRE***

Rainwater harvesting
Tunisia

Wind erosion susceptibility
China

Effects of SWC practices in olive fields - **Syria**

Enhancing social capital for SLM - **Tanzania**

Desertification and mitigation - **Morocco**

Farmers' investments in SLM - **Ethiopia**

Watershed management
Uganda

Impact Assessment of EU policies - **Portugal**

Land Degradation & Development Group (LDD)

Land Degradation & Development Group

WAGENINGEN UR

LDD playing field

The LDD group and triangulation

The Land Degradation and Development group (and in fact also its predecessor, the ESW group), has in its education and research always considered three aspects of (sustainable) land management: land degradation, land conservation and land development. This is clearly indicated in the LDD playing field (Page left) and the LDD mission 2008-2012 shown on the next page.

Fundamental research on land degradation was combined with assessment and design of conservation measures and for adoption of that technology attention was paid to socio-economic conditions and governance. For a proper understanding of land and water management problems the literature often refers to triangulation: one needs to approach a problem from different angles (three at least) to understand it better. As example, the LDD group used for the full understanding of the erosion problem in an area also the MMM concept: **m**easure (as far as possible) the soil erosion, **m**odel the erosion processes and consult the people (**m**ankind) about the problem and the way they could deal with it.

Measuring

(Group visit to Trier)

Modelling

(DESIRE excursion China)

Mankind (people)

(Discussing Fanya Juu terraces in Ethiopia)

Among the staff and PhD students of the LDD group some were focussing largely on the degradation processes, some were dealing specifically with the conservation aspects and others were involved in the development issues. However in many cases the borderline was not that clear and often some attention was also paid to the other aspects. Two PhD students (with respectively a physical and a socio-economic background) have in fact worked together on a combined PhD thesis, incorporating all three aspects.

In the following part of the booklet, more than 60 (former) staff members and PhD students show what role academic training has played in their career and which role Leo has played in that. They have been divided in the three parts of the triangular playing field, but it should be realised that such classification is arbitrary, as mentioned above.

And the LDD group could have not reached its achievements without its important support staff, to which the last words are reserved.

LDD flyer no. 03: 04.01.2010

LDD mission 2008 - 2012

Sustainable land management in a rapidly changing world is the focus of the LDD Chairgroup of Wageningen University. Not only bio-physical conditions change (e.g. land use & climate) but also many socio-economic conditions (e.g. population changes & competing claims on land).

Three aspects of land management form the playing field of the Chairgroup: ***DEGRADATION*** (Processes, Models & Measurements), ***CONSERVATION*** (Design and Watershed Management) and ***DEVELOPMENT*** (Impact, Adoption and Policies). Fundamental research on land degradation processes is needed for the proper assessment and design of soil & water conservation at the farm/plot scale as well at watershed/community level. Since the adoption of conservation technology depends on local socio-economic conditions and governance, these conditions are studied simultaneously.

LDD teaches sustainable land management in Bachelor and Master courses of the study programs International Land & Water Management (BIL & MIL). LDD supervises about 25 PhD-students on different topics related to sustainable land management.

LDD research fits in the 'Sustainable Production and Conservation Systems' mission of the Graduate School Production Ecology & Resource Conservation (PE&RC). LDD contributes at the field, farm, catchment and regional scale with a main focus on semi-natural and natural production and conservation systems. with its interdisciplinary research it also participates in the Graduate School WIMEK (Wageningen Institute for Environment and Climate Research (WIMEK), which is part of the Netherlands Research School for the Socio-Economic and Natural Sciences of the Environment (SENSE). Within the Center for Soil Science and Land Use LDD covers the themes Land Degradation and Land Use and Management.

LDD's workfield is the whole world but we have a **strong commitment** towards the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable land management aimed at **food security** in particular.

DEGRADATION

Coen Ritsema

LDD Special Professor Physical Soil Quality

2006 -

After studying Physical Geography at Utrecht University between 1977 and 1985 with a specialization in hydrology and soil erosion, and majors at Delft University (fluid dynamics) and Wageningen University (soil physics and soil chemistry), I started working at the Institute for Land and Water Reclamation (ICW) and continued working in Wageningen at Stiboka, the Winand Staring Center, and Alterra, respectively. In 1998 I obtained a PhD degree at Wageningen University with promotors Prof. Reinder Feddes and Prof. Johan Bouma. I headed research teams of Alterra between 1994 and 2005 and became Special Professor Physical Soil Quality at Wageningen University in 2006. This position was affiliated with the chair group Erosion and Soil and Water Conservation (later renamed the Land Degradation and Development) headed by Leo Stroosnijder.

It was a great pleasure to work closely with Leo, who opened the university doors for me and taught me that enthusiasm, inspiration and creativity to initiate new projects should preferably go hand in hand with some adequate delegating of administrative and financial tasks to others. Many joint projects were initiated around the globe in the relatively short time span in which we collaborated closely, like the DESIRE (desertification) and WAHARA (water harvesting) EU-funded projects, and others in China and the Caribbean. Also a significant number of Dutch and foreign PhD students were brought into the chair group through our joint work.

Coen

Photograph of Leo and myself in a restaurant in downtown Praia, Cape Verde, during one of the DESIRE plenary project meetings (2008). Project meetings were always very productive and joyful, and as soon as the spirit was sufficiently high during the evenings and project partners started to dance in the restaurant, we both turned directly to our cell phones - presuming to talk to someone somewhere in the world - in order to escape from being pushed onto the dance floor.... ! This strategy appeared to be very effective during most of our project meetings!

Leo Eppink

1990–1998 UHD Erosie en bodem- en waterconservering (ESW)

Leo,

de leerstoelgroep Erosie en Bodem- & Waterconservering [EBWC] van de Vakgroep Tropische Cultuurtechniek begon in 1990 meteen met twee Leo's, zeker in het begin nu en dan enige verwarring met zich meebrengend.

De overgang van de vakgroep Cultuurtechniek was voor mij als Leo II weliswaar vanzelfsprekend - ik moest er toch niet aan denken medewerker te worden van de Vakgroep Ruimtelijke Planvorming, leerstoelgroep Landgebruiksplanning - maar viel toch allesbehalve mee.

Leo I bleek een voortvarende leider van de groep te zijn: duidelijke visie op de toekomstige ontwikkeling van het vakgebied op de lange termijn, initiatiefrijk, duidelijk, maar ook inspirerend, bindend, vrolijk.

Dat het voor mij ook betekenen zou, dat vakken die ik zelf ontwikkeld had en tot dan toe steeds zelf verzorgd had, werden omgezet in gemeenschappelijke vakken viel me koud op 't lijf en vies tegen.

Daar stond tegenover dat er weer nieuwe elementen konden worden ontwikkeld op het niveau van procesanalyses en de veldpractica in Spanje eens een heel andere invulling kregen.

Hoewel ik een echte collegeboer ben en allesbehalve een onderzoeker kreeg ik toch van jou de opdracht een Keniase promovendus te begeleiden. Een uitdaging! Pijnlijk was, dat het eerste gesprek met de promovendus bij jou, op een maandagmorgen zomer 1996 viel op een tijdstip, even nadat mijn tandarts al mijn tanden had getrokken en ik een kunstgebit kreeg ingezet. En de Keniaan prevelde, elke keer als mij het gebit bijna uit de mond vloog, meelevend: Sorry!

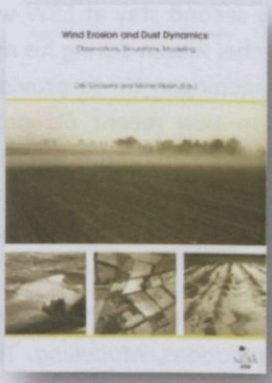
Uiteindelijk werd dat onderzoek - al helemaal na een veldbezoek waarbij de promovendus mij probeerde in te palmen met leuke tripjes onderweg - naar mijn overtuiging niks nieuws: een nette scriptie, cijfer 6½, doe maar een 7. Gebaseerd op wat veldmetingen van zijn studenten en niets innoverends. Ik schreef je daarover een negatief advies: dit werd niks. Dat rapport stuurde je maar door naar Kenya, hetgeen ertoe leidde dat de promovendus ziedend was over mijn stank voor dank. Tja. Uiteindelijk ontving hij toch zijn bul. Dankzij Geert.

Leo, je hebt een succesvolle loopbaan achter de rug. Ik wens je - met een andere invulling - een even succesvolle pensioentijd toe.

Leo II

Dirk Goossens

Associated Researcher ESW



The first time I heard from Leo Stroosnijder was in 1994, when I applied for a research position at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research. I had to provide the Fund with the name of several foreign referees and asked Wim Spaan, whom I had met at a conference in Denmark in 1993, if he would be willing to serve as a referee. Wim told me that "he was just a civil servant" and that Leo "would be a better reference". So I already knew of Leo's presence at the former ESW group when I arrived there in 1998 to work as a researcher with the EU project WEELS (Wind Erosion on European Light Soils). However, it turned out later that I had met Leo before, without knowing it. During an excursion in 1993 (or was it 1994?) the ESW group visited the Laboratory for Experimental Geomorphology in Leuven, where I showed them the wind tunnel we used for simulations of aeolian dust transport and deposition. Who could know at that time that only a few years later I myself would become a member of the group I was showing the lab?

After my arrival in Wageningen in 1998 my first meeting with Leo was a little controversial. Or at least, the place where it happened was somewhat controversial. It was in a toilet... in restaurant Campman in Renkum... Apparently we had to obey nature at the same moment and by accident stood next to each other in that room. It remained a rather uncommon place for a first official meeting with "the boss".

I stayed three and a half years in Wageningen - up to mid-2001; the last six months thanks to the generosity of Leo who secured some ESW money to make it possible. That was not common in those times of severe cuts at the university and I have never forgotten his help at what was for me a very difficult time.

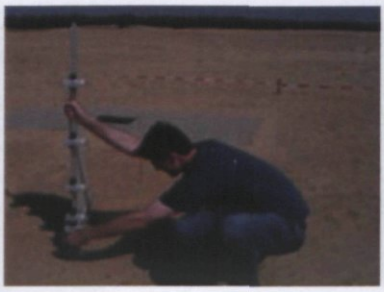
My second stay at ESW was in 2002 and 2003, when I received a J.T. DeWitt grant for assisting Michel Riksen during his measurements in the Kootwijkerzand drift sand area. A second reason for Wageningen UR to provide that grant was Leo's idea to look for unpublished yet valuable data from two recent EU projects on wind erosion (WEELS and WELSONS) in which ESW had participated, and make that data available to the scientific community in the form of a booklet. Michel and I waded through the WEELS and WELSONS files, contacted the partners who had collaborated with ESW during these projects, and we finally came up with 10 chapters of new data.

They were published in the ESW publication *Wind Erosion and Dust Dynamics: Observations, Simulations, Modelling*. This booklet, which has found a place in the libraries of many aeolian research groups worldwide, would never have existed without Leo's original initiative. In its phase of completion, in spring 2004, I returned to ESW for a third stay, albeit a short one this time, only two months, to complete the work.

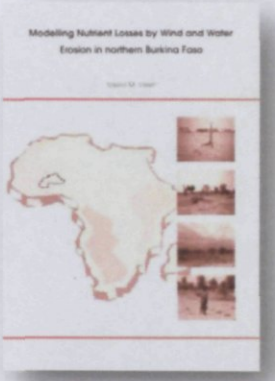
Since then I have met Leo at several other occasions, such as the Ph.D. defences of Michel Riksen and Jakolien Leenders in 2006, but no longer as a member of the ESW group. As a consequence, and unfortunately, I missed the transformation from ESW into LDD. However I still maintain contacts with some of my former colleagues, who have become real friends. I always liked to be and work in Wageningen, and Wageningen and Renkum (where I lived during my stays) have become a second home to me, much more than the other countries in which I worked and am still working today – even though I left ESW almost eight years ago.

Leo, thank you for giving me the opportunity to work at ESW and meet all those nice friends I found there. All the best, and enjoy your retirement!

Dirk


Saskia M. Visser



PhD thesis 2004. *Modelling nutrient losses by wind and water erosion in northern Burkina Faso*

(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

I remember very well the day I met Leo. I had a job interview for a PhD position. I was pretty nervous because this was a dream job for me. You can imagine how incredibly happy I was when I heard the news that I was selected, and could start in May that year. On my very first day Leo took me for a drink in the centre of Wageningen, and that drink changed my view on "professors", these are indeed smart people with a passion for science, but also agreeable people with whom it is nice to drink a beer or some wine. During my PhD-research I enjoyed the fieldwork in Burkina Faso. During Leo's visits, we not only discussed my French language skills, my research project and the lack of rain, but also enjoyed the sun-sets (=drinking beers, while the sun goes down) in Ouaga and tried to dance to the African rhythms.

When I was almost finished with my PhD, I asked Leo to help me out with my struggles with the IND, which eventually resulted in an employment at the ESW group , first a couple of months as a research assistant, later as a UD. As a UD I started (re)introducing GIS education in the International Land and Water Management program, and took over the education committee membership from Leo, when he became a member of the OWI –Board.

Working at the ESW-group meant having a busy life, including teaching nice courses, developing new courses, of course traveling to PhD-students who did their fieldwork abroad, visiting conferences and enjoying a day-out to the birthplace of one of our group members. The conference in Ghent was a nice occasion, where sitting next to a girl having the same name eventually resulted in a new group member, Saskia Keesstra. I organised a day to Sliedrecht, but unfortunately could not enjoy the walk, because I was so smart to break my leg. And I think one of the social highlights was the sheep party that was organised in my garden on December 30th 2006!

Overall I truly enjoyed working with Leo because he was so able to combine the serious work with sufficient social occasions, and he gave me full support when necessary and career opportunities that I wanted. It eventually resulted in an employment with Alterra. Outside the LDD-group, but sufficiently close to continue a nice collaboration.

Saskia

Saskia Keesstra

Staff LDD: 2007 -

In September 2003 I met Leo for the first time in Ghent at the conference '25 years of assessment of erosion'. During the conference dinner Leo and I were put by chance (as far as I know) next to each other. Fortunately we sat in such a way (Leo on my right hand side) so both our good hearing ears were directed to each other, which enabled a very animated conversation that evening.

In the following years I worked on my PhD at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam on 'Impact of natural reforestation on the hydrology, geomorphology and sediment budget of the Dragonja River, SW Slovenia'. During this time I didn't have any contact with Wageningen apart from meeting Saskia Visser once more at another conference. However, when I was finishing the last bits of my PhD in the spring of 2006 Saskia Visser e-mailed me with the question if I wanted to write a post-doc proposal for a so-called MEERVOUD grant. Of course, I was very interested! So in a months' time prior to the birth of my daughter and my thesis defence I wrote the proposal and it was granted by the beginning of 2007.

I started the post-doc/assistant professor job in March 2007. In the first years, I slowly got introduced to the university system, while doing the research for my post-doc with fieldwork in Poland. Leo was always very supportive to all initiatives I undertook. He also saw many qualities in me I wasn't aware of. He put me forward to be the PR woman of our group and even gave me the possibility to do a media course. He also involved me as a co-promotor in a PhD project in Ethiopia right from the time of my arrival. I was very lucky to have Araya as my first PhD student, as he was very effective and independent (at the same time there was also another PhD who was a bit more worrisome, but we will not discuss that here). In the spring of 2009 Leo and I travelled to Ethiopia on my maiden trip to Africa to visit our (Araya) and some other PhD students at the same time. It was a very interesting and very instructive trip for me. I watched closely how Leo supervises and directs the students, for which he uses his analytical and summarizing skills to the fullest. I tried to absorb these techniques and also try to use them with my other students. In June 2011 Araya finished his PhD and Leo and I were his proud (co)-promotors.

In 2010 I became an assistant professor in the LDD group. Apart from many other (PhD) projects I work on, Leo and I now have another Ethiopian PhD candidate working on a topic a bit closer to my own expertise than Araya's topic. In February 2012 Leo made his last trip as an official full professor to visit Alemayehu with me. Again I enjoyed the trip, the perfect Ethiopian coffee (see photo) and learning from the experience of seeing Leo work. I wish Leo a very long and healthy life as an emeritus, and hope to keep in contact and maybe sit behind the Aula table with him once more in a few years.

Saskia

Manuel Seeger

Staff LDD 2009 - 2012

I joined the group "Land Degradation and Development" in February 2009 after passing through many Universities in different countries. Leo clearly trusted my experience and I was challenged to cope from the first moment with the new university, new teaching and the Dutch language. And I was challenged and trusted also from the first moment with the freedom to do things as I like to do them.

So I took over teaching in "Processes and Models", the "Spain Practicals", and one issue of the "Physical Aspects". Later I took over the coordination of "Land and Water Engineering". Leo also put all his confidence into my technical skills, letting me finish the large laboratory rainfall simulator. And yes, just before I left LDD it was raining hard to understand the processes of land degradation.

From Leo I learned how to make things very, very straightforward, and I am sure that I challenged him and his patience with some of my ideas. The meetings with him and his "kan er af" were for me, first, astonishing, and then, comfortable... so fast, reduced to the max!

But of course, Leo told me many other things... such as that he likes not only wine, but also beer in the Vlaamsche Reus. But I had to learn also that this may start in the mid of my afternoon.... so he had to suffer sometimes the collision of experiments and beers...

With "one crying and one laughing eye" I left the LDD group and Wageningen University at the end of 2011. The laughing eye because the weekly travelling could stop and I work again much closer to my family; although the negative side of that is that I left a great team that had a broad vision of interdisciplinarity concerning the look and analysis of the problems in the rural world. And of course, the crying eye because I left great people that Leo managed to put together into one group.

Unfortunately, I am, sure that there is one thing I'll never manage to learn:

to keep my desk and office as tidy as Leo!

Manuel

Alma de Groot

Postdoc 2009 – 2012: *Ecological optimization of dynamic coastal defence*

In 2009, I got the opportunity to take a postdoc position on dune and vegetation modelling at WUR. This was a truly collaborative project: five supervisors from 4 different groups (LDD, NCP, and two Alterra groups) and one postdoc, i.e. me. Initially, I settled in the NCP group as that was where the administration allotted me, but soon found out that LDD was superior when it came to organised social events. In a group with so many people flying in and out to far-away countries, Leo realised that you need something to bind people together - and that this is done best by having fun and drinks together. He also makes a point to introduce our foreigners to some Dutch culture, for example having their picture taken in traditional Dutch costumes and then having that on display in his office. I wish I had seen that in real life!

After my first contract was finished, I moved to LDD to continue my postdoc work. My work is a variation on the core business of the group: whereas most are interested in land *degradation*, my specialty is land *aggradation*, namely sedimentary coasts where sand piles up into coastal dunes. This can only happen if the sand is eroded from the beach, hence the connection. There are now four of us working together in a dune group within LDD, spanning various temporal and spatial scales with our work. Ever efficient, Leo found a nice way to combine holiday and work by visiting our fieldwork on the beach of Ameland.

Alma

On the beach at Kwade Hoek.

Wine tasting in Trier.

Eli Argaman

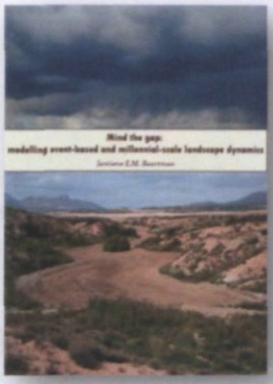
Associated Researcher LDD

During 2008, while working as a private consultant in the Soil Erosion Research Station after having received my PhD, I was asked to guide a group that arrived from the Netherlands working at the ESW group of the WUR. This name was very familiar to me, as well as to any person who knows the discipline of soil erosion and conservation. A few months later, I got a postdoc scholarship and came with my family to Wageningen – this was the first time I got to meet Leo.

I had heard a lot about Leo and his group, thus it was a pleasure to be a part of the LDD (yes, the name had been changed before my arrival). From day 1 Leo was involved with my work, but most importantly with supporting the "soft landing" of my family. Leo was always willing to assist with any problem that emerged, in particular during the first phase of getting settled.

I worked with the LDD group, in the DESIRE project, for almost one year in the Netherlands, and continued my work later – because I got a research position back in Israel. This year, when I worked with Leo, I had the chance to see and learn about the complexity of sustainable land management and become familiar with Leo's research and projects accomplished during his long career working worldwide. This approach of collaboration, initiated following my arrival, is encouraged by Leo and leads to involvement of BIL and MIL students who come to Israel to conduct their research and share knowledge. The LDD group, constructed by Leo, is well known worldwide - and being part of it, even for a short time period, is an honor.

Eli



Jantiene Baartman

PhD thesis 2012. *Mind the gap: modelling event-based and millennial-scale landscape dynamics*

(Promotors: Prof. dr. ir. T. Veldkamp and Prof.dr.ir. C. Ritsema)

Staff member LDD-group 2012 -

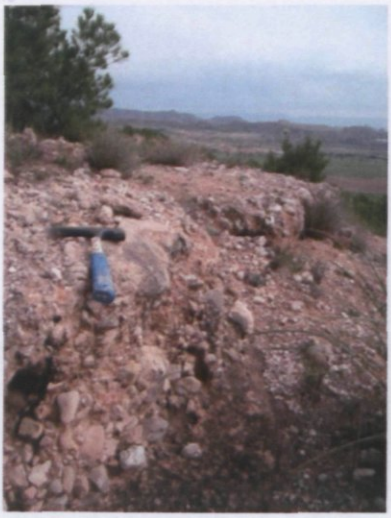
Dear Leo,

Although you were not involved in my PhD research as one of the direct supervisors, you did play a role: as head of the LDD department. For practical matters, I could always come by your office. Financial matters regarding my PhD were handled by you in a smooth and convenient way. But most important, you showed confidence in my work and made sure everything was going fine. Although I was working only half-time for LDD, I was always fully included in the social activities of the group: excursions, dinners, drinks. These were great!

I am happy that your confidence in my work and abilities was so high that you made it possible for me to stay in the LDD group after finishing my PhD. I am looking forward to working with you for some more months and with the rest of the group for at least one year.

Leo, enjoy your retirement and thanks for your support!

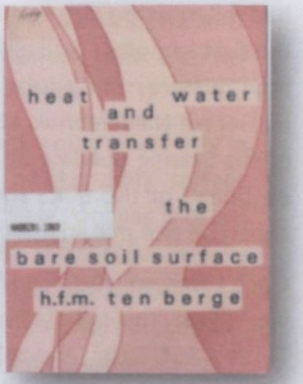
Jantiene



Hein F.M. ten Berge

PhD thesis 1986. *Heat and water transfer at the bare soil surface: Aspects affecting thermal imagery*

(Promotors: Bolt and Wartena; co-promotor: Stroosnijder)



As students we heard about Leo Stroosnijder but we never got to see him until we entered the final phase of the curriculum, which included a series of caput lectures. The reason why Leo's name was often mentioned in the department was the so-called column scanner. Leo had built this machine for his dissertation work, and the tidy room that housed it was a sacred place for us. Only senior students were allowed to play with the scanner. It held secrets, even for the regular staff of the department. A lot of lecture material was on infiltration theory, the scanner provided the experimental evidence. You could say it was part of the soil physics foundation. So while Leo's work had been omnipresent for some time in our education, his personal appearance on stage came as a surprise. On one occasion, at a guest lecture in professor Gerard Bolt's Capita Selecta series, there was a backbencher in a tourist outfit. This was in the midst of winter, Carnival was still to come. The man in the turquoise flower-print remained silent, but turned out to be the father of our struggles with the scanner. Leo had upgraded his domain from the scanner room to the Sahel region, and this explained his earlier absence as well as his sudden 'tropical' appearance. (Later I learned by experience that, contrary to what one might expect, you carry along an amount of heat when you return from the tropics, and this serves like a shield keeping away the cold.)

Leo settled quickly and proved to be a swift organiser. He hated disorder, and his room smelled like new wooden furniture. I know both these facts for sure because in his absence I was allowed to use that office. It was shiny while all the other space in the extensive Dreijen Complex was worn and dull – certainly compared to today's bright standards. Leo surely knew how to get things (done), and that's one quality aspirant PhD students should look out for. Soon I became his first PhD student.

Right from the start, Leo had a clear picture about the question central to my dissertation work: what can we 'read' from the earth's surface temperature? The study was to combine modelling with a few comprehensive experiments on the soil energy balance, in order to assess the potential of thermal infrared remote sensing. To simplify matters, we decided to exclude crops – they obviously mess up all relevant transport processes. In my view – I don't know if this remained so in later years - Leo had a fascination with nice tools. So we bought an expensive Heimann infrared thermometer, which became a key piece of equipment for my studies. We also explored the usefulness of simple household tools in the research arena. Hairdryers had proved successful worldwide, razorblades and the like too (for my fine-layered surface sampling), and now Leo jumped to the next level of complexity. He added the microwave oven to the soil science toolkit. Now this certainly had the appeal of novelty. To own a microwave, in those days, was like having a retina-covered iPad3 today. No wave-dried cat

had fallen victim yet, and few could imagine the sheer power EM waves could raise. If I recall well, the first samples - and all others that were to follow - exploded to cover the inner oven with fine mud mixtures: the adobe oven avant la lettre. Fortunately, my experiments were also supported by Gerard Nieuwenhuis at ICW (Instituut voor Cultuurtechniek en Waterhuishouding). In the attic of the Staring Building he guarded a splendid collection of micromet equipment and dataloggers on behalf of the BCRS (Begeleidings-Commissie Remote Sensing), and he generously shared his expertise and materials with me. This was extremely helpful for making quick progress.

Once I was on track, Leo felt confident enough to travel again and leave me with the day-to-day work. First, the call of the West drew him to Texas, to the famous Cees van Bavel and his crew at Texas A&M. Later, the call of the East lured him to the volcano land of Malang, Indonesia. With two very qualified supervisors still remaining in Wageningen - Gerard Bolt and Bert Wartena - such absences presented no special problems for me. I believe there were no formal arrangements between my trio of supervisors, but the pattern settled quickly that Gerard Bolt's interest and support focussed on theory, thermodynamics in particular, Bert Wartena was to oversee my links with several micromet specialists, while Leo's chief role was to provide frame and boundary conditions for the study, including a regular glance at the 4-year calendar, universal friend and foe of any PhD student. Irrespective of geographical separation, this worked out well.

Leo's travels offered new opportunities. For one, somebody was to take over Leo's tasks in Wageningen, and some of those tasks were very pleasant indeed – like teaching an MSc course on Land and Water Management. The enthusiastic foreign audience provided many cheerful breaks away from my modelling exercises. Next, Leo's stay in Texas allowed me to join a true campaign among howling coyotes and other wildlife, and to collect data myself in the half-desert land there. We camped in tents and in the night or early morning went out to see wildlife with the local ranger, a man with built-in telescopes who could see animals before they had come, and after they were gone. Later I was asked to replace Leo on one of the first crop modelling capacity building missions, with Cees de Wit's team to Bulgaria. This first venture away from the bare soil was, most of all, a crash course on crop physiology for me. Still I believe that, if models are any one thing in particular, they are tight overviews for students of existing knowledge - even if precise quantification of their components remains an eternal challenge.

Back to Texas: one of Leo's golden ideas – and this is for serious – was that I should make a trip to visit all the key US research teams involved in connecting soil physics and micrometeorology with remote sensing. This is perhaps the best gift to any eager student, and one that all supervisors should consider. Such a trip can be an instant recipe to transform the names of the famous into real humans that are mostly happy to share their views and wisdom, and sometimes their homes; and a sampler of work cultures and personalities around in the trade. Gerard Bolt - who always maintained intense contacts with the US after his return to the Netherlands - knew many of these people in person. He once reprimanded me during the preparation of this trip, when I wondered how and if I could obtain appointments: "Don't think that you are just a student, you're my student". Indeed, it turned out to be amazingly easy, then, to enter the NASA offices at Goddard Space Flight Centre in Pasadena, and get a full day with the top people on the Mars heat capacity mapping mission (HCMM). The rocky Mars surface was a fine target and a lot easier than Earth, for the lack of crop, soil and water, let alone their interactions. You have to start somewhere. Death Valley was another popular focus, for the same reason. Though my trip ended abruptly with a tragic private event, still it stands out as an episode of great excitement and adventure. I vividly

recall the warm receptions by the teams of Ray Jackson (Phoenix) and Art Warrick (Tucson), pioneers of the bare soil energy balance, and the help and solace of Don Nielsen (Davis) on my return.

While the Texas camp was exciting, my major site was in Flevoland. We found a nice peculiarity in relation to the HCMM mentioned earlier. On Mars, larger amplitudes of the daily surface temperature wave are associated with smaller heat capacity or, more precisely, smaller thermal inertia of the rock type. The same pattern is generally found for soils on Earth, moist soils showing generally smaller amplitudes for their larger inertia, but also for their higher evaporative heat loss. My Flevoland field, however, showed the reverse pattern. This became evident in silty patches and stripes within the field, where a smaller amplitude was associated with lower moisture content. It turned out that a hydraulic soil property called 'opdrachtigheid' (the soil's ability to sustain an upward water flow towards the evaporation front) caused the pattern. Soil that sustains upward water flow for a longer period will exhaust its moisture stock more rapidly than a 'conservative' soil. For a sustained flow, you need capillaries fine enough to retain water at sufficiently low potential, and coarse enough to enable decent transport: silty textures are good for this. To quantify this property we developed a new simple method based on the concept of 'matric flux potential' (the integral of hydraulic conductivity over pressure head, starting from a reference such as the saturated state). There were respected colleagues, then, who disliked the concept of this 'potential' - perhaps for its faulty name - but I found it attractive and useful, and I wonder about its fate or what became of it after so many years. Leo, by the way, had used it before for another purpose: to reduce errors in numerical schemes.

Pleasant were also visits with Leo to various conferences. The world of soil physics was rather small at the time, and most people in the business knew each other, across Europe, Israel and the USA. At one of the meetings, a family tree of soil physics workers was presented, and I was proud to be connected in a way to all those smart and friendly people. Always planning ahead, Leo organised a ski outing in the Sierra Nevada after a conference in Las Vegas. The lasting imprint of that excursion was that Americans couldn't ski at all, but instead made a lot of fun. On the piste most of them were deeply engaged in snowball fights and sleigh-riding, the fragrance of show that you may find in Europe was completely absent. Later we made several more ski trips with Leo's family to Austria, which was good fun. During some holiday periods, I was had the chance to exchange my tight student housing for Leo's spacious house-with-dog-and-garden-terrace-pond in Zetten, ideal for inviting friends. This being my first dog experience, I got into trouble with some of the neighbours, unaware as I was of dog-dropping etiquettes (plastic was yet to be invented, but there were rules nevertheless). For another small accident I felt more embarrassed. There was a beautiful 100-years old potted fuchsia on Leo's terrace. Being a teacher – by then – in soil and water management, I forgot to water it during three weeks and the little tree gave in to the withering heat of that summer. My only good excuse was that my true hobby is aquatic plants. They need, paradoxically, no watering.

Of course there were many more, minor and major, points of general interest. Talking material flows, the Stroosnijder family – when based in Malang – constituted a major sink for the famous Dutch 'dropjes' industry. To save cost, dropjes were massively channelled through the diplomatic mail system. Apparently, some personnel at our Royal Embassy were fond of them, too. Some packs arrived empty or were nibbled on, but at some point we were formally requested to stop this illegal trafficking.

Back to technology: not only was I the proud owner of the aforementioned Heimann, the Texas Instruments portable thermal monitor was another key item to my thesis work. It was like a typewriter, but had two large rubber cuffs on top to 'suck' onto both ends of an ordinary telephone receiver. This connected me from anywhere to the mainframe IBM at the Leeuwenborch building, the central computing facility for the entire City of Life Sciences (as a community, we were unaware still of our own excellence). While you could talk to the big machine from anywhere, you had to appear in person to collect prints. Well, I should say real prints, because the portable TI could also print. It had its own way of writing on thermal paper, but if you made the mistake of exposing the paper to sunshine for some time, all coded beauty quickly faded. The real prints as collected from the Leeuwenborch, good as they might have been, were not good enough, however, for final work. So all graphs were re-drawn by hand by professional drawers, Mr Rijpma at Biotechnion being first among them. So, should anyone wonder why my graphs are so stunning, still, this is why: craftsmanship.

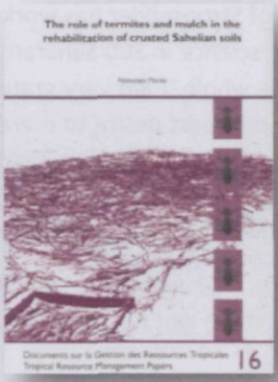
After my thesis work I ventured into other fields, including the rice-fields of Asia that mirror the sky, and the nitrate-laden Dutch potato fields that bring our daily food. In a way, I lost touch with the pulse of soil physics and its advances in Wageningen and in the wider world. I hope this book with its many contributions to honour Leo's successful career – they are still hidden as I'm writing this - will help me catch up quickly.

Hein

Abdoulaye Mando

PhD Thesis 1997: *The Role of Termites and Mulch on the Rehabilitation of Crusted Soils in the Sahel*

Leader of the Natural Resource Management Program of IFDC, North and West Africa Division



I owe a lot, in fact almost everything, to the LDD group and mostly to its chairman, Prof Dr Ir Leo Stroosnijder. Indeed the LDD group has played a crucial role in developing my skills and knowledge, in laying down the foundation for my human development and in shaping my career development. I had my very first contact with LDD in June 1990 when I joined the group's research project on soil and vegetation dynamics under the combined effects of integral protection and soil and water conservation measures in Northern Burkina Faso. This first contact was sustained, enriched in many ways and maintained since then.

When collecting data from the plots set by the project team for my MSc Thesis, I observed that most of the applied soil and water conservation measures were not giving impressive results due the crusted nature of the soils. I also observed that the patches of vegetation were often associated with the presence of termites. I requested and obtained permission to test the possibility of triggering termite activity on crusted soils using mulches of contrasting quality. The project allowed setting up of a small trial which yielded very promising data and led Prof Leo Stroosnijder to accept me as a PhD student to expand the scope of the research on termites and mulch mediated soil processes within the LDD group's Antenna Program in the Sahel. While doing my PhD, Prof Stroosnijder generously allowed me to be exposed to the scientific world through conferences, scientific visits and many other opportunities. After defending my PhD, I was given a position within the Antenna research program to support the natural resource management group.

When I joined the Institute of the Environment and Agricultural Research (INERA), the LDD group gave me the chance to co-supervise the PhD research of one INERA staff who is now leading the CGIAR efforts in climate change in West Africa and is the General Secretary of the African Soil Science Society. This gave me the chance to be in the Aula as a co-promoter after having been there only a few years before as a PhD candidate myself. Furthermore, LDD funded a research project on Soil Organic Matter Dynamics (SOM) which allowed me to publish numerous papers on soil organic matter and to co-supervise a PhD work on integrated nutrient and water management using organic and mineral inputs (this PhD student defended his thesis and is now contributing to the World Bank Agricultural agenda in West Africa and is chairing the Soil Science Society of Burkina Faso). I had an opportunity to be a team member of various projects developed with the LDD group (Convergence of Science and From Soil to the Mouth by NREF, More Crop per Drop by WOTRO) while in INERA Burkina Faso or at IFDC.

Prof Stroosnijder has worked tirelessly to empower me as an individual, to develop the capacity to do science in Sub Saharan Africa countries and to increase the relevance of science for that part of the whole. I am very grateful and am speechless when I consider all his efforts, deeds, intentions and honest desire to make a difference. The Scientific community in Burkina Faso is very grateful to him not only for training many PhD's (he may be the Western Professor who has trained the most PhD in Burkina Faso) but also for contributing to the institutional strengthening of various agriculture organisations in the country.

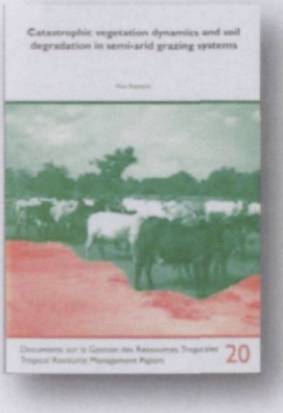
Leo, Burkina Faso is your second country and we look forwards to travelling across Burkina with all us there when you retire!!!

YI BOOGO- YI NIKE- FOFO

Abdoulaye

Max Rietkerk

PhD thesis 1998. *Catastrophic vegetation dynamics and soil degradation in semiarid ecosystems*



Leo kwam in mijn leven toen ik in 1992 mijn afstudeervak deed in Burkina Faso (bij het Antenne Sahelienne toen onder leiding van Wim van Driel) onder begeleiding van Leo en Fidèle Hien (ook gepromoveerd bij Leo en later minister van milieu in Burkina Faso geworden). Ik bestudeerde daar de kieming van zaden van Cassia tora in relatie tot lokale bodemverschillen; een studie die we met ons drieën als auteurs ook hebben gepubliceerd.

In 1993 werkte ik als onderzoeksassistent bij de toenmalige vakgroep Terrestrische Ecologie en Natuurbeheer waar op een gegeven moment Leo langs kwam met de vraag of ik eens mijn gedachten op papier wilden zetten over kantelpunten in verwoestijning. Uiteindelijk heeft dit geresulteerd in een onderzoeksvoorstel en een promotietraject onder begeleiding van Leo en Herbert Prins, waarbij ik op de Nieuwlanden plaats nam en regelmatig naar Afrika (Burkina Faso en Tanzania) ging voor veldwerk. In 1998 heb ik mijn proefschrift verdedigd en werd mij cum laude de graad van doctor toegekend. Ik kijk met zeer veel voldoening en plezier terug op die promotiejaren en de samenwerking met Leo waarbij ik de vrijheid en het vertrouwen die mijn promotoren mij gaven zeer op prijs heb gesteld. Dank je wel Leo!

Max

28 april 2011. Leo (op de trap kijkend in de camera) bij Max zijn oratie.

Emiel van Loon

PhD thesis 2002. *Overland flow: interfacing models with measurements*

From erosion to statistical ecology

After my studies in Wageningen, I spent several months in 1994 working for Jan de Graaff as an assistant researcher in the ESW chair-group on a project to enhance a spreadsheet-based water balance model. This was when Leo scouted me, and asked me to write a PhD proposal - an offer that I eagerly accepted. After Leo and I jointly wrote a PhD proposal it was approved by the PE&RC graduate school and, in the typical resolute Stroosnijder-style, I could start right-away after my civil service in late 1996. The following five years of my PhD-research were a pleasant and intense mix of field-work in both Costa Rica and Burkina Faso (at the two permanent tropical field research stations) and data/model analysis in Wageningen. During the field-period in Costa Rica Leo visited me once in 1997 (photo), together with our joint friend Teunis van Rheenen (then working at the Burkina field station), to learn about the Costa Rican Field station and to get an update on my research progress. The photo reminds me of a long day, visiting the Horizontes field site with family, Leo and Teunis. It ended with relaxing at a nearby beach. Being a bon vivant, Leo knew better than anyone else how to spot & seize nice opportunities for recreation in the tropics (also noteworthy: the somewhat faded but still clearly visible Wageningen-logo of that time). So were the days with few commitments at work, other than conducting great research - thank you Leo.

I started a post-doc job in the Hydrology group with Peter Troch in 2001. It meant that I stayed very close to the ESW group physically. The nature of my work did however change quite drastically. As a post-doc I got responsibilities to supervise MSc and PhD students, organise workshops and take care of project administration, next to conducting research. My research focussed more on the methodological and statistical hydrological questions. It was towards the end of this period in 2002 that some Iranian PhD students started their PhD research with Leo and Wim Spaan. I helped to supervise one of them: Vahedberdi Sheikh (Vahed). Vahed went through an enviably fast and deep learning process where he trained himself to write academic English, developed a good understanding of hydrological modelling and acquired at the same time a broad range of field skills. During Vahed's PhD period I was appointed as assistant professor at the University of Amsterdam in 2003 to work on (geo-)statistics and statistical ecology. It was a second shift, moving again further from the geo-sciences and the more applied research, towards statistics and ecology. So now I am developing my expertise in statistical ecology, while teaching basic and advanced statistics courses in the earth science and biology curricula at the University of Amsterdam.

Emiel

Olga Vigiak

PhD thesis 2005. *Modelling spatial patterns of erosion in the West Usambara Mountains of Tanzania*

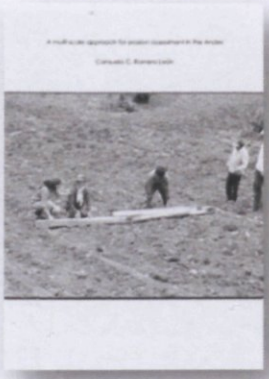
(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Dr. Ir. G. Sterk)

I met Prof. Leo Stroosnijder as chair of the ESWC group of Wageningen University when I came to Wageningen to attend the Soil and Water MSc course - Erosion and Soil and Water Conservation specialization, in August 1998. The MSc turned out to be a terrific experience, full of friendship, international cultural experience, and robust knowledge building. After completion of the MSc, I was more than happy to remain at the ESWC group as student assistant first and PhD student after. My PhD was funded by the project "Development of an improved method for soil and water conservation planning at the catchment scale in the East African Highlands" - EROAHI, which involved two other PhD projects, and the collaboration of the Alterra group, the Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute KARI-Embu, and the Tanzanian Agricultural Research Institute ARI-Mlingano. During the PhD I spent extensive time in the West Usambara Mountains, Tanzania, and participated to several meetings in Kenya. I also enjoyed my life in Wageningen, where I met great friends and colleagues but thoroughly disappointed Leo by my lack of progress in learning Dutch!

Immediately after completion of my PhD, I moved to Laos for a two-year post-doc experience in landscape ecology with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), working on the impact of riparian management on water quality. In September 2007, I successfully obtained a position as research scientist at the Department of Primary Industries of Victoria, Australia, where I work on the impact of agricultural activities on water quality. The skills of working in data-poor environments, engaging in multidisciplinary/multicultural teams, and the technical capabilities in modelling, data handling, and data analysis I gained at Wageningen University during my PhD are essentials in my job today.

I always appreciated Leo's philosophical approach of joining biophysical and socio-economic aspects of soil and water conservation for sustainable development and his attention, as chair of the ESWC group, to maintain a positive and healthy working environment, by making sure that new comers were welcome, by creating occasions for informal chats, and by addressing any source of concern before stress would kick in. I am also indebted to him for supporting the visa application for my Tanzanian love to come to The Netherlands. I have very fond memories of the regular ESWC coffee morning breaks, the meetings at the local pub De Vlaamsche Reus, and the beautiful annual excursions to ESWC member home places, which allowed me to discover so many aspects of Dutch life and of my colleagues! Cheers, Leo!

Olga



Consuelo Romero Leon

PhD thesis 2005. *A multi-scale approach for erosion assessment in the Andes*

(Promotor: Prof. dr. ir. L. Stroosnijder)

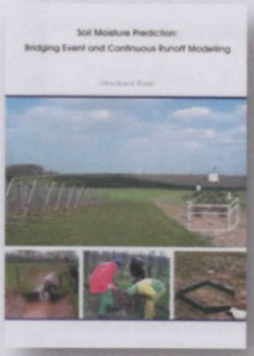
It was 1997 when I met Leo. He visited Peru for his Sabbatical. I was a Lecturer at the Soil Department of the National Agrarian University – La Molina, Lima, Peru. My husband Guillermo, who at that time worked at the International Potato Center (CIP), told me he had met a Professor from Wageningen University. Yes, it was Leo...Professor Leo Stroosnijder. It turned out that a part of his activities was recruiting students for the MSc/PhD programs for the former Erosion and Soil & Water Conservation Group under his supervision. I was very fortunate to have met him then, as I ended up becoming a Ph.D. candidate in Leo's group.

The experience of being a Ph.D. candidate was extraordinary. It was hard work but it was worth it. Earning a Ph.D. degree allowed me to learn much about my area of expertise. It helped me to become a better researcher, to be more critical of my own work, and to be more independent! That is what Leo was looking for from me. He knew I was so shy and I thought he was worried about that. He wanted me to be stronger, more independent, and more adventurous! In a way I think I became all of those! After graduation I moved to the United States and got a Post-Doctoral position at the University of Florida. Then the trips started, attending meetings here and there, preparing presentations, writing papers... and I am still doing these activities because they are part of me now. So, I often remember Leo when I reach new goals in my professional life. But he also knew how to enjoy life...I learnt that from him too. He is full of life.

Guillermo and I enjoyed every time that Leo visited us in Peru. He loved our food, our tropical fruits, the chaos of Lima, the peacefulness of the highlands. I personally am very proud that Leo was my Supervisor, and I hope he will continue working because he is a wise man; he is a valuable scientist, and an outstanding human being.

Consuelo

Vahedberdi Sheikh



PhD thesis 2004. *Soil moisture prediction: Bridging event and continuous hydrological modeling*

(Promotor: Prof. dr. ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Dr. ir. E. van Loon)

In 2000 the Ministry of Sciences, Research & Technology (MSRT) of I.R. Iran granted me a scholarship to do my PhD study abroad during four years. I was also committed to work as an academic member of the Watershed Management Department of the Gorgan University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (GUASNR) after accomplishing the PhD study and give lectures in the field of arid zone hydrology and flood simulation. Therefore, among many other criteria, I wanted to choose a very well known university in this and many other fields. Finally I came up with three universities: one from Australia, one from UK, and the Wageningen University and Research Centre from the Netherlands. Writing a brief proposal on flood simulation in arid and semi arid zones, I applied to all of them through their admission offices. Fortunately, I got conditional admission from all of them. Despite being the most expensive one, the MSRT agreed with the Wageningen University. The admission office of Wageningen University unfortunately and/or fortunately had sent my application form to the ESW chair group. I say unfortunately, because the title of my proposed thesis topic and my field of interest was much more related to the Surface Hydrology and Water Quantity Control chairgroup of the university in the same department. But now deep down in my heart I believe it was fortunately, because their decision resulted in an unforgettable opportunity in my life – the chance to meet Prof. Leo Stroosnijder and have the honor of being one of his more than 50 graduated PhD students. And now after about 9 years (about 4 years studying and doing research under the supervision of Leo and 5 years working in the Gorgan University of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources) I feel very lucky, and for this fortune I always give thanks to God. Currently, I work as the head of the Watershed Management Department of GUASNR.

Sheikh

Anton Vrieling

PhD in 2007: *Mapping erosion from space*

Assistant professor at ITC, Enschede, 2009 -

During the second year of my University studies in the regular Dutch programme "Tropical Land Use" (1995-2001) a profile choice had to be made: agronomy, nature conservation, irrigation, or erosion. My choice was erosion (and soil and water conservation - ESW). Within ESW my main interest was on processes and models, resulting in a close collaboration with Geert Sterk. Through him I obtained my first outside-Europe experience of six months in Niger. There I worked in ICRISAT with Charles Bielders and BSNE (Big Spring Number Eight) sediment catchers to study variability of sand transport in a farmer's field. Very interesting, but I felt that I wanted to work on larger spatial scales. Therefore I developed my second interest, i.e. remote sensing: looking at the earth from a distance. Fortunately the two interests were not mutually exclusive, which logically resulted in a keen interest to perform a PhD on the use of satellite data for mapping soil erosion. My initial idea was to use radar interferometry for that purpose. Although a full WOTRO proposal did not get funding, an opportunity was created to be funded 50% by the department and 50% by the EROAHI project. Unfortunately interferometry did not work for the study sites in Tanzania and Brazil, and the work was more geared towards optical satellite imagery and data integration. The PhD (defended February 2007) resulted in several well-cited articles. During the final months of my PhD, I worked shortly for the Wageningen-based company SarVision on forest monitoring by satellite data. Despite my now-wife (Laura) transferring to the Netherlands to start her PhD at ITC, I did not resist the opportunity to leave for the Joint Research Centre (Ispra, Italy). I was there two years (2007-2009) working in the field of crop and drought monitoring for food security studies. Partly because of being fed up with a long-distance relationship, I moved back to the Netherlands in August 2009 to start as an assistant professor at ITC, Enschede. My main research interest there is the use of remote sensing time series for monitoring and studying change processes.

I greatly value the opportunities offered at the ESW group, and strongly appreciate the positive atmosphere experienced there. The annual trips were certainly a highlight (including the one to Drenthe that I had the pleasure of organizing), but also other regular social events (including PhD celebrations and drinks in the Vlaamse Reus) were important for keeping the team spirit up and making feel everyone (PhDs, staff) included and appreciated. Leo, thank you for your share in that!

Anton

Araya Alemie Berhe

PhD thesis 2011. *Coping with drought for food security in Tigray, Ethiopia*

Asst. Prof. Mekelle University, Ethiopia, 2011 -

I am one of the PhD graduates from LDD, Wageningen, The Netherlands, and I really benefited from my PhD training there. The title of my PhD thesis was coping with drought for food security in Tigray, Ethiopia. I am currently working at Mekelle University, Ethiopia where I teach several MSc course such as advanced agro-climatology, climate change impact and adaptation, irrigation agronomy and crop modelling and simulation. In addition I also coordinate several research projects.

A Few Personal Views About Leo:

Leo advising me during his field supervision in 2009

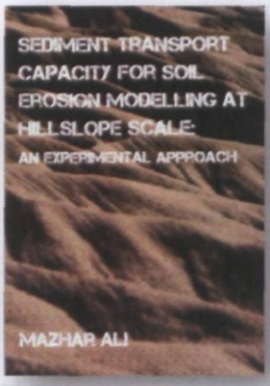
1. Leo is human (understands his students, he is always straight and positive minded and respectful);
2. Leo is very organized (even simple communication will never get lost from his shelf; his shelf is catalogued and well organized);
3. Leo loves all his students equally (African, European, Asian etc.);
4. Leo is more Ethiopian than Dutch.

God bless Leo and his family,

Araya

Left: Leo and Saskia dressed an Ethiopian traditional cloth during their

supervision visit to Ethiopia in 2009; Right: Leo and I at one of the beautiful sites in the Netherlands. We are dressed in traditional ancient Dutch fishermen's clothes.



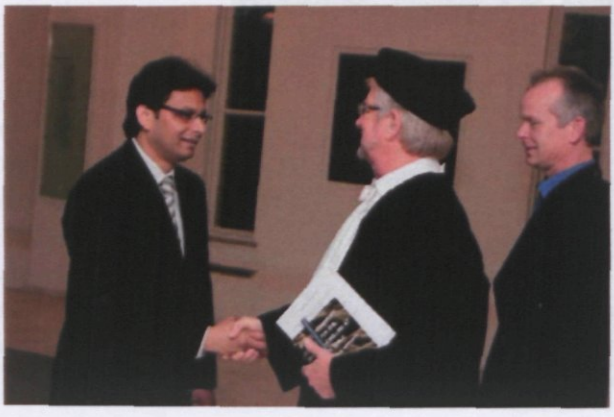
Mazhar Ali

PhD thesis 2012. *Sediment Transport Capacity for Soil Erosion Modelling at Hillslope Scale: An Experimental Approach*

(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotors: dr.ir. G. Sterk and dr. K.M. Seeger)

It is an honour for me to write about my experience with Professor Leo Stroosnijder. In 2007, I commenced my doctoral studies as a PhD guest researcher and spent a period of four (4) years with the Land Degradation and Development Group under his supervision. During my stay, I visited many places in the Netherlands with him like Leiden, Arnhem, Beach, Keukenhof and many other places. As his PhD student, I also had many meetings regarding my work with him. I really enjoyed working with him, since he is so polite and easy going. After spending four years, I feel that Professor Leo is not only a good researcher, but a good person. He completely understands the mentality of his PhD students. As a promoter, he is supervising in this period more than ten (10) PhD students, belonging to different parts of the world. He knows how to handle them, which inspires me a lot. Professor Leo is going to retire in May 2012. I am sure after his retirement, we will miss him.

Mazhar



Ate Poortinga

PhD Candidate: *Making erosion profitable*

2009 –

Al tijdens mijn Bsc. Internationaal land- en waterbeheer stond ik extra vroeg op om zeker te zijn dat ik op tijd was als er weer een college van Prof. Dr. Ir. Stroosnijder gegeven werd. Colleges waren altijd goed gestructureerd, breed georiënteerd maar zeker ook diepgaand. Interessante veld ervaringen werden gedeeld, die alle studenten zeer boeiend vonden.

Later kwam ik meer met het hoofd van de vakgroep in aanraking, doordat ik ging assisteren bij verschillende vakken. Uiteindelijk ben ik als PhD bij de land degradatie en ontwikkelingsgroep terecht gekomen, waarna het contact intensiveerde.

Het is erg jammer dat je vertrekt, omdat er een erg sterke cohesie binnen de groep heerst. De bezoeken aan De Vlaamsche Reus, uitjes naar Trier en Zeeland zijn naast dat ze erg gezellig zijn, ook erg goed voor het werk klimaat. Verder heb ik erg veel bewondering voor de manier waarop je bodem land degradatie in een hip en innovatief jasje gestoken hebt, waarbij de idealistische insteek nooit vergeten is.

Ate

Joep Keijsers

PhD research started in 2010. *Modelling coastal dune formation under climate change*

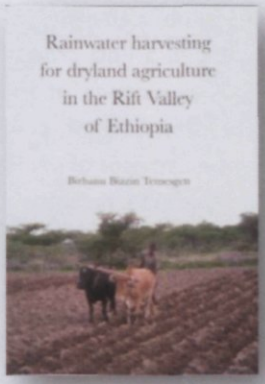
A few months after starting my research I found myself in the field on one of the Dutch barrier islands. Just a few days to assist in the fieldwork of my colleague and to get a better understanding of the landscape-shaping processes for my own plans. Suddenly Leo passed by on the beach, combining his research interests with a little holiday. Later that day we were invited to join Leos dinner along with a group of fellow scientists in a very Dutch Mexican restaurant. Of course, it turned out to be a pleasant and colloquial evening with drinks as scientific fuel.

And like that, Leo is able to create a comfortable atmosphere and environment for his PhDs to focus on research instead of meetings, financial matters and administration. Most importantly, he's able to connect the useful and the pleasant, which he will undoubtedly continue to do in his post-professoral years.

Joep

Birhanu Biazin Temesgen

PhD thesis 2012. *Rainwater harvesting for dryland agriculture in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia*



I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry in 1999 from Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources. While working in the position of graduate assistant in the same institute for one year, I perceived the prevailing problems of land degradation and particularly soil erosion in the Ethiopian highlands. Thus, I developed an intense interest in continuing my postgraduate studies in the area of soil and water conservation. I found the Erosion and Soil and Water conservation group, now Land Degradation and Development, in Wageningen University to be the most appropriate. I joined the group as a master student in 2001 through the financial support of Wageningen University fellowship. I was very impressed by the knowledge and international experience of Prof. Leo regarding soil erosion and international land development when I attended the course introduction to Erosion and Soil and Water Conservation. The scientific group that has been led by Leo has a good combination of biophysical, social and economic scientists which enabled the Masters students to understand the various aspects of land degradation and development issues at a global scale. After graduation, I went back to Ethiopia and, for about five years, tried to make contributions through teaching, research and development on erosion and soil and water conservation in Ethiopia. My focus area was related to soil and water conservation for undergraduate students. I was also involved in a couple of research and development projects related to watershed developments. Apart from this, I was serving as the head of the department of Natural resources and actively involved in the inauguration of a new department on "Soil Resources and Watershed Management".

Over time I became more interested in rainwater harvesting and management issues and developed a PhD proposal. The international standard of education in Wageningen and the rich global experience of the group inspired me to continue my PhD in the same group with the supervision of Prof. Leo and Dr. Geert. It has been a privilege to have Leo as a chair and the scientific advisor of my PhD study, and he is a great person for dealing with on the spot problems. I had several technical and financial problems while conducting my field experiments in the field for three years. The interesting thing with Leo is that he knows the challenges of conducting research in developing countries and he can always suggest possible ways to escape all the bureaucratic processes and financial constraints. Also, despite the Dutch culture of sticking to appointments, I did not need to make appointments to drop by his office any time I needed help from him. With the stimulating and constant backup of Leo, and the good scientific guidance of Geert, I managed to finalise my PhD study in 2012.

During my associations with Leo, I came to realize how he has contributed significantly to the global efforts of mitigating land degradation and developing appropriate land management techniques. I also learned that Leo is a leader in the office, an assistant in the field during experimentation, a father and an advisor during challenges, and a fun companion in recreational settings. Leo has really brought attention to the issue of improving rainwater use efficiency for improved agriculture in dryland regions. That is also my area of interest for future research. I think his efforts over the last couple of decades will be intensified by his former PhD and MSc students. In addition to me, there have been several students from Ethiopia who graduated from his scientific group. Along with the others, I will try to further contribute to the efforts for land and water development, improved food security and environmental protection in Ethiopia.

Leo visited Ethiopia during the PhD study of Birhanu Biazin in 2009

Erik van den Elsen

PhD Candidate: *'From measuring soil water content to monitoring soil water dynamics'*

Promotors: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder and Prof. dr. Coen Ritsema.

Leo leading the way...

On the pictures; Leo leading an excursion in Xian (the terracotta army museum) during the 2010 annual DESIRE project meeting in China.

Leo was involved as the promotor of a number of DESIRE PhD candidates from 2008-2012, and in that way involved in the DESIRE project. Next to that, he assisted in setting up a number of Special Issues for the project. My own involvement in that project was co-coordinator. Besides the collaboration in DESIRE, we worked together in the Soil Science department of WUR; Leo as professor and chairholder in the Land Degradation and Development group, myself as colleague with Alterra.

In 2010, when Leo asked me to temporarily replace Piet Peters, because of his illness, he also asked me whether I would be interested in getting a PhD degree with him as promotor. I had been thinking about this for a long time, but never got round to actually doing it; Leo helped me cross the threshold and actually start working on this. Although at this moment I have not yet finished the PhD, Leo has been an important catalyst in setting this process in motion. Leo, thank you for this!

This is a nice example of Leo leading the way in new ideas or initiatives; from setting up scientific research projects, education programs, department excursions, or as excursion leader at a museum...

Erik

Alemayehu Muluneh

PhD Candidate 2011-2014 on: *Strategies to adapt to climate change in the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia: Linking regional drought stress patterns to on-farm water management*

I first joined the Erosion and Soil and Water Conservation group (ESW), later renamed Land Degradation and Development Group (LDD) in 2005 where I studied my MSc. in International Land and Water Management (specialization: Erosion Soil and Water conservation). It was during this time that I met prof. Leo in his office for the first intake meeting, and was from that point inspired not only by his career but also by his devotion to helping developing countries like my own, Ethiopia. After finishing my MSc. study successfully, I returned to Ethiopia and got a lecturer position at Hawassa University. My Academic and practical experience at Wageningen University has helped me a lot in discharging my duties in teaching - and also in serving in different administrative positions such as Head of the Department of Agricultural Engineering and Mechanization and Assistant Registrar.

Prof. Leo and Saskia, during their visit to Ethiopia in 2009, assisted me in identifying available sources of funds for my PhD study and also in shaping my PhD proposal to address the real problem of climate change in Ethiopia by devising strategies to adapt to climate change. After serving the University for more than 4 years I again joined the Land Degradation and Development Group (LDD) for my PhD study in January 2011, with Prof. Leo as my promoter. Currently, I am working on my field research in the Ethiopian Central Rift Valley, which is among the drought prone regions of the country. On the first week of February, 2012 Prof. Leo along with Saskia made a visit (perhaps Prof. Leo's last professional visit) to my PhD research sites in Ethiopia. This visit to my research sites has given me great confidence for my research. Generally, I would say that I am lucky to get Prof. Leo as my promoter and to have this time to work with him.

Alemayehu

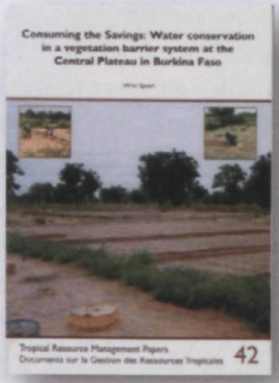
Prof. Leo and Saskia during a field visit to CRV of Ethiopia, February, 2012

CONSERVATION

Wim Spaan

PhD thesis 2003. *Consuming the Savings: Water conservation in a vegetation barrier system at the Central Plateau in Burkina Faso*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)



In 1972 I graduated from the International Agricultural College Larenstein in Velp, The Netherlands. Shortly thereafter I found work at the Department of Public Works in Amsterdam. My first assignment was working on the Toekomst (Future), a sports park, which in later years became the Ajax training complex. In 1974 I was appointed as a soil technician at the Department of Cultuurtechniek (Agricultural Engineering), where I was going to work on land subsidence, soil improvement and above all soil and water conservation. Six months later, Leo Eppink was appointed. We worked for 25 years together, first under professor van Duin and later with Leo Stroosnijder. In the period 1976 - 1982 my job got an extension in the area of land consolidation, organizing and conducting practicals for MSc students. In 1981 I was asked to set up wind erosion research. I undertook a study tour to major wind erosion research centers in the United States. Most of the research there took place in wind tunnels. I decided after my return to focus on wind erosion under field conditions. Simple equipment was already present for that purpose, but integrated systems that detect climate issues simultaneously with soil transport were not yet available. Together with electronics engineer Gijs van den Abeele, I threw myself into the development of wind erosion monitoring equipment. Some years later we had created a field station where data from soil transport - with Saltiphone - and relevant climate data could be simultaneously recorded and stored. After the microphone in the Saltiphone "had learned how to count" we could quantify soil transport under all kinds of circumstances.

In 1986 I met Leo Stroosnijder. He came along, together with Professor Wani Hadi Utomo, and asked me to come to Indonesia to give a soil and water conservation course for S2 students at the Brawijaya University in Malang. During the lectures it became clear that the students lacked practical skills. Therefore Leo and I looked together near Malang for an area suitable for practical exercises. MSc student Didik Suprayogo was also involved in developing the practical course. In 1987 I gave the course again, this time supplemented by a practical period in the field.

Shortly after his return from Indonesia, Leo applied for the professorship of "Agriculture of rain-fed agriculture," a chair in the department where I was working. Because he knew me, he enquired about the "ins and outs" of the department. Not long after he became my boss. Within the new chair group, I became responsible for "Implementation & Design".

In the early nineties the university decreased the number of chairs from more than one hundred to ninety. The following reorganization caused much turmoil. As a representative of the management cluster I invested a lot of time in discussions. The chair of Tropical Land Use remained just outside the downsizing.

In 1993 Leo asked me to take over the Sahel research project work of Wim van Driel, who became director of the Sahel Centre in Ouaguadougou. After orientation and interviews with the Sahel

researchers I decided, on advice from Leo, to investigate the water conservation efficiency of vegetative barriers. In 1994 at Gampela, near the capital Ouaguadougou, a test area was laid out on which different types of vegetative barriers would be tested. In 1996, after development of the vegetative barriers, the measurement program started. In the first year Arnold Sikking, and Helena Posthumus a year later, gave important input to the program.

In 1997, after writing EU proposals, I was involved in the project Wind Erosion on European Light Soils (WEELS, 1997 to 2001) as coordinator of the Dutch contribution. In 1998 I became coordinator of the EU project Assessment of the Agricultural Potential of an Indigenous Water Harvesting System in Central Asian Deserts (AWACAD; 1998 to 2001).

From 2001 onwards to 2004 my work as a lecturer and study advisor was rather overloaded, doing at the same time PhD research and writing my thesis.

After having obtained my PhD in 2003 I worked on land consolidation and erosion problems in the Netherlands. Lectures on these subjects were given. A publication on land consolidation in the 20th century – a desire of Leo's – was not yet written, but a number of publications on the approach to water erosion in South Limburg saw the daylight.

I began my career by working on the "Future" and finished in 2009 with the publication "A New Approach to Soil Erosion and runoff in South Limburg, The Netherlands'

Work for a new generation of alumni and land users to carry on into their futures!

Wim

Dirk Meindertsma

1976 - 1990 Weg- en Waterbouwkunde en irrigatie / Tropische Cultuurtechniek

1990 – 2010 Erosie en bodem- en waterconservering / Land Degradation and Development

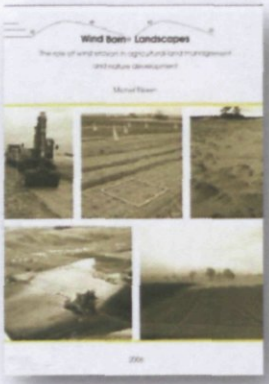
In 1976 ben ik begonnen bij de vakgroep Weg- en waterbouwkunde en Irrigatie (later omgedoopt in Tropische cultuurtechniek) aan wat toen de Landbouwhogeschool heette. Als HTS- ingenieur bij de sectie Weg- en waterbouwkunde was ik o.a. belast met het begeleiden van practica op het gebied van wegenbouw, constructieleer en grondmechanica.

Het was in 1989 toen ik als beheerder van de laboratoria van Tropische cultuurtechniek Leo heb ontmoet. Leo zat toen nog bij de vakgroep Bodemfysica die op het punt stond te fuseren met het "natte deel" van de vakgroep Cultuurtechniek. De nieuw te vormen groep zou gehuisvest worden op De Nieuwlanden. Het practicum Bodemnatuurkunde zou ook op De Nieuwlanden worden gegeven. Daarvoor was Leo naarstig op zoek naar een geschikte labruimte. En zo kwam hij ook langs in de laboratoria van Tropische cultuurtechniek om te kijken wat voor mogelijkheden daar lagen. Achteraf had ik toch wel wat een dubbel gevoel over die ontmoeting. Leo was namelijk ook in de race voor hoogleraar op de nieuwe leerstoel "de cultuurtechniek van de regenafhankelijke landbouw" bij de vakgroep Tropische cultuurtechniek. Daarvoor is een goed ingericht laboratorium natuurlijk ook van belang. Voor het practicum Bodemnatuurkunde is uiteindelijk een mooi lab ingericht in de kelder van De Nieuwlanden. En toen Leo in 1990 als hoogleraar werd benoemd waren de labs van Tropische cultuurtechniek nog helemaal beschikbaar

De nieuwe leerstoel Erosie en bodem- en waterconservering kwam in de plaats van de leerstoel Weg- en waterbouwkunde welke in het kader van de SKG operatie in de jaren 1986 – 1991 werd opgeheven. In de ESW groep was ik betrokken bij meerdere vakken: Practicum Kwintelooien, Selectie en ontwerp van BWC maatregelen (later Design 2), Alora practicum en Bodemtechniek. In veel van die vakken kon ik gelukkig toch nog een stuk van mijn civieltechnische expertise kwijt. Naast mijn onderwijstaak heb ik vanaf 1997 ook het financiële en materiële beheer van de leerstoelgroep en van veel (PhD-) projecten verzorgd.

Met de komst van Leo was er ook ruimte voor studiereizen met de groep naar instituten en universiteiten in omringende landen. Onder het motto "cultuur, natuur en culinair" hebben we vele "schoolreisjes" gemaakt naar geboorteplaatsen van collega's. En niet te vergeten de vele borreluurtjes met kaas, worst en nootjes bij de Vlaamsche Reus. Die zaken hebben wat mij aangaat ook bijgedragen aan de plezierige werksfeer in de groep. Terugkijkend prijs ik me gelukkig dat ik zo'n 20 jaar bij de ESW/LDD groep heb gewerkt.

Dirk



Michel Riksen

PhD thesis 2006. *Wind born(e) Landscapes*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; Co-promotor: Dr.ing. W. Spaan)

Staff member LDD-group 2009 -

I started my career in Wageningen as a junior researcher in the European research project "Wind Erosion on European Light sandy Soils". Just a few months before the project ended Leo asked me if I was interested in writing a proposal for a PhD project. The idea was that in this project we would use our knowledge on erosion processes in a different way. Not to reduce erosion on agricultural land, but to use erosion in nature development. Together with Geert Sterk and Wim Spaan I explored the possibilities. We visited several locations where soil erosion is one of the landscape differentiating processes creating a special habitat for pioneer vegetation and fauna. After the proposal was approved Leo asked me if I was also interested in conducting this PhD project. So in January 2001 I became a PhD student.

One of my research sites was Kootwijkerzand, a large inland drift sand area on the Veluwe. Once Leo visited me during one of my field days (see picture). We had to collect the sediment traps filled with sediment and rainwater from the field. To Leo it seemed that it was only a short *distance from the site to the car, so he decided to take two catchers instead of one like we did.* Our hypothesis that he would not make it the whole way back to the car was soon confirmed...

In my final year Leo's help with finalizing my PhD thesis became more important, but with guidance from him and my co-promotor Wim Spaan I managed to finish my PhD in 2006. That year I became a Post. Doc. continuing my research on inland drift sands. In 2009 Leo asked me to become a staff member of the LDD group. He gave me the opportunity to develop myself further as a researcher and lecturer. Leo thanks for all your help in this.

I wish you all the best.

Michel

Leo visiting me at Kootwijkerzand

Erik Slingerland (MSc.)

University teacher / Trainee 2010 -

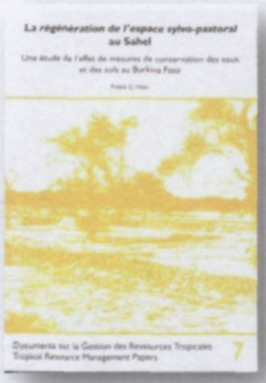
Dear Professor Leo,

"Professor" because that's how we had most of our contact. During my MSc. studies our paths only crossed during your "Land Degradation & Soil and Water Conservation" course. It was far from my intention and expectations to be one of your successors in this course. Although not directly, it was a great opportunity you gave to me to become coordinator of this course. Without much contact you gave me the chance to start working at the ESW group and continue doing so when the name was changed to LDD. By now I have lost count on the many small contracts I've had in this group; at first smaller contracts of only a few weeks/months, and now the opportunity to go more into depth with a 1 year contract.

On the one hand it surprised me that you gave me these opportunities, in most cases indirectly. But I guess it shows the trust you have in the staff in order to do so. On the other hand I'm very happy and honoured. It has given me the possibility to contribute to the education of the next generation of students and to develop myself as well.

You brought many PhD students to Wageningen, to the ATLAS building. It made it possible for me, in the first place to do my MSc thesis research in Vietnam with Yen. It shaped my scientific view on current problems in Land Degradation. Later on, it gave me the possibility to let students travel to foreign countries in order to do their BSc. research. They could develop an academic view on the topic they were working on and at the same time contribute to the work of (your) PhD students. These topics were always covering the most interesting ones in our field. More personal, it gave me the possibility to participate in several scientific publications. So thank you for all this.

Erik



Fidèle HIEN

PhD thesis 1995. *La régénération de l'espace sylvo-pastoral au Sahel: une étude de l'effet de mesures de Conservation des eaux et des sols au Burkina Faso*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

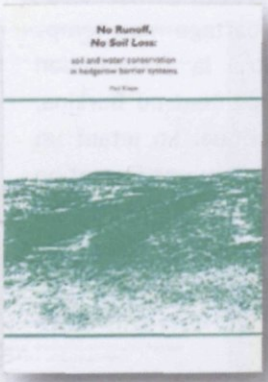
Lorsqu'en 1984 je finissais mes études d'Ingénieur à l'Université de Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), je me destinais à une carrière d'enseignant-chercheur après une formation doctorale. Le service militaire en décidera autrement : je me retrouve engagé au Ministère de l'Environnement comme Directeur central puis régional. En 1989, alors que je coordonnais un projet de foresterie rurale financé par les Pays-Bas dans la région du Centre-nord, je relance avec Martha Bloemberg et Els Verlinden/Bognetteau, deux AT Néerlandais mon idée de poursuivre un PhD. Martha se propose de prospecter à l'Université Agronomique de Wageningen où un jeune prof titulaire venait d'être promu dans le Département de Conservation des Eaux et des Sols : Leo Stroosnijder. Leo hésite mais finit par accepter de m'essayer selon le système « sandwich ». Le projet « Bois de Village » décide de prendre en charge les recherches de terrain si le projet de recherche était accepté ; me voilà donc à Wageningen fin avril 1990. Le premier contact avec Léo est courtois mais plutôt prudent : j'étais son premier candidat PhD, venu d'un petit pays du Sahel où j'avais fait toutes mes études universitaires ! Leo me propose donc de jouer « quitte ou double »: soumettre avec succès mon projet de recherche en 3 mois ou repartir chez moi. Début juillet, mon projet de recherche est évalué positivement; je suis dispensé de l'examen de niveau qui m'était nécessaire pour m'inscrire en PhD. Je conduirai ainsi mes recherches au Burkina Faso de Aout 1990 à Mars 1994, au sein de l'Antenne Sahélienne de l'UAW/UO dans le cadre du « programme aménagement et gestion de l'espace sylvo-pastoral au Sahel », où j'ai côtoyé les chercheurs du Département SWC de l'UAW dont Jan Willem Nibbering, Paul Kiepe, Nico de Ridder, Jan de Graaff ou Maja Slingerland...

Après mon PhD (mars 1995), j'intègre l'Institut de Recherches Environnementales et Agricoles du Burkina Faso (INERA) comme chercheur en agro-écologie, au sein du Département «gestion des ressources naturelles et systèmes de production». De janvier 1997 à Novembre 2000, je coordonne pour le Burkina Faso, un projet de recherche-action intitulé «Indigenous soil & water conservation in Africa, phase II ». Ce projet de Recherche et de Développement Participatif de Technologies couvrait 7 pays des régions semi-arides d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (Burkina Faso, Cameroun), du Nord (Tunisie), de l'Est (Ouganda, Tanzanie, Kenya) et du Sud (Zimbabwe). Il a mis en relation des Chercheurs, des Vulgarisateurs et des Paysans Innovateurs, dans une démarche d'expérimentation conjointe pour l'analyse, la validation et l'amélioration des innovations endogènes en matière de gestion de l'eau et des sols. De Novembre 2000 à Juin 2007, je fais une parenthèse politique (Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Eau puis membre du parlement), tout en poursuivant des activités scientifiques (encadrement de jeunes chercheurs) et de consultation.

Depuis Juin 2007, tout en participant à quelques activités scientifiques, je partage mon temps d'expert en environnement et gestion des ressources naturelles entre la consultation internationale et la gestion d'un important programme intégré de développement au Burkina, financé par le Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) des Etats-Unis d'Amérique. En jetant un regard rétrospectif sur ces 22 ans passés, j'ai le sentiment d'avoir reçu, grâce à Leo, une formation scientifique et intellectuelle accomplie : il a semé la graine et je l'ai fait pousser et grandir... En même temps, en réussissant l'épreuve du premier AIO de Léo, je crois avoir aussi «ouvert la porte» à cinq autres chercheurs Burkinabè dont Leo a supervisé la thèse PhD entre 1994 et 2010.

Fidèle

Un week-end de 1994 à Maastricht avec Leo et le Dr B. OUEDRAOGO de l'Université de Ouagadougou (milieu)



Paul Kiepe

PhD thesis 1995. *No Runoff No Soil Loss: soil and water conservation in hedgerow barrier systems*

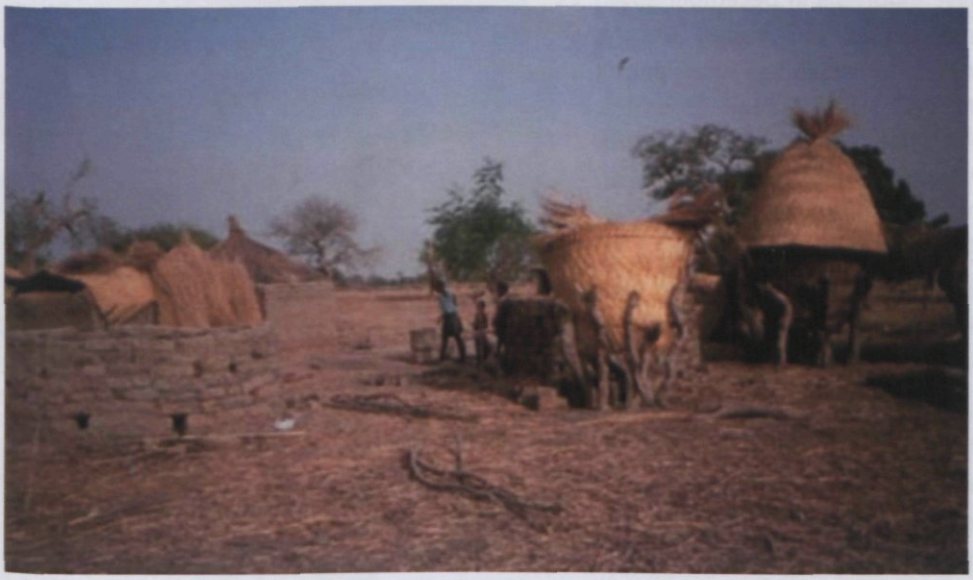
(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

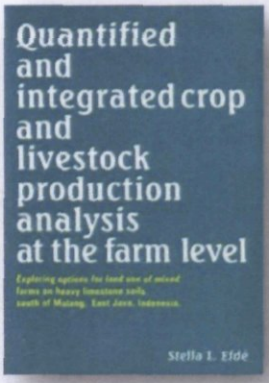
From 1987 until 1992 I was employed as an Associate Soil Scientist by DGIS and seconded to the World Agroforestry Center, then ICRAF. During the second year of my employment in Kenya I was involved in the organization of a pre-conference field tour (in Kenya) for the 4th World Soil Erosion Congress to be held in Addis Ababa in 1989. My runoff plots were the subject of the first stop of the tour. After I explained the ins and outs of my experiments to a group of nearly 300 eminent scientists, the group continued to the next experiments, but one man stayed behind. He asked me if I was Dutch, which I confirmed. He then asked me if I had a PhD, to which I replied no. He told me that I should start thinking about it since I had interesting data and he proposed that we would discuss it further the following week during the conference in Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa we discussed my subject and he told me to get in touch with Johan Bouma, since my research dealt with preferential flows. However, when I met Johan in 1990 he advised me to wait for the newly appointed professor of Erosion and Soil Conservation who would take over his assignment. The new professor turned out to be Leo. In 1991 I visited ESWC trying to master the art of simulation modeling.

To have a shelter during my stay in the Netherlands I rented a house in Zetten, which appeared to be a couple of houses down the road from Leo's home. When I went back to Nairobi I had mastered the art of modeling, and I had also experienced the coldest spring of the century, with day-time temperatures ranging from 4 degrees in early May when I arrived to 16 degrees mid-June when I returned to Kenya. It was for more than one reason an unforgettable experience. When I returned again to the Netherlands from Kenya in December 1992 I spent six months at the Nieuwlanden busily writing and analyzing my soil samples at the soil physics lab in the basement. After this period I spent two years of data analysis, modeling and writing until a beautiful day in May arrived when I submitted the manuscript to the printer.

After my PhD defense I was employed by Wageningen Agricultural University at the time as the project manager of the Wageningen outreach station for the dry Tropics, based in Ouagadougou. During my time in Burkina Faso my collaboration with colleagues from Wageningen increased, especially with other ESWC staff members like Wim Spaan, Gert Sterk and Jan de Graaff as well as PhD students like Saskia Visser, Emiel van Loon and Max Rietkerk. The outreach station, called the 'Antenne Sahelienne' closed its doors in December 2000 with a successful end-of-project workshop. This was attended by a range of scientists, including two Burkinabe government ministers: the minister for Environment and Tourism, Dr. Fidele Hien, and the minister for Research and Higher Education, Professor Laya Sawadogo. In the first half of 2001 I stayed behind to arrange the handing over of the office, transport and scientific equipment to the University of Ouagadougou. Finally, twelve years after I met Leo on the slopes of Machakos our collaboration ended and I moved on to Cote d'Ivoire to work on rice in the inland valleys of West Africa. In hindsight, after almost another dozen years, I can draw the conclusion that Leo taught me to think critically and devote long working days to achieving what is necessary, but always mixed with lots of humor and relativism.

Paul





Stella Efdé

PhD thesis 1996. *Quantified and integrated crop and livestock production analysis at the farm level. Exploring options for land use of mixed farms on heavy limestone soils south of Malang, East Java, Indonesia*

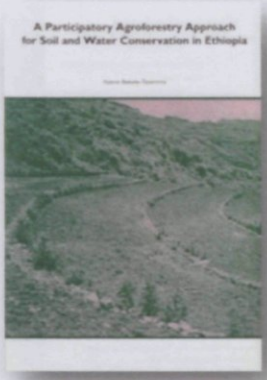
(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder and co-promotor Dr. ir. H. Udo)

In 1990 I applied successfully for a PhD job for the Interdisciplinary Research project (INRES), a collaboration between Wageningen University, the State University of Leiden and the Brawijaya University in Malang, Indonesia. The research was partly financed by the Netherlands University Federation For International Cooperation (NUFFIC). Somehting very special about this project was that 6 PhD students created, through integrated field research, a common database which was used by each of them individually for their PhD thesis. The other Dutch PhD student was Teunis van Rheenen. The 4 Indonesian PhD students were Bapak Widianto, Bapak Ifar, Bapak Sunaryo en Bapak Solichin. Beginning in June 1990 I lived in Malang, Indonesia until, because of what is called in Dutch "de affaire Pronk", we had to leave Indonesia in December 1992. During this period you visited Malang several times. I remember that during your visits you always joined us at the hashes of the Malang Hash House Harriers. Once when we were both in Bangkok participating in a conference, we both decided to leave one day early so we could join a special hash, RUN 450, somewhere between Probolingo and the Bromo Vulcano.

From December 1995 I worked as a postdoc in Costa Rica for the project "Research programme on sustainability in agriculture". In 1999 I decided to quit my research job and I became a study advisor in the Faculty of Biology at Utrecht University. In 2002 I returned to Wageningen University and became Head of the Student Service Center. In the meantime in 1997 I became active for the local political party PvdA, and in 2002 I became a member of the municipal council in Wageningen. In 2006 I left my job at Wageningen University and became alderman, deputy mayor, of the city of Wageningen.

Stella

Azene Bekele-Tesemma



PhD thesis 1997. *A participatory agroforestry approach in soil and water conservation in Ethiopia*

Technical Advisor, Land and Water Management, Rwanda

After half a decade of service in the Ministry of Natural Resources Development and Environmental Protection, in Addis Ababa, I saw the issue of land degradation and the slow pace of natural rehabilitation become a grave concern to Ethiopia. I developed a research concept on how I might be able to find and contribute a solution - and submitted a research grant proposal to FAO in competition with fellow contenders. I was one of the lucky ones and got a grant to conduct the research in my country. I sent the same proposal to Wageningen Agricultural University (then) where it got the attention of Leo from the department of Soil Conservation and Van Maaren in the Forestry faculty. These two became my promoters.

Leo was selfless in his support at both the office level in the development of my dissertation and the field level where I conducted research. He used to take the opportunity to lecture and build the capacity of fellow students at sister universities in Ethiopia. In this selfless effort, I recall we had once crawled in a car and gone out through the windshield on the way to Alemaya University in Ethiopia; but continued straight to the lecture room for intellectual dialogue with the eagerly awaiting audience before even properly cleaning our wounds.

As promoter of my PhD studies, Professor Leo used to take part in my Farmer-Participatory Research by travelling frequently to my research site in Ethiopia. He used to travel deep into my rugged research sub-watershed (Tikurso), where he could observe and mentor the research work on the ground. He used to meet the innovative farmers doing the research work in partnership with me, to see the progress made in the farmer-participatory research approach and to advise based on 1st hand information.

Thanks to the sandwich program of Wageningen University coupled with the mentorship by Leo and Van Maaren, my training has given me all the necessary armaments needed for triumph in my carrier. I have become a successful publisher, winner of international awards in land and water management, and a capacity building advisor in an international research centre (ICRAF) for 7 years. Currently, I am Technical Advisor in land and water management for the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources of the Government of Rwanda.

Azene

Willem Hoogmoed

PhD thesis 1999. *Tillage for soil and water conservation in the semi-arid tropics*

(Promotors: Prof.ir. U.D. Perdok and Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

My first contacts with Leo were in 1973. I was a student at Wageningen University (then: "Landbouwhogeschool") in the program "Landbouwwerktuigkunde" (Agricultural Engineering).

In the final stage of my study (there was no BSc-MSc structure then, just a 5 year program leading to the degree of "Ir.") I had chosen soil physics as one of my thesis topics. Leo was at that time working with Professor Gerard Bolt on his PhD thesis. Under supervision from Leo I worked on the measurement of water infiltration in soil columns using a gamma ray scanner and we wrote a computer simulation programme (quite an endeavor in those years!) for water infiltration.

After my graduation I worked some years at the University of the West Indies and then came back to Wageningen in the Soil Tillage Laboratory, working in a joint Dutch-Israeli research program on tillage for rainfed agriculture. My renewed contacts with Leo were then through the PPS project in Mali where I joined the research activities in Niono, working again on the effect of soil tillage on soil surface crusting and water infiltration. We spent a lot of time running rainfall simulator tests; and there were many fun times with the PPS team (dinners on 'Capitaine sauce arachide' prepared by the cook Bakari, who also occasionally served baguettes from age-old flour!) in the guest house in Niono.

Later, after the PPS activities in Mali, I continued my work at the Tillage Laboratory, went to Brazil, was again involved in research in West Africa, this time in Niger with the Sahelian Center of ICRISAT, and then in the early nineties again joined up with Leo on the "Antenne Sahelienne" in Burkina Faso. Our activities at that time were geared toward soil and water conservation aspects in Sylvo-pastoral environments.

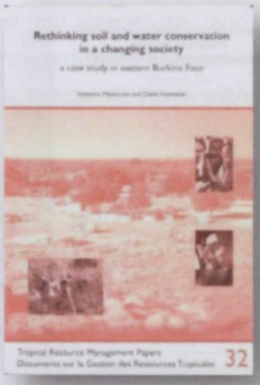
It was during these years that Leo strongly urged me to combine the scientific articles I had produced so far into a PhD thesis - and this indeed ended up in the defense of my thesis in 1999. Since then (still working at WU, now in the Farm Technology Group) I have kept close contact with Leo's chair group through teaching activities and cooperation in e.g. the CA2Africa project.

I am still grateful to Leo for his support which lead to my PhD, and his interest in the role of soil tillage in agriculture in the developing world.

Willem

Visiting with Leo in the field (1976-1980); Israel (shown with Yoska Morin), Mali, USA

Valentina Mazzucato and David Niemeijer



PhD thesis 2000. *Rethinking soil and water conservation in a changing society*

(Promotors: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder and Prof.dr.ir. N. Röling)

Leo's gamble

A perhaps lesser-known fact about Leo is that he can sometimes take a gamble. Being a man of science, he of course takes only educated gambles. As PhD students we were very fortunate to be one of those.

Back in 1993 there was a vacancy at the department for a PhD candidate to do research on local soil and water conservation practices in Burkina Faso, West Africa. Leo's first gamble was to put two instead of one person on this job. One was supposed to focus on the human and economic side of the equation and the second on the technical environmental side.

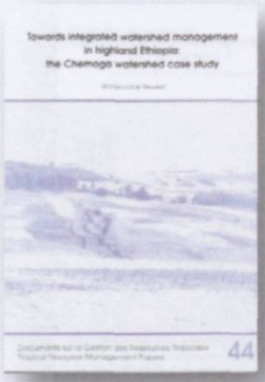
Leo was soon to find out that these PhD candidates had pretty unorthodox ideas and plans on how to approach this topic. Instead of pulling in the reins, as any sensible professor would have done, Leo took another gamble and gave virtually carte blanche to these ambitious — and maybe a bit crazy — young researchers. Not only that, but he helped provide today-undreamed-of research conditions with means for transport, assistants, multiple field visits and almost anything else a researcher could wish for. We guess this is where his scientific spirit showed again. Once the experiment was created he did everything in his power to have an unconstrained experiment that would be unaffected by external influences.

We can only imagine what he must have thought when his two PhD students came back from their first 4 months of fieldwork with a head full of ideas but only some picture books in hand with photos shot by local farmers of their village. Building trust and getting to know the context, we called it. Leo, a strong believer in his experiment, again did not pull in the reins and did not share with us the difficulties he must have had defending to others in the department - and beyond - why he was allowing us to do the things we did.

Later Leo came and visited us in the field. We took him for an overnight trip to one of our research villages and spent the night listening to local folktales and parables. That's what you do if you want to convince your professor that you are working on hard science, right? Of course this was not all we did: we conducted surveys and soil sampling just as a good soil and water conservation student does, but also wishy-washy stuff such as archival research and participant observation.

Then came the time to write it all up and instead of producing two neat dissertations we told Leo we wanted to write a single, integrated one. Again we got his full support. Leo's last gamble proved him right. He applied for a cum-laude after having seen our draft dissertation and he won, as we both received a cum-laude after a tumultuous defense.

We hope that Leo will retain his educated gambling spirit during his retirement and that our story provides inspiration for other Wageningen professors and beyond. Valentina & David



Woldeamlak Bewket

PhD thesis 2003. *Towards integrated watershed management in highland Ethiopia: the Chemoga watershed case study*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Dr.ir. G. Sterk)

It was May 1998 when I, as a final year graduate student in geography, writing a masters thesis on climate change impacts on stream flows of small highland catchments (in Ethiopia), first heard about a PhD opportunity as part of the newly launched Regional and Local Development Studies (RLDS) program of Addis Ababa University (AAU). RLDS was a collaborative capacity building program, offering a Master's degree in regional and local development studies, between the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) from The Hague and two colleges from AAU (the College of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Business and Economics). The program was designed to meet an expected growing demand for experts in the area subsequent to a new decentralization and federal political arrangement Ethiopia had adopted a few years earlier. As a new program, RLDS did not have academic staff of its own, and totally relied on staff from the many academic departments in the two participating colleges of AAU and visiting lecturers from ISS. The plan was that the program would financially support eight PhD researchers from AAU to be enrolled in Dutch universities who, upon successful completion, would return and become core staff members to the program.

When I got the information, in May 1998, it was the second call for potential PhD candidates - four positions all for different areas of specialization. I didn't think twice before submitting an application; an expression of interest type and very quickly drafted a research proposal and curriculum vitae (CV). A couple of weeks later, I received an email from Leo stating that he would accept me as his PhD candidate. I was tremendously overjoyed reading the news, as I had feared that I could be rejected because I had not yet even received my Master's degree. It was also from this email that I came to know that my application had landed at Wageningen University, a university held in the highest regard among Ethiopian agricultural scientists.

I arrived in Wageningen on the afternoon of 01 April 1999, and proceeded straight to Nieuwlanden to meet Leo and the LDD group. On the way, I rehearsed how to introduce myself and tell a nice story about my country. I arrived at the LDD office corridor and was trying to locate Leo's office when, by chance, Leo himself came along and shouted 'Welcome Woldeamlak!" as he saw me. We exchanged greetings, and then he led me in to his office and told me that he once worked in Ethiopia, actually before I was born. I felt very happy for two things: he could pronounce my name correctly (unexpected!), and he knew about my country. The non-significant downside was that my pre-arranged words for self introduction and the story about my country were of no use because Leo knew so much about Ethiopia - and he had also read through my CV and already knew who I was. He also told me that Geert Sterk would be my immediate mentor.

I stayed nine months in Wageningen taking courses and refining my research proposal; then returned to Ethiopia for fieldwork in the Choke mountain range, the water tower for the Blue Nile

River. Leo and the LDD group organized a nice get-together evening for my departure, and included in this was a gift of a nice text book. My first-round stay was very rewarding in academic terms and very pleasant socially, and this laid the good foundation for my subsequent stays with the group and my research with Leo and Geert.

On top of the Choke Mtn., water tower of the Blue Nile River

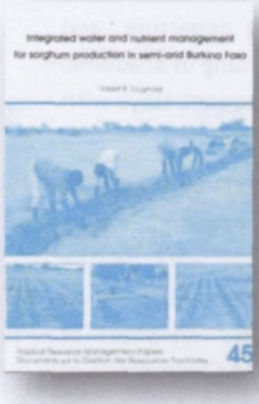
I received my PhD in 2003 and resumed my job with a higher academic rank - Assistant Professor - at AAU (in the geography department and RLDS, on an equal time basis). After 3½ years of service, I was elected as Chairperson of the geography department and served for 2½ years; and after four years of service (from my PhD) I was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, considering my academic contributions which included a research-based book on rainwater harvesting, some four journal articles, and other contributions. As Chairperson of the department, I developed a curriculum for a PhD program, defended it before the University's Senate and launched it with a first batch of nine candidates. This program now has a total of 29 PhD researchers. I am the supervisor to four of them.

In addition to my active engagement in postgraduate level teaching and research, I have provided consulting services to many local as well as international organizations. To mention a few, I had the privilege of preparing technical materials for presentation by Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture at three UNFCCC's COP meetings- COP15 in Copenhagen, COP16 in Cancun, and COP17 in Durban. I have also consulted for international organizations like the UNWFP, African Development Bank and DFID. Leo and the LDD group have given me the skills and knowledge - and thereby the self-confidence - that I use today to discharge my duties at the University and take up challenging assignments from highly esteemed international organizations.

On invited talk at Univ. of South Africa

I feel very lucky that I studied at Wageningen University with Leo and the LDD group. To all, I remain eternally grateful. Wageningen is a university that I shall recommend to everyone seeking postgraduate education; and even for PhD holders from elsewhere: believe me, Wageningen is really very much worth visiting!

Woldeamlak



Robert Zougmoré

PhD thesis 2003. *Integrated water and nutrient management for sorghum production in semi-arid Burkina*

(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. Leo Stroosnijder; coo-promotor: Dr Abdoulaye Mando)

I met Leo Stroosnijder for the first time during his visits as Coordinator of the interuniversity project in Burkina, a project that was employing my colleague, and very good friend, Abdoulaye Mando who in fact introduced me to Leo and established the links between us for my involvement in a PhD programme. Discussions with Leo on my research work and topics of interest within INERA resulted in a field visit to INERA's on-farm research on the impact of stone rows at Kirsi village in Burkina Faso in 1999. Following this visit, Leo decided to accept me as a PhD candidate (sandwich program) in the Erosion and Soil & Water Conservation Group of Wageningen University, where I completed the PhD in 2003. During the supervision of the thesis, I greatly appreciated his invaluable scientific guidance, support and constant availability. As a foreigner in Wageningen, I will never forget the social events that Leo frequently organised within the Erosion group (excursions) and privately (in his house with his nice family).

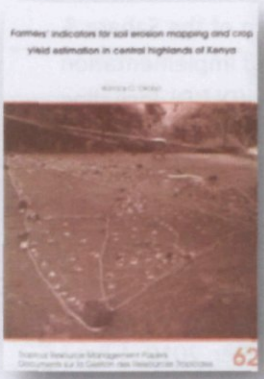
Back in Burkina, I became a senior researcher and have been Chief of the Department of Natural Resources Management and Farming Systems at the Institute for Environment and Agricultural Research. Thanks to the great experience I acquired in integrated land and water management at plot and watershed scales during my PhD studies, I have coordinated several research projects at national and regional levels in partnership with regional and international institutions (IFDC, ICRISAT, IITA, CIAT, FAO, IFAD, etc.).

I have contributed new and developing options and strategies for adaptation to climate variability and land degradation in the vulnerable arid and semi-arid ecosystems, therefore generating and sharing significant scientific knowledge for informed decision making and sound policy development. I have also actively contributed to the use of databases for the validation of APSIM and DSSAT models in the Sahel and their use for the dissemination of sustainable land, water and nutrient management technologies. I was also a part-time Lecturer at the Polytechnic University of Bobo-Dioulasso on land degradation and sustainable land & water management.

I spent one year (2004) as a Post-Doc at the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Science (JIRCAS), working on the benefit of conservation agriculture for soil and water conservation.

From 2009 to 2010, I was a senior staff member within the Environment Program of the Sahara & Sahel Observatory (Tunisia) where I was actively involved in the development and implementation of initiatives pertaining to: (1) Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) including environmental surveillance, monitoring and evaluation of DLDD, drought early warning ..., in the framework of the UNCCD implementation; and (2) climate change adaptation in Africa (analyzing adaptation strategies of vulnerable populations in arid and semi-arid zones, etc.); the aim being to contribute to designing informed policies for good environmental governance in Africa. I coordinated a joint-funded IDRC/DFID project entitled "Experimenting a capacity development approach and a toolkit for monitoring and evaluation within climate change adaptation initiatives", in collaboration with UNECA, AGRHYMET, and IUCN. Since November 2010, I have been the West Africa Regional Program Leader of CCAFS, the new CGIAR program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security, hosted by ICRISAT Bamako. For all my above professional steps, Leo has been a key reference person for me and always provided useful advice.

Robert



Barrack Okoba

PhD thesis 2005. *Farmers' indicators for soil erosion mapping and crop yield estimation in central highlands of Kenya*

I may not have a photo of Prof. Leo while in Wageningen or when with me during my fieldwork in Embu Kenya, but I have three memorable events that formed a strong impression and a permanent benchmark in my life as a result of interaction with Prof. Leo:

Upon registering for my PhD studies at WU and housed in the Nieuwlanden building, together with my two other African classmates (Albino Tenge and Robert Zougmore) Prof. Leo invited us to accompany him to Amsterdam for a tour of Amsterdam City. This is because he was an Amsterdam boy, having been raised there. So he asked us if we would like a tour of the great city under his guidance. Obviously we did not object and a date was fixed. One early Saturday morning, in the company of Prof. Leo and his wife, Jacquelijn, we travelled by bus to the railway station to take a train to Amsterdam. It was at the railway station that I first observed Prof. Leo kiss his wife (Jacquelijn). The act of kissing his dear wife shocked us! Given our conservative African culture we did not expect a "whole" Prof do such an act right in front of his students and in broad daylight in a public place. Anyway at the right time we bordered the train for Amsterdam and we indeed had nice time visiting very many landmarks in the big city; namely the boats, bridges, floating hotels, nice restaurants, etc. Without too much talking we meandered through narrow streets and at a certain point on either side of the street we saw "nearly-naked women" behind glass window frames. I later learnt that this was the famous "Red light" district of Holland. The good Prof never made any comment, allowing his students to come to terms with the modern WORLD. That was quite amazing for me.

I also remember him visiting me in Kenya when I was doing my field research. He enjoyed the stay even though it was short. He encouraged me so much and through that he convinced me that he was a good promoter.

I fondly remember his friendly attitude that was always demonstrated by his willingness to join his students and staff during both 10.00AM and 4.00PM breaks for coffee/tea, on the third floor of the Nieuwlanden building. This was a good opportunity he exploited to mingle and rub shoulders with his staff. I remember many times he gave his staff "treats" for any occasion in the town bars. Occasions like successful defence of student's thesis at the AULA were best fit for bar drink. I truly liked such opportunities. Of course he would talk less and let the likes of Dr. De Graaff and Dr. Sterk do most of the talking. For me this pattern of interacting with his staff and students talked volumes of the pleasant sociable character he has. Prof. Leo I wish you a bright "future".

Barrack

Jakolien Leenders

PhD thesis 2006. *Wind erosion control with scattered vegetation in the Sahelian zone of Burkina Faso*

Beste Leo,

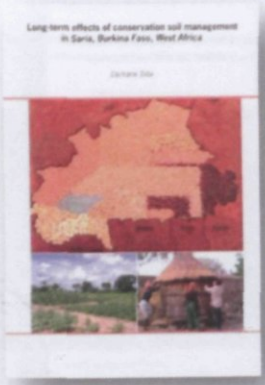
Van 2001 tot 2006 werkte ik bij de vakgroep ESWC aan mijn proefschrift naar het effect van verspreid staande vegetatie op winderosie. In die periode ben ik vaak naar Burkina Faso geweest om gegevens te verzamelen. In Burkina Faso heb ik het erg naar mijn zin gehad. Ook de bezoekjes aan het dorp M'Banga met het schooltje waar een scholenband met de basisschool 'De Okkernoot' in Zetten was, waren altijd erg bijzonder.

In Wageningen heb ik het heel fijn gevonden dat er naast het werk ook tijd was voor een borrel bij de Vlaamsche reus op zijn tijd! Kortom – een goede tijd. Dank daarvoor.

Na mijn PhD ben ik bij HKVLIJN IN WATER gaan werken, een adviesbureau dat onderzoek- en adviesdiensten levert op het gebied van water en veiligheid. Mijn huidige werk betreft een ander vakgebied dan het onderwerp van mijn PhD, maar veel vaardigheden die ik tijdens mijn proefschrift eigen heb mogen maken, kan ik in mijn huidige werk inzetten en verder ontwikkelen!

Alle goeds
&
Tot ziens!

Jakolien



Zacharie Zida

PhD thesis 2011. *Long-term effects of Conservation Soil Management in Saria, Burkina Faso, West Africa*

(Promotor: Prof. dr. ir. L. Stroosnijder, Co-promotors: Dr. A. Mando and Dr. B. Ouattara)

After having worked at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA) in Burkina Faso, I was recruited to IFDC as a research assistant on the Desert Margins Program, which ended in 2005. In my former position, I worked as a field technician for two PhD students, one of whom (Dr Zougmore Robert) worked with Leo. My name was put forth as a good candidate for a PhD program. On August 2005, I was informed by Dr Mando, that Prof Leo was selecting PhD candidates for a program they were developing. A meeting was organized with at the Hotel Splendid in Burkina Faso in conjunction with a WOTRO work plan meeting attended by all the partners. Later on, I was informed by Prof Leo that I would be retained for the PhD program. I was therefore invited to come to Wageningen in January 2006. So I left my position at IFDC for the PhD program, which all in all took around 5,2 years.

Leo and me during a group excursion to Leiden - 24 April 2008

Looking back, I could say that without Prof Leo's support that PhD would not have been accomplished. The challenges were many: the theme covered three main domains - physical, hydraulic, and chemical, and six countries were supposed to be covered. But Leo's patience and respectful vision lead us to finalizing the work. I want to express my great thanks to him for being part of my life.

Zida

(My dear) Prof Leo gives me, Zacharie ZIDA, my PhD diploma

Bui Tan Yen

PhD Candidate: *Integrated modelling of soil erosion assessment, land use optimization and adoption of land use recommendations in Northern upland of Vietnam*

After working at the Soils and Fertilizers Research Institute (SFRI) of Vietnam for 12 years, I decided to continue studying and was lucky to be awarded a sandwich PhD fellowship at Wageningen University. In 2007, I started a PhD project entitled "Integrated modelling of soil erosion assessment, land use optimization and adoption of land use recommendations in Northern upland of Vietnam" under supervision of Prof. Dr. Ir. Leo Stroosnijder and Prof. Dr. Ir. Herman van Keulen and other supervisors. Because my study focuses on both soil degradation and cropping systems on sloping land, I became a shared student of the Plant Production System (PPS) and the Land Degradation and Development (LDD) groups. In 2008 I had the chance to introduce Prof. Leo and Prof. van Keulen to my study sites and the cultures of some of the ethnic groups in the upland region of Vietnam. After the first two years working at the PPS group, I moved to LDD to continue my study. I was warmly welcome by LDD members and had opportunity to work closely with Prof. Leo. I received great support from him in soil erosion modelling, agent based modelling and integration approaches. I am impressed by his direct questions, quick responses to students and the way he always proposes the best solutions for any emergency problem. What I can say is that I am so proud to work in the LDD group and to have Leo's supervision.

Yen

Left: *Field visit of supervisors in 2008;* right: *Promoters visited the ancient imperial Academy of Vietnam, which was built since 1076 in Hanoi.*

Gudrun Schwilch

PhD Candidate 2012. *A process for effective desertification mitigation*

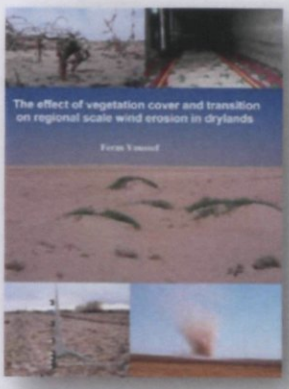
(Promotors: Prof. dr.ir. Leo Stroosnijder and Prof. Dr. Hans Hurni)

After having worked as a scientist at the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern (Switzerland) for many years, a new EU-project opened up an opportunity for me for a (late) PhD study. This EU-project was the integrated research project DESIRE (Desertification Mitigation and Remediation of Land - a Global Approach for Local Solutions) under the 6th Framework Programme. Being one of the six working block leaders in that research, I was heavily involved during its five years (2007 – 2012) anyway. In the DESIRE project we worked towards establishing promising alternative land use and management strategies in seventeen degradation and desertification study sites around the world, based on a close collaboration of scientists with local stakeholder groups. These study sites served as the global laboratory for developing and applying new methods of science – stakeholder collaboration and trialling traditional and innovative technologies to combat desertification.

The coordinator Prof. Coen Ritsema suggested to me that I expand on this involvement and do a PhD within the LDD group at Wageningen University. Having gotten into Leo's group and under his supervision, I enthusiastically started my research. As I had to combine this with my ordinary work at CDE and my family, I tried to look for synergies wherever possible. My long-term experience in the WOCAT programme (www.wocat.net) was fertile ground to build upon. But without the continuous support of Leo, I would not have been able to have it almost finalized by now. I have very good recollections of Leo in the field and at Moroccan and DESIRE meeting dinners. The collaboration with Leo and his group gave me some extraordinary inputs and broadened my horizons extensively, which so far had been characterized by my Swiss University. And this was possible even without the need to move to the Netherlands and live far away from my family. Now I'm looking forward to completing the PhD study sometime this year, which is an important year not only for Leo with his retirement, but also for me.

Gudrun

Feras Youssef



PhD candidate 2012. *The effect of vegetation cover on regional scale wind erosion in drylands*

In 2007 I completed my Master's in the soil science department at Ankara university, Ankara, Turkey. Soon after my graduation, I applied for a position as a sandwich PhD at the ESW group at Wageningen. While I was working under bad conditions for an agricultural company in England, I read an email from Saskia Visser saying that I was selected for the PhD program in Wageningen. I was so happy with that news as I wanted to do my PhD at an international university. From the first step of application the group was very supportive in managing all the documents and steps required for things to go as smooth as possible. In January 2008 I started my PhD when I met Leo. At the beginning of my PhD research, some funding problems arose which was the first time to discuss something with Leo. I never forgot that meeting in which Leo was so open minded and supportive to solve the problems.

He said "with you we will try to solve the funding problem" and he gave me some addresses where I could apply for scholarships. That meeting gave me a lot of energy to ignore the problems and focus on my research. After six months I went back to Turkey and, following his suggestions, applied for funds at several funding agencies. During this period, I got all the support I needed from the group and specifically from Leo who answered so quickly all time. And after the first year of my research I got a scholarship from the Scientific Turkish Council. After the three field campaigns, in Turkey and Syria Leo approved my coming to Wageningen for five months to improve the modelling part of my research. These five months were not within the sandwich PhD program, so it was a big decision for Leo to agree on that. In addition to all the financial solutions that Leo managed during my research, he was always very open to discuss any research or official problem.

I had the chance to be with the group on some trips and events which were always much fun and a great time. The time during my PhD went very fast and I can't believe that four years have already passed. I think I did some improvements in my PhD research and I plan to do my defence in September 2012. I am so happy that I will submit my thesis (hopefully) before Leo's retirement. I will never ever forget Leo's support during my research and my time in the Netherlands. His door was always open for all kinds of support, and he was optimistic and positive about solving problems to get things to work all the time. I think I was a lucky person to meet Leo and I wish him full happiness and an enjoyable life after his retirement.

Feras

Desire Mbarushimana Kagabo

PhD Candidate 2008 - 2012. *Integrated watershed management for improved natural resource management and crop productivity in the north-western highlands of Rwanda.*

Your role as supervisor of soil erosion and land degradation research - in which you were immensely involved and enjoyed for the last 45 years – is coming to an end and now you are starting a new phase of life. As a PhD student under your supervision I feel fortunate to have met you, and gained much from your wisdom. I remember how our first impressive discussion (meeting) was enough to give shape to my vague research proposal which culminated in my current PhD research. As we say in the Rwandan national language "tuzagera ikirenge mu icyawe" loosely translated: we will follow your steps. Cutting-edge skills in land and soil management in Rwanda is flourishing like never before as a result of PhD opportunities you have offered to Rwandans students including myself. Many thanks.

I wish you a good new phase of life with prosperous opportunities that keep you only as busy as you want to be!

Desire

Innocent Wadzanayi Nyakudya

PhD research. *Optimizing maize (Zea mays L.) yields using rainwater harvesting in semi-arid Zimbabwe*

PhD Student January 2010 –

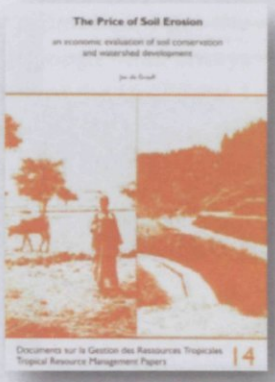
I first met Leo in 2007 when I was participating in an International Course on Land Drainage organised by ALTERA ILRI, in Wageningen. I had submitted my research proposal to him earlier on and this was a big opportunity for me to meet him face to face. The meeting turned out to be fruitful because Leo gave me useful comments which I used to improve my proposal. After applying for funding I got confirmation that my proposal had been funded in 2009. In January 2010 I became Leo's first PhD student from Zimbabwe. This was a great opportunity for me to develop my career. Back home I work at a university. My training is a major contribution to manpower development in Zimbabwe after a decade of massive brain drain due to almost a decade of an economic crisis. This opportunity to do a PhD could not have come at a better time for me since it is now mandatory for all university academic staff to have PhDs in Zimbabwe. Besides, my PhD addresses a key food security issue and should impact policy in Zimbabwe. Leo is highly professional in discharging his duties, although you are a student he does not keep you waiting for feedback. He documents every discussion he has with you and follows-up the issues in subsequent meetings. In July 2011 I had the rare opportunity to host Leo in Zimbabwe. We spent two days and one night in Rushinga district, a rural area where I am doing my experiments. Leo also visited my family in Bindura where I stay. I would like to say to Leo, enjoy your retirement and thank you for making it possible for me to embark on the PhD programme that will help to develop my career.

Leo observes a rainwater harvesting technique in Rushinga District, Zimbabwe in July 2011

Innocent

DEVELOPMENT

Jan de Graaff

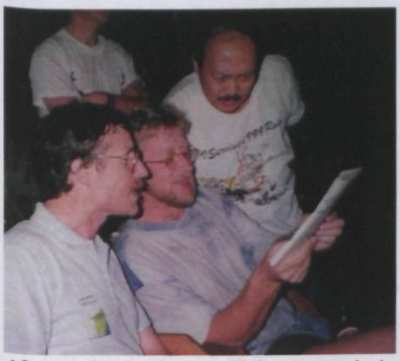


PhD thesis 1996. *The Price of Soil Erosion: an economic evaluation of soil conservation and watershed development*

(Promotors: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder and Prof. dr. A. Kuyvenhoven)

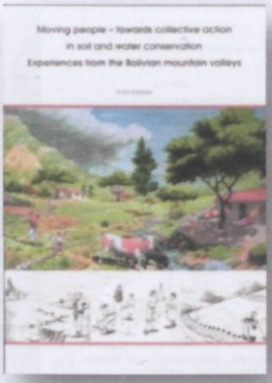
Staff LDD-group 1990 -

After having worked on similar projects with FAO, I worked from 1986-1990 with the Royal Tropical Institute for a watershed development project in Indonesia. There I met Leo: not in the office, since he worked for another project, but during the hashes and parties the expat community organised. Leo was Scribe of the Hash committee and wrote spicy stories in the Hash Trash. At the end of my assignment there I worked on a research proposal on the economics of watershed development, for submission to WOTRO. After returning to the Netherlands in 1990 there was a vacancy on "The social and economic aspects of soil and water conservation" with Leo's newly formed chair group (ESW, later LDD), for which I solicited successfully. I became involved in teaching several courses and in research, initially focused on the interuniversity research project in Burkina Faso, of which Leo was coordinator. There I selected six research villages and undertook, with local staff and Burkinabé and Dutch students, many surveys. Two years later the improved research proposal was positively appraised and with a WOTRO subsidy I could embark on my PhD research. I undertook ex-post evaluation activities with local staff in four developing countries. Leo was always ready to travel and he and Waluyo Nibbering joined me in Indonesia, where he assisted me in the development of a watershed model for the evaluation. After having obtained my PhD in 1996, I worked on EU project proposals. From 1999-2003 we worked on the Impact assessment of water harvesting (WAHIA) project in Tunisia and Morocco and subsequently on the "Future of olive orchards on sloping land" project (OLIVERO; 2003-2006) in the four countries of southern Europe. As in the Burkina Faso project, Leo was an inspiring and resourceful chairman during the meetings. Meanwhile I had become the coordinator of the newly established education programme International Land and Water Management (2000-2004), the replacement for our Tropical Land Use programme which was suddenly cancelled in 2000. Since then lots of PhD students have come to the group, half of them from developing countries. The group also participated in NUFFIC educational projects in Uganda and Rwanda, and with PhD and MSc students in the EU DESIRE and CA2AFRICA research projects in many different countries.



After a hash during PhD research in Indonesia, 1994

During all these years of education and projects, there were always social events, ranging from drinks at the Vlaamsche Reus to cultural excursions to places in The Netherlands and surrounding countries. Looking back at it now, I could say that I was lucky to have met Leo in Indonesia and have been working with his group for the past 20 years. Jan



Aad Kessler

PhD thesis 2006. *Driving people – towards collective action in SWC (Bolivia)*

Staff member LDD-group 2009 -

I started my study Tropische Cultuurtechniek in 1985: fresh from highschool and sharing the ideals of many of my fellow students to contribute to a more just and better world! I enjoyed studying in Wageningen and got inspired by our great soil erosion master Don Leo Eppink; to be honest the main reason for choosing the erosion specialization instead of irrigation. And then, when I had almost finished my MSc, there was all of the sudden another Leo at the SWC group. I remember the reception at De Nieuwlanden where I saw Leo for the first time. However, because I graduated shortly thereafter, it was not him but mainly Leo Eppink with whom I maintained contact while being in South America for 10 years, working first for FAO and later for a Japanese research organization.

During my job in Bolivia, where I was the technical coordinator of a soil and water conservation project in the Inter-Andean valleys around the beautiful town of Sucre, I contacted the SWC group again and got two MSc students for their thesis research. Their work and my renewed interest in research inspired me one day to put on paper a very first idea for my PhD research. I was a bit afraid to send such a rough draft version to Wageningen, and thought the idea of doing a PhD while being "in the field" was simply a bridge too far. However, I still remember very well the more than enthusiastic reaction of both Leo and Jan de Graaff who, instead of rejecting the idea, were strongly in support of it. And this I think is most typical for Leo: being able to motivate people to take off with just some very basic ideas, and quickly seeing how apparently loose ideas might fit together to become "a good proposal", "a scientific paper" or in my case "a coherent PhD research".

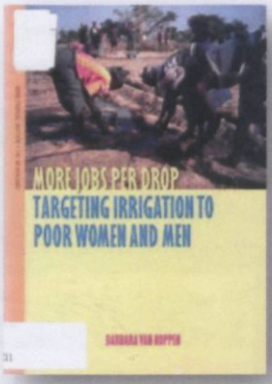
Once accepted as a PhD student I travelled to Wageningen to discuss the ideas, and shortly thereafter Leo and Jan visited me in Sucre. We made a long field trip to my research village Tomoroco, had interviews with several farmers, and – of course – a nice dinner to conclude the day. As I still didn't know Leo very well in those days, I remember particularly well the more informal events such as these dinners we had together with Stela, who was also remarkably delighted with the friendliness, openness and interest of Leo towards her and our family in general. To me, this too is typical for Leo: always interested in the wellbeing of others and valuing the social and informal events at least as much as the scientific and professional site of our work!

Once back in Wageningen I finished my PhD and published several papers together with Leo. What I most admired was how Leo always kept a clear overview of the coherency of my PhD work and the different chapters: focusing on the structure and the final message, always stressing the

scientific quality without losing sight of interdisciplinarity. Even before my promotion, I got the opportunity to start working at the SWC group on a 3-year contract. And, although I had always announced that I would prefer a job at a development organization rather than at the University, I quickly got to like this new job. Very important was the pleasant atmosphere within the group: the outings with the whole group, the rich diversity of PhD students, and of course the drinks at the Vlaamsche Reus. Leo was a great initiator of these social events, not only because he enjoyed it as much as the rest of us, but also because he knew that doing such things is mighty important for binding a group together.

And so here I am, still trying to contribute to a more just and better world, and being relatively well-placed to do just that. Leo has definitely been part of that endeavour. He has greatly influenced my career and – hence – my life, and I do feel a certain connectedness and sharing of ideals with him. I hope Leo that you will still pursue them after this retirement; there is still a lot to do for our world!

Aad



Barbara van Koppen

PhD in 1998. *More jobs per drop: targeting irrigation to poor women and men*

(Promotors: Prof.dr. C. Safiliou and Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

It was a great moment: Leo giving me my PhD certificate in 1998. It completed an important phase in my life. During the eight preceding years I had been lecturer Gender and Irrigation at the "Vakgroep Tropische Cultuurtechniek". Thanks to Leo's excellent managerial skills, a dynamic interdisciplinary research program had been set up in Burkina Faso. This enabled me to do one of my two Ph.D. case studies in south west Burkina Faso. I had lived and worked there for SNV, before joining the Vakgroep. So I knew that a rice improvement project in that area allocated improved land primarily to women. Yet, in the first schemes that the project had constructed, it had allocated improved land to men. So my research question was: why did they do this, and with what impact? In many talks and papers afterwards, this case kept illustrating how projects' gender assumptions often overlook the possibility that women can be primary farm decision-makers with certain land rights, as well as key to a project's success. The other Ph.D. case study was in Bangladesh about female landless water sellers. I am still very grateful for the moment that Leo said: 'And now close your books and start writing'.

Immediately after my PhD, I spread my wings and joined the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in Sri Lanka. After two years, IWMI established offices in Africa. I was glad to move back to Africa. I joined the new IWMI office in South Africa, the country of Mandela, which was buzzing so energetically after the victory over apartheid. Leo visited me in Pretoria after a workshop in South Africa; it was very nice to catch up. In IWMI I do research, engage in policy dialogue, and supervise PhD and M.Sc. students on gender in irrigation, the history of water management in South Africa, plural water laws across Africa, and, more and more now, participatory multiple use water services both in Africa and Asia.

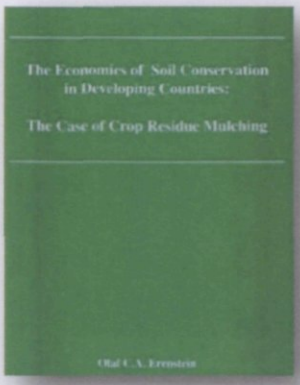
Time flies. It is hard to believe that I am already more than ten years in South Africa, and that Leo is retiring. But retirement is relative. Maybe Leo will come for yet another workshop, or to visit a PhD student. Or maybe he'll really just take it easy and comes to Kruger National Park to enjoy a well-deserved rest. In all cases, most welcome, Leo!

Barbara

Olaf Erenstein

PhD thesis 1999. *The Economics of Soil Conservation in Developing Countries: The Case of Crop Residue Mulching*

(Promoters: dr. A. Kuyvenhoven & dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; Co-promoter: dr.ir. H.A.J. Moll)



I completed my Wageningen MSc training in 1990 and subsequently worked as associate expert in Pakistan and Mexico. The Mexico assignment was with the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the 3 years of empirical research (1994-97) were developed into my PhD while I resided in Ghana. I am very grateful to Leo for first accepting the request to be promoter for this PhD and for his subsequent constructive and valuable feedback as the PhD developed with occasional visits to Wageningen and interactions by e-mail.

The PhD was instrumental in my career as it allowed me to pursue opportunities in international agricultural research within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), first with the Africa Rice Centre (WARDA, 2000-04) in West Africa (Ivory Coast and Mali) and subsequently with the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). For CIMMYT I was first based in India (with a focus on South Asia, 2004-09) and subsequently moved to Ethiopia (with a focus on eastern and southern Africa, 2009 to date).

Leo, thank you once more for your inputs in shaping my professional development and career and wishing you a fruit-full and deserved retirement.

Olaf

Olaf Erenstein

Agricultural economist

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) Ethiopia

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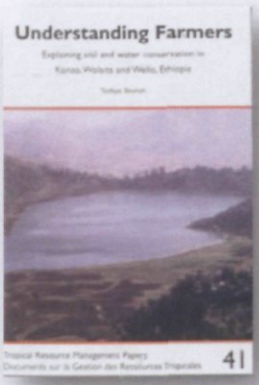


Tesfaye Beshah

PhD thesis 2003. *Understanding Farmers: Explaining soil and water conservation in Konso, Wolaita and Wello, Ethiopia*

(Promotors: Prof. dr. ir. N.G. Röling and Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder)

Congratulations Leo!

If you look back, there are many scholars who followed your foot steps, you have published volumes on various topics, you have traveled in many parts of the world in the interest of science for mankind, and you have guided dozens of M.Sc and PhD students from around the world. In a nutshell, you have done a lot by any standard. Thank you for that, and I am very happy to be one of your students.

I met Prof. Leo Stroosnijder at his Office in the then Department of Erosion and Soil & Water Conservation in 1998, where I requested to be his PhD student. After some discussion about my topic, which was about social science perspectives on soil and water conservation, he was kind enough to accept me as his student. Following that I sent him my a draft proposal for his input. Since then, Leo brought me to his world of vast knowledge and experience on soil and water conservation in Africa and elsewhere. With his typical deep and analytical questions, I managed to grasp fundamental issues about soil and water conservation, design my research and go back to my country for a field work after about 9 months. During the course of my sandwich PhD study, Leo's guidance was very instrumental. Leo is a Prof. of details with precision, which made me a better professional.

Even though, I did not have the opportunity to arrange a field trip with him to my research sites in Ethiopia, the fact that he knows Ethiopia extensively was very helpful for contextualizing my research work during the write up stage.

Thanks to Prof Leo and Prof Niels Röling (my Professor at my home department, CIS) my Thesis was published in the Tropical Resource Management Papers, No. 41. I carry it with me wherever I go, and remember these two distinguished Scientists to whom I am eternally indebted.

Even though Leo has decided to retire from his regular duties, I trust that he will certainly have special plans to continue his contributions to science and society.

Leo, the time you put into building my career is not wasted, and I promise you that I will make it even better.

Finally, I wish you and your loved ones a very special time and all the best in life.

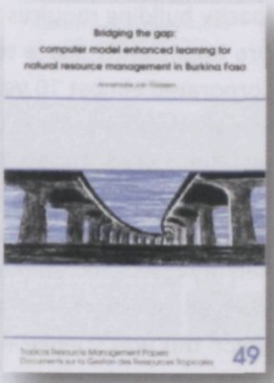
Sincerely,

Tesfaye Beshah (PhD), from Ethiopia.

Annemarie van Paassen

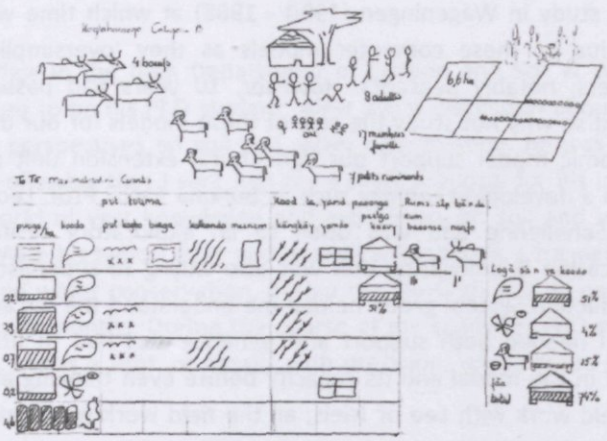
PhD thesis. *Bridging the gap: computer model enhanced learning for natural resource management in Burkina Faso*

Present: Asst. Professor 'International Communication for Rural Development' WUR



While working as a planning, communication and training officer at the Integrated Rural development Programme PEDI in the province of Sanmatenga, Burkina Faso (1997-2001), I was approached by the 'Research Antenna' of Wageningen University to see if I was interested in doing a PhD on the role of the Multiple Goal Linear Program (MGLP) model SHARES for agronomic learning by the farmers in Sanmatenga. I knew a bit about these models from my Economic study in Wageningen (1980 - 1988) at which time we were very skeptical about the added value of these computer models as they 'oversimplified' the complex reasoning of smallholders, notably peasants. However, 10 years had passed and computer modeling had progressed so why not study the role of these models for our development practice? Could such an agronomic model support our agricultural extension unit and/or the everyday practice of farmers in a developing country such as Burkina Faso? Prof. Leo Stroosnijder was director of the Antenne Sahelienne and was open to an exploratory research. Prof. Niels Röling of the Communication & Innovation unit was also willing to supervise me, and Nico de Ridder of the Plant Production System group helped me understand the ins and outs of the SHARES model. At the start I needed both support and patience as I had to first get my agronomic colleagues interested in the model and its capacity before even thinking about an in-situ test. Hence there was no field work with Leo or Niels; all the field work was done in close collaboration with the PEDI agronomic unit. My contact with my promotors Leo and Niels was limited to home visits and some e-mails. During his visits, Leo wholeheartedly experienced the Burkina way of life (photo) and trusted the progress of my field work. My husband was a soil scientist, who guided me through the biophysical parts of the model (he even executed the soil mapping needed to get the data for the computer runs), and at my arrival in Wageningen I would receive a '3 months introduction to Erosion, Soil and Water conservation.

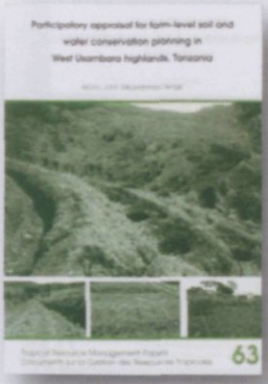
Capacity building requires time and learning but Leo is an excellent teacher, providing support and more importantly space to try things, go your own way and learn-by-doing. The SHARES model incorporated almost 10 years of agronomic research by the Antenne Sahelienne, and it was hoped the model would provide useful advice for more sustainable farm practices in Sanmatenga (higher agricultural production with less soil-loss and N-loss). The MGLP model required less data than more comprehensive models, so it was esteemed to be the ultimate tool for learning and capacity building in land and water management in developing countries. However Leo did not despair when my tests showed that local agricultural staff members had different preoccupations (SHARES answered questions not asked), and farmers assessed the SHARES model as 'irrational'. In his opinion this was science – sometimes there were surprises you had to be critical about it, but deal with in a scientific manner. Science required openness and Leo carefully listened to my story: how I visualized computer results in drawings and diagrams (figure below) to support the discussions with the farmers; how these visualizations of computer runs triggered much discussion amongst farmers about the flaws of the scientific reasoning and incited them to clearly articulate their own reasoning; how this enabled us as experts to better understand the farmers' situation, values and reasoning. In fact this enabled us to 'adapt the model', including farm rationality and preferred farm practices, to make it useful for the future. Rather than a farm decision-support model, the model had served as a communication tool between experts and farmers. It forced agricultural experts to discuss the local rationality with the farmers, before diving into the details of a specific conservation practice. In hindsight we could say, SHARES was primarily a communication and capacity building tool for the agricultural experts rather than the farmers. When this discussion-, mutual understanding- and remodeling phase was executed, the model could become useful for reflection, learning and capacity building regarding sustainable farm practices.



Leo seemed to enjoy the debate on the role of MGLP models for land and water management, did not reject the findings but helped me to remain critical and work structurally to get the job done. We did not meet often, but when we met he always provided useful and to-the-point advice. For my present work as Assistant Professor 'International Communication for Rural Development' at the WUR he certainly serves as a role model.

Annemarie

Albino J. M. Tenge



PhD thesis 2005. *Participatory appraisal for farm-level soil and water conservation planning in West Usambara highlands, Tanzania*

I graduated on 25 April 2005 after being registered as a sandwich PhD student for four years (2000-2005). Professor Leo was the Chair of the group and hence my promoter to PhD. My immediate supervisors were Jan De Graaff and Geert Sterk. Since 2011 I have been privileged again to work with Prof Leo as chair of the LDD group - where I am currently in a Post doc position. My immediate supervisor is Aad Kessler.

During my PhD studies I learned a lot from both supervisors and my promoter. However, for the scope of this article I want to share with you a few things I learned from Professor Leo and how I consider him in my life:

Prof. Leo Congratulating Albino J. M. Tenge.

Academic promoter:

Professor Leo facilitated the promotion of many scholars from developing countries to the rank of PhD. Through his ability the Group was always composed of international students from both developed and developing countries.

Researcher:

Prof Leo was involved in many research projects with his students both in developed and developing countries. From this research he generated extensive knowledge especially in Land and Water Management.

Professor Leo with Research team in Lushoto, Tanzania

Knowledge Sharing:

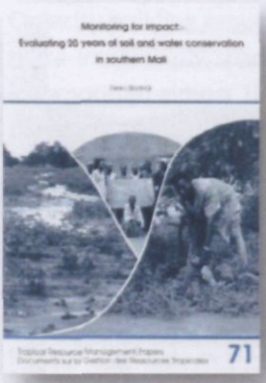
Prof Leo not only generated knowledge through research but also ensured that the generated knowledge reached target audiences for the intended impacts. He presented his work at various international and national conferences, and published his work in different journals, posters, brochures and books. I admire the number of publications he has, and that there is at least one poster all the time in his office or corridor for knowledge dissemination.

Parent:

Prof Leo acted as a parent particularly to international students. At least once per year he invited the group to share different activities outside the office. These were opportunities for understanding and guiding international students through academic situations outside their countries. It was useful and it really worked.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PROF. LEO FOR ALL THESE ACHIEVEMENTS! YOU ARE RETIRING BUT WE STILL NEED YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE!

Tenge



Ferko Bodnar

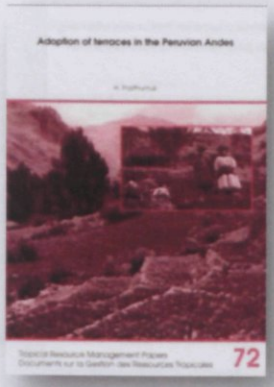
PhD thesis 2005. *Monitoring for impact: evaluating 20 years of soil and water conservation in southern Mali.*
(Promotor: Leo Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Jan de Graaff)

Beste Leo. Bijna met pensioen als professor, dat is zeker een mooie gelegenheid eens een overzicht te maken van waar alle begeleide PhD kandidaten inmiddels terecht zijn gekomen. En, zoals veel PhD studenten erg eigenwijs en vaak laat zijn – en dat kennelijk ook blijven na de promotie, wordt ook dit stukje niet helemaal in het voorgestelde format en pas op de valreep van 2011 aangeleverd. Allereerst ben ik heel blij dat ik mijn PhD heb kunnen doen, en vooral ook dat ik dat na 8 jaar praktisch werk in Malawi en Mali heb mogen doen, en niet direct aansluitend aan mijn MSc. Tegen de trend in om de slimste studenten meteen door te laten stoten via een PhD de tenure track in, ben ik blij dat ik betrokken, uitvoerend werk met meer afstandelijk, beschouwend onderzoek heb kunnen afwisselen – maar goed, ik hoorde dan ook niet bij de slimste studenten. Mijn geluk was dat ik een start met een impact studie in Mali had gemaakt en een doos vol interviews en veldwaarnemingen naar Nederland mee kon nemen dat interessant genoeg leek om verder uit te werken. Via een aantal stage studenten: Janneke van Dijk, Fedde Dijk en Lieselot Smilde, was er al een link via Wim Spaan met de vakgroep. Jan de Graaff en jij durfden het aan hier een jaar 'eerste geld' in te steken. In het veldwerk werd ik onder meer geholpen door MSc student Jasper Hulshof. Zo was het toch voldoende om deze studie in 2005 af te ronden.

Vanaf de laatste loodjes van het proefschrift in 2005 tot 2009 heb ik gewerkt bij Agro Eco, een adviesbureau voor biologische landbouw met een groot programma in Afrika. Daar heb ik vooral geleerd om beter te plannen, en dat een redelijk resultaat op tijd ingeleverd, klanten tevredener stelt dan een 'perfecter' resultaat dat te laat komt. Ik hoor het Leo zich nog afvragen: *'ik weet niet wat het is met vooral de Nederlandse PhD studenten: ze zijn slim genoeg, maar ze onderschatten systematisch wanneer ze iets af denken te hebben'*. Agro Eco werd in 2009 overgenomen door het Louis Bolk Instituut in Driebergen, en in die tijd ging ik me steeds meer toeleggen op ontwikkelingsproject- en programma-evaluaties – opdrachten die ik dankzij een PhD titel redelijk makkelijk binnen wist te halen. In 2010 ging ik als ZZP-er zelfstandig verder. Na een aantal kleinere en grotere evaluaties ben ik nu terechtgekomen bij het IOB in Den Haag, waar ik me bezig ga houden met de evaluatie van het Nederlandse programma op gebied van voedselzekerheid. Ook hier zal de combinatie van de ervaring in projectuitvoering in Afrika met de ervaring in projectevaluatie - waarvan het proefschrift in kwantitatief opzicht de meest grondige was, me zeer van pas komen.

Ferko

Helena Posthumus



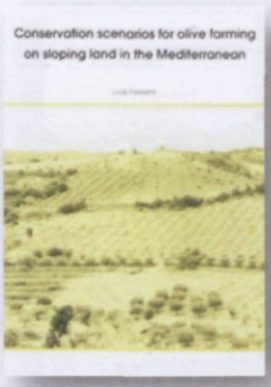
PhD thesis 2005. *Adoption of terraces in the Peruvian Andes*

(Promotors: Prof. Dr. Ir. L. Stroosnijder and Prof. Dr. A. Kuyvenhoven; co-promotors: Dr. Ir. J. De Graaff and Dr. R. Ruben)

I am still grateful for having been given the opportunity to do an interdisciplinary PhD on the socio-economic aspects of soil conservation in Peru. Doing a PhD at two different chair groups (Erosion, Soil and Water Conservation, and Development Economics) at two different research schools, was both a privilege and a challenge. I am still benefitting from this experience. During that period I learned a lot in many different areas: on-farm research, extension and technology transfer, the world of NGOs, farmer participation and their livelihood strategies, working across disciplines as well as across different cultural backgrounds, impact assessment, econometrics, driving a motorcycle, speaking Spanish, and making do with less than ideal research circumstances. A few days after submitting my thesis in June 2005, I left for England to take up a post-doc researcher position at Cranfield University. I was involved in several research projects on agricultural policy, rural land use and flood risk management in the United Kingdom. It was interesting to apply all the concepts, methodologies and insights I had learned during my PhD in a completely different context. I spoke to over 100 farmers across the UK, drinking many cups of tea at kitchen tables; and their views on the world and their farms are really not that different from the Peruvian farmers I had spoken to. After a few years I wanted to return to research on natural resource management and development in developing countries. Since January 2009 I am working at the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Greenwich in England as a senior research fellow. My skills and experiences are still very useful and much appreciated by colleagues. In 2011 I was awarded the Early Career Researcher Excellence Award of the University of Greenwich. I continue working on interdisciplinary research projects that use integrated approaches for sustainable agricultural and rural development. My current projects cover a wide range of topics including linking smallholder farmers to markets, conservation agriculture, impact of Fairtrade schemes, innovation platforms and ecosystem services. This versatility in research activities can be traced back to my PhD training, and I hope to continue these diverse but interesting research activities for many years to come.

Observing terraces with potato with farmers in Pacucha, Peru

Helena



Luuk Fleskens

PhD thesis 2007. *Conservation scenarios for olive farming on sloping land in the Mediterranean*

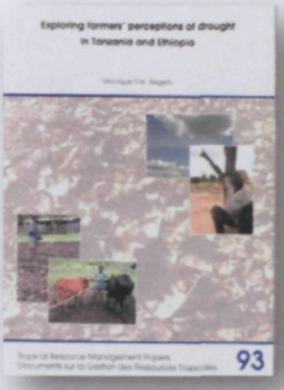
(Promotor: Prof. dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor Dr. ir. Jan de Graaff)

After growing up in Paramaribo, Suriname, which marked my interest in geography, ecology and development, I embarked upon the MSc Programme Tropical Land Use at Wageningen University in 1992. It is here that I first met Leo lecturing Introduction to Soil and Water Conservation. I became interested in this field and combined a practical period on soil nutrient balances and a thesis research on erosion and its perception by farmers in Nampula, Mozambique organized through the then ESW group (1996). After graduating in 1997 I returned to Nampula to combine living with Carla (at the time my girlfriend and a year later my wife) and setting up a private consultancy business. My studies proved to be of much value and from 1998 to 2000 I provided services to many (inter-)national (N)GO's and Dutch bilateral development projects. I returned to the ESW group in 2000 to work as project officer on two EU-funded research projects on water harvesting in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (AWACAD), and Morocco and Tunisia (WAHIA). I had an embarrassing moment when I overslept on a day when an early flight to a project meeting required us to take a taxi to Schiphol. Leo rang the doorbell at 5 in the morning and I had to ashamedly apologise for being late – it helped that the taxi driver had hilariously managed to get a flat tyre driving up the pavement in front of my home. Upon ending these projects, Leo contracted me as assistant professor to give lectures, supervise students and for project acquisition. I co-wrote the OLIVERO project proposal that was selected for funding by the EU (€1.5 million) and formed the smooth transition to a position as researcher (2003-2007). Apart from being involved in day-to-day project coordination, I completed my PhD on the basis of the ideas developed during the project. Meanwhile I also continued lecturing, and supervised final theses of 11 MSc students. Before defending my PhD, Leo facilitated a consultancy for the IFDC Catalyst project in Rwanda to prioritize rural public works interventions for agricultural intensification. I truly enjoyed my 7 years at the ESW/LDD group and looking back I appreciate Leo's very efficient management of staff meetings, inspiring ideas for and discussions about projects and my PhD, and last but not least the great social events and regular outings, also for partners. After spending a less fortunate year in Eritrea in 2008, I moved on to the University of Leeds, where I now work as a lecturer in environmental change, further developing integrated environmental models for sustainable land management, supervising PhD students, and – no doubt based on the ESW experience – a so far successful track record in obtaining research funding.


OLIVERO project meeting Matera 2004

Luuk

Monique Slegers



PhD thesis 2008. *Farmer's perceptions of drought in Tanzania and Ethiopia*

(Promotor Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; copromotor Dr.ir. J. de Graaff)

My first contact with the LDD Group (then ESW Group) was in 2000. At that time I was a Rural Development Sociology (RDS) student and had taken a few ESW courses. I was working on a research proposal for my thesis and had the idea of performing a sociological research about soil and water conservation (SWC) practices. Therefore I came into contact with Leo Stroosnijder. It appeared that my thesis proposal about land tenure security and the adoption of SWC measures was a relevant issue in Ethiopia and a topic of interest for the ESW Group. So, early in 2001 I went to Ethiopia, a country I fell in love with. I was hosted by the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organisation (EARO) and stayed at the district field office in Debre Zeit. Three of Leo Stroosnijder's (former) Ethiopian PhD students Teklu Erkossa, Selamyihun Kidanu and Woldeamlak Bewket, facilitated the fieldwork that I performed in their study areas Ginchi and Chemoga. At more than 80 pages my thesis was much too long according to typical ESW standards. But considering that I was a sociology student it was accepted, and even reeived a high grade. The results of the fieldwork were also published as a chapter in the PhD thesis of Selamyihun kidanu.

After graduation, November 2001, I worked for some years in Tilburg at an accounting firm. After a year there I considered pursuing my PhD and consulted both the RDS Group and the ESW Group. Leo Stroosnijder was the most concrete and offered me a part time position for one year as a junior researcher. This enabled me to work out PhD proposals among others on the subject of drought perceptions. In 2003, the day before Christmas, Leo phoned me with good news. He offered me a PhD position which I started in April 2004. We decided that my fieldwork would be done in Tanzania and Ethiopia. However, first I performed a short pilot study about drought perceptions in Burkina Faso together with Robert Zougmoré. Altogether I spent one and a half years in the field and performed sociological as well as biophysical fieldwork (see pictures). Especially the biophysical part gave me occasional headaches, but Leo always had good advice for such troubles and for writer's blocks: just take a few glasses of wine and then it will come.

Fieldwork in Goima area, Tanzania (2006)

Just before my PhD defense on 7 November 2008, I started working for the national research programme Knowledge for Climate (Kennis voor Klimaat). I work there as a scientific project coordinator. The research programme will finish by the end of 2014.

Monique

Nadia Jones

PhD candidate (2009-2013). *Impact assessment of land use policies on agro-ecosystem goods and services, desertification and rural livelihoods in Portugal*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Dr.ir. J. de Graaff)

Three years after graduation and after a few collaborations in national research projects at my home University (Technical University of Lisbon), I had the chance to participate as a researcher in a large research project on the sustainability of olive farming (OLIVERO). From 2003-2006 I was then involved in data collection and analysis for the socio-economic work block, as well as in the adaptation of the methodological guidelines and result communication in project meetings, seminars and publications. Leo held the main coordination role and for me it was quite an experience to witness the perfect blend of the different views that he made out of each meeting in a very efficient and beautifully discreet manner. That encouraged all of us to give our best.

After the end of the project in 2006 and in the two subsequent years, I continued collaborating on research projects in the same field. During that period I was asked to assist in two courses in agricultural economics in Cape Verde and East Timor. Although these two experiences were quite far apart, geographically and in terms of the deliverables, they made me realise that teaching was something that I would like to do in the future and so I started to prospect for PhD options. Shortly thereafter I learned that Leo and LDD group were offering a PhD position in the field of policy impact assessment in the framework of a very large research project on desertification (DESIRE).

Together with the LDD team we improved a research proposal that was positively appraised and with FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia) funding I could embark on my PhD research. In the past three years I have been working on data collection and analysis in two research areas for the assessment of desertification mitigation measures in Portugal. In my first year Leo told me that he hoped I would do a similar job to what I had delivered within OLIVERO... In the end I hope to honour this through the fine art of blending.

Nadia

Zenebe Adimassu

PhD Candidate. *Towards sustainable land management in the central rift valley of Ethiopia: Exploring the potential of co-investments*

(Promotor: Prof.dr.ir. L. Stroosnijder; co-promotor: Dr.ir. A. Kessler)

I obtained my first degree (B.Sc.) in soil and water conservation from Mekele University (Ethiopia) on the 3rd of July 1999. Immediately after my graduation, I was employed by the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) as a junior researcher in the department of soil and water management based at Holeta Agricultural Research Center. I became involved in several projects, particularly in soil and water conservation related research. In September 2003, I joined the Erosion & Soil and Water Conservation group (later named Land Degradation and Development (LDD)) of Wageningen University and Research Center (WUR) for my second degree (MSc). My MSc was fully sponsored by the Netherlands organization for international cooperation for higher education (NUFFIC). It was at that time that I saw Professor Leo Stroosnijder for the first time. I successfully completed my MSc in May 2005. After returning to Ethiopia, I again joined EIAR and was assigned as an associate researcher in land management at watershed scale. I was also assigned to coordinate the African Highlands Initiative programme (Galessa, Ethiopia), an eco-regional program of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and a network of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) hosted by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

Zenebe during focus group discussion with farmers

After three years, in September 2008, I entered the PhD program of Land Degradation and Development at WUR supervised by Professor Leo Stroosnijder and Dr. Aad Kessler. Since then I have been conducting research on "Towards sustainable land management in the central rift valley of Ethiopia: Exploring the potential of co-investments", which is the subject of my PhD thesis. The research is funded by WUR through the ILCE (Improving livelihoods and resource management in the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia) project. In general, I am very happy working with Professor Leo Stroosnijder and the LDD research group.

Zenebe

SUPPORT

Marnella van der Tol

Secretaresse LDD groep 2008 -

Maart 2012

Beste Leo,

Al weer bijna 4 jaar maak ik deel uit van de LDD groep, op 14 juli 2008 'bestormde' ik het Atlasgebouw. Ik heb er geen dag spijt van. LDD is een leuke groep mensen, dat komt mede door de leiding. De leiding bepaald de sfeer en daarvoor dank ik je hartelijk.

Ik wens je een goede tijd toe, veel plezier en gezondheid.

Marnella

En natuurlijk, bedankt voor alle bloemen

LDD groep op bezoek

Demie Moore

Guest worker, Communication Advisor, Researcher

When I first arrived at WUR (July 2009) – I'm pretty sure Leo didn't really know what to make of me. Fortunately I started out sharing an office with Zacharie Zida and at some point offered to review the English in one of his papers. I think that's when Leo first got some idea that I had some interest and abilities – other than soil water repellency.

Some time later a group of PhD students from several African countries, including Jack from Mali and Edmond from Benin, needed some additional "training" before taking the TOEFL exam – and Leo asked if I would spend some time with them. Although never having heard of TOEFL, I agreed. And that, as the poet Robert Frost would say, "...made all the difference."[1] That was the beginning of working more with Leo, and other LDD staff members, to support and assist various PhD candidates along the path to their (and Leo's!) ultimate goal for their time at WUR.

Since that time – there have been papers, thesis introductions and syntheses, propositions, presentations, coaching in that other English exam (IELTS) as well, a few things even for Leo himself, and serving along with Jan de Graaf as Zida's paranymph, as well as collaboration on a synthesis paper for the session at the Wageningen Conference on Applied Soil Science, which Leo chaired. And it continues...

June 2011 – Goodbye party for Xiaomei and Jianxia. There's Leo, 3rd from left, and I am on the far right in front.

There was also TUNEX 2010! Leo came along one day and asked if I spoke some French. When I answered yes, he asked if I'd like to accompany a student excursion to Tunisia and help with translation (French, English and Dutch). Of course I said yes – and what an experience! Recently I tallied up the number of students I've had the privilege to work with thanks to Leo's direct or indirect suggestion - more than 50.

Leo's dedication to his students – especially the foreign students - regarding their PhD program *and* their experience of being in Nederland is a real trademark – and probably contributed to my "recruitment". Leo told me once that his first PhD student was French speaking – and therefore wrote his thesis in French. How times have changed, and how professors and students have had to adapt. Congratulations on all that you have accomplished Leo, and thanks for the opportunities to contribute.

Beste wensen en veel plezier in je toekomst! Demie

[1] The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

Jolanda Hendriks-Ruisbroek

2003–2005 Parttime management assistent, leerstoelgroep Erosie- en Bodem en Waterconservering. Wageningen Universiteit

Het is al een paar jaar geleden dat we elkaar gezien hebben. Voordat ik op mijn huidige werkplek terecht kwam (Leerstoelgroep Educatie en Competentie op de Leeuwenborch) , ben ik nog even binnengewandeld in het Atlas gebouw. Dirk stond op het punt om met pensioen te gaan en we zagen elkaar eventjes. Nu ben jij aan de beurt om te genieten van je welverdiende pensioen.

Ik herinner me vooral de goede onderlinge sfeer tussen de medewerkers.
Een leuk, hecht team dat werkzaam was op de Nieuwlanden. Met een eigen koffiehoek waar Dirk en ik zorgden voor de koekjes bij de koffie.

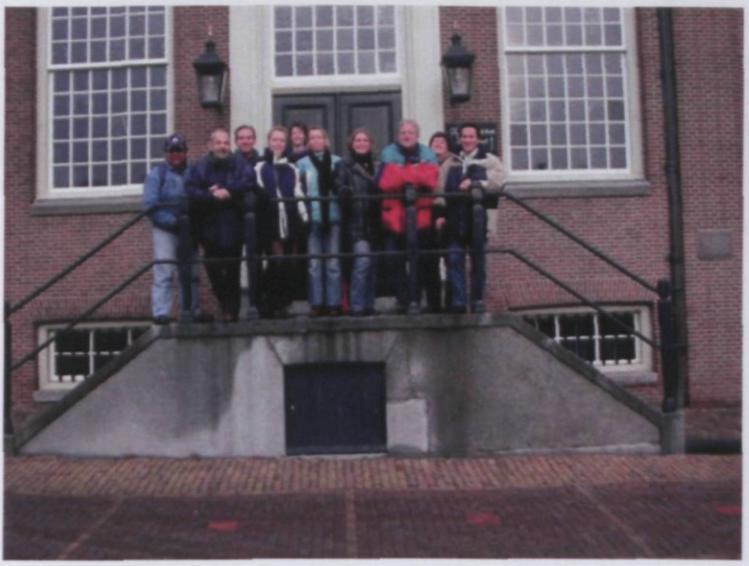
We hebben behalve hard te werken ook een paar leuke uitstapjes gemaakt. Een groepsuitje naar de geboorteplaats van Anton en een fietstocht naar Rhenen waar we gebowld en een wandeling gemaakt hebben onder de deskundige leiding van een gids van Stichting de Greb. Waar bleef die gids toch? Na een half uur bleek hij op het parkeerterrein van de Grebbeberg te staan. Op de militaire begraafplaats was het niet rustig. De gids was amper te verstaan door al het voorbijrazende verkeer. Daarna geluncht en gebowld.

Het was zeer prettig om onder jouw leiding gewerkt te hebben.

Geniet en pluk de dag!

Groetjes van de je oud secretaresse

Jolanda



Rina Anthonijsz

werkzaam bij de leerstoelgroep ESW van 1 februari 2008 t/m 1 april 2009

Beste Leo,

Mijn eerste kennismaking met de Universiteit was bij de leerstoelgroep bodemerosie.

Het sollicitatie gesprek vond plaats in een wat 'oud' gebouw. Mijn eerste werkdag was in het Atlas. Inmiddels was men binnen ESG ook met een nieuwe werkstructuur begonnen, de Unit Beheer. Naast secretaresse van de leerstoelgroep maakte ik ook deel uit van de Unit Beheer en gaf ik 8 uur ondersteuning aan de leerstoelgroep bodemkwaliteit. Je vroeg me om mijn uren bij te houden om er zeker van te zijn dat de 16 uur die ik werkte voor bodemerosie die uren ook daadwerkelijk maakte. De unit beheer vond je maar niets. Ook dat de koffiepauzes op het secretariaat werden gehouden met de medewerkers van de Unit beheer vond je maar niets, dat zou studenten afschrikken om binnen te lopen. Er werd veel gepraat over de Unit Beheer en alle veranderingen die dat met zich meebracht. Over de veranderingen kon ik niet meepraten, wel dat het werken binnen de Unit Beheer ook mijn voorkeur niet had.

Tot één van mijn taken behoorde nieuwe Phd studenten begeleiden bij het inschrijven bij de gemeente en bank. Omdat ik zelf geen auto bij me had die dag, mocht ik jouw auto lenen. Helaas was het die dag overal bijzonder druk en kwam ik een uur later terug dan gepland, je stond al buiten te wachten, want je had een afspraak en had al lang weg moeten zijn.

Je hield niet van overleggen. In het begin nam je de tijd om mij zaken betreffende de Universiteit uit te leggen, die overleggen werden al snel korter en op een gegeven waren ze verdwenen. Ook het tweewekelijkse werkoverleg met de stafmedewerkers waren efficiënt en vonden in een hoog tempo plaats, ik kon het notuleren maar net bijhouden. Des te meer heb ik het op prijs gesteld dat je wat tijd wilde vrij maken om mijn vragen te beantwoorden t.b.v. mijn opleiding bedrijfskunde.

Bodemerosie was een hechte groep , waar ik al snel werd opgenomen. Ik denk dan ook met plezier terug aan de koffiepauzes en de uitjes met de groep.

Ik hoop dat je nog lang in goede gezondheid mag genieten van je vrije tijd.

Groetjes,

Rina

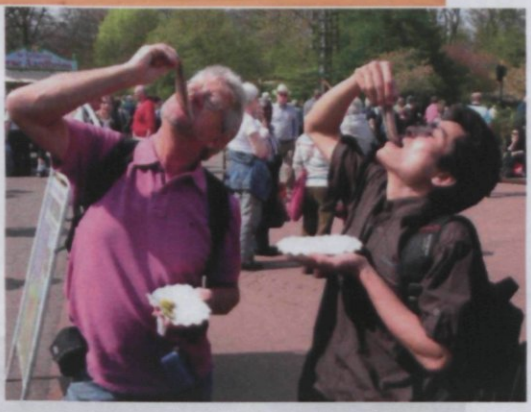
DESSERT

We will miss Leo as leader

We will miss Leo as teacher

We will miss Leo as Promotor

We will miss Leo and his social events

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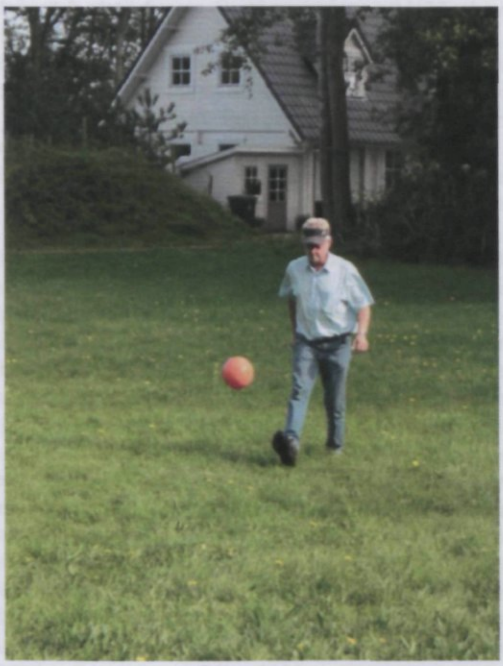
We will miss Leo for all his other talents

Imitation Dr. Clavan



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Academic Training in Land Degradation and Development (1990-2012)

Land is life's fundamental resource base: it provides us with all the products we need and the environment to live in. Much of our land however is not used in a sustainable way, often resulting in land degradation. Soil erosion for example causes a loss of about 10 million hectares of arable land each year. Particularly in arid and semi-arid regions desertification increasingly forces the people to migrate elsewhere. Recent climate change has worsened this situation. Given the high impact of land degradation on poverty and food security, combating the root causes of bad land management has recently received major attention in the Millennium Development Goals. The Land Degradation and Development (LDD) group, formerly Erosion and Soil & Water Conservation (ESW) group, is involved in the BSc en MSc programmes International Land and Water Management of Wageningen University. Though Wageningen offers an academic study program our focus is on the design of solutions for real world problems. That is why we have incorporated excursions and field work in the study programmes: excursions to Limburg and Tunisia plus an internship abroad in the BSc and a field practical in Spain followed by thesis research abroad in the MSc. The students also acquire a great number of skills, ranging from literature retrieval and writing skills for research, to measurements, design and project planning. In this way they are ready for jobs in research, education, consultancy and policy. Every year the group teaches about 45 BSc and 40 MSc students. A PhD-study in Land Degradation and Development at Wageningen University consists mainly of research and takes four years. There are two options: (1) Four years in Wageningen and (2) A sandwich construction; consisting of two times six month in Wageningen in the beginning and at the end of the study and in between three years of field research at the PhD's home institute. The sandwich construction not only provides PhD-training but also strengthens the local research capacity. From 1990-2012 Leo has been the promoter of about 60 PhD students. For more information see the website: www.ldd.wur.nl.

This booklet gives an impression about the importance of this academic training for the careers of former and present LDD staff and PhD students, and the role Leo Stroosnijder has played in that.

Education Académique en Dégradation et Développement des Terres (1990-2012)

La terre est la ressource fondamentale de la vie. Elle nous fournit l'environnement et tous les produits dont nous avons besoin. Cependant, une grande partie de la terre n'est pas utilisée de manière durable, ce qui conduit souvent à la dégradation des sols. L'érosion cause une perte d'environ 10 millions d' ha par an de terre cultivable. Dans les régions arides et semi-arides, la désertification force de plus en plus la population à émigrer. Récemment cette situation a empiré avec le changement de climat. Etant donné l' impact de la dégradation de la terre sur la pauvreté et la sécurité alimentaire, le combat contre le mauvais aménagement des terres a obtenu récemment beaucoup d'attention dans les « Millennium Development Goals ». Le Groupe « Land Degradation and Development » (LDD), avant appelé « Erosion and Soil & Water Conservation » (ESW) est engagé dans les programmes BSc et MSc « International Land and Water Management » de l'Université de Wageningen. Bien que Wageningen offre un programme d'études académiques on se concentre plutôt sur des projets pour résoudre les problèmes réels mondiaux. C'est pour cela qu'on a incorporé des excursions et du travail sur le terrain: excursions à Limburg, en Tunisie et des stages à l'étranger dans le BSc, et du travail sur le terrain en Espagne ainsi que de la recherche à l'étranger dans le MSc. Les étudiants acquièrent ainsi un grand nombre d'habilités depuis la recherche et l'écriture scientifique jusqu' à la prise de mesures, dessins et planification de projets. De cette façon ils sont prêts à assumer des postes dans la recherche, l'éducation, la consultation et la politique. Chaque année le groupe enseigne à environ 45 étudiants BSc et 40 MSc. Une étude PhD dans le domaine de la Dégradation et du Développement des Terres à l'Université de Wageningen consiste principalement en recherche et dure quatre ans. Il y a deux options: (1) Quatre ans à Wageningen, et (2) une « construction sandwich » composée de deux fois six mois à Wageningen au début et à la fin des études, et entre-temps trois ans de recherche sur le terrain à l'Institut d'origine. La « construction sandwich » ne fournit pas seulement l'éducation PhD, mais renforce aussi la capacité de recherche locale. Entre 1990 et 2012 Leo a été le promoteur d'environ 60 étudiants PhD. Pour de plus amples informations, voir le web: www.ldd.wur.nl

Ce document montre l' importance de l'éducation académique pour les carrières des anciens et nouveaux cadres et étudiants PhD du groupe LDD, ainsi que le grand rôle que Leo Stroosnijder y a joué.

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