Development and Organisational Practice: Ethnography at the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists have analysed development from several angles: some have critiqued development on the grounds that it is a modernising project, while others have sought to understand relationships between actors in development work and proposed alternative methods of pursuing development. Rarely however, have anthropologists "studied up" within organisations to analyse the practices and cultures of this 'community of experts'. This research provides an insider's perspective on the 'lived experienced' of employees of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), based on having worked as a consultant for FAO's Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) with permission to conduct this research. The LSP aimed at 'mainstreaming' livelihoods approaches in FAO, and may be considered as an exercise in alternative development. This ethnography deconstructs the idea of 'one FAO', revealing the many "disjunctures" inherent to the organisational structure and the diversity of practitioners employed at HQ and in the field. This aim is achieved through focusing on two themes: a) the complexity and compartmentalisation of the organisation, depicting the organisational context within which employees work; and b) the agency of some professionals who undertake initiatives beyond their prescribed scope of work. Using ethnographic information and empirical observation, this research reports on the heterogeneity of the interactions of employees with FAO's organisational structure. With attention to charismatic, networking and experienced practitioners, the research highlights that professionals are not 'only' experts: while achieving their tasks, development workers contribute not only their technical knowledge, but also their experience, networking skills and personalities. The research confirms that the 'structure' itself does not produce work and that the agency and interactions of FAO personnel affect the organisation's work. The capacity of practitioners to deploy agency depends on three interrelated factors: a) their positions and statuses within FAO; b) their capacity to use both formal and informal channels; c) their ability to assume leadership and gather a group of interested individuals around a

cause. This dissertation proposes that their practice and agency combined with the complexity and the scale of the organisation need to be taken into account in constructing an anthropological critique of development work.

Keywords: anthropology of development, alternative development, organisational culture, FAO, livelihoods approaches, practice theory, ethnography.

RÉSUMÉ

Les anthropologues ont analysé le développement sous plusieurs angles : certains l'ont critiqué pour être un projet moderniste, alors que d'autres ont voulu mieux comprendre les relations entre les acteurs du monde du développement et ont proposé des moyens alternatifs de faire du développement. Rarement les anthropologues ont étudié «vers le haut», à l'intérieur même des organisations de développement, afin d'analyser les pratiques et les cultures de cette «communauté d'experts». Ma recherche offre une perspective interne sur «l'expérience vécue» par les employés de l'Organisation pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture des Nations Unies (FAO), après avoir travaillé au sein du *Livelihoods Support Programme*. Ce programme avait pour but d'intégrer les «*livelihoods approaches*» dans les pratiques de la FAO, et peut être considéré comme une approche alternative de développement. Cette ethnographie déconstruit l'idée '*d'une* FAO', en révélant la présence de nombreuse «dis-jonctions» appartenant à la structure organisationnelle ainsi que la grande variété des professionnels employés au siège social et sur le terrain. Deux thèmes sont au cœur de l'étude : a) la complexité et la compartimentation inhérentes à l'organisation et b) le pouvoir d'agir (*agency*) des professionnels qui entreprennent des initiatives en plus de leur travail quotidien. L'ethnographie et l'expérience empirique ont permis de documenter l'hétérogénéité des interactions des employés avec la structure organisationnelle. Ainsi, la recherche démontre que les professionnels – charismatiques, au centre de réseaux sociaux et expérimentés – ne sont pas

seulement des «experts» : en plus de leur savoir technique, ils ont également recours à leur expérience, à leurs réseaux, et à leur personnalité. Elle confirme que la 'structure' elle-même n'est pas productive et que le pouvoir d'agir et les interactions quotidiennes des employés affectent le travail de l'organisation. Leur pouvoir d'agir dépend de trois facteurs inter-reliés : a) leur position et statut à la FAO; b) leur utilisation du formel et de l'informel et c) leur 'leadership' et leur capacité de rassembler des individus autour d'une cause commune. La recherche propose que la pratique et le pouvoir d'agir des professionnels, combinés à la complexité de l'organisation, doivent être pris en compte dans la construction d'une critique anthropologique du développement.

Mots-clés: anthropologie du développement, développement alternatif, culture organisationnelle, FAO, moyens d'existence durables, participation, théorie de la pratique, ethnographie.

À Guillaume pour l'amour,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Development and Organisational Practice: Ethnography at the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(In alphabetical order)

APO	Associate Professional Officer
BTOR	Back-to-Office Report
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DG	Director General
ECHA	Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
EDF	European Development Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FAO-HQ	FAO – Headquarters (Rome)
FAO-R	FAO Representation
ICCARD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IEE	Independent External Evaluation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIED	International Institute or Environment and Development
IWG-PA	Informal Working Group on Participation
LSP	Livelihoods Support Programme
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PCA	People-Centered Approaches
PCT	Programme Coordination Team
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal

SARD	Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development
SLAs	Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches
SP	Sub-programme (generally an LSP sub-programme)
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCCARD	World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

INTRODUCTION

EXPLORING DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE AT FAO

> *"The fragility of crucially important international institutions provides good enough reason to seek a better understanding of their working".*
> *(Mosse 2008a:25)*

INTRODUCTION TO AND AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Hunger is the leading cause of death in the world, killing directly or indirectly 36 million people every year, that is, 100 000 people a day (Ziegler 2002:53). Currently, 1.02 billion people live in food insecure situations, perhaps representing the "highest level of chronically hungry people since 1970" (FAO 2009:11).[1] The main cause of food insecurity by far is poverty, caused by a range of inter-related factors: the lack of purchasing power, and weak or inadequate infrastructure such as health care and educational systems (Collomb 1999; McGovern 2003; Sachs 2005; Ziegler 2002, 2005). Among the organisations established to contend with global food insecurity, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) was created in the aftermath of WW II with the mandate "to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy" (FAO website 2007). FAO was created in 1945, as the leading international organisation regarding food and agriculture and since then has attempted to raise levels of food security through providing technical expertise on the formulation of policy, the initiation of new strategies of food production, and the design and implementation of projects of agricultural development[2].

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[1] This number takes into account the victims of the 2008 food crisis.
[2] In FAO's constitution, the term "agriculture" refers to "agriculture and its derivatives including fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products" (FAO 2000a).

At the end of the 1980s, the worldwide food security situation seemed promising. Developing countries generally had increased their food production (Valdés and Siamwalla 1981), while the number of hunger victims was decreasing. "…941 million people were undernourished in 1969-71, 843 million in 1979-81, and 781 million in 1988-90" (Collomb 1999:30; free translation). In parallel, worldwide food availability more than doubled between 1950 and 1990 (*ibid*: 19). However, since the beginning of the 1990s, global food insecurity has mounted: between 1992 and 1999, an additional 40 million people were found to be food insecure (Maïga 2003:7), even as current worldwide food production has increased to the point that it could potentially feed up to twice the actual global population, according to Ziegler (2002, 2005). Food insecurity thus stems not from an actual shortfall in world food production but from inadequacies in food distribution and lack of accessibility of food resources for poorer populations (Collomb 1999; Sen 1999; Ziegler 2002, 2005). When compared to global population growth, the proportion of food insecure people has remained similar to that of the beginning of the 1990s, with some important regional variations (FAO 2004a). Many specialists agree that in the face of an increasing worldwide population and global environmental degradation, which can only exacerbate the problem, achieving food security in the context of sustainable development becomes an urgent priority (Collomb 1999; Klatzmann 1991; Lappé *et al* 1998; Sachs 2005, Young 1997).

Arguably, while the existence of FAO has not prevented declines in food security, FAO alone cannot be held responsible for the global persistence of food insecurity. By definition, an agency of the United Nations such as FAO works with its member-states, so its achievements depend on many factors outside the organisation's control (markets, trade agreements, natural disasters, politics, etc.). In addition, numerous other agencies and organisations of development work in the agricultural sector, such as the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Consultative Group on International

Agricultural Research (CGIAR)[3] and bilateral agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), while others are dedicated to food aid, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM). The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is responsible for negotiating global trade relations between countries, which influence national and international food security. Nonetheless, FAO remains the central agency addressing technical issues pertaining to agriculture, preserving and generating impressive quantities of data, employing numerous qualified experts, and able to identify and respond to urgent food insecure situations. FAO also constitutes a forum of international voices, in particular those of its 192 member-states (see Appendix 1), who meet at least once a year to discuss food insecurity and problems related to agriculture.

It is precisely because of FAO's role as the lead agency working on food security that I chose to study this organisation. My initial intention was to look at FAO's impact on global food insecurity – nothing less! –, but the complexity of the issue would require a large team of professionals armed with decent funding and… a lifetime! Indeed, underlying this problematic are many layers of 'complexity': the complexity of the problem of hunger and food insecurity itself within each country (i.e. including a panoply of specific trade agreements and political systems), the complexity of the architecture of organisations dealing with agriculture and development, the complexity of development practitioners themselves, and the complexity within FAO itself, considering the compartmentalisation of its domains of activity. It took time to decide how to grapple with only a part of "the complex nature of the development world" (Stirrat 2000:33).

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[3] CGIAR is in fact an alliance of 15 research centers dedicated to very particular topics. For example, these centers include ILRI – the International Livestock Research Institute, IRRI – the International Rice Research Institute and IWMI – the International Water Management Institute, to name a few. The results of their research are often used at FAO (CGIAR website, http://www.cgiar.org, April 2008).

Although my interest in food security and concern with social justice with respect to "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, […] and the fundamental right [of] everyone to be free from hunger" (Rome Declaration on World Food Security 1996:1, FAO Website 2007) remained my underlying motivation in carrying out this research, I have turned my attention to the professionals working at FAO. My approach to tackling the complexity described above was to shed light, through an ethnographic approach, on the nature of professional practice pursued at FAO: Why are development professionals interested in working at FAO and in the development of food and agriculture? How do they pursue their aims and goals within the parameters and constraints of the organisation? How do employees integrate their professional aspirations and their responsibilities to the organisation, while carrying out their activities? What kind of "disjunctures[4]" between their ambitions and the pragmatics of their work do they deal with and attempt to reconcile (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003)?

One of the reasons for this choice was that, once in FAO, I found little discussion of 'food security' or 'development[5]' *per se*, although food security is the very *leitmotif* of the existence of the organisation and runs as a sub-text through all of its activities (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995; Li 2007; Mosse 2005a). As a result, the issue of food security is rarely examined explicitly, except by a limited number of professionals who work in specific units of the organisation, and except on occasions when the definition or essence of food security becomes a central focus. Generally, however, everyone at FAO directly or indirectly works for or on food (in)security, through such channels as policy advising, emergency responses, programme and project design and implementation, and through a variety of themes and sub-themes related to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

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[4] Quarles van Ufford et al (2003:3) have discussed the concept of "disjunctures", which they define as "incompatibilities or contradictions, both in the daily routines of development and in its macro contexts" which are experienced by development professionals.

[5] "Development" is henceforth understood as 'development intervention'. There is a distinction between development – which can occur in spite of government policy or 'international development projects and programmes' – and development as planned interventions conducted by governments, the UN, bilateral agencies and, grassroots organisations, etc., which are the focus of anthropological critiques of development.

Hence, discussion mostly focuses on themes that define modes of action, rather than on the major objectives that frame FAO's mandate, i.e. food security and development. In a way, the overarching concepts that define FAO's *raison d'être* can be compared to the "collective unconscious" of a social group (Bourdieu 1990:146), in this case the professionals of FAO.

Some anthropological critiques of development depict practitioners working in international organisations as having the negative effect of spreading western values and capitalism[6] (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Shrestra 1995). Moreover, whenever attention was placed on 'development experts', discussion typically focused on their work and the 'technical knowledge' pertinent to the problem at hand (Crewe 1997; Li 2007; Mosse 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Rew 1997). Rather than remain content with the somewhat monolithic view of the 'expert', I sought to find out more about their personal attributes and talents beyond their expertise, and about their perceptions of development work. I was interested in how the estimated 4000 employees of FAO put into practice their "will to improve" the world (Li 2007), often through poverty alleviation, and in elucidating whether they were conscious of the system of global power relations they were a part of (Escobar 1995; Giddens 1984)[7]. I aimed to understand the nuances regarding the aspirations and values of the professionals working at FAO, and to better understand how they interact with the organizational system in which they work. This goal responds to a call for "setting aside self-representations of bureaucratic rationality in order to uncover more of the inner workings of development agencies" (Lewis and Mosse 2006a:3)[8].

"Development" has been identified by some as a morally questionable and even "colonialist" endeavour (Esteva 1992; Marglin 1990; Sachs 1992), and those who

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[6] Many authors have discussed the relation between the development process and the imposition of western values and capitalism: Crush 1995; Escobar 1995a; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Marglin 1990; Rist 1997; Sachs 1992; Staudt 1991; Tucker 1999; Williams 1978.
[7] Like Mosse, I take distance with the idea that he attributes to Ferguson of "a micro-physics of power occurring entirely beyond the intelligence of actors (Ferguson 1994) – a world of duped perpetrators and victims of development" (2005b:19).
[8] The research follows the work of a few authors: Cernea and Kassam (2006), Crewe (1997), Harrison (2003), Li (2007) and Mosse (2003; 2005a; 2006; 2008b), among others.

participate in development project as equally morally problematic. For example, Sachs (1992:4) stated that the purpose of his edited book was to "disable the development professional by tearing apart the conceptual foundations of his routines". In fact, the debate Sachs (1992) was raising mostly revolved around the question of whether or not anthropologists had a legitimate role to play in development, and whether they should accept employment by development organisations. In contrast, other anthropologists advocated an "engaged anthropology" (Cernea 1995; Gow 2002; Smith 1999), arguing that the presence of anthropologists or social scientists in organisations of development was crucial to keeping the organisations closer to the needs of the poor (Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Eyben 2000; Gardner and Lewis 2000; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998).

But I quickly found that few social scientists, let alone anthropologists, were employed by FAO, when compared to those with technical expertise[9]. Since the development industry is a highly professionalised and institutionalised system, as pointed out by Escobar (1991:666), most development specialists, at least in the case of FAO, operate in very specific scientific fields, of agriculture, fisheries or forestry, which are in turn related to soil, animal, plant, or nutritional sciences, etc. In contrast, social scientists more often play the role of 'generalists', occupying positions of coordination or management, pursuing surveys and analyses, needs assessments, evaluations, etc. I thus found that the focus of some of the anthropological literature on the legitimacy of anthropologists' participation in development was highly reductionist and simplistic, and as a result I became increasingly interested in how the 'ensemble' of actors in development organisations coordinated their aims and their practical activities.

The debate over the legitimacy and efficacy of engaged anthropology is but one strand in the many other passionate debates on development in the anthropological literature. In attempting to move from critique to action, some

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[9] The term 'expert' is used in this thesis, as in the context of FAO, to designate someone with a particular expertise and knowledge.

have sought to understand the interaction between grassroots organisations and "project beneficiaries" and projects of development, proposing participatory and empowering methods of pursuing development (Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Green 1986; Peet and Hartwick 1999; Peters 2000, among others). Among these, some have argued that a greater inclusion of social scientists in development organisations can make a constructive difference (Brohman 1996; Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; McGee 2002; Woost 1997).

Some anthropologists have also focused on the complex interactions of development, examining the relationships between development professionals, local actors, donors and national government staff, as well as the interplay between theory and practice, and policy and intervention (Crewe 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Ferguson 1997; Harrison 2003; Li 2007; Mosse 2005a; Rew 1997). Within this trend, I attend specifically to development professionals and to the organisational and personal challenges they face. I have chosen to "study up" in FAO, a major development organisation targeting food security, inspired in part by Nader's project of studying "the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty" (Nader 1999:289). Accordingly, this thesis looks at the life of the professional elite – mainly transnational, cosmopolitan, and global – working at the FAO, an agency within the United Nations system, itself a "loosely connected plurality of elite organizations, ringed by particular institutional environments" (Marcus 1983:12). My research did not focus on the higher administrative decision-making level in FAO, to which in any case I did not have access, but rather explored the "lived realities" (Long 2001) of the professionals and the institutional 'space' within which they carried out their official tasks or undertook professional initiatives beyond or in addition to their formal duties.

This internal perspective on the "practice of everyday life" (de Certeau 1984) allowed me to 'unpack' the diversity of development workers, to explore the many

lived "disjunctures" they professionally and personally face (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003:4), situating the realm of 'expertise' within an understanding of the agentive human beings who, as 'experts', are the wielders of technical knowledge[10] (Li 2007). This includes consideration of their goals and visions, their personality traits, their relations to and perceptions of their own work and of that of their colleagues, of the organisation, and of their working conditions at FAO-HQ and in the field.

In other words, this research offers a multi-sited overview of development experts involved in the compartmentalised and complex world of FAO, revealing the constant and diversified mediation processes that occur between organisational structure, common sense, and what Li (2007) calls the "will to improve". In doing so, this thesis contributes to ongoing theoretical discussions in the anthropology of development regarding the interactions between the agency of employed professionals and the organisational structures within which they work. With reference to his applied research in India, Mosse (2008:123) described his aim of creating "space *within* programming worlds for anthropology's interpretive description – that takes social relations, everyday interactions, and divergent meanings seriously – and to regard this description as a vital source of insight, learning, and adaptation". This particular endeavour must embrace the relations, interactions and meanings of 'programming worlds' themselves, and to this effect, this research is offering an anthropological 'interpretive description' based on an internal exploration of one organisation of development.

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[10] This expression – 'technical knowledge'– is widely used in FAO to mark the difference with those in charge of coordination, or more 'generic' types of tasks. Technical 'experts' in FAO are, for example, agronomists, nutritionists, forest engineers, soil specialists, watershed management experts, etc. Li (2007:7) has offered a discussion of the initial processes of development which starts with "problematization" or "identifying deficiencies that need to be rectified", and proceeds to "rendering technical", where experts "frame problems in technical terms". "Their claim to expertise depends on their capacity to diagnose problems in ways that match the kinds of solution that fall within their repertoire".

The purpose of unveiling the multiple human faces working at FAO is pursued through concentrating on two broad themes.

The first theme is to illustrate explicitly the *complex* and *compartmentalised* organisational context within which employees negotiate their professional practice. In the case of FAO, there is the inherent complexity of the structure at the headquarters (HQ) level, but also within the field offices and in its relations with the donor community as a whole, of which FAO is a part (see Chapters 2 and 4). It is likely that the compartmentalisation of FAO's work responds to the complexity of the problems and specialised fields that make up its subject matter. Yet, this formal structure also accommodates a variety of informal channels, a wide range and plurality of activities, and a great many actors involved in the working of its mechanisms. In addition, this structure is constantly 'complexified' or 'simplified' by the agency of the professionals (staff and consultants) themselves, who make an apparently rigid organisation malleable through work practices.

Agency is the second theme of this thesis. While professionals carry out their formal work, they simultaneously pursue their professional interests, complementing their official work with activities that go beyond the prescribed scope of their work. This "positive" kind of "deviance" (Heckert and Heckert 2002; Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2004) adds value to their work while adding to their motivation and engagement. In the anthropological literature, theorists of agency (Giddens 1979; Long 2001; Ortner 1997; 2006; Sahlins 1981, to name a few) often identify within the notion a form of "resistance", in opposition to power (Ortner 1997). Ortner (2006:134) writes that theories of agency commonly explore three distinct problems of analysis:

> "[…] (1) the question of whether or not agency inherently involves "intentions"; (2) the simultaneous universality and cultural constructedness of agency; and (3) the relationship between agency and "power.""

In the context of FAO, some professionals display agency by resisting the structures of management in determining their own priorities and methods. For most of them, however, agency depends on their personality, is undoubtedly intentional[11], and has to be seen as an expression of their interests, specialisation, and acquired skills and experience. As will be further discussed in Chapter 4, FAO's staff and consultants are highly educated, specialised, and are most often very interested in and motivated by their work. Agency may be shown as one exercises leadership or demonstration of charisma in interacting with others (Conger 1989; Lindholm 1990), and allowing one to put aims and intentions into action, thus 'making things work'. Giddens observes that:

> "This presumes that to be an agent is to be able to deploy (chronically, in the flow of daily life) a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others. Action depends upon the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (1984:14)

I propose that attention to processes of agency and of organisational complexity, allows us to better understand the nature of the "disjunctures" faced by FAO professionals in carrying out their work.

However, this ethnography, while seeking to avoid the twin predicaments of "radical agentivity" or "radical contextuality" (Escobar 2008:130)[12], will deconstruct the idea that there exists a unified strategy for pursuing the practice

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[11] "Intentionality" is one element composing "agency" (Ortner 2006:134). She defines intentionality as including "highly conscious plots and plans and schemes: somewhat more nebulous aims, goals, and ideals; and finally desires, wants and needs that may range from being deeply buried to quite consciously felt. In short intentionality as a concept is meant to include all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose (emphasis original). As will be discussed in this thesis, professionals in FAO demonstrate agency through taking intentional actions which differed from organisationally-planned ones, or take initiatives that fall off the scope of their work. In the case at point, intentionality, as explained by Ortner, is an intrinsic part of agency.

[12] In his article "Development, trans/modernities, and the politics of theory", Escobar identifies four problems in the literature on development that concern actor networks, which "in the last instance, make up development projects" (2008:130): radical agentivity (everyone has agency), radical connectivity ("everything is connected to everything"), radical contextuality (everything is context-dependent), and radical historicity (everything has a genealogy).

of development at FAO. Some development workers make use of the complex context described above – an organisational heterogeneity of sorts – and deploy agency by adopting a mixture of formal rules and informal networks, by both complying with and transgressing guidelines, by adopting managerial perspectives and at the same time evolving their own unique perspective on a given situation, and by using their common sense, among other elements, to fulfill the tasks at hand.

In this sense, there are reciprocal interactions between the agency of the personnel and the complexity of the organisation as they 'feed off' of one another: when professionals strategically take independent initiative, this, in turn, deepens the complexity and heterogeneity of the organisation.

To summarise the theoretical orientations of this research, it should be clear that it is grounded in an alternative development perspective in two concrete ways. First, its object of study, the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) at FAO, was itself proposing alternative approaches to development (i.e. the mainstreaming of participatory and livelihoods approaches), as well as alternative ways of working within the organisation. Second, this research contributes to anthropological literature which focuses on the relationships between actors involved in development by exploring in depth the relationships of FAO's professionals with the organisation's structure, to each other as colleagues, and – to a certain extent – with the very nature of their work.

This dissertation is also grounded in practice theory. While acknowledging and at times affirming the harshest critiques of development, it asserts that the construction of anthropological critiques should be based in practice, and in this particular case, on an internal analysis of organisational practice and context. This ethnography of "routines of development" (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003:19) and of innovations within the structure will shed new light on practices of development from an organisational point of view.

Ultimately, seeking a deeper understanding of the internal realm of the organisation will highlight the "lived realities" of the professionals (Long 2001) by investigating two core themes: the complexity of FAO, and the agency of the professionals. These in turn complement constructive critiques of the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994).

One of the theoretical contributions of this ethnography of development practice and of practitioners can be articulated as follows: anthropological critiques should include considerations of the agency of the 'experts', who should not be stripped of personality. Mosse (2005a) has shown that development practice is not necessarily driven by policy; likewise, development is not only conducted by the 'expertise' of professionals but by their entire persona, including their vision and their capacity to exercise agency.

The practice of development, as will be demonstrated, is shaped not just by organisational structures but also by the actions of individuals who inhabit, informally define, and in so doing transform those structures. This is thus an exercise in reaching beyond "rendering technical" (Li 2007:7), and beyond the simplifying of corporate behaviours and normative rhetoric and discourses spread about in reports, websites, and in literature on development more generally. As Harrison has argued, such an approach may "create[s] a messier view of reality than many of the 'deconstructors of development imply', but arguably a more accurate one" (Harrison 2003:103). I take these issues up again in the conclusion.

This research project also faced some limitations while trying to achieve its aims. The primary focus was placed on the professionals themselves, with the aims of shedding light on the human factors and skills that lie behind their 'technical knowledge' and on their "lived experience" (Long 2001) while they were working at FAO and working in development more generally. These aims are achieved by a) presenting the complex organisational context within which the practice of

development at FAO is framed, and b) using ethnographic examples to illuadvanastrate how some professionals reach beyond organisational limitations by demonstrating 'agency' in taking initiatives, showing leadership, and reshaping their work environment.

I will show how, for FAO aspects of development work that are described elsewhere by Mosse, professionals "do have to engage in the messy, emotion-laden practical work or negotiating presence within national bureaucracies, compromise, rule bending, and meeting targets and spending budgets, not to mention personal security, loneliness, family relations, and stress" (Mosse 2008b:122).

In addition, the thesis concentrates mostly on the professionals working at FAO's Headquarters in Rome, and more specifically but not exclusively on staff and consultants involved in the Livelihoods Support Programme, where most of the ethnographic fieldwork took place. The exception is Chapter 5 which describes my travels to "the field" where I encountered other professionals whose activities unfolded within social contexts quite different from that of FAO headquarters. Generally, mine is much more an ethnography of the "desk" than the "field" (Mosse 2006). However, perspectives of the "field" from the "desk" – i.e. the field as seen from HQ – were often discussed by professionals who see 'field experience' as a *sine qua non* condition to work in FAO (see Chapter 5). In addition, this research concentrates on the struggles that occur within the organisation, with limited attention to the professionals' relationships with local actors and project participants, or with government officials. However, to some extent, their relations to officials in donor agencies will be touched on.

It should also be reiterated that the thesis has not investigated either the process of development intervention or the formulation of policy. Mosse (2003:45) observes that development initiatives, whether in policy or intervention, "never encode a unity of interests. They are the result of complex negotiations over

meaning, and as such are very much part of the wider social life and politics of development organisations that need to be explored ethnographically" (Mosse 2003:45). As ethnography, this study was dependent on my informants and on my overall FAO experience, so it is through the eyes of the professionals encountered that considerations of policy or intervention are discussed, "framed by personal histories, individual passions and bureaucratic strategies" (Mosse 2005b:17).

Finally, it is important to recall that this is not an efficiency study of FAO, and, thus, the 'success' or 'failure' of FAO's work is not addressed here. However, the perception of the professionals regarding the organisation they work in, and their capacity to achieve the work they aim to do within this organisation, is central. Again, the focus is on giving voice to the development professional themselves, and on illustrating the organisational context in which they work.

THESIS ORGANISATION

This thesis is divided into two parts: the first (Chapters 2 and 3) lays down the theoretical and contextual background of the research, and the second (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) presents an ethnographic account based on my FAO experience. Metaphorically, Chapters 2 and 3 describes the 'house' of FAO and of the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) by presenting their respective structures, whereas the second part of the thesis presents the 'home' of FAO, that is, what professionals make of the house and where and how they find their own place within it.

Chapter 1 provides an account of the methods used in this ethnography of organisational practice within FAO. The chapter begins by situating the usage of ethnographic methods with bureaucracies in the wider anthropological context, moving from 'classic' anthropology to conducting research 'at home' in complex societies and situating organisations as an object of anthropological study.

Chapter 2 presents the general context in which this research took place. It offers an overview of the range of anthropological critiques of development in order to establish that development, the very *leitmotiv* of FAO's existence, is not a unanimous concept and has been critiqued by anthropologists. This is achieved by illustrating the contested goals of development, which in turn situates this research within these critiques. Since it is argued that the production of a constructive critique of development should take into account the complexity of organisations, the chapter then presents the organisational structure of FAO itself, its history, mandate, and structure, as well as some of the events shaping its recent past.

Chapter 3 presents the more specific context in which I was involved within FAO, the Livelihoods Support Programme. The purpose of the LSP – an HQ-based programme, with some activities reaching into the field – was to 'mainstream' sustainable livelihoods and participatory principles into the wider work of the organisation. To do so, the LSP itself adopted participatory ways of working (a horizontal structure, team coordination, meeting facilitation, etc). The LSP was an extra-budgetary programme in FAO, meaning that its budget was independent from FAO's overall budget, giving the programme substantial freedom of action. The LSP is considered here as an exercise in 'alternative development'.

Before turning to the LSP, however, chapter 3 situates this thesis as an exercise in "alternative development", following authors who proposed alternative ways of conducting development through: the adoption of participatory and people-centered approaches organisations (Brohman 1996; Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; McGee 2002; Woost 1997); the greater incorporation of social sciences into development (Cernea 1995; Cernea and Kassam 2006); and the exploration of relationships between actors in development including professionals, local actors, donors, and national government staff (Crewe 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Ferguson 1997; Harrison 2003; Li 2007; Mosse 2005a; Rew 1997). Adherents to this perspective generally continue to see value in the current 'development system', but agree

that improvements are needed in order to benefit the poor in a more adequate manner.

Chapter 4 marks the beginning of the discussion of the 'home' of FAO, or of its social organisation, and gives voice to the different professionals working at HQ in Rome. The chapter discusses the elements which make one feel at home in FAO, before offering a presentation of the personalities and their motivations for working at FAO-HQ, where professionals form "communities of memory" (Malkki 1997). This chapter also take into consideration some concepts borrowed from the literature on the anthropology of organisations – namely elements of organisational culture, including formality versus informality, human resource management, the role of individuals and their space for creativity, the organisational environment, etc. (Britan and Cohen 1980; Bryant and White 1982; Hirsch and Gellner 2001; Serber 1981; Smircich 1983, among others) – in order to analyse the relationship of the professionals with the structure.

The chapter also discusses the respective conditions of work of staff members and consultants, who hold different statuses within FAO, which in turn influence their experience of the organisation Broadly, through the testimony of the interviewees, this section presents some of the difficulties that short-term consultants have expressed in terms of finding a balance between their personal and professional lives, and how the 'contract mode' offers them an unsatisfying space for quality involvement in their work. Throughout the chapter, I add another layer by contrasting the differences between my experience as a consultant with the LSP to that of other FAO consultants, thereby showing that even within FAO, consultants may enjoy different types of treatment.

Chapter 5 travels from HQ to two FAO field locations, Waterland and Mountainland, which host other types of FAO-created 'homes'. The chapter begins with an account of how field experience, as discussed by interviewees at HQ, is valued and considered by all as crucial in order acquire the capacity to conduct adequate work in FAO. Having field experience confers credibility on

professionals and is recognised as an important asset by their peers. However, field experience is now mostly acquired through a mission system and short-term consultancies, rather than through long-term field assignments.

The chapter then opens a discussion of my two short-term missions to Waterland and Mountainland, illustrating how the field, similar to HQ, is also compartmentalised in terms of sectoral types of work (agriculture, fisheries and forestry). The different structures of the two field offices visited are compared, as are the types of personnel hired to carry out work in both places. Finally, the chapter offers an example of emergency work in FAO to illustrate another layer of organisational complexity in fieldwork, at times creating conflicting situations within the organisation.

Chapter 6 pursues the discussion started in Chapters 4 and 5, which sought to dehomogenise FAO at HQ and in the field, by providing examples of leaders who influence work processes within what can be seen as a strictly structured organisation. The chapter illustrates this through two examples of leaders, one charismatic and the other one with networking abilities, who rely on their professional skills to establish trust relations with their peers. Additionally, the chapter discusses the emergence of facilitated meetings in FAO, which have the potential of making more 'reserved' voices heard in the organisation through the use of novel communication techniques. These meetings, by putting the focus on ideas rather than on individuals, may bring about unexpected and subtle change in FAO by giving an opportunity to a wider range of professionals to express themselves. Lastly, Chapter 6 briefly addresses the appraisal processes in FAO, through two different angles and using two different examples. The first example focuses on the difficulty of making professionals answerable within FAO, the second on the predicaments of rewarding outstanding achievements by professionals. Thus, Chapter 6 teases out the room for manoeuvre FAO professionals may have, while also highlighting the fact that FAO has difficulty in

either sanctioning 'negative' behaviours or rewarding more 'positive' strengths of employees.

Finally, the conclusion of this dissertation summarises the main findings of the research, which involved journeying into the multi-level compartmentalisation of the organisation and its work (what Ferguson referred to as a "complex structure of knowledge" (1994:18)), examining the lives and working experiences of some of the many professionals working at FAO. The findings of this thesis are based on two ideas: first, that the 'structure' itself does not produce work, people do; second, that the 'agency' demonstrated by some FAO staff may bring about innovative work in FAO. There is great diversity in the types of development workers found at FAO, which depends on their varied professional background, overall experience and personality. Finally, the thesis shows how, within this complex and compartmentalised organisation, some professionals use a variety of "tactics" and "strategies" (de Certeau 1984) to deal with the "disjunctures" (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003) they face on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 1

ETHNOGRAPHY AT FAO: METHODS OF STUDYING A BUREAUCRATIC ORGANISATION

Ethnographic methods have been the cornerstone of anthropological investigations ever since Malinowski's *séjours* in the Trobriand Islands (1922). Originally, ethnography has privileged small-scale and exotic social groups, where anthropologists had to live among their research subjects for a long-term period, and ideally learn the local language. However, ethnography can equally be practiced in complex societies, "at home", where the cultural diversity, social institutions, and socio-economic contexts guarantee an endless source of research subjects and topics. Ethnography "at home" has gained much popularity in the recent past, propelled by post-modernist paradigms and allowing for much creativity on the part of researchers. This freedom to choose the "fieldwork" location, however, has put into question some of the premises on which "classic" ethnographic fieldwork is based.

For example, contrary to small-scale societies, complex societies could not be studied "as a whole", and researchers had to focus on particular "social units" such as "the homeless" (Passaro 1997), or "the Puerto-Rican community of New York city" (Bourgois 1995). In fact, each structural element of society be it related to economics, religion, welfare, or politics, and each group of social actors called for attention in the analytical reconstruction of the social puzzle in which people live. In this context, bureaucratic organisations as "an aspect" of society became a topic for ethnography, one particularly related to the political spheres. Hence, anthropologists' interest in organisational cultures emerged over time as part of an anthropological process which implied a transition from conducting 'classic' fieldwork, to doing ethnographic investigation 'at home', that is, in complex societies, from which stemmed the need to understand organisations as a part of those complex societies, and as loci of subjectivity.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first elucidates the concept of "classic" ethnographic fieldwork and seeks to understand the challenge that doing anthropology at home represented in terms of fieldwork methods, and how it came to include ethnographic investigations of bureaucratic organisations such as FAO. The section sketches the academic and methodological context in which my dissertation is embedded. Some key definitions are also offered to ensure conceptual clarity of some of the terms used throughout this research (organisation, institution, bureaucracy and organisational culture).

The second section of this chapter presents the combination of methods used in the context of this ethnographic investigation of FAO. As will be discussed, this research was made possible because I was hired as a part-time consultant by FAO's Livelihoods Support Programme. The methods thus heavily relied on participant observation, but also on interviews, on research in archives and documents, as well as on the information provided by particular key informants.

FROM 'CLASSIC' FIELDWORK TO ORGANISATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY: METHODS THROUGH TIME

On 'Classic' Fieldwork [13]

The ethnographic endeavour started long ago, during the exploration of Asia and the colonisation of Africa, with travelers and missionaries reports (Clifford 1997; Nader 1964). As Willis (1999) wrote: "To a considerable extent, anthropology has been the social science that studied dominated colored peoples – and their ancestors – living outside the boundaries of modern white societies (Willis 1999:123). The emergence of ethnographic writings also came about with the quest for understanding the 'primitive man' prior to the influence of civilisation and modernity. This need for investigating the past brought anthropologists to far

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[13] Some of these characteristics were the subject of entire books, book chapters, or articles, and it is not my purpose to provide a deep explanation for each characteristic. This is simply to provide an idea of classic fieldwork which will later be compared to doing ethnography 'at home'.

away places where populations had been preserved from "Western intrusion" (Jackson 1986:8).[14]

The formalisation of travelers' accounts was accomplished by the 'professionalisation' of anthropology and particularly with the influence of British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1922). Malinowski's way of doing fieldwork – a long term stay in the remote Trobriand Islands – became a 'must' for anthropologists, something comparable to a 'rite of passage', and certainly a "marker of professionalism", crucial in building anthropologists' credibility (Clifford 1997:193; Gupta and Ferguson 1997:2). "Indeed, we would suggest that the single most significant factor determining whether a piece of research will be accepted as (that magical word) "anthropological" is the extent to which it depends on experience "in the field"" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:1).

Over time, ethnographic practices encompassed a series of requirements and rules to form the essence of 'classic' ethnography. Although there was never an agreement on the meaning of 'fieldwork' (Karp and Kendall 1982:249), its meaning has evolved to incorporate an increasingly active actor, as opposed to a passive research subject (Rabinow 1977; see also Simon and Dippo 1986 and Rosen 2002).

Traditionally, fieldwork has taken anthropologists to far away places where they could study small-scale and 'exotic' populations different from their own culture. "Anthropology's major emphasis was still on simple non-Western cultures, chronicling, analyzing, and theorizing about their "exotic" lifeways" (Britan and Cohen 1980:1). At first, anthropologists conducting fieldwork considered 'cultures' as if isolated from one another and as unique entities, and rarely considered interactions between groups and sub-groups. Generally, going to one's field "[…] suggests a trip to a place that is agrarian, pastoral, or maybe

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[14] This is the official "anthropological" aim of ethnography, but critics have pointed out that this also a political aim of helping colonial power to dominate foreign populations (see for examples Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Rist 1997).

even "wild"; it implies a place that is perhaps cultivated (a site of culture), but that certainly does not stray too far from nature" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:8).

Doing classic fieldwork in exotic small-scale societies entails that researchers live among the population under study for a long period of time, enough to learn the local language (Jackson 1986:69). This long-term stay allowed anthropologists to gain insight into everyday life and to understand the meaning of cultural practices. "We say fieldwork involves conducting "long-term" participatory research in a "community" or "society" and observing people's "ordinary," "everyday" routines and practices" (Malkki 1997:90).

Anthropologists were and remain obsessed with 'otherness' and originally found it in remote places – some places being more 'anthropological' than others (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:13). The purpose was to ensure objectivity through a distance, both geographical and cultural. In fact, "[…] the assumption was that an epistemology of "Otherness" was the best route to "objectivity" […]" (Passaro 1997:152). Therein lies a paradox: once a distance is established, anthropologists must become as close as possible to the people they study to gain an internal perspective of their culture. In reality, "no other social scientist – indeed no other scientist – has this intimate relationship with the subject of his study" (Goldschmidt 1977:294). This proximity to populations under study, which paradoxically transits through the notion of distance, is an important characteristic of anthropological fieldwork.

Ethnography at Home

This cursory picture of classic ethnography underwent changes over the years as ethnographic fieldwork entered the post-modern era which witnessed the redefinition of concepts such as 'culture' and 'other', and as interest in complex societies increased. The historical leap which occurred in anthropological

research from classic ethnography to doing ethnography in organisations first transited through the notion of doing ethnography at home. Starting in the 1950s, researchers sought to better understand their own society (Jackson 1986), a practice which had heavy implications for classic fieldwork and which was the source of many debates in anthropology. Doing fieldwork at home was to affect research methods, not to mention that analysing one's own society could be threatening for the current status quo and for prevailing power relations (Escobar 1995; Nader 1999). To Despres (1968), anthropology's future depended on this ability to "undertake meaningful research in the so-called complex societies" (Despres 1968:3). There was a fear, however, that the 'Malinowskian' type of ethnography would increasingly become unrealistic in the face of the globalising and changing world, a point to which I come back below (Cheater 1986:164).

Doing anthropology at home challenged nearly every characteristic of classic fieldwork. Ethnography at home basically involved leaving isolated and exotic communities, trading small-scale societies for complex societies, learning a "contextual language" as opposed to a "foreign language", and remaining at home instead of travelling to far away places, in some cases, even taking the subway to the field (Passaro 1997). But these were not the only challenges in rethinking fieldwork. Most of the debate focused on whether or not doing anthropology at home required new types of ethnographic tools, and if the same methods could be applied at home (Messerschmidt 1981; Jackson 1986). According to Despres (1968) however, this question of methods seemed to miss the point since "there are no epistemological reasons why anthropology has to be practiced in simple societies, or why data gathered in complex modern societies cannot be made relevant to anthropological theory" (Despres 1968:5).

Classic anthropologists were concerned by the lack of geographical and cultural distance with the research subject – in doing anthropology at home – would not allow for enough objectivity, and would inhibit "the perception of structures and patterns of social and culture life" (Aguilar 1981:16). How would an 'insider' attain

a certain degree of objectivity without being "detached" in particular ways from the research subjects (*ibid*: 24)? As Passaro (1997) later wrote: […] for most people the essential question was whether by doing fieldwork in the United States I was "distant enough" to produce adequate ethnographic knowledge. Whether I was "close enough" was never an issue" (Passaro 1997:153).

This cultural distance with the research subject was not only a question of objectivity *per se*. Distance allows anthropologists to understand the "patterns for doing certain things in certain ways", in order to reveal the "conscious or unconscious pressure upon us to follow certain types of behaviour that other men have created for us" (Kluckhonn 1962:25). Hence, to classic anthropologists, researchers who were too familiar with their field sites were perhaps unable to pursue analysis beyond taken-for-granted cultural behaviours.

The main argument of the proponents of anthropology at home, however, was that in the context of complex societies, one did not need to travel far to encounter cultural diversity and 'otherness'. "Many societies are fragmented by class, regional, urban-rural, and ideology-related affiliative differences, and all cultures (including subcultures) are characterized by internal variation" (Pelto and Pelto 1975, in Aguilar 1981:25). As already mentioned, this rethinking of ethnographic practices first came with the recognition that the changing and globalising world of the end of the twentieth century called for understanding differences within one's own society, and from the "deterritorialisation" of populations in general. As Appadurai (1991) wrote:

> "[…] there are some brute facts about the world of the twentieth century that any ethnography must confront. Central among these facts is the changing social, territorial, and cultural reproduction of group identity. [...] ...insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (Appadurai 1991:191)[15].

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[15] Peirano has expressed a similar point of view: "… we must examine contemporary currents of anthropology at the convergence of the many socially recognized theoretical histories, including

Yet, there was a concern that a method of investigation set up many years ago was becoming inadequate to analyse and understand the modern world (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Doing anthropology at home also prompted the need to either define categories of 'home' and 'abroad', or to simply question this dichotomy. As Clifford (1997:2) indicated, this poses questions regarding "the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion". Accordingly, anthropological fieldwork does not need to be geographically bounded. Rather, the core of the matter is the "social space" and perhaps even more the interrelations of these "shifting locations" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:38). As Passaro (1997:153) argued: ""Otherness" is not a geographical given but a theoretical stance [...]". Home, however, also consists of an 'anthropological site' as it constitutes a site where identities are negotiated (Clifford 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Thus, these reflections on otherness lead to acknowledgement of the relativity of the concept, to the redefinition of categories of 'home' and 'abroad', and to the recognition of a liminal space between both. Instead of being located in exotic places, the "other" could suddenly become one's neighbour, depending on how the relationship was contextualised. It is useful to keep in mind that, regardless of the geographical location in itself, most fieldwork sites end up feeling like home or like a second home with time.

In doing ethnography at home, there was also an apprehension that the researcher's relation with his/her subjects would be tainted with suspicion, making it harder for him/her to gather the information needed and to establish a relation of trust. Although it might seem simpler to enter the field located at home

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their neighbouring disciplines (either models or rivals) and local traditions, where these broader relationships are embedded (1998:123).

or near home, the research may raise wariness on the part of close research participants/subjects who may feel threatened by such a project for a variety of reasons (Jackson 1986:14). Moreover, doing research in complex societies implied that a "unit" or "population" of research had to be defined, since studying complex societies as an overall entity remains an impossible endeavour. If anthropologists were going to document "cross-cultural perspective[s] to the understanding and planning of modern life […]", they "must consider new sets of institutions and must develop the new perspectives and new concepts needed to grapple with them" (Britan and Cohen 1980:2).

The proponents of applying ethnographic methods at home also promoted its usefulness and benefits. Doing anthropology at home "refers to the kind of inquiry developed in the study of one's own society, where "others" are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity" (Peirano 1998:122). Ethnographers found that it would be easier to adapt personally to the demands of the field, given that they did not need to learn another language, live with foreign people and learn new behavioural and subtle cultural codes of conduct. Without this hard adaptive phase to go through, some anthropologists figured that interactions in general with the populations under study would be easier, which would in turn help anthropologists to obtain the information necessary for their research (Aguilar 1981). Another important point was that anthropologists would also be less inclined to "disturb" the local social context and "alter social settings" (Aguilar 1981:18).

George E. Marcus (1986; 1995; 1999) has also tackled "fieldwork geography" by suggesting the realisation of "multi-sited ethnography". Marcus generally takes for granted that ethnography in contemporary contexts of complex societies is possible and necessary, and therefore, does not question the relevance of doing ethnography at home. To him, "cultural logics so much sought after in anthropology are always multiply produced" (1995:97). What Marcus (1995

emphasised was the understanding of connections or interfaces between sites, where he imagines the "global" is located (Marcus 1995:99).

Malkki (1997) has proposed an interesting way to conceive of "social units" within complex societies, which she calls "accidental communities of memory". These are formed of people who met under particular circumstances in their life, for example "people who have experienced war together, […]; people who have lived in a refugee or internment camp together for a certain period [...]" (*ibid*: 92). The particularity of "accidental communities of memory" lies in the recognition that people may be brought together in a "social unit" for something aside from 'who they are', but also because of what they do, what and who they like, etc. "There is indeterminacy here not because these or other historical occurrences are haphazard, but because they bring together people who might not otherwise, in the ordinary course of their lives, have met" (*ibid*: 92). In a sense, FAO is a huge "accidental community of memory", which can be broken into several smaller ones (I come back to this point in chapters 2 and 3). Generally, professionals who work for the UN come from a wide range of geographic areas, are displaced, and meet specifically because of their work (I come back to this point in chapter 4).

Doing anthropology at home also met the expectations of making anthropology useful for 'our' society, as it held the potential to be as informative about 'us' as it was about the 'other'[16]: Increasingly, some anthropologists have expressed the will that ethnography should be useful for people and society, mostly in dealing with issues of power and poverty for example. "Indeed, it is our complex holistic theory that needs to be applied to the practical world. It is our perceptive methodology that needs to be used in the service of our society" (Goldschmidt 1977:303). In the words of Berreman:

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[16] This idea of being useful for the 'other' disregards the colonial past, when, according to Esteva (1992), anthropologists participated in the domination and control of colonial regimes.

"We ask that anthropological work be relevant in the sense that it addresses the issues facing people in their social existence, and we ask that it reflects the quality of that social existence as it seeks to provide foundations and practical recommendations for improving it. And we ask that high value be placed on humanity, originality, and freedom in the work which anthropologists do in research and teaching" (1999:96).

Thus, fieldwork practices can be an asset to better understand complex societies and to promote reflexivity in anthropological practices (Strathern 1986:16), provided that changes in fieldwork practices which ensue can be accepted as credible in spite of the challenges they may pose to classical fieldwork conventions (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:39). "Practising decolonized anthropology in a deterritorialized world means as a first step doing away with the distancing and exoticization of the conventional anthropological "field", and foregrounding the ways in which we anthropologists are historically and socially (not just biographically) linked with the areas we study [...]" (*ibid*: 38). With these changes in ethnographic methods, one could argue that "anthropologists are a lot closer to their 'other' than they used to be" (Mosse 2006b:936), which is certainly the case for this research project (see below).

In the case dealt with in this thesis, FAO is primarily a work place, not a home *per se*, and it is located in Rome, Italy. Although at the beginning they were perceived by me as field locations, both FAO and Rome slowly became familiar places, just as they have for most employees who come from many different countries and share this work place. Although I was not familiar with FAO's bureaucracy itself, I was familiar with general bureaucratic processes, my life as a Westerner having been regulated by bureaucracies since my birth. However, some characteristics of FAO such as the specific language (jargon) and the multi-cultural and cosmopolitan environment called for adaptation. In fact, professionals who work for FAO, whether in FAO field offices or FAO HQ, come from all over the world and thus are rarely at 'home' in FAO or in Rome, as most officers are "deterritorialised" (Appadurai 1991). Everyone goes through a

familiarisation and learning process so that by some point in time they are able to call FAO and Rome (or the city where their FAO office is located) 'home'.

For the research reported here, defining a unit of study was necessary, given the size of FAO and the diversity of actors involved. My point of anchorage and unit of study was the Livelihoods Support Programme in which I was employed (see chapter 3), but which I also used as a window onto the rest of FAO. Because of the networks and social connections my colleagues were part of, it was at times difficult to maintain the borders of a defined unit, but in this case such a closed unit would not have been desirable. In fact, my unit of study was very fluid as it changed depending on events, circumstances, colleagues, and the planned and un-planned activities of the Programme itself.

To be clear regarding the current study, FAO became a familiar working environment with time without, however, really becoming home *per se*. FAO was located far away from home (Montreal) and working there, in FAO and in Rome, meant that I had to adapt to both. I thus found comfort in a liminal space that neither felt quite like home or abroad, but something in between, enough so that I could live as if at home, yet constantly mediating the distance with my real home, family and friends.

The Ethnographic Investigation of Bureaucratic Organisations

If there is value in doing anthropology at home, there logically is relevance in studying the various aspects of social life, including in bureaucratic organisations. In spite of the preponderance of bureaucratic organisations in the modern world "our ability to conceptualize and explain this phenomenon has continued to decline" (Fisher and Sirianni 1984:4). The history of anthropology has witnessed several times when organisational investigations were more or less popular: at the end of the 1950s (Jackson 1986), at the end of the 1970s (Serber 1981; Willis

[1977] 1981), and finally from the end of the 1990s onwards (Cernea and Kassam 2006; Harper 1998; Rabinow 1996; Rosen 2002). This 'generational gap' in organisational studies, in addition to the contributions of several disciplines (sociology, administration, and psychology for examples), contributed to the emergence of a diverse vocabulary. Anthropology of organisations, organisational studies, sociology of organisations, the anthropology and sociology of work, psychosociology of organisations, organisational psychology and behaviour: these terms all refer to the study of the place of the individual within organisations, of the influence of organisations on society, or to organisational efficiency studies.

Before continuing this discussion, it is useful to define a few terms such as "institution", "organisation", "bureaucracy", and "organisational culture".

Institutions and Organisations

In classic ethnographic work, 'institution' mostly refers to social institutions such as family, marriage, rituals, etc. (Douglas 1985). Institutions are considered an important part of social structure. According to Despres (1968:13), a "plural society" is characterised by (1) "the extent to which specified groups are culturally differentiated in terms of specific institutional activities"; and (2) "the level at which institutional activities serve to maintain cultural differentiation as the basis for sociocultural integration". Institutions, as an integral part of social structure, shape and regulate individuals' lives. Individuals, however, also influence institutions. Indeed, "it is at the level of individuals that norms, rules, habits, conventions and values exist" (Hollingsworth 2002:6-7).

But what exactly *is* an institution? Sikkink (1991:23) provided an encompassing definition: "By institutions I mean established organizations and the rules and practices that govern how these organizations function internally and relate to one another and to society". Institutions structure society and are embodied in

law, government, social welfare, educational systems, banking systems, economic and financial systems, etc. Institutions are often abstractions, and function through tangible organisations. In the case that will be examined below, the 'International System' is an institution (though not recognized by all countries) and the United Nations, including FAO, is one organisation to make it work. "To apply a metaphor, organisations can be seen as the players and institutions as the rules of the game" (Lundequist, 1998, in Dale 2001:4).

Organisations, then, "are *instruments* to do things" (Bryant and White 1982:45, emphasis in original). Organisations have particular goals or "some sort of governing ethos" (Hirsch and Gellner 2001:5; see also Britan and Cohen 1980:15; Bryant and White 1982:42) that have an impact on the structure of the organisation, which was set up in view of achieving these goals. Internally, organisations may be structured in very diverse ways, but externally, organisations are embedded in particular social, economic, political contexts and "do not exist in a vacuum". "They operate in a wider context which both provide them with the aims they pursue and sets limits to the way they may operate" (Hirsch and Gellner 2001:5). "In short" wrote Bryant and White (1982:42), "organizations are clusters of people, each with its own needs and interests, interacting to accomplish certain tasks and operating within resources and constraints in the environment". In the case of FAO, it seems like the 'big' organisation is composed of many smaller ones which are instruments to achieve different tasks (see chapter 2).

Bureaucracy

A bureaucracy can be seen as the mechanism of an organisation. In a sense, a bureaucracy is the 'organisation' of the organisation, regardless of its purpose. All industries and organisations, including primary (industries related to the exploitation of natural resources or raw materials), secondary (transformation of

natural resources or manufacturing) and tertiary sectors (services, including government, restaurants, insurances, banks, etc.), are all 'organised' or regulated by bureaucracies as a means of achieving their purpose. Max Weber ([1922] 1968, 1978) remains the reference point in discussing theories on bureaucracy, which he defined as having several basic characteristics, including: a precise jurisdiction or area of work, a defined hierarchy – which is to be found in all structures of society – written documents and archives, and a set of office rules and experts in management. According to Weber ([1922] 1968:196-198) once the "[…] office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be firmly delimited. […] The management of this office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned. Knowledge of these rules represents a special technical learning which the officials possess". Thus, each organisation has a set of rules which have to be learned by those who make the organisation work.

Weber saw bureaucracies – with "their cold, mechanical efficiency"- as the perfect complement to "machine-age technology", because their structure ignored, in theory, the personalities of their leaders and members (Britan and Cohen 1980:10; Dubhashi 1990:140; Gupta 1990:16). In a bureaucracy, rules are clearly defined to ensure everyday operations (Britan and Cohen 1980:15), to establish every member's task, which should be carried out efficiently, and to lay down the patterns of activity coordination (Bryant and White 1982:43). As Kamenka (1989:157) indicated:

> "[...] 'bureaucracy' means a centrally directed, systematically organized and hierarchically structured staff devoted to the regular, routine and efficient carrying out of large-scale administrative tasks according to policies dictated by rulers or directors standing outside and above the bureaucracy".

Weber ([1922] 1968: 942) presented bureaucracies as structures of social and economic domination, which he defined as "imposing one's own will upon the

behaviour of other persons", that can take various forms. However, Weber points out that bureaucratic rules clarify the roles of officials and hierarchy, and establish a "system of super and subordination. […] Such a system offers the governed the possibility of appealing, in a precisely regulated manner, the decision of lower office to the corresponding superior authority" (*ibid*: 957). In other words, to Weber, bureaucratic rules not only affirm authority, but also serve as protection of the 'lower' officials who respect these rules. This structural analysis of bureaucratic rules is, however, theoretical, and Weber himself has indicated that this reciprocity depended on the established relationship between individuals: "[…] where a customer places with a shoemaker an order for a pair of shoes, can it then be said that either one has control over the other? […] No precise concept of domination could be built up, however, upon the basis of such considerations; and this statement holds true for all relationships of exchange, including those intangibles" (*ibid*: 947).

Bureaucracies have pervaded and supported much of modern life (Fisher and Sirianni 1984:3). Indeed, almost every single aspect of modern life relates or may relate to a bureaucratic organisation. In other words, bureaucracies structure each and every activity citizens undertake. This invasion by bureaucracies into citizens' lives can be explained, according to Gupta (1990:13), by the fact that "bureaucrac[ies] ha[ve] arisen wherever a social problem has sought out a centralist solution". In fact, the presence of bureaucracies has almost become a second nature for people born in a bureaucratic society, so much so that "people only notice [it] when it appears to violate its own alleged ideals, usually those concerning a person's place in the social scheme of things" (Herzfeld 1992:3).

Kamenka's (1989) above definition emphasises the importance of hierarchy in bureaucracies, which may be considered as the 'engine' of the structure. Put simply, "a bureaucracy then, is a vertical organisation in which orders flow downward and information upward" (Gupta 1990:39). The hierarchical structure constitutes the formal channels of information flow in a bureaucracy (Britan and

Cohen 1980:17). For the expert eye, however, the formal structure "tells little about how an organization functions in reality" (Bryant and White 1982:47). Bureaucracies often see, through time, the emergence of an 'informal' structure, especially when the formal structure appears inefficient (*ibid*: 47). "Some are tightly scripted, rather predictable, and governed by well-established social rules and cognitive schemes. Some are not" (Van Maanen 2001:241).

If bureaucracies taken at face value can be dehumanising in character, actors recreate a space for humanness through informal and social networks, official and non-official communications, and the development of several organisational sub-cultures. Indeed, it would be impossible to calculate the enormous amount of work that often gets done through these informal channels.

Chapters 3 to 6 will specifically address the many ways in which bureaucracies, such as FAO, are invested by the agency of the professionals working within them, thereby giving their work a personal and professional meaning. This relates to Weber's ideas of *vocation* and *disenchantment*. In his allocution "Science as a Vocation" (Weber 1918, in Gerth and Mills 1946:139), Weber argues that science is a form of disenchanted knowledge, and that the intellectualisation of the scientific process and knowledge excludes any "mysterious incalculable forces" such as religion or magic. "One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for who such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service" (*ibid:* 139). In many ways, this process of disenchantment applies to bureaucracies, which structure organisations rationally, through sets of rules. However, Weber recalls that science, like religion, also proceeds from a set of presuppositions (*ibid:* 154), and that scientists are engaged in a *vocation* – thereby assigning a value to science (*ibid*: 140). This certainly applies to the professionals working at FAO, who are often involved in the organisation following their belief in the organisation's mandate, and who in a sense, are

vocationally engaged in the causes of development and food security (see chapter 4 for a thorough discussion of professional's motivations to work in FAO).

Organisational Culture

Organisations, when considered as "composed of complex, interactive, and multiple levels of world views possessed and expressed by members of sub-groups" (Hamada 1990:115), certainly hold the potential for being sites of culture. Where there are humans, there is culture. People who work in organisations spend a great deal of time together, and generally end up building relationships extending beyond their particular tasks. "Organizational culture" can be defined as "a system of shared beliefs, symbols, values and assumptions which provide meaning and direct action in an organization at a given time" (Paules 1990:95).

According to Scmircich (1983:344), "culture" in an organisation may serve several purposes in providing the "social or normative glue that holds an organization together". "Culture", in an organisational context, becomes "the property of a 'group' […], which 'persists over time' in the sense of being unchanging, and is 'shared' in the sense that there is consensus and no ambiguity" (Wright 1994:3). Scmircich (1983:346) has also established that culture may be, within organisations, "a sense-making device that can guide and shape behaviour". Contrary to the bureaucratic structure, the organisational culture is generally not written, is informal, intangible, and can only be revealed through "the patterns of attitudes and actions of individual organization members" (*ibid*: 343). Importantly, however, as much as there is culture in organisations, organisations themselves *are* a cultural expression. Organisations are a "culture-producing phenomena" (*ibid*: 344) and a product of culture all at once (Escobar 1995:113; Hamada and Jordan 1990:6).

FAO is a compartmentalised bureaucracy, which means that each part of the house has a somewhat different culture of work, since culture varies among departments, divisions, and services (see chapter 2). Every professional's vision of the organisation is affected by the ambient culture of work of their service or unit, and also by their own cultural background, work ethic, management style, etc. The organisation of life around work also becomes cultural depending on such factors as whom one has lunch with, one's hierarchical status, and the general character of the working environment, for example.

As demonstrated in the above definitions, bureaucratic life has multiple components – providing as many angles with which to analyse the phenomenon. In general, the overarching purpose of internal analyses of organisations is to find ways to improve their efficiency. "Understanding how organizations work provides insights into possible changes and ways in which they can be more effective" (Bryant and White 1982:55). In this perspective, themes related to the structure of the work itself – the degree of hierarchy (*ibid*: 44), decision-making processes, organisational change (Wall and Gruneberg 1984), and information technology (Harper 1998), for examples – are worth investigating. From my experience at FAO, it seems that the idea of helping to make organisations more effective through ethnographic studies may be a bit optimistic, as it depends tremendously on the 'ear' one finds in colleagues and especially in high management. Perhaps it is more realistic to have such an impact on a small organisation or on a small part of an organisation (ex: a service or a working unit). To be sure, ethnographers may have many ideas regarding how the organisation could be more effective, and will perhaps make comments accordingly, especially in the case where they were specifically hired to do so. However, being listened to is an entirely different issue.

Yet, ethnography may be helpful, if not essential, in the identification of the many potential causes of inefficiency. Ethnography has the capacity, given appropriate

freedom[17], to avoid top-down research by considering multiple voices within the organisation (Nader 1999); to provide "a holistic framework for integrating formal rules, informal organization, and environmental constraints in the analysis of everyday bureaucratic life" (Britan and Cohen 1980:4); and to offer "a more interpretive approach through which to understand organizations as sites for constructing meaning" (Wright 1994:3).

Some Issues Related to the Investigation of Organisational Practice

A few authors have conducted ethnographic investigations within bureaucracies in order to shed a new light on the inner workings and relationships within these organisations (Mosse 2008a:25[18]). In doing so, they have proposed methodological insights as to how to realise such a study (Cernea and Kassam 2006; Harper 1998; Hirsch and Gellner 2001; Serber 1981). First and foremost, the presence of the ethnographer within the organisation comes out as crucial for the realisation of a thorough ethnography. If, indeed, the first step in understanding organisations is the "accumulation of more knowledge about everyday organizational dynamics in a wide range of bureaucratic settings" (Britan and Cohen 1980:23), then ethnographers must participate in the internal life of the organisation to witness and experiment with everyday operations.

According to my recent experience in FAO, I can confirm that there is, in fact, no other way of studying organisations: the core of any ethnographic methodology to investigate organisations is to *work* within organisations, which is the only way to understand the internal mechanism. Otherwise, participant observation becomes mere observation incapable of adopting an internal view. However, Li (2008:116) has argued that to "keep the positions of critic and programmer distinct" on the

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[17] Depending on the type of organisation, researchers may face imposed limits on their work, generally to ensure that anthropologists do not diffuse any sensitive information (Serber 1981).
[18] See also Cernea and Kassam (2006); Crewe and Harrison (1998); Quarles van Ufford *et al* (2003).

grounds that "the opening up that is intrinsic to critique can only be accomplished when the demands of programming are suspended" she was forced to "think and write in a different way" to adapt to the "telos of programming".

There is no doubt that academic critical writing certainly calls for a different set of skills than writing programming documents within the constraints of development organisations, and that it is harder to remain critical while deeply involved (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003). However, as strong constructive critiques often emerge from internal analysis, being involved with programming might be inevitable[19]. Considering the numerous calls that anthropologists have made to "study up" (Nader 1999) within organisations of development, how could one undertake serious and constructive critiques without experiencing the "inner mechanisms of programming", to use Li's term (2007)? Perhaps two solutions may offer a way out of this dilemma: a) relying on sound methods for qualitative and quantitative data gathering (each as appropriate) and b) refraining from undertaking 'critiquing' work at the same time as programming (and vice versa), since a continuous involvement with programming – over time – may bring new elements to bear on critical reflections (as exemplified by Li 2007 and Mosse 2005a).

It must be acknowledged, however, that even with a role to play on the 'inside', some aspects of staff member's daily practices may escape the researcher. For example, being a consultant was problematic in the sense that I was not experiencing the 'real' FAO in terms of full-time staff members' responsibilities or administrative tasks. While being a consultant allowed me to keep a distance as opposed to being completely absorbed and integrated within FAO, some of the administrative aspects of FAO work have certainly escaped my knowledge. However, finding a consultancy was the only option available in order to conduct

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[19] This idea of being too close to the object of study is not a new debate in anthropology and has been discussed above in the section "Ethnography at home".

this research, and, looking back, being employed part time was positive in that it allowed me to seize opportunities that would have otherwise been out of reach.

In the case at point, another limitation imposed on my learning about FAO was that I was involved in an extra-budgetary programme which was administered differently from FAO's regular programmes. This meant that my own daily routines differed from those of FAO consultants at least in administrative terms. Although the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) was anchored in one of FAO's services, and was composed of professionals involved in FAO's structure, the LSP had adopted its own ways of functioning and attempted (with varying degrees of success) to work according to principles based on the sustainable livelihoods approaches, which was not the case in the rest of FAO. I come back to this point in chapter 3.

Generally, ethnographic studies of bureaucracies require that the ethnographer keep an open mind regarding events and people who may benefit the research in unexpected ways. This "methodological holism" includes a research strategy which accepts "that in principle anything in the research context can be relevant and could potentially be taken into account [...]" (Hirsch and Gellner 2001:7). This certainly corresponds to my experience at FAO. Indeed, keeping an open mind and attitude is key to being a participant observer. For the first year of my consultancy, I immersed myself in my FAO world, observing, participating, but also remaining alert to potential learning experiences that were not obviously related to my research topic or work interests. Only then did I become comfortable enough to interview colleagues in a more structured way, as the experience had started to sink in, giving the confidence needed to ask relevant questions.

Being incorporated into an organisation, however, comes with a series of implications. First, higher management may be fearful of what the ethnographer might find, and may keep information from the researcher. As Hirsch and Gellner

(2001) put it, "any 'method' that insists it lacks a cut-and-dried technique, any discipline that grants a central position to the voices of the 'client' and refuses to prejudge what they might say, will always be suspect to powerful organizations" (2001:2). However, contact with high management in a big organisation is quite rare, especially when one works in the shoes of a consultant. My rapport with higher management would have probably changed and been more frequent had I been considered as a staff member with administrative tasks to achieve**.**

Moreover, staff behaviour towards the ethnographer may vary. In some occasions, some staff members may feel threatened by the ethnographer's presence, for personal as well as professional reasons (Hirsch and Gellner 2001:5). Yet, encounters with resistance of elites and irregular relationships with certain participants most likely occurred – in very similar ways – during the course of "classic" fieldwork in small-scale societies. Despite a thoughtful academic research project, classic ethnographers evidently had to remain open to key but unexpected situations.

Serber's (1981:78) study of insurance companies demonstrated how the ethnographer's success depended on "the cooperation of those being studied". In my experience, a great deal of 'fieldwork success' depends on friendship and the sincere ties one can create with given informants or colleagues, no matter where or in what situation. This especially applies where there are conscious restrictions on information, and a selection process of 'who can do what'. In my specific case, I encountered almost no resistance to my research from the FAO personnel met, creating a very positive climate of work. Without this kind of collaboration from my colleagues, this research would simply not have been possible.

Ethnography in organisations should, to a certain extent, take into account the management model(s), especially in terms of human resources, applied by the organisation under study. The management model(s) certainly influence not only the work atmosphere, but also the formal and informal rules, the room left for

individual initiative, the structure and rigidity of the hierarchy of the organisation, and the degree of information sharing between units, individuals, departments, or services.

In addition, the ethnographer has both to see beyond the apparent rigidity of management models in everyday operations, and to acknowledge their influence on the work on individuals. These models can be defined as cultural systems. "They organize information, symbols, and people in ways that influence the allocation of resources and facilitate change in directions consistent with the goals of the organization" (Wiedman 2000: 149). Examples include: a scientific management model, a decision-making theory, a human relations model, a sociotechnical model, a conflict model, a sociological model, an open-systems model, a contingency model, a best practices model, a strategic management model and a total quality management model (Bryant and White 1982:60-66; Wiedman 2000: 146-148). In FAO, the original management model has been changed, bent, twisted, and personalised through time, and would be quite hard to describe with precision (see chapter 2).

RESEARCH METHODS IN THE FAO/LSP CONTEXT

As previously mentioned, this project of ethnographic research on FAO's bureaucratic organisation relied on a combination of methods including participant observation, the use of key informants, non-participant observation, research in documents and archives, and interviews and questionnaires (see below). Participant-observation, particularly, was the foundation stone of this investigation, pursued through the means of an FAO consultancy (Appendix 2). Finding this consultancy, however, was something of a challenge. There was no possibility of getting into FAO to simply observe and carry out research. I had to find work and 'infiltrate the *milieu*', so as to resolve the difficulty of accessing a closed organisation (Mosse 2006:936). My first step was to apply as a volunteer,

allowing me to look for a longer term solution from within. Interestingly, my application fell into the hands of an anthropologist who was happy to take on an anthropologist-to-be as a volunteer.

The experience was positive in many ways. Aside from meeting an energetic and sympathetic mentor, I found myself inside FAO for the first time, able to get a sense of the place and of the people working there. More importantly, my first mentor helped me to contact other staff members who could help me find job possibilities for the next year, which is how I met my second (but not secondary) mentor, who later hired me as a consultant for the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP – see chapter 3). He supported this research project from the outset and invested a great deal of energy in involving me in various events and working tasks. His wide-open door policy provided a positive, encouraging, and creative work environment, where advice was always to be found and discussions could take place whenever necessary.

Overall, I was employed at FAO for a period of seventeen months, to which four months of volunteer work needs to be added – for a total of twenty-one months. The agreement (explicitly endorsed by FAO's legal department (Appendix 3), which also took some time to accomplish) was the following: I was hired as a part-time consultant to carry out work needed by the LSP, but was 'around' fulltime, allowing me to attend meetings and events which at times were not directly related to my LSP work, no questions asked. I ended up voluntarily working more than part-time because I became involved in my work and took advantage of each experience to learn something from my colleagues, about process and working mechanisms. This arrangement gave me the freedom to discuss and interview professionals according to their availability.

The combination of methods provided the cornerstones of this research. Using only interviews or simply observing would have provided too limited a view in any research context, especially within an institution. Considering the size and

complexity of FAO, doing ethnography meant coping with a methodological paradox: although it was impossible to get an encompassing overview and exhaustive account of the organisation or to come up with a general portrait of the 'typical' staff or consultant' there, research methods had to be reliable enough in order to draw conclusions based on observations made from my 'FAO window', that is, from where I was situated within FAO. As will be discussed in chapter 4, there are some norms shared by all FAO staff and consultants, but each of FAO's units seemed to have its own organisational sub-culture, as was the case with the LSP.

Thus, this research is an ethnography of encounters, of the people I have met through work and networks in FAO and of the "micro-social processes" of working in FAO (Mosse 2006b:940). It is my "version" of the story (Mosse 2006b:945), though there could be "as many stories and as many co-authors" as people met in the course of this research (Mosse 2005a:13). However, I think I have conducted a kind of 'triangulation' of many stories in constructing my own narrative, and my conclusions about strategies of work and styles of leadership, though based on the particularities of my own experience at FAO, may have more general applicability within FAO or other organisations of development.

The combination of methods I used included the following:

1) Participant observation. This fieldwork relied heavily on participant observation. Through being hired as an LSP consultant, I was deeply immersed in my work, which is, I believe, the best and perhaps only way to carry out participant observation in a site like FAO. From doing the work, one learns about the logic behind it, about the negotiations involved in team work, the division of labour, the bureaucratic mechanisms, etc. Importantly, working for the LSP opened up the possibility of pursuing a multi-sited exploration (Marcus 1999), which would not otherwise have been possible. My own FAO experience (as I am also an 'informant' for this research (Mosse 2006a)) was itself compartmentalised

and multi-sited. I was able to carry out consultancies in two field offices for periods of two months each: Waterland, where I worked in a post-emergency situation, and Mountainland, where I was involved in a development programme. In addition, through the LSP and its coordinator, I was invited to work as part of an FAO/ donor evaluation team, work which took me to four countries of Africa for periods of five days per country. This allowed me to experience more 'normal' FAO-style missions and programme evaluations, an experience which will be briefly discussed in chapter 6.

2) Key informants. I had two very valued key informants (Edward and Eva) to whom I could turn for just about any question, and about six informants or colleagues who provided me information based on their experiences and priceless opportunities for discussions. Sometimes they did not know more than I did regarding a particular event or issue, but we could bounce ideas back to one another, which was almost as important as the information itself.

3) Non-participant observation. Many times, I went to meetings, observed interactions, or was involved in discussions that were not directly related to my work. These meetings were important because they offered me perspective on how different the LSP was from the rest of FAO, and vice-versa. I went to events or meetings that were open to a large FAO audience, or, in some cases, to 'closed' meetings that I was given permission to attend. It also occurred that Edward or Eva would take me to meetings to which they were respectively invited, finding a work-related excuse for me to come along, generally as a notetaker.

4) Interviews and questionnaire. The process of seeking interviews was interesting in itself. I had to wait for a long time before feeling comfortable enough to ask colleagues and professionals I only slightly knew for interviews. It would have been inappropriate or fruitless to request an interview from or send a questionnaire to professionals who did not know me at all, or who were not

recommended by someone who did. The general discourse in FAO-HQ is that staff and consultants are busy, time being the most precious resource that one must protect. In the context of HQ, a questionnaire sent by a complete stranger stood little chance of eliciting a response.

Indeed, when I first started asking for interviews, the most common answer was, "sorry, I don't have time this week and I will be away next week"! So, with the help of at least four colleagues, and with my supervisor's approval, I decided to send out a questionnaire via email, accompanied by a letter (see Appendix 4). The process of writing the questionnaire itself took time, and I remain dissatisfied to this day with the results. It seems that I had gathered so much information and found so many topics of interest that I could hardly be concise through asking only a few questions. Questionnaires were sent individually, one by one, and I adjusted the covering letter accordingly.

Fearing the time factor, I sent out two documents: one was the questionnaire, and the second one was made up of 'extra questions' in case someone would have time to fill it in. However, when carrying out face to face interviews, I generally managed to ask both sets of questions. The questionnaire did not include any 'yes/no' questions because it proved impossible to pose such questions without including preconceived opinions or intentions. I finally obtained several interviews through using three strategies: a) some responded in written form (much more limited in scope than those obtained through oral interviews); b) after I sent out the questionnaire, I received a couple of phone calls from colleagues who said they did not have time to answer the questions in writing and preferred to discuss directly, so we fixed a meeting time; c) after a long silence following the reception of the questionnaire, I called back colleagues to see if they would have time in the near future. At this point, some realised that they would not be able to find time unless we sat down together, so scheduled a meeting time.

Overall, I obtained a satisfying response rate, considering that some colleagues had warned me to expect a very low rate of return, which had certainly been the experience of the LSP with other questionnaires. I sent out ninety individual questionnaires and two colleagues forwarded the questionnaire to another eight colleagues of theirs. Of the ninety-eight people who received it, forty-seven (or 48%) responded overall, of which twenty-nine were face to face interviews, and eighteen replied in written form. Five colleagues who answered in the written form also asked for interviews, thinking it would be interesting to discuss in person some of the questions posed. The average interview lasted about one hour, and many took place over lunch. I simply got used to eating with one hand and writing with the other.

Another set of interviews was subsequently conducted, but this time the interviews were part of my work, because they concerned the history of the LSP I had been asked to write. In this context, I interviewed eight staff members who had played a role at the beginning and throughout the LSP (half of whom were re-interviewed for my research). These interviews provided different points of views on the LSP and on its history, but several accounts were very personal, so I preferred not to use some of the information gathered.

No one I talked to or interviewed expressed concern about my use of the information they provided for research purposes. Some interviewees, however, told me stories they preferred would stay off record. I then stopped taking notes and simply listened. None of these 'off the record confidences' are presented in this thesis, unless someone else said something similar on record. I can say with some confidence, though I can never be certain, that no one refrained from saying anything they wanted to because of my presence in our meetings.

I have protected the identities of interviewees in this thesis by using pseudonyms. I have opted for simple 'English' names, randomly attributed, in order not to give away any nationalities, but have respected the gender of the individuals. In

addition, the names of the countries in which I travelled were given pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of the people I worked there. Since there are few staff in country offices, their identities would otherwise have been easy to uncover.

One important methodological issue I encountered is that interviewees did not want to sign a consent form, and after a while I stopped asking them to do so in order to avoid making them feel awkward. Two major reasons were mentioned: first, some raised the issue that staff and consultants were not allowed to sign documents in the context of FAO, even if it had nothing to do with their work; second, the consent form made the interview too formal. I was told that there was no reason for them to sign if they did not care what I did with the information. Nevertheless, I made sure I had verbal authorisation to use the information provided by interviewees. By agreeing to be interviewed, they consciously made the choice to participate in this research.

The use of a tape recorder was not really appropriate in the context of FAO. At first, I used it in work-related meetings to record general discussions. Reactions to the recorder varied: either there was no reaction because colleagues did not care or they thought it was not necessary to record their discussions. In the context of interviews, pulling out the recorder made the interview too official or too formal, since, although most interviewees were willing to be interviewed, I could sense that they preferred to keep it as informal as possible. Taking notes was expected and seen as more appropriate.

It was surprisingly hard, in the context of FAO, to obtain straightforward answers. Why? FAO's staff and consultants are highly educated individuals, highly specialised, have strong personalities, and have a sense of having landed somewhere important (see chapter 4). This translated into different attitudes towards interviews: some had a sense of 'entitlement' that allowed them to not answer my questions but rather to tell me how I should be pursuing the research;

others were quite knowledgeable regarding 'how things should be' in FAO, which was certainly interesting, but left aside information regarding 'how things actually were'. Thus, it was difficult to obtain comparable answers to similar questions. At times I felt as if my questions were being manipulated, though perhaps not consciously, by individuals who seem to prefer discussions of matters they had already given some thought to, rather than thinking about the questions that were being asked. However, if this meant that interviewees felt comfortable discussing whatever they wanted and thought relevant, then the interviews conducted were very productive. In this sense, my ethnographic account was very much guided by the informants I met and who agreed to answer my questions. Moreover, because of this "ease" one the part of the interviewees, I was fairly certain that I was not merely recording only "authorised views" (Mosse 2006b:938). Most interviewees were, in fact, quite critical, some of them even cynical, towards the organisation and easily shared their views on what and how the organisation should attempt to improve.

5) Documents and archives. During my time at FAO and with the LSP, I had access to many documents, some public, others internal. To ensure that I did not use confidential information inadvertently, I relied only on public documents, with the exception of the archives concerning the history of the LSP that were given to me by three staff members, with permission to use the documents for my research.

Shortly after I started to work with the LSP, those with whom I interacted for work purposes knew about my project, or were informed about it soon afterwards. The LSP team was open-minded about and supportive of my research. Often, after meetings, someone came to me asking "this will be great information for your research, right"? This sentence was generally said in a positive and encouraging sense. I also remember going to meetings with colleagues, and, while I wanted to keep a low profile and simply be there, I ended up being introduced to people they knew as the "researcher who will be writing about us"! If sometimes this left

me speechless, the response from the person was generally positive and articulated as, "This is so interesting! If I were you, here is where I'd look and what I'd do" or "you should talk to so and so". Everyone had his or her own idea of where the research should be going.

There were times when I preferred not to speak about my research, perhaps because I was simply working and did not see any particular relevance of what I was engaged with for my research (though this was rare), but mostly to deflect attention away from myself and my research project. Whenever my research became the focus of interaction, I found the 'authenticity' of the work context and people's behaviour was lost. Sometimes I was glad not to talk about it but just do my work and learn more "freely" from people and my experience of them; there were times when being an LSP consultant was enough to manage. However, if during a meeting I picked up on an interesting interaction, or heard a discussion I did not fully understand, I would later pass by that person's office and ask about it: "Remember you said this in that meeting, what did you mean"? Obtaining an explanation was rarely a problem, unless the person was too busy or was inaccessible because of his or her hierarchical position. In this case, I would resort to my close colleagues for clarification.

I had many opportunities to participate in open discussions. Edward, who was both a key informant and my FAO supervisor, had an open-door policy and at any time I could come by his office to ask questions, seek his opinion, or discuss the events of the day. I could also turn to colleagues who became dear friends, friendships which turned out to be a driving force of this research. Without them, I would have failed to discover the "human" and "de-homogenised" view I was seeking.

Some colleagues may have 'used' me as a sounding board to say things they could rarely discuss more publicly, or to simply ventilate and say out loud what they thought of the organisation, their boss, or their work. These comments were

not always constructive or relevant to my research, as they were often very personal. Even if such comments were rich in implications for my interests, they would have been difficult to make use of since they could have been too easily traced back to the interviewee. Examples include discussions about problems with authorities, histories of sexual harassment, comments on political decisions, affairs between colleagues, negative opinions of personalities, etc.

An important discovery, at least for myself, was the extent to which research methods are linked to one's personality, or perhaps the perception of what is on – or off-limits. I am not one to drop into a colleague's office at any time. Perhaps I could have been more forward in that sense and knocked on more doors, but it was also a question of respect. Sometimes I was told by colleagues to go see someone, but I did not do so if I judged that the person in question was too busy. I did not want anyone to feel constrained or obliged to collaborate on my research. Accordingly, I did not set particular standards for the number or characteristics of interviewees[20] (ex: male/ female (though eighteen interviews out of forty-seven were done with men, which is somewhat less than half), from different departments, specialists versus generalists, age categories, staff or consultant, etc.), but rather sought to interview the staff members and consultants I had crossed paths with and with whom I felt comfortable enough to take their time.

No set of methods is ever perfect, but, in the context of FAO/ LSP, the combination of methods presented above provided the means for me to a) access a variety of points of view; b) experience different contexts of work, at headquarters and in two field offices; c) become acquainted with the work associated with the 'livelihoods approach'; d) learn first hand about FAO/ LSP and immerse myself in its organisational mechanisms, and e) gather information through a variety of sources.

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[20] For a study of this kind, see Rathgeber (2006) which focuses on social scientists and their role in the CGIAR system.

One of the downsides of this set of methods was the difficulty experienced in integrating information coming from various contexts and actors. My work as a consultant led me into a variety of situations and settings that were often hard to link together in the context of FAO. In a sense, I was able to experience the strong compartmentalisation of FAO. Thus, while not allowing for an exhaustive examination of FAO, which would have been impossible considering the scale of the organisation, this set of methods provided generous opportunities for me to learn about the specifics of the "LSP world". However, any chosen site within FAO would have posed a challenge in terms of the representativity of the culture, methods, and staff involved in its work. Nonetheless, I do believe that the flexibility and support I found only could have been provided by the LSP, given the LSP's own freedom within FAO (see chapter 3).

The advantages of working with the LSP included:

a) Open-minded and supportive colleagues. As will be demonstrated in the history of the LSP presented in chapter 3, the programme attracted a particular crowd of professionals who were perhaps more inclined to appreciate and support the research than would many of those in other units in FAO.

b) Freedom and trust. Support from my colleagues often took the form of allowing me to attend meetings and events which provided opportunities to better understand the 'rest of FAO'. Nobody ever asked me if I was doing my job, ever looked over my shoulder, or asked how I intended to use information. There was a climate of mutual trust that I can only be thankful for. In this sense, I did not have trouble 'resisting' organisational pressure, as discussed by Mosse (2006b:941), who found that some actors in organisations might be subjected to a pressure to "conform to dominant policy-driven or economics-biased knowledge systems" (Mosse 2006:941). The LSP staff and consultants did not 'pressure' me though it is fair to say that

c) Capacity to reach various parts of FAO. The LSP consultants and co-conveners came from a variety of services and departments in FAO, and thus brought to the table different points of view and experiences of work. In this sense, the LSP provided me a network of contacts that extended far beyond the programme itself. One of my key informants, Eva, who was at the centre of a particularly extensive network, introduced me to people who were not directly related to the LSP but who shared similar working values (see chapter 6). This helped me gain perspective on the rest of the FAO 'house'.

d) Opportunity to go to the field. Edward and Eva managed to find opportunities to send me to the field to carry out livelihoods-related work (see chapter 5), which was a privilege in itself. Edward agreed to send me on 'long' missions of two months each, which are unusual for FAO as typical missions are of about ten days. These missions allowed me to discover what it meant to work 'in the field' as well as learn something of the general socio-cultural contexts of the countries I visited.

On the other hand, there were also several disadvantages to being affiliated with the LSP:

a) Not everybody in FAO liked the LSP or believed in livelihoods principles. My association with LSP perhaps inhibited some people from engaging in discussion with me. I recall that several doors closed rather quickly shortly after colleagues asked about my work.

b) This programme gathered liked-minded individuals, and involved ways of working and values that differed greatly from those in the rest of FAO, even in administrative and financial terms, as LSP was an extra-budgetary programme with an unusual degree of autonomy (see chapter 3). In that sense, I probably gained a selective view of how 'administrative' matters

worked in FAO. Likewise, many LSP colleagues shared a commitment to the 'livelihoods approach', and I found it difficult to gain exposure to a variety of opinions or to different 'approaches' to development.

c) Finally, most of my close colleagues were generalists, and, in the end, I had few opportunities to meet technical specialists in fields such as fish science, agronomy, veterinary science, biology, etc. This certainly has limited the range of perspectives I was able to gather, as technicians probably would have different views from those whose job it is to put projects together, to engage in training, or to deal with 'social' matters.

Overall, there were more advantages than disadvantages in working with LSP. I felt 'spoiled' and in an enviable position as an LSP consultant (see chapter 4). It may therefore be difficult for me to offer a fully critical perspective on my experience with the LSP, but, in spite of this potential for bias, I remain convinced that the LSP provided an opportune window through which to understand something of the wider organisation.

Finally, I did not experience the kind of challenges that were faced by Mosse (2003, 2004, 2005a) in terms of "negotiating ethnographic exit from insider professional roles" (Mosse 2008:25). My dissertation has been shared in part with key informants, who have helped me in clarifying certain information and have critically commented on drafts. However, I have encountered many difficulties in turning "relationships into data" which Mosse describes as an "anti-social" exercise (2006:937). In this perspective, the most anti-social part of my research was to end up alone with a blank page and eventually with a manuscript, away from these relationships, during the very isolating process of writing.

CONCLUSION

The current development industry can be qualified as 'bureaucratic'. In the case of FAO, and I would imagine that in most large development multi-lateral and bilateral agencies, much of the bureaucratic process is concerned with funds management, project design, the production of reports and documents, work planning, preparing for conferences and meetings, preparing policy advice for specific countries, establishing contracts with third parties, managing human resources, carrying out evaluations, among many other activities. Documents are massively produced, not only in FAO but across UN organisations and multi-lateral agencies, yet for lack of time only the very rare professional manages to read even half, perhaps less, of the relevant documents which end up on his/her desk.

In order to understand some of these 'bureaucratic processes', I have combined ethnographic methods in order to multiply sources of information, allowing me to explore a diversity of perspectives on a variety of topics related to the functioning of the organisation. Even though participant observation may be most important in terms of gaining a view from within and also of 'living' within the organisation, the availability of key informants and the possibility of interviewing various actors were equally central to my research, as their views enabled me to more confidently interpret events, behaviours, discourses, and work objectives. However, it was only by being employed by and immersed in FAO that these resource persons became accessible to me.

This chapter has outlined the general methodological context and inspiration for this research, i.e. the methodological implications of conducting fieldwork in a bureaucratic organisation, and as assessment of the combination of methods used. The next two chapters will focus on the organisational context of the research, the 'house'. The overall FAO structure will be discussed in chapter 2, before turning to the more particular LSP programme for which I worked as a consultant in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

THE GENERAL RESEARCH CONTEXT: DEVELOPMENT AND THE FAO

As previously discussed, anthropologists recognise the need to "study up" (Nader 1999) and to consider bureaucratic organisations as ethnographic sites in order to gain insight into organisational practice (Cernea and Kassam 2006; Li 2000, 2007; Mosse 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008b; Quarles van Ufford and Giri 2003). In undertaking ethnographic work in an organisation such as FAO, one is struck by the many layers of complexity that employees deal with when fulfilling their tasks. Yet, the complexity not only stems from the organisational structure itself, but also is a result of the subject matter, the compartmentalisation of working units, and the great many actors involved in and around FAO's work.

Pursuant to this observation, it seems that the production of a constructive critique of development should take into account the complexity of organisations in which development professionals are involved. To substantiate this statement, this chapter presents two consecutive discussions.

The first illustrates some of the critiques of development that a) highlight the fact that development, the very *leitmotiv* of FAO's existence, is not a universally embraced concept but has been critiqued by anthropologists, and b) assess the nature of anthropological critiques of development by proposing an overview of its contested goals At the same time, this discussion provides an occasion to broadly situate this research within the anthropological literature, although theoretical orientations will be further discussed in the opening of Chapter 3.

The second section attends to the complexity of the organisation itself: FAO is spread all over the world through a network of in-country Representations and Regional Offices, in addition to its headquarters in Rome. The organisation is composed of many compartmentalised units in which specialised individuals

operate and fulfil their tasks. This section examines some of the many levels of complexity found in FAO:

a) the history and mandate of the organisation;

b) its governing bodies and structure;

c) its work towards alleviating food insecurity; and

d) some of the recent events – reforms and an Independent External Evaluation for example – which have had an impact on FAO's work and structure.

Although the following account of FAO's formal and official structure is non-exhaustive (as a thorough description and assessment of FAO and its activities could be the subject of several theses) I have made a point of describing in detail the inner structure of FAO to provide a reliable illustration of the organisational context that enfolds development professionals. Revealing this complexity serves to illustrate how some critiques of development could potentially be addressed by taking into account organisational aspects of development and the "lived realities" (Long 2001) of development professionals. Moreover, this descriptive account of FAO provides a foundation on which to situate the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP), the programme for which I worked at FAO, which will be presented in Chapter 3.

Hence, this chapter presents the structure of the organisation, or, metaphorically, the 'house' in which FAO's professionals work. In contrast, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will be dedicated to presenting the 'home', or the 'homey working environment', where FAO's employees engage in their work through several (at times individual) patterns of agency.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL CRITIQUES OF DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

The Contested Goals of Development

Development as Modernising Endeavour

Since this research project takes place in an organisation for development, it is relevant to lay down the bases of anthropological critiques of development. This is achieved through the presentation of certain authors' views, as I believe it is illustrative to take stock of the color and tone of their own words and expressions. Critiques of development often relate to the purposes or "intentions" of development intervention, or the paradox of development: "Because development, whatever definition is used, appears as both means and goals, the goals are most often unwittingly assumed to be present at the onset of the process of development itself" (Cowen and Shenton 1996:4). In practice, however, as will be discussed throughout this thesis, practitioners generally see means and goals as interrelated and find themselves in situations where they do the best they can with the means they are given to attain objectives.

Perhaps an 'official' definition of the goals of development which occasioned the creation of organisations such as FAO – as an example of what many anthropologists oppose, critique, or wish to modify – would be useful to situate the discussion. The following definition of development comes from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)[21], a leader in the international development scene:

> "The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security

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[21] This definition is also used by the World Bank Group (www.worldbankgroup.org).

against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives." (Mahbub ul Haq, UNDP website, December 2007)[22]

To begin, it should be highlighted that, just as in the larger development world and related disciplines, there exists no agreement in the anthropological literature as to what should be the purpose of international development (Black Knippers 1999:1). Although most anthropologists share the view that development may be about developing human capacities and choices, several authors, based on discourse analysis, argued that the definition provided by UNDP only serves as a 'cover', an exercise of rhetoric, to hide the real and only goals of development, which were expressed in several ways: economic growth and the promotion of capitalism (Escobar 1995a; Esteva 1992; Rist 1997; Sachs 1992; Williams 1978), the imposition of Western values and the pursuit of modernity (Hobart 1993; Marglin 1990; Sachs 1992; Staudt 1991; Rist 1997), or the continuation of colonial relations (Li 2007; Cooper 1997).

Indeed, for many, UNDP's definition presented above constitutes in fact a statement promoting the Western way of life, or, rather, the hegemonic imposition of the Western way of life, although presented as something natural, as the normal evolution of life and civilisation (Rist 1997; see also Cowen and Shenton 1995; Hobart 1993; Marglin 1990; Sachs 1992; Staudt 1991; Tucker 1999). "Development discourse is thus rooted in the rise of the West, in the history of capitalism, in modernity, and the globalization of Western state institutions, disciplines, cultures and mechanisms of exploitation" (Crush 1995:11, paraphrasing Cowen and Shenton in the same volume).

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[22] Prior to the influence of economists Amartya Sen (1989, 1999) and Jean Drèze (1989), development was mostly defined according to the economic growth of national economies, and did not include concern for "human" development. The definition including human development, used by charity organisations and International and national NGOs for a long time, became more prevalent and was adopted by some agencies of the UN in the 1990s.

This discursive construction of development as a natural phenomenon is of particular concern for anthropologists in contexts where development signifies planned interventions. This illusion of being "natural" legitimises interventions designed to "civilise", – what Sachs (1992) called the "hidden" development agenda. "Development proceeds by creating abnormalities ('the poor', 'the malnourished', 'the illiterate', 'the pregnant women', 'the landless') which it would then treat or reform. Seeking to eradicate all problems, it actually ended up multiplying them indefinitely" (Escobar 1995b:214).

Furthermore, authors have highlighted how the aims of development, besides seeking to alleviate poverty, were built on preconceived ideas of modernity, on the experience of "'advanced' industrialized countries" (Worsley 1984:3). Thus the hidden agenda of development, regardless of the types of projects and aims, is also about the 'modernisation' of the global population (Escobar 1995b, 2008; Kothari and Minogue 2002; Rist 1997):

> "While post-modernist convention requires us to suggest that everything is diverse, complex and differentiated, we would like to restate the notion that there is a singular, though not always homogenous, development project that propels us towards modernization" (Kothari and Minogue 2002:8)[23].

In this sense, development can be seen as the continuity of colonialism, as argued by Li (2007). The international community of donors, just like the colonial states have done in the past, exercise control over national states and local communities, with a promise to "improve" their institutions. Like in the case of colonialism, "development's rational models achieve cognitive control and social regulation; they enhance state capacity and expand bureaucratic power" (Mosse 2005a:2). International development can be seen as part of the same "chain of actions" within poor countries: there was the colonial state, the postcolonial state,

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[23] Escobar shares this view: "Discourses of globalization and development are, themselves, subsidiary to visions of modernity; modernity thus remains a key political and cultural question" (2008:131).

and then international development, which may be seen as a type of 'global' colonialism (Escobar 2008; Li 2007; Stirrat 2000).

Development and Culture

In addition to being perceived as a modernising, colonialist and Western project, development has been critiqued by anthropologists for underestimating and depreciating, even despising at times, non-Western or non-modern knowledge and culture (Crewe 1997; Escobar 1995b; Hobart 1993; Peet and Hartwick 1999, among others).

> "A largely neglected aspect of such development is the part played by western scientific knowledge. Not only are indigenous knowledges ignored or dismissed, but the nature of the problem of underdevelopment and its solution are defined by reference to this world-ordering knowledge. […] the knowledges of the peoples being developed are ignored or treated as mere obstacles to rational progress. In order for them to be able to progress, these peoples have first to be constituted as 'underdeveloped' and ignorant" [...] (Hobart 1993: 1-2).

In fact, one of the fundamentally anthropological critiques of development concerns 'culture', or, rather, the almost complete disregard of culture by developers. Whereas the economic and political spheres of development have received significant consideration, "the cultural dimension, the production of cultural meanings and symbols, has not received adequate attention" (Crewe and Harrison 1998:143). Culture is not only generally ignored in the development world, but when culture receives attention, it is often considered as an obstacle to development (Crewe and Harrison 1998; see also Escobar 1991:659; Rew 1997). Tradition, for example, is often depicted as preventing populations from adopting modern ways of life, and implies visions of a fixed-in-time backwardness (Crewe and Harrison 1998:133).

These 'insensitivities', which may stem from the widespread use of dichotomies – modernity/tradition, rich/poor, rational/indigenous (Long 1992:273) – and from an ignorance of culture, have resulted in many practical problems. Dove (1994) has illustrated how projects may be negatively impacted by the lack of consideration for locally "differing construction of social realities", that is, by taking for granted that local knowledge and realities are homogenous (1994:332; see also Mosse 2005a). Additionally, Crewe (1997) has demonstrated how indigenous knowledge can be marginalised by "expert" knowledge when it comes to implementing and testing new technologies: "The implication is that while users passively 'perceive' but do not 'know', the technical experts actively 'find' and 'know', and even develop knowledge within an objective, scientific discourse. Behind this implication is an assumption that 'Western science' is the only path to objective truth" (1997: 68). Further, Crewe and Harrison (1998) offered some illustrations of basic assumptions about the cultural sphere that may have major ramifications for development practice:

> "First, it is assumed that the interests and motivations of all members of rural households are equal. […] Second, simple material gain is assumed to be a primary aspect of motivation. […] Finally, and relatedly, the assumption that the decision-making process of individual actors should be viewed as an informed weighing of costs, benefits, and risks – with a completed outcome – is queried. […] This puzzle offers an especially convincing challenge to the idea that people are uniformly driven by opportunities for wealth creation alone" (Crewe and Harrison 1998:113-114).

Situating the Research: Development and Organisational Practice

The views above present development as a pervasive project. For many authors, the official purpose of development, as stated by UNDP, the World Bank and other international organisations and governments, simply consists of a 'cover' hiding the real motivations and purposes of development, i.e. economic growth, Westernisation and modernisation. Others are outraged by the ways

development is conducted and imposed on others, and denigrating to non-Western ways of living. These critiques share a common ground, as they have emerged from the disappointing realisation that development "did not work" (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Esteva 1985; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; Sachs 1992), at a time when expectations of development in terms of social equity and poverty alleviation were quite high.

However, it has also been argued that the promotion of economic growth and the hegemonic imposition of Western values does not prevent development from also seeking to alleviate poverty in the world (Ferguson 1994; Peet and Hartwick 1999), and to positively transform "society through organised intervention" (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003:8; Mosse 2008b).

> "It is clear in reading scholarly literature on "development" that the word "development" is used to refer to at least two quite separate things. On the one hand, "development" is used to mean the process of transition or transformation toward modern, capitalist, industrial economy – "modernization", "capitalist development", "the development of the forces of production" etc. The second meaning, much in vogue from the mid 1970s onward, defines itself in terms of "quality of life" and "standard of living", and refers to the reduction or amelioration of poverty and material want" (Ferguson 1994:15).

If most anthropologists seem to agree on the basic critiques of development presented above, disagreements predominate as to how best to challenge 'mainstream' development, which debate has led to the creation of two main camps in anthropology (which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3): those who propose 'alternatives to development', arguing that the primary purpose of development is to impose Western ways of life; and those who advocate for improving the current system by integrating 'alternative development' approaches. This opposition has been described by Ferguson in the following terms:

> "One key feature of such a landscape is the set of complex, shifting relations that exist between the academic social sciences and the

various kinds of knowledge and theory that circulate within the world of development. [...] Development practitioners, in contrast, appear more likely to believe that important development ideas tend to be hammered out in practice, and that academic theory is largely irrelevant to what they do" (Ferguson 1997:150).

While sharing the basis of the critiques presented above, this research takes the view that development and development organisations, in practice, may yield positive outcomes for poor populations. If we accept this as a 'good', it matters to analyse the inner workings of development organisations and to build constructive critiques in order to eventually make the system "work". While external critiques offer important perspectives, there is no reason to believe that the "development apparatus" (Ferguson) will end its activities in the near future. It seems that perhaps the only way to bring changes to the current development system is to work from the inside.

Ideally, constructive critiques should be grounded in practice. I share Li's view that discourse analysis of development may narrow analyses and "mak[e] much of what happens in the name of improvement obscure" (Li 2007:9). This is partly why this research is based in practice theory (De Certeau 1984), and why it sought to explore development more specifically from organisational practice. As Black Knippers (1999:11) observed:

"Greater familiarity by the theorists with the experience of the practitioners might lead to a more useful choice of factors and more realistic expectations of actors. [...] ...we would do well to position ourselves at the intersection between the real world and the official world and to ask how we might cut down the number of wrecks at that intersection".

Development, almost by default, embodies complexity or 'plurality', mostly because of the multidisciplinarity[24] inherent in development issues, their many

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[24] In academia, the complexity of development has attracted interest from several disciplines of social and human sciences, such as political science, sociology, economics, and anthropology, and from technical fields such as agriculture, nutrition, forestry, fisheries, etc. In addition to these multiple domains, the "fragmentation" of disciplines also increases this diversity, as certain sub-

real-life applications, and the multitude of concepts, topics, premises, paradigms, and theories of development, all of which call for several angles of analysis. As Chambers wrote: "the problem has many levels – international, national, regional, community, household, and individual; many dimensions – of gender, class, caste, age, occupation, and physical and mental capability; and many implications in domains which are political, legal, economic, social, psychological and ethical" (1997:2)[25].

In the context of this research, the platform of analysis chosen concerns FAO, one development organisation. While others have analysed various levels of complexity of the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002; Mosse 2005a; among others), this research focuses on the complexity inherent in FAO, in which development practitioners are embedded. Ultimately, a deeper comprehension of the inner workings of the organisation may shed light on the "lived experiences" of the professionals, a crucial element of analyses that aim to complement or produce constructive critiques of the development system.

What follows exemplifies the organisational context in which FAO professionals work, highlighting the complexity and compartmentalisation of its structure, its mandate, its wide range of activities, and of some of the changes that have occurred in the organisation in recent years. The subsequent chapters will 'walk into' this structure to shed light on the work conditions and situations of some FAO employees, and discuss how they deal with the complexity of the organisation.

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disciplines "mix and match" between two or three domains of study (i.e. agro-forestry, fisheries economics, etc.). The realm of development intervention has come to require joint collaboration between specialists, academics, community members, etc.

[25] In the introduction to their book "Doctrines of Development", Cowen and Shenton provide many definitions of development, thereby illustrating the wide range of activities undertaken in the name of development: "Thus, development is construed as 'a process of enlarging people's choices'; of enhancing 'participatory democratic processes' and the "ability of people to have a say in the decisions that shape their lives'; of providing 'human beings with the opportunity to develop their fullest potential'; of enabling the poor, women, and 'free independent peasants' to organise for themselves and work together. Simultaneously, however, development is defined as the means to 'carry out a nation's development goals' and of promoting 'economic growth', 'equity' and 'national self-reliance' (Cowen and Shenton 1996:3).

FAO AS AN ORGANISATION OF DEVELOPMENT

FAO's History and Mandate

FAO is the successor to the International Institute of Agriculture, which was active between 1905 and 1940, with a membership reaching 74 countries in 1934 (FAO 1985). This Institute started to build up international cooperation in the realm of agriculture, and importantly created and maintained the first global database on agriculture. The Institute was mostly a technical agency, and its role in the world events was limited to guidance as the 1930's economic crisis had severe repercussions on agriculture through the diminution of food trade (Maïga 2003).

At the same time, the then recent discipline of nutrition 'discovered' how widespread was the phenomenon of malnutrition even in developed countries such as Great Britain, and the threat of global population growth was becoming a worldwide concern (FAO 1985). Together, the food crisis and the discovery of malnutrition led some members of the League of Nations to propose ways to protect public health through ensuring adequate food resources. The core idea was to "marry health and agriculture[26]" (*ibid*: 6-7). Although World War II put a halt to these efforts, FAO was later created to pursue the challenges foreseen before and aggravated during the war.

FAO's history officially starts on October 16th 1945 at the Château Frontenac in Québec City, where it was founded based on and following the 1935 Geneva Conference of the League of Nations where discussion of worldwide food supplies had been launched in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the Great Depression. The thirty-nine countries attending at Quebec City signed FAO's Constitution Act, which had been elaborated two years earlier at Hot Springs, Virginia (FAO 1985; Phillips 1981:13; see also Collomb 1999). The existence of FAO is in fact the result of the action of a few individuals who were interested in

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[26] This phrase can also be found in Marchisio and Di Blase 1986

improving the production and distribution of agricultural products in the world: David Lubin – a Polish American –, King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy, Frank McDougall and Stanley Bruce of Australia, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, along with the crucial contribution of Sir John Boyd Orr (from the UK), who after laying much of the ground work leading to the creation of FAO became the organisation's first Director General in 1945. Sir John Boyd Orr had inspired many people to think about ways to prevent malnutrition in the world during the time of the League of Nations (Phillips 1981).

These visionaries not only defined and elaborated on what was going to become FAO's mandate and purpose, but sought to give the organisation the instruments necessary to end hunger in the world (FAO 1985; Phillips 1981; Marchisio and Di Blase 1986), which were to include control over food prices and food distribution, along with the creation of a world wide food bank. At Hot Springs it was resolved:

> "That the governments here represented, by virtue of their desire to obtain freedom of all peoples from hunger, in all countries, reaffirm the principle of mutual responsibility and of coordinated action: […].
> d) to help in reaching this goal by all appropriate means, including capital, tools, and technical knowledge;
> e) to maintain the balance in funding and ensure an ordered direction of currencies;
> f) to improve the methods of food distribution internationally and to lower its costs; […]" (FAO 1985; free translation).

Although these were the elements privileged by the initiators of FAO, economic and commercial instruments and policies were denied by the member-states at the 2nd Conference of FAO, held in Copenhagen in 1946. On that occasion, Sir Boyd Orr presented his views on how to solve problems related to hunger, but the member-states required first the creation of a Commission in order to study the Director General's suggestions, which were based on the idea that "food is more than a commercial product: it is essential to life" (*ibid:* 15, free translation). The Commission worked for three months, treating two problems separately: ensuring food supplies for all human beings on the one hand, and stabilising the

prices of agriculture products on the other hand (FAO 1985). Although the Commission generally approved of Sir Boyd Orr's suggestions in proposing that a food bank be created, and agreed that the prices of some food products be fixed, the member-states subsequently rejected all of the recommendations of the Commission and agreed that each state should retain their sovereignty over actions taken to alleviate hunger[27].

FAO was thus refused the political, economic and decisional power over the state of worldwide food production and distribution[28], but was given the role of gathering knowledge of food supplies, of providing advice to member-states, and of hosting an international forum on food security. Sir Boyd Orr, the then Director General of FAO, dissatisfied with having to work with inadequate tools to fulfil the organisation's goals, subsequently resigned from his position in 1948 (Phillips 1981). He once said: "People are asking for bread and we will give them statistics" (cited in Saouma 1993:2; free translation). The aims of FAO are summarised in the Preamble and Article I of the Constitution, and remain unchanged since their elaboration in 1945 (Figure 1).

It should be mentioned that to this day, a certain amount of confusion remains among FAO's employees regarding the organisation's mandate. During my round of interviews, I have asked interviewees what was, according to them, FAO's mandate. Although most knew the 'tools' of FAO (policy advising, technical assistance, standard setting and normative work), there was a great deal of diversity in the vocabulary used to describe FAO's overall task. Answers ranged

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[27] "There existed then a profound incompatibility between the perspective of an international administration, through and by FAO, of the agricultural products market on the one hand and the opinions of the producing states (or rich importers, such as Great Britain) on the other hand. States were not interested in stabilized markets, in control of prices, or in the establishment of an international reserve of agricultural products. The apparent disorganisation of the international system could suffice to prevent sensible surplus on the free market. This ensured that FAO's inability to solve root problems – for which the organisation would be criticised during all its existence – was a free choice made by the states which had contributed to FAO's creation since the Hot Springs Conference, rather than a choice made by the organisation itself" (Marchisio and Di Blase 1986: 27, free translation).
[28] It was only fifty years later that the World Trade Organisation - previously the GATT – which was created in 1994 - was given the mandate of regulating food trade, but not for the purpose of alleviating world hunger.

from "reducing food insecurity in the world" (Jordan), to "sustainable development and rural livelihoods for poverty alleviation" (Eva). Many also answered more radical ideas such as "fighting hunger" (Huck), "ending hunger" (Karen) or "eradicating hunger" (Janice). Other answers concerned "poverty reduction" (Pascale) or "the reduction of rural poverty" (Joshua). Many of these answers implied a much larger scope for the work of FAO compared to what FAO *can* actually achieve.

Two reasons may explain why the range of answers was rather large. First, a senior informant suspected that many staff and consultants, especially the young consultants, actually were not aware of the history of the organisation:

> "FAO does not have the mandate to do what the member-states or the public think the organisation's mandate is. The official mandate is written in black on white, but FAO did not receive the instruments necessary to carry out this mandate. […] FAO is a technical agency without political power. […] People working in FAO do not know this, or do not know where the ambiguity comes from". (Michael)

Figure 1. Preamble and Article 1 of FAO's Constitution.

"*Preamble*

The Nations accepting this Constitution, being determined to promote the common welfare by furthering separate and collective action on their part for the **purpose** of:

- **raising levels of nutrition and standards** of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions;
- **securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution** of all food and agricultural products;
- **bettering** the condition of rural populations;
- and thus contributing towards an **expanding world economy** and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger;

hereby establish the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, hereinafter referred to as the "Organization" through which the Members will report to one another on the measures taken and the progress achieved in the field of action set forth above.

Article I
Functions of the Organization

1. The Organization shall **collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture.** In this Constitution, the term "agriculture" and its derivatives **include fisheries, marine products, forestry and primary forestry products**.
2. The Organization shall **promote** and, where appropriate, shall **recommend** national and international action with respect to:

   a. scientific, technological, social and economic research relating to nutrition, food and agriculture;
   b. the **improvement of education and administration** relating to nutrition, food and agriculture, and the spread of public knowledge of nutritional and agricultural science and practice;
   c. the **conservation of natural resources** and the adoption of improved methods of agricultural production;
   d. the **improvement of the processing, marketing and distribution** of food and agricultural products;
   e. the adoption of policies for the provision of adequate agricultural credit, national and international;
   f. the adoption of international policies with respect to agricultural commodity arrangements.

3. It shall also be the function of the Organization:

   a. to furnish such **technical assistance as governments may request**;
   b. to **organize, in cooperation with the governments concerned, such missions** as may be needed to assist them to fulfil the obligation arising from their acceptance of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture and of this Constitution; and
   c. generally to take all necessary and appropriate action to **implement the purposes of the Organization** as set forth in the Preamble" (FAO 2000:3, emphasis mine).

Secondly, some of the language used by the interviewees can be found in FAO's *Strategic Framework* (1999b). Indeed, FAO's goals have been revised (but not amended) in the last decade, partly because of the realisation that the number of food insecure people was increasing, and also because the United Nations as a whole had to comply with the Millennium Development Goals (see Appendix 6). FAO's Constitution, however, was never changed. This *Strategic Framework* was intended to pave the road for FAO's work until 2015.

The first strategy laid out in this document seeks to "address member's needs" by contributing to "the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty", which FAO hopes to accomplish by improving "sustainable rural livelihoods and more equitable access to resources; access of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food; preparedness for, and effective and sustainable response to, food and agricultural emergencies" (FAO 1999a)

> "Keeping in mind the Basic Texts of FAO, it is possible to define three interrelated global goals that the Organization is specifically dedicated to helping Members achieve:
>
> - **Access of all people at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate and safe food**, ensuring that the number of chronically undernourished people is reduced by half by no later than 2015.
> - The **continued contribution of sustainable agriculture and rural development**, including fisheries and forestry, to economic and social progress and the well-being of all.
> - The conservation, improvement and **sustainable utilization of natural resources**, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture" (*ibid*: 1, emphasis mine).

Thus, interviewees' answers echoed the revised goals of the organisation. It should be indicated, however, that if FAO in some ways renewed it's 'vows' to its member states by restating and rephrasing these goals, FAO's instruments to achieve them have remained the same throughout the years.

Overview of FAO's Governing Bodies and Organisational Structure

Since FAO was created at the same time as the United Nations itself (General Assembly, Security Council, Secretary General), FAO's governing structure is, not surprisingly, very similar to the one adopted by the United Nations system in general. FAO answers directly to its 192 member-states (FAO website 2007). Countries' membership in FAO is voluntary, though members also have to be subscribers of the United Nations organisation based in New York City. The organisation has many layers of complexity within its structure, the most relevant of which are described below (see Figure 3).

FAO has two major governing bodies: the Conference (all members) and the Council (representative members). Each of these two governing bodies meets every two years and they alternate with each other. Each has its own series of respective rules and tasks (some of which have changed over the years). Depending on the work to be done, Conference and Council meetings may last for varied periods of time, generally about a week.

The Conference is the fundamental governing body of FAO, each member-state having a seat and a vote. The Conference has a different agenda for each session, but generally has the power to discuss and regulate the following:

> "applications for FAO membership, elects the Members of the Council, reviews and approves the Organization's programme of work, decides the level of its budget, sets the scale of contributions, reviews the state of food and agriculture, makes decisions on administrative and constitutional questions, […], appoints the Director General and the Independent Chairman of the Council" (Phillips 1981:19; see also FAO website 2007).

In some cases, as defined in the rules of the FAO Constitution, two thirds of the votes are necessary to pass a resolution. This is with regard to the admission of additional or Associate Members, decisions on the budget, and amendment or

suspension of the General Rules of the Organisation, for example (FAO website 2007).

Figure 2. **Some Layers of Complexity in FAO.**

Regional Office (RO)
FAO Representation (FAOR)
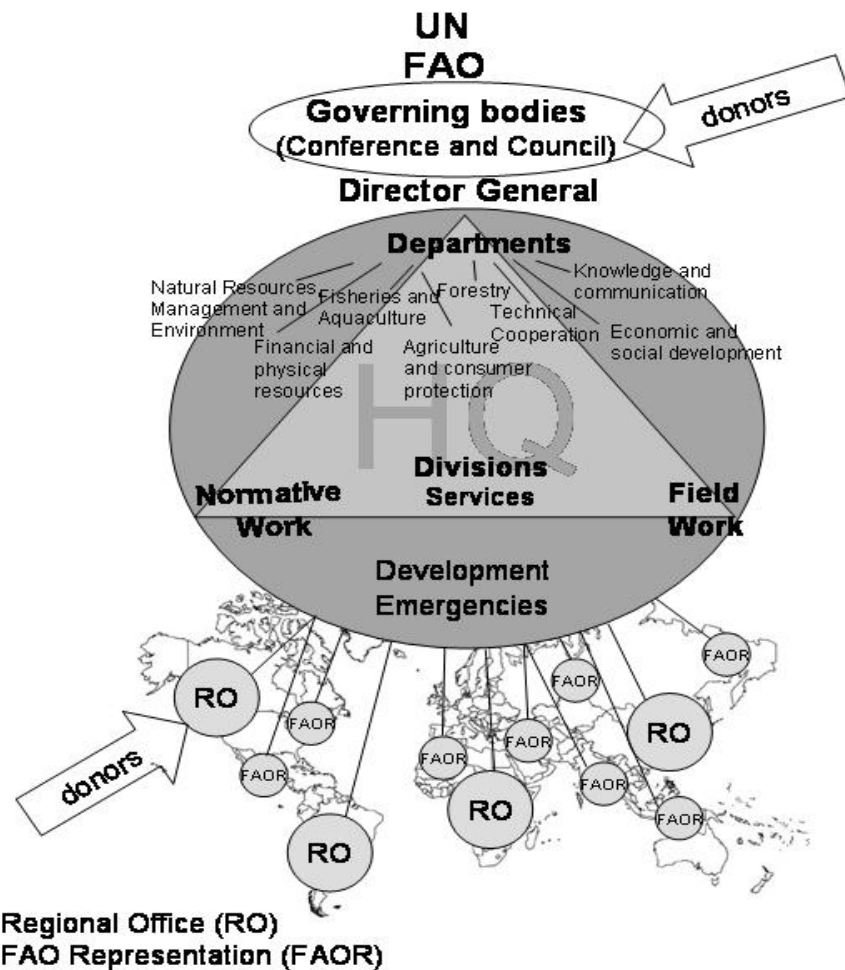
The Council's structure differs from that of the Conference, as only forty-nine countries elected by the Conference sit at the Council and have the power to vote. A fixed number of countries per region are represented in the Council (see Table 1).

Table 1. **Number and Distribution of Council Seats per Region.**

Region	Number of Council Seats
Africa	12
Asia	9
Europe	10
Latin America and the Caribbean	9
Near East	6
North America	2
Southwest Pacific	1

Source: FAO website 2007

The Council was set up to be the executive mechanism of FAO and its work is more closely related to the technical purpose of FAO:

> "In particular, it exercises functions dealing with the world food and agricultural situation and related matters, current and prospective activities of the Organization, including the Programme of Work and Budget, administrative matters, financial management of the Organization, and constitutional questions" (FAO website 2007).

The Conference and the Council of FAO are informed by and base their decisions on work carried out by eight special Committees who have advisory roles on specific topics. In fact, "most of the Council's substantive and detailed work is carried out in the first instance by these committees" (Phillips 1981:28). These committees are:

- the Programme Committee
- the Finance Committee
- the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters
- the Committee on Fisheries
- the Committee on Forestry
- the Committee on Agriculture
- the Committee on World Food Security
- the Committee on Commodity Problems.

Members involved in these Committees are elected by the Council after having submitted their candidacy (FAO 2000a). Although these Committees meet on a regular basis, their respective topics do not necessarily figure on the agenda of the Council or the Conference on such a regular basis. Appendix 8 presents a table documenting the particular functions, members and meetings of each Committee.

To this list of Committees can be added the multitude of Statutory bodies who also provide advice to Committees on specific topics[29] (such as the Intergovernmental Group on Oilseeds, Oils and Fats and the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, for example) and numerous "Panels of Experts" who also provide advice (including the Panel of Experts on Pesticide Specifications, Registration Requirements, Application Standards, and Prior Informed Consent; the Panel of Eminent Experts on Ethics in Food and Agriculture; and the Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources).

In addition, the Office of the Director General itself also serves as a governing body, as many important internal decisions are taken by the Director General himself. In fact, throughout its history, FAO has been greatly influenced by the different personalities who have occupied this position (Abbott 1992; Phillips 1981; Saouma 1993). Since 1977, the Director General (DG) has been elected by the Conference for a period of six years, with no restrictions regarding the number of mandates, granted that he/she manages to be re-elected[30] (Phillips 1981; Maiga 1995:31). According to FAO's constitution, "subject to the general supervision of the Conference and the Council, the Director General shall have full power and authority to direct the work of the organisation" (*ibid*: 35).

Thus the DG is an extremely powerful individual within the organisation. It suffices to read Edward Saouma's book (1993), (elected FAO's DG in 1975, 1981

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[29] On the FAO website, I counted 74 statutory bodies in February 2007.
[30] The current Director General of FAO is Mr. Jacques Diouf from Senegal. No woman has ever been elected as Director General since the creation of FAO in 1945.

and 1987) to understand the scope of actions the DG can undertake, especially when sanctioned by the Conference and Council. Souma (1993) describes for example some of his most important initiatives, which included nothing less than the reform of FAO's work and budget along with the creation of the Technical Cooperation Programme (encompassing most of FAO's field projects), the creation of country representations and the decentralisation of the organisation, and the setting up of a worldwide information and alert system on food insecurity. Saouma's book (1993) certainly gives a good idea of how much space Director Generals have to innovate and change the organisation's orientation as long as the overall mandate and purpose are respected.

These governing bodies of FAO are supported (or vice versa) by a masterpiece of organisational structure which is sub-divided into departments, divisions, and services (see Figure 3 and Appendix 5) where "more than 3 600 staff members – about 1600 professional and 2 000 general service staff" work (FAO website, February 2007). Currently there are seven departments in FAO, in addition to the Office of the Director General (ODG):

- Forestry
- Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Agriculture and Consumer Protection
- Economic and Social Development
- Natural Resource Management and Environment
- Technical Cooperation
- Knowledge and Communication
- Financial and Physical Resources

These Departments are reproduced at the level of Regional Offices, and sometimes even within a Country Representation (see chapter 5). Indeed, FAO is decentralised and represented across the world by "five regional offices, nine subregional offices, five liaison offices and 74 fully-fledged country offices

(excluding those hosted in Regional and Subregional Offices) […]" (FAO website, February 2007).

Within the Departments (see Figure 3), a considerable range of topics are addressed by FAO staff and consultants working within FAO's many Services (over one hundred). Looking at the variety of Divisions and Services (Appendix 5) provides a quick overview of the complexity involved when dealing with food security issues. Taken randomly from the chart presented in Appendix 5, FAO Services include, among many others: Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch, Food Quality and Standards Service, Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service, Forest Economics, Policy and Institutions Service, Fishery and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service, Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service, Mountain Resources Management, Climate Change and Bioenergy Unit, Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policies Unit, Field Programme Monitoring and Coordination Service, etc.

Most of these Services operate under what is called the "Regular Programme" (Figure 3) of FAO, which refers to the contents of the work programme ("Programme of Work and Budget") elaborated every two years by FAO for general approval and total budget level allocation by members of the Conference. The Regular Programme includes both the 'normative' work of FAO (the compilation of information on agriculture, policy advising, and norm-setting activities) as well as the more 'operational' work of FAO, more commonly called 'field work' (project and programme interventions at country level).

Additionally, FAO receives extra-budgetary funds from individual donor countries for particular programmes or projects. FAO's Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division, for example, depends almost entirely on such extra-budgetary funding for its responses to emergencies worldwide. However, many other specific programmes are also funded in this way – this was the case for the Livelihoods Support Programme for which I worked, but also for the FAO/

Netherlands Partnership Programme (FNPP), or more recently the Food Security Information for Action Programme funded by the European Commission.

In fact, according to FAO, in 2007, 47% of the organisation's total budget was composed of extra-budgetary funds (10% going to FAO's Regular Programme, and 37% for Emergency work) meaning that the budget actually approved and provided by the member-states is only 53% of FAO's total operating budget (FAO 2007). Such extra-budgetary funds and programmes can be seen from several angles. On the one hand they provide a means to complement the budget limitations of FAO's Regular Programme, but they are also a channel through which donors can individually exert additional influence and control on the work of FAO, as the donors can negotiate the terms of extra-budgetary programmes without obtaining the approval of the Council or the Conference.

Through this extra-budgetary funding mechanism, another layer of complexity is added by the inclusion of a greater number of actors within FAO's sphere of action and by allowing donors to exercise more influence over the work of the organisation by funding particular initiatives (see below for an illustration of the case of the LSP). Donors themselves also work in compartmentalised ways, and may have multiple interfaces when dealing with FAO (see chapter 4).

I have summarised above (and in Figure 3) some of the many layers of complexity, lines of compartmentalisation, and geographical divisions which all exist within the same organisation. The various professionals working in FAO have to deal with at least a part of this complexity on a daily basis. Currently, there exist no clear guidelines for collaboration between working units, or directions concerning particular interactions between them.

> "Multi-disciplinarity: this is the most important thing that FAO brings to today's problems. FAO's specific disciplines are unique in the world and that is our comparative advantage. Inter-disciplinarity is harder to do because it means working together. […] We don't do it enough though, and there is no specific mandate for it. It is the same thing for rural

employment [as a topic] which is linked to many sectors of work in FAO. There is a huge amount of similar work going on in different services– what does this tell us?" (Doreen)

Doreen is here referring to the invisibility of the articulation between departments, divisions, services and governing bodies within this kind of organisational structure and layers of complexity. In addition, the very scale of FAO certainly plays a role in making those links even more obscure. While there is documentation which lays out the precise tasks of each service[31], the links between the different services, even when they work on similar issues, are not defined in any document.

The difficulties one might expect to find in officially working 'horizontally' in such a vertical organisation are in fact easily found, to such an extent that the horizontal work which is actually carried out often falls into the "informal" category (see chapter 3). Even if there were official information regarding the expected collaboration between different services, it would only highlight the formal links, or what those links are supposed to be, as opposed to what the links are in reality. As will be discussed later, this compartmentalisation of the work between the different organisational units, in addition to their sheer number, makes the coordination of potentially related topics difficult.

Although FAO is a single and unified organisation in the eyes of the public and project participants around the world, FAO could more accurately be seen as an umbrella organisation hosting several smaller ones. Indeed, project beneficiaries and the larger general public do not make distinctions between the 'different FAOs' and expect the organisation to be functioning as a whole.

I was personally confronted with this situation when on mission for the evaluation of a programme (see chapter 5). The project participants with whom we met often

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[31] These include the Strategic Framework 2000-2015 (FAO 1999b) and more precisely in the Medium-Term Plan 2004-2009 (FAO 2002a).

closed the meeting sessions by telling us – the programme evaluation team – about their greater need for funding to fulfil the needs of their community, which ranged from the need for health care, to the need for seeds, animals, schools, teachers, etc. It felt awkward to tell them, as the evaluation team leader often did: "well, we take note of your needs in the community, but, really, we are not the right people to speak to in FAO". It was hard to explain that we did not have the power, even if we worked for FAO, to make decisions on funding allocations, but that if we could, we would.

FAO's Work in Alleviating Food Insecurity

FAO, following its mandate and in agreement with its member states, seeks to identify solutions in various ways. To illustrate some of FAO's activities – as it is impossible here to come up with an exhaustive inventory of past and current work, I refer to FAO's website where it is stipulated that "FAO's activities comprise four main areas: putting information within reach; sharing policy expertise; providing a meeting place for nations; and bringing knowledge to the field (FAO website, May 2009)**.**

1. "**Putting information within reach**. FAO serves as a knowledge network. We use the expertise of our staff – agronomists, foresters, fisheries and livestock specialists, nutritionists, social scientists, economists, statisticians and other professionals – to collect, analyse and disseminate data that aid development. [...]. We also publish hundreds of newsletters, reports and books, distribute several magazines, create numerous CD-ROMS and host dozens of electronic fora" (*ibid:* May 2009).

FAO does indeed publish many reports, books and newsletters, and importantly many guidebooks, or 'how-to manuals'. It should be said, however, that FAO does not conduct research itself, but rather relies on already existing information that is then synthesized and published. Among all the information published every year by the organisation, a few get media attention and are considered as

FAO's "flagship" publications. These include: The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA); The State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI); The State of the World's Forests (SOFO); and The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).

FAO also plays a role in monitoring the world's food insecurity through systems such as the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) of FAO (Snijders 2001). GIEWS in fact collects, analyses and disseminates information from a network composed of countries, NGOs, research centers and other UN organisations. This information concerns various aspects of food security, based on a "crop monitoring system using near real-time satellite images. Data from four satellite systems are used for monitoring the various crop seasons throughout the world" (FAO website, May 2009). Additionally, a very important function carried out at FAO is its collection, in collaboration with governments, of worldwide statistics on various topics such as agricultural production, water availability and management, land use, nutrition, fish stocks, forests, etc. (*ibid:* May 2009).

2. "**Sharing policy expertise**. FAO lends its years of experience to member countries in devising agricultural policy, supporting planning, drafting effective legislation and creating national strategies to achieve rural development and hunger alleviation goals" (*ibid*: May 2009).

FAO was created as a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) and is structured following the general pattern of most UN organisations (see Appendix 7). FAO, in this regard, is a membership-based organisation supported by direct financial contributions from each member-state. Organisations of the United Nations have a very particular status in that they are neither 'governmental organisations' nor NGOs. They constitute instead organisations of global governance, providing a forum for member-states where discussions at the international level take place. Their 'governing role' is limited, as the United Nations and its various agencies, including FAO and the World Health

Organisation (WHO), for example, can only play an advisory role (as discussed above), and cannot actually impose any rules or codes of conduct on their member-states. FAO can recommend or provide incentives for national initiatives, but cannot force a country to follow any advice[32] (Staudt 1991:145). In addition, since FAO depends on funds from donor countries, diplomatic efforts may be deployed to please donor country demands (*ibid*: 167). In this sense, "FAO can only play the role that member states have assigned to the organisation" (Marchisio and Di Blase 1986:237; free translation).

Because of this reality, the most important players in food insecurity alleviation remain national governments. Although international organisations (such as WTO, FAO, WFP, and IFAD for example), national agencies of international cooperation (CIDA, DIFD, USAID), NGOS and organisations of Civil Society (CSOs) certainly have a role to play, the burden in terms of food insecurity alleviation continues to rest on national governments (Sen 1989:7). Governments, obviously familiar with their own national food problems and hopefully aware of their citizens' needs, are well-placed (or should be) to take action with regards to building social infrastructure, regulating food prices, or participating in trade agreements. However, this greatly depends on the national government's priorities and financial and economic means. In this context, FAO provides policy advice and technical expertise to its member-states on many topics related to food security, which governments remain free to take or leave.

3. "**Providing a meeting place for nations**. On any given day, dozens of policy-makers and experts from around the globe convene at headquarters or in our field offices to forge agreements on major food and agriculture issues. As a neutral forum, FAO provides the setting where rich and poor nations can come together to build common understanding" (FAO website, May 2009).

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[32] Within the UN, the only decisions taken that are "legally binding" for members-states are the ones taken by the Security Council.

Without going into a review of the evolution of FAO programmes over time, some recent global fora (which are perhaps the most media-oriented activities of FAO) have contributed to triggering a renewed global interest in food security. The Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro (1992), although not organised by FAO, was the first of several global conferences where an effort was made to discuss the issues of food security and sustainable agriculture. Subsequently, FAO hosted the World Food Summits (WFS) in 1996 and the *World Food Summit – five years later*, in 2002.

In 1996, the World Food Summit (WFS) renewed "global commitment to the fight against hunger" in response "to widespread under-nutrition and growing concern about the capacity of agriculture to meet future food needs" (FAO website 2005). Among the most important outcomes of this Summit was *The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and Plan of Action* (Figure 2), in which the participants of the Summit "reaffirm[ed] the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" (Rome Declaration 1996:1). The agreed upon aim was to eradicate hunger by 2015.

1. The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action lay the foundations for diverse paths to a common objective - food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In this regard, concerted action at all levels is required. Each nation must adopt a strategy consistent with its resources and capacities to achieve its individual goals and, at the same time, cooperate regionally and internationally in order to organize collective solutions to global issues of food security. In a world of increasingly interlinked institutions, societies and economies, coordinated efforts and shared responsibilities are essential.

2. Poverty eradication is essential to improve access to food. The vast majority of those who are undernourished, either cannot produce or cannot afford to buy enough food. They have inadequate access to means of production such as land, water, inputs, improved seeds and plants, appropriate technologies and farm credit. In addition, wars, civil strife, natural disasters, climate related ecological changes and environmental degradation have adversely affected millions of people. Although food assistance may be provided to ease their plight, it is not a long term solution to the underlying causes of food insecurity. It is important to maintain an adequate capacity in the international community to provide food aid, whenever it is required, in response to emergencies. Equitable access to stable food supplies should be ensured.

It appears, however, that the political will of the signing member-states did not concretely follow, as another World Food Summit – 5 years later, was held in 2002, where the will to eradicate hunger was "re-reaffirmed", and where discussions focused more precisely on the right to food. Importantly, participants adopted the more realistic goal of reducing hunger *by half* by 2015.

The outcomes of such Summits in terms of practical achievements remain unclear, but the fact that close to 190 nations got together to discuss food security in itself made it an important event. One of the concrete outcomes was the creation of the International Alliance Against Hunger, which has its secretariat in FAO and which continuously serves as an open forum on food security (Maïga 2003:103). However, the Plan of Action adopted at the 1996 World Conference was purposely framed to offer flexibility to member-states who are left with the responsibility to concretely realise these objectives (Maïga 2003). The forum of

NGOs who participated to the World Food Summit's – 5 years later rejected the Summit's declaration on the grounds that the policies suggested during the summit were not innovative enough and since they reiterated advocacy for the liberalisation of markets and policies to reduce hunger which have proven to be part of the problem in the past:

> "Social movements, organisations of agricultural producers, fishermen, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, ecologists, and women's groups, in addition to unions and NGOs present here in Rome express their dissatisfaction and their refusal to accept the official Declaration of the *World Food Summit – 5 Years Later*.
>
> The Plan of Action of 1996 did not fail because of the lack of political will and of resources but rather because it advocates for policies leading to hunger, for policies which favour the economic liberalism of the South and the standardisation of cultures, and which are supported by armed force in case of failure of the first series of measures
>
> Profoundly different policies alone, based on dignity and livelihoods of communities, can eradicate hunger. We affirm our conviction that such policies are possible and urgently required" (*ibid*: 112-113; free translation).

More recently, in March of 2006 in Porto Alegre (Brazil), FAO organised the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), as a follow-up to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of 1979 (WCARRD). Ninety-two countries took part in this conference, while 150 organisations from civil society participated to a parallel event.

Since this conference took place only recently, assessing potential impacts remains impossible. However, this conference, which aimed at mobilising political will in taking steps to work towards food security, was critiqued because it succeeded more in mobilising the strong participation at the conference of civil society representatives rather than heads of governments. Nevertheless, the member states and the civil society organisations who participated made the following pledge:

"We will develop appropriate mechanisms through a lasting platform at global, regional, national and local levels in order to institutionalize social dialogue, cooperation and monitoring and evaluation of progress in agrarian reform and rural development, which are crucial to promote social justice and to enhance an environmentally sustainable agrarian reform and rural development, more focused on the poor and respectful of gender equality […]". (ICARRD final declaration, ICARRD website, February 2007)

These global forums are examples of specific initiatives taken by FAO to work towards increasing food security, in addition to FAO's every-day operations as described above.

4. "**Bringing knowledge to the field**. Our breadth of knowledge is put to the test in thousands of field projects throughout the world. FAO mobilizes and manages millions of dollars provided by industrialized countries, development banks and other sources to make sure the projects achieve their goals. FAO provides the technical know-how and in a few cases a limited source of funds" (FAO website, May 2009).

Through the implementation of projects in the field, FAO has sought, among other things, to improve nutrition (notably through home/school gardens); improve agricultural techniques; provide seeds, fertilizers and livestock; protect and increase fish stocks; work on gender, AIDS and livelihoods; facilitate access to land and natural resources; develop the outreach of urban forestry; answer to emergencies such as the desert locust, avian flu, tsunami; etc. As will be addressed below, the range of topics addressed by FAO also translates – where necessary, possible and appropriate – into field interventions of all sorts.

FAO in Motion: Reforms, the Director General, and the Independent External Evaluation

FAO's overall structure and activities have undergone some changes over the years. Some services have closed, new ones have been created, and some divisions have moved to different departments. The Nutrition Division, for example, moved from the Agriculture Department to the Economic and Social Department at the beginning of the 1980s (Phillips 1981:91), only to recently return to the new Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department in the re-organisation which took place in the 2006 Reform. Some departments have also changed names. For instance, the Economic and Social Department was the Economic and Social Policy Department until 1974, while the Technical Cooperation Department until 1995 was the Development Department. In addition, some core divisions, created at the outset of FAO in 1945, later became departments, which is the case for both the Forestry and the Fishery Departments.

The general structure of FAO had remained almost the same since the 1960s, until changes occurred both in 1994 and in 2006 (Phillips 1981; FAO 2000). However, one should be reminded that these name changes were generally cosmetic as they did not much change the activities carried out by FAO over the years.

Saouma (1993) writes about the decentralisation that he proposed and put into action back in 1976, yet FAO went through a further reformation of its structure and decentralisation of its activities in 1994[33] (FAO 2000b; Maïga 2003). This reform was undertaken in accordance with the realisation that the world environment had changed since the creation of FAO in 1945, including: 1) the transformation of the international economic system; 2) changes in international finance; 3) non-economic concerns; 4) changing consumer demands and

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[33] Although the Conference had witnessed discussions on this topic since 1987, the actual decentralisation only took place in 1994 (at least in theory) shortly after Dr. Jacques Diouf – the current Director General – came into office (Maïga 2003).

urbanization; 5) growing pressure on natural resources; 6) technology and information gaps; 7) the persistence of poverty and food insecurity; 8) the relationship between security and food insecurity; 9) the increasing number of food emergencies (FAO 2000b).

The aims of this encompassing 1994 reform, and especially the decentralisation of FAO, were "to bring the Organization's technical and operational expertise much closer to those countries and regions where the need is greatest; to reduce costs; and to make the best use of national capacities, which had increased substantially over the last decades" (FAO 2000b; see also Maïga 2003:42). In other words, this decentralisation was aimed at outposting more officers into the field offices. In addition, this reform also sought to put an end to food insecurity, especially for the 192 million children of 5 years old or less who are chronically undernourished (Maïga 2003:41). It is out of this reform that FAO created the Technical Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Departments. More particularly, the Technical Cooperation Department was created to carry out the "operational" activities of FAO, overseeing the field operations and most of FAO's projects. The Sustainable Development Department on the other hand was created to fulfil the expectations coming out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (FAO 2000b), only to be subsequently abolished in the 2006 Reform (discussed below).

This decentralisation process involved important budget cuts which translated into massive lay-offs at FAO's Rome Headquarters (close to 600 lay offs), and in a lesser number of job positions being created in the Regional Offices (a bit more than a hundred posts). The reasoning was that hiring supporting staff members in the Regional Offices' local environments cost less that hiring people at the Rome Headquarters (FAO 2000b; Maïga 2003:66). By attempting to decentralise the organisation FAO hoped to direct more authority to its Regional Offices, which were considered closer to regional issues and thus able to "react quickly and

more efficiently" (FAO 2000b). In turn, this delegation of authority to Regional Offices aimed at reinforcing the links between FAO and its member-states.

With the 1994 reform were associated revisions of FAO's focus and aims, including, at the request of FAO's member-states, greater attention to food security. FAO then launched several new programmes including the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS)[34] (see Appendix 9 for a brief description), the South-South Cooperation initiative – which promotes cooperation between developing countries – and the creation or continuation of some emergency prevention systems. Additionally, FAO further clarified its normative activities, which included, among others, a website on agricultural trade, the Codex Alimentarius, the International Plant Protection Convention, activities related to the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, genetic resources, etc. (FAO 2000b). This clarification of FAO's activities also forced a clarification of its goals (as discussed above), which were inscribed in FAO's Strategic Framework 2000-2015 (1999b).

In spite of its strong rhetoric, FAO's 1994 decentralisation did not succeed at all levels. An independent evaluation of FAO's decentralisation presented to the Programme Committee in 2004, ten years later, indicated, among other things, that FAO's communication between Headquarters and Regional Offices needed

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[34] The SFPS was characterised by many as the "baby" of the Director General. In 2002 this programme was the object of an independent external evaluation which found that: 1) the SPFS was involved in too many countries (62 at the time of the evaluation) considering the limited amount of financial and human resources available to the programme; 2) the SPFS did not pay enough attention to the sustainability and to the larger social context of its projects; and 3) the SPFS exit strategies were not rigorously planned or not planned at all (FAO 2002). Furthermore, Maïga indicated that, after a decade of existence, the SPFS was still kept at the "pilot project" phase, which clearly limited its impact on food insecurity alleviation (Maïga 2003:93). Maïga also echoed the Independent Evaluation in assessing that the SPFS had remained interested only in agriculture itself, rather than finding ways to ensure the viability of the larger social, environmental and political contexts in which the pilot projects took place (Maïga 2003:94). As a response to these critiques, the SPFS is currently in the process of being transformed into the NPFS (National Programme for Food Security) in order to promote "national ownership and local empowerment in the countries in which it operates", as well as to work more closely with regional economic organizations to develop "Regional Programmes for Food Security which optimize regional conditions for attaining food security in areas like trade policy" (SPFS website, February 2007).

to be improved to reinforce the working links between each other, as Headquarters remained reluctant to delegate authority to Regional Offices (FAO 2004a). In addition, since supporting staff members were hired locally at the national level, the report observed some discrepancies in different Regional Offices' work forces. In general, "the objectives for the decentralization were found by the evaluation team to have been insufficiently achieved due in large part to an imbalance in the weight given in FAO's institutional structure between the needs of countries and regions on the one hand, and the technical programmes and administrative structures of the Organization, on the other" (*ibid*: 10). Thus, the 'decentralisation experience' undertaken by FAO in 1994 has not been completed ten years after its inception.

According to Maïga (2003:72), FAO's decentralisation did not fulfil expectations mostly because the reform was put into practice hastily, without a thorough assessment of how best to carry out such a reorganisation, and without a real planning effort. There was confusion over the new responsibilities of newly created departments and in Regional Offices which suddenly acquired more autonomy, in addition to a remarkable lack of collaboration between technical units from each department (*ibid*: 73).

The more recent FAO reform, proposed in 2005 and undertaken by the Director General Jacques Diouf in 2006, is in fact still underway at the moment of writing (2008). It is thus difficult to see this reform (henceforth referred to as the "2006 Reform") as an historical event since it is still a moving target. There is currently a lot of confusion about the purpose of this reform and the events which led to its creation, let alone regarding the impact this reform might have on FAO. In an email sent to me in February of 2008, a colleague wrote:

> "Here, the headless chickens continue to cheep. I am speaking of the general agitation in FAO, between the reform and the counter reform, the little revolutions and mini coups".

The reasons why the 2006 Reform occurred at this particular moment remains somewhat unclear in FAO, but they certainly had to do with the fact that some member-states had withheld their payments to FAO because they wanted to see changes in the way FAO was carrying out its work (FAO 2005). Also, the reform followed a more general trend within the UN towards "harmonisation" between the different agencies (mostly under the guidance of United Nations Development Assistance Framework[35] (UNDAF)). Officially, the 2006 reform was put in place to:

- "accentuate FAO's role as a knowledge, learning and capacity-building organization, with an important function in identifying, disseminating and promoting best practices[36];

- focus resource mobilization activities on stepping up investment in the rural sector in member countries, to increase the sector's crucial contribution to development;

- strengthen FAO's coordinating role in addressing major threats to crop, livestock, fish and forest production and consumption;

- amplify the Organization's impact by expanding alliances, partnerships and joint programmes with organizations having similar goals;

- enhance responsiveness, transparency and communication with Members and all stakeholders" (FAO 2005: VII).

It should be noted that this reform was launched by the DG after the FAO governing bodies had agreed to establish an Independent External Evaluation

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[35] "As the common strategic framework for the operational activities of the United Nations system at the country level, the UNDAF provides a collective, coherent and integrated United Nations system response to national priorities and needs within the framework of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and the other commitments, goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration and the declarations and programmes of action adopted at international conferences and summits and through major United Nations conventions. The UNDAF emerges from the analytical and collaborative effort of the CCA and is the foundation for United Nations system programmes of cooperation". (http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/ohrlls/cca_undaf_prsp.htm, February 2008).

[36] Contrary to the 1994 Reform which sought to increase FAO's activities in the field, the 2006 Reform was presented as a turning point for FAO's future, a turning away from "field interventions" to the extent possible, to become increasingly a "knowledge organisation". Many professional staff in FAO feared this Reform for exactly that reason, which they saw as cutting FAO off from its most important source of information and reality-checking, which they considered to be its field work. This issue of the importance of the field for FAO personnel in general is tackled in chapter 4.

(IEE) of FAO. The reform was implemented so rapidly that it was not in a position to benefit from and integrate the findings expected to come out of the IEE. The IEE itself, once approved by the members, was financed and largely coordinated by a number of member states who were unsatisfied with FAO's work (among which were Norway, Canada, and the United States). This IEE was to be the most important and thorough one in FAO's history. Many FAO colleagues were wondering if perhaps the DG precipitated his reform in reaction to this evaluation, in order to 'blur' the baseline situation for the evaluators.

> "I do not know enough about the reform details, but I note the lack of information getting to the field and also the fact that it is being implemented in a hurry while an independent assessment of the organization […] is ongoing. The reform process should await the results of this latter assessment and merge the two results and recommendations. To do otherwise would bias the results and result in a one-sided exercise that may not be the best for FAO". (Sam)

However, the official discourse was that the Reform and the IEE were to be conducted hand-in-hand:

> "The Committees and the Director-General agreed that the proposed reforms and the Independent External Evaluation of FAO should be mutually supportive, and both fit under a reform umbrella" (FAO 2005: Preface).

The Director General presented the purpose and objectives of his reform ideas to both the Programme Committee (September 2005) and the Conference and Council (November 2005). Some elements of the reform approved then concerned mostly internal restructuring and the creation of a sub-regional office in central Africa, and included:

- "streamlining administrative and financial processes, including the establishment of a "Shared Services Centre" serving Headquarters and the regions
- initial steps towards organizational restructuring at Headquarters

- using one geographic region as a pilot case for implementing proposals for greater decentralization, and establishing one new subregional office in another region" (FAO website, February 2007).[37]

Thus, it took about two years to complete the cycle of Council and Conference sessions which would finally approve some of the reform elements proposed by the DG. Meanwhile, staff and consultants alike went through a period of great insecurity as I was able to witness during my fieldwork. The DG had set up inter-departmental working groups in order to consult his staff on a variety of topics, yet most colleagues felt they were not being consulted in these working groups, but rather simply being informed. Everything became uncertain: from the name of the service one would end up working for, to who would be appointed director of a given division, to finding out who would lose their positions or be out-posted. Everything became fluid, making many colleagues uncomfortable in the face of the unknown.

Although most staff and consultants recognised the need for change in FAO, most were not in agreement with the way the reform process was being conducted from within. While a climate of anxiety and uncertainty revolved around the reform process, most staff and consultants were intensely curious about what the IEE would report. The fact that Director General Diouf had been re-elected for a third mandate also led to a questioning of his leadership by many internally and externally. A good illustration is provided by a short article of *The*

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[37] More reforming elements were approved by the Council of November 2006: "At its 131st session in November 2006, […] The Council further authorized the Director-General to implement the restructuring at Headquarters as described in section V of document CL 131/18, noting that some Members expressed reservations about the need for restructuring at the present time. […] The Council approved in principle the establishment of a new Sub-regional Office in Central America; the modalities of implementation to be addressed by a working group to be convened by the Secretariat with the participation of the interested countries, these modalities to be submitted for a final decision by Council in 2007. […] The Council emphasized that the overarching objective of reforms was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization and its capacity to provide services to the Membership. It reiterated that the ongoing reform process in FAO and the outcome of the IEE be mutually supportive, and that implementation of reforms should not prejudice the implementation of the outcome of the IEE" […] (Council Report of the 131st Session, November 2007).

Economist (Nov. 2005) which was circulated informally via email within FAO (figure 4).

Figure 4. Article of *The Economist* on the Re-election of Dr. Jacques Diouf as Director General of FAO.

The UN's food boss hangs on

Nov 24th 2005
From *The Economist* print edition

HE CAME to office when Bill Clinton was a new president. Last weekend, he was re-elected, unopposed, for a third six-year term. Jacques Diouf of Senegal does not rule a country. But as head of the UN's largest specialised agency, the Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), he wields immense financial power in the poor world and is treated by many governments as a head of state. With a staff of over 3,000, the FAO spends some $375m a year. One of its many responsibilities is advising the world's governments on bird flu.

Mr Diouf's reappointment would have been more welcome if his organisation were not in crisis. But it is expected to have to borrow at least $80m this year, mainly because Japan withheld its subscription to mark its unease over the FAO's performance. The organisation's last big event, the Food Summit in 2002, was widely criticised. A British study this year concluded that the FAO was the second-most ineffective UN body out of 23 surveyed.

Perhaps the most damaging criticism of Mr Diouf came in May, when a fellow West African former FAO official, Mahamadou Maïga, published an open letter in a Malian newspaper accusing the FAO boss of having an "undemocratic vision". Essential policies, said Mr Maiga, had failed.

Mr Diouf is now at least showing an interest in reform. A plan he tabled at the weekend includes proposals for streamlining his outfit's administration. He has also dropped objections to an external evaluation. The FAO needs one.

Because this reform is very recent and still underway, it is difficult, or rather impossible, at the time of writing to assess its impact on the general work of FAO or on the staff and consultants. The IEE report was published in July of 2007 and was entitled "*FAO: the Challenge of renewal*" (FAO 2007). While the document recognised that the world needs FAO, it also asserted that FAO needs to change

"in a major way, and with a sense of urgency" (FAO 2007: 1-2). The IEE recommended that FAO focuses it activities following four themes: "a) a new strategic framework; b) investing in governance; c) institutional culture change and reform of administrative and management systems; and d) restructuring for effectiveness and efficiency in both headquarters and the field" (FAO 2007:1-2).

Since the publication of the IEE Report, FAO has presented a "management response in principle" and set up a "Conference Committee for IEE Follow-up". However, according to many colleagues, many internal conflicts are still ongoing within FAO, and the directions which will be taken are still being negotiated.

This section has presented the organisation that is FAO, its purpose and aims, as well as its internal structure, and some events such as reform processes and internal evaluations which make the organisation 'fluid' and ever changing. Although some changes are 'cosmetic', others may have more profound impact on the work of the organisation on the long term. Despite this rather heavy structure and complicated functioning, some individuals, as will be illustrated in chapter 3 with the example of the LSP, manage to take initiatives which may last within the organisation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter opened with an overview of the main anthropological critiques of development, showing that the very purpose of FAO, i.e. food security and development – FAO's *raison d'être* –, are not universally embraced. Some anthropologists see development organisations as supporting a "hidden agenda" of Westernisation and modernisation of the world, and therefore seek to find 'alternatives *to* development'. Others continue to see value in – and a need for – the current development system while arguing that improvements are necessary, particularly in regard to achieving the objective of poverty alleviation: they argue for 'alternative development'. This research supports the view that development organisations must be investigated in order to better understand the complex context in which development professionals work and thus ultimately move towards constructive critiques that consider this complexity.

Without seeking to be exhaustive, this chapter presented an overview of the organisational context in which FAO professionals are involved. It will serve as a foundation for my research by illustrating the various levels of complexity underlying the practice of development that frame the "lived experience" (Long 2001) of the professionals.

This portrayal of FAO's organisational structure serves to establish a few points, which allow us to a) deconstruct the idea of a single, monolithic FAO, and b) take stock of the complexity with which professionals deal when carrying out their work. Several levels of complexity inherent to FAO were discussed, including:

- The organisation's broad mandate;
- The diversity of actors involved (192 member-states, and bilateral donors);
- The hierarchy of its governing bodies;
- The compartmentalisation of its structure and the great variety of its working units and of their specific subjects ;
- The personal influence of the DG;

- The diverse funding mechanisms;

- The reforms and changes affecting the organisation;

- The wide range of activities – both in the areas of development and emergency relief – which all include many categories of labour (work): normative and policy work, field interventions, preparing documentation, organising international meetings, etc.

FAO officers and consultants are generally involved in more than one level of complexity at a time, and they generally have to work informally in order to cut across the compartmentalisation of the organisation. Yet, as previously indicated, work largely takes places within specific units, at times functioning quite independently from the rest of the structure. These units can become nested 'homes' for the professionals and loci of organisational culture. I return to these points in chapter 4.

"Studying up" (Nader 1999) in FAO's structure allowed me to shed light on FAO's organisational dynamics in which development professionals are embedded, thereby complementing existing literature on development (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002; Mosse 2005a; among others). This will be further pursued by now leaving the realm of structure to focus on individuals and their agency, specifically through an exploration of the Livelihoods Support Programme, which aimed to mainstream alternative and participatory approaches and to change FAO's ways of working, and by taking a closer look at the working conditions of FAO officers in FAO-HQ and in decentralised field offices.

CHAPTER 3

THE LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT PROGRAMME: AN EXPERIMENT IN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in chapter 2, anthropological critiques of development may be categorised into two camps of opposing thought. One group of anthropologists argues 'against' the current development system on the grounds that it is not designed to help the poor, but rather, to impose capitalism and modernism (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Latouche 1993; Munck 1999; Sachs 1992). They consider development to be a hegemonic endeavour, and propose to explore 'alternatives *to* development'.

The second group of anthropologists, while also strongly critical of the development system, continue to see value in the goals of development and are seeking to find practical ways to integrate 'alternative development' approaches within the current system. These alternatives include participatory approaches to development intervention and the greater inclusion of social scientists within development organisations. Moreover, some anthropologists have analysed the relationships between the many actors involved in development, and in doing so reveal obscure power relations and shed light on particular structural problems embedded in the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994). Generally, proponents of alternative development approaches take the view that the development system may be improved by working from within rather than by external critique.

It should be mentioned that this research inclines toward the latter theoretical orientation, and thus finds value in assessing FAO's initiatives in alternative development. It takes as a core principle that, since the current development system is unlikely to disappear in the near future, it is relevant to seek a greater understanding of its inner workings in order to reflect on internal problems that

may affect the development system's effectiveness in fulfilling its objective of alleviating poverty. This research therefore offers a reflection on the existing relations between the "actor and the system" through an ethnographic analysis from within FAO (Crozier and Friedberg 1977).

The first section of this chapter offers an overview of both positions – 'alternatives *to* development' and 'alternative development' –, along with each's critique of the other, hopefully gleaning certain nuanced perspectives from the debate. This section also offers a non-exhaustive discussion of two alternative approaches to development: a) participatory approaches, which were the backbone of the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) for which I worked at FAO and b) 'relational approaches[38]' to development, which seek to analyse the internal interactions and mechanisms of the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994).

The LSP is presented in the second section of this chapter. As will be explained, for the purpose of this research the LSP is considered as one initiative grounded in alternative development, and also as an example of how the agency of a few motivated individuals can create new spaces of work and bring changes in the ways an organisation functions. This presentation of the LSP also gives a sense of the more specific context in which I was immersed within FAO, and the analytical lens through which I saw FAO's "world". Moreover, the LSP can be seen as one way for the practitioners to cope with the organisational complexity described in the previous chapter.

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[38] This is the term I personally used to describe this body of literature. I have baptised it 'relational' because it generally focuses on the relationships between different actors of development, namely the development organisation or project, the donors, the local actors, and the state. Some of the contributing authors include: Crewe 1997; Dove 1994; Ferguson 1994; Harrison 2003; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002; Mosse 2001, 2003, 2005a; Quarles van Ufford 2003; and Stirrat 2000, among others.

DEFINING 'ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT' AND 'ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT'

Alternatives to Development

As previously mentioned, some anthropologists and social scientists have lost their faith in the current 'development system' and prefer to discuss 'alternatives to development' (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Latouche 1993; Munck 1999; Sachs 1992). For these anthropologists, the idea of 'alternative development', is simply not radical enough, as it resorts to the mainstream model of development, which according to them should be discarded completely. They propose an "anti-developmentalist" discourse, which has most likely emerged from social movements[39] dissatisfied with the achievements of mainstream development (Escobar 1991; 1995a; 1995b).

Hence, the proponents of 'alternatives to development' aim for a fresh start:

> "The potential here is for more radical transformations of the modern capitalist order and the search for alternative ways of organizing societies and economies, or satisfying needs, of healing and living" (Escobar 1995b:226).

According to Munck (1999:203), the very credibility of this anti-development discourse lies in its potential to give "a voice to the excluded". Esteva (1985) summarises well the claim for 'alternatives to development':

> "I am here to debate those who, at home as well as abroad, want to cover the stench of "Development" with "Alternative Development" as a

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[39] Escobar considers social movements to be the only forces capable of truly challenging mainstream development: "What is at stake is the transformation of the political, economic and institutional regime of truth production that has defined the era of development. […] However, the grassroots initiatives may very well lead in this direction. Social movements constitute an analytical and political terrain in which the weakening of development and the displacement of certain categories of modernity (for example, progress and the economy) can be defined and explored. It is in terms of social movement discourse that 'development', and its foundational role in the constitution of the 'Third World' and the post-war international economic order can be put to test" (Escobar 1995b:216).

deodorant. […] Never before have I addressed so many people who in such good faith want to erect a new fantasy castle, this time labelled an "alternative" structure, on the shaky-foundations of development, forgetting that they build on a swamp" (Esteva 1985:78-79).

Alternative Development

Rather than seeking to reform development completely, other anthropologists have suggested alternative ways of doing development, featuring participatory and people-centered approaches, along with a claim for the greater inclusion of social sciences in development organisations (Brohman 1996; Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; McGee 2002; Woost 1997). Adherents to this perspective generally continue to see some value in the current development system, but agree that important reforms and improvements are needed in order to benefit the poor in a more adequate manner.

Defining alternative development remains difficult. Neverdeen Pieterse (1998:357) described alternative development as a "loosely interconnected ensemble of sensibilities". To him, there exists no proper theory of alternative development, which he rather qualifies as a "profile" of development (*ibid*: 353). Accordingly, the most important characteristics of alternative development should not be sought in theory, which "leave[s] a lot to desire" (Munck 1999:201), but rather in practical applications. Overall, approaches to alternative development share "the same *goals* as mainstream development" but resort to "different *means*, participatory and people-centred" (Neverdeen Pieterse 1998:345).

To be sure, mainstream development refers to "everyday development" as carried out by governments and international and local organisations dedicated to development (Neverdeen Pieterse 1998:360). Thus, alternative development "shares the radical critiques of mainstream development while retaining belief in development and redefining it" (*ibid*: 363-364). For anthropologists, alternative

development responds to core values of the discipline and makes for a more 'moral' development (Quarles van Ufford 2003).

> "It is the Enlightenment's contemporary progeny, alternative development, that most clearly articulates anthropology's engagement with development, a commitment characterized by strong moral values, an approach which incorporates ideas of community, local control, and ecological concerns, ideas which often originate in the West" (Gow 2002:306).

Divergence Between 'Alternatives to Development' and 'Alternative Development'

Anthropologists advocating for either 'alternatives to development' or 'alternative development' have critiqued one another. The proponents of 'alternatives to development' have accused anthropologists working in development organisations of taking part in the oppression of the poor and of participating in the imposition of Western values and ways of life (Escobar 1991; Esteva 1992).

Yet, those who believe in 'alternative development' have also critiqued the proponents of 'alternatives to development', mostly for its lack of 'operational' possibilities (to use organisational jargon), and for its inability to challenge existing development intervention practices (Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; Nustad 2001; Lehmann 1997; Little and Painter 1995; among others). Among others, Tucker (1999:15) proposed that if the logic of discarding development as a whole was to be followed, then

> "We would also need to abandon concepts such as socialism, cooperation, and democracy because they have also been abused and manipulated for purposes of domination and exploitation. This would amount to handing over a powerful tool to those who exploit it for their own purposes".

Following Tucker's comment, those who critique anthropologists working in development organisations for cooperating with the dominating system are, in a

sense, even more guilty themselves of the same sin. Their non-involvement allows Western domination to be freely pursued by organisations and governments. "The more difficult task", wrote Tucker, "is that of constructing an alternative" (*ibid*: 22).

The divergence between alternative development and alternatives to development is well illustrated by the critiques addressed to Escobar (1995), because they provide an overview of both sets of arguments. Lehmann (1997) and Little and Painter (1995) agree that Escobar's critique is justified, but that it provides few practical tools with which to work towards poverty alleviation (Lehmann 1997; see also Gow 2002). To Lehmann (1997:575), by dissecting "the discourse and ideology of establishment development", Escobar does not provide an assessment of either grassroots movements or bureaucratic discourses. In other words: "to seek recourse in the rhetoric of 'empowerment' is not to solve the development problem but to replicate it" (Cowen and Shenton 1996:4).

Little and Painter (1995), for their part, contend that Escobar's work tends to imply that anthropologists who are working in development are "somehow demonstrating political solidarity with oppressed people" (*ibid:* 602). They brought Escobar's critiques, based on discourse analysis, "back to earth", by arguing that, despite development discourses and their influence, "poverty, environmental degradation, political oppression, and other material symptoms of underdevelopment are more than reflections of hegemonic texts and ideologies" (*ibid*: 605). To them, the reality of the above phenomena excludes reducing development to discourses, and they insist that anthropologists must take part in the development process in order to ensure that anthropology has something to say about poverty, hunger and violence.

This grounded perspective is also echoed by Nustad (2001). While recognizing the theoretical importance of development critiques, which he observes do not "point to a way forward for development practice," Nustad argues that these

critiques could hold the potential to be constructive if investigations of "how development interventions are transformed in encounters with target populations" are pursued (*ibid*: 480). In fact, Nustad suggests finding a practical side to these critiques by exploring how they are enacted in development encounters. He observed that despite all the critiques elaborated above, much work still needs to be done to improve development practices, which can be attempted by taking each critique into account and working towards the gaps between theory and practice (see also Neverdeen Pieterse 1998).

More generally, 'discourse analysis' was found to limit the possibilities for assessing and examining the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994) because of its incapacity to consider the diversity inherent to both policies and interventions: "One of the problems in much of this literature is that it presents the development world as a unified homogenous entity, sharing a common discourse and a common ideology. […] Here there is no chorus of harmony but rather a cacophony of different views and positions" (Stirrat 2000:33).

TWO APPROACHES GROUNDED IN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Since this research follows the theoretical orientations of 'alternative development', it is important to understand its core approaches. In fact, alternative development has broadly sought to challenge 'mainstream' development by adopting three main approaches: by a) "putting people first" through participatory and people-centered approaches (Chambers 1997), b) arguing for a greater inclusion of social scientists in development organisations, and c) conducting 'relational analysis' in the different "interpretive communities" of the development system (Mosse 2003). For the purpose of this research, I focus on two of these three approaches, providing an account of participatory approaches – which were at the heart of the LSP – and an overview of what I call the 'relational approaches' to development.

On Participatory Approaches

Participatory and people-centered approaches proposed that development should emerge 'from below', rather than descending top-down from mainstream organisations of development[40]: "Participatory development is conventionally represented as emerging out of the recognition of the shortcomings of top-down development approaches" (Cook and Kothari 2001:5). Examples of propositions for participatory approaches abound[41] (Anacleti 2002; Brohman 1996; Long 1992; Cernea 1995, 2006; Chambers 1997; McGee 2002; Peters 2000; Woost 1997). Long (1992:275), for example, has argued for an "actor-oriented approach" which consists of "a more systematic and sensitive methodology for reaching the voices, practical knowledge and strategies of local actors that include the ongoing transformation and interpenetration of local and external models and experience". Long believes in the "complexities involved in the battlegrounds of everyday life" and argues that "the spread of hegemonic discourses such as development is always played out in local encounters and through human agency", and thus argues that research should include all actors involved in the development process[42] (Long 1992:272;).

Cernea (1995) and Chambers (1997), for their part represent two of the most 'practice-oriented' proponents of alternative approaches. Both argued convincingly for people-centered approaches, but in different ways. Cernea (1995a) discussed the significance of "designing strategies around the social actor rather than starting with technical factors" and insisted that these strategies should be included in development policies and development interventions alike

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[40] Bottom-up approaches to development are generally embodied by NGOs and social movements[40] (Escobar 1995a; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998:346). Social movements may be valued for their detachment from mainstream organisations, but the rise of social movements also consists of a direct "response to the failure of development to address the needs of the poor" (Munck 1999:207)

[41] Since participatory approaches were central for the LSP, a greater attention has been given here to issues revolving around participation. However, compared to the quantity of literature that has been produced on the subject, what is presented here is merely an overview.

[42] See also Cernea and Kassam (2006) and Nustad (2001:486) for similar point of view.

(*ibid*: 21). For Cernea[43], development can only work if development projects are "capable of being operated and maintained by the local social actors and their institutions and organizations" (*ibid*: 19). To him, then, the only possible way to alleviate poverty involves the deep participation of local actors who should become responsible for the continuation of a given project.

Similarly, Chambers created the strategy of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)[44], which requires changes in all spheres of development – whether institutional or grass roots –, insisting that even the highest levels of hierarchy should work to "put people before things" (Chambers 1997:210). For Chambers, there exists no 'blueprint' in development work, since people and social processes are rather unpredictable. To him, the answer to the "many of the errors of development" lies in participatory approaches which facilitate bottom-up development through the participation of "beneficiaries" in development projects (*ibid*: 190). An evolution of Chambers' approach was later taken up and advocated by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) in the form of the "Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches" or SLAs (1999), which development practitioners have adopted as "livelihoods"[45].

This sample of claims for participatory approaches only represents the "tip of the iceberg" compared to the number of similar suggestions that have been published on the relevance and practical applications of the concept of participation in development (Anacleti 2002; Brohman 1996; McGee 2002; Peters 2000; Woost 1997, among others). Participatory approaches are seen as crucial to a more flexible, bottom-up, sustainable, empowering and contextually-adapted

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[43] It should also be noted that Cernea has long argued for a greater inclusion and role for anthropologists and social scientists in organisations of development (Cernea 1995). More recently, Cernea has argued for giving more importance to social research specifically in the CGIAR organisations, which has not been given enough importance and is currently understaffed (Cernea 2006:11).
[44] Chamber's original approach (1983) was labelled Rapid Rural Appraisal, or RRA. It is not rare to find this acronym in early literature on participatory approaches.
[45] As already indicated, my fieldwork took place in a livelihoods programme funded by DFID called the "Livelihoods Support Programme". This will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

development (Cook and Kothari 2001:5). At the same time, as an "ambiguous" concept, participation allows for bridging between the various perspectives and expectations of parties to a given project (Mosse 2005a:33).

Some Critiques of Participation in Development

Participation in development, as a concept and a practice, has been criticised even by those who advocate alternative development (Li 2007; Mosse 2005a; Olivier de Sardan 2005; Stirrat 2000).

To start with, participatory approaches have raised the issue of 'representation': who is representing the communities, how, in pursuit of what interests? This question of 'elite capture' remains a real problem for development practitioners who deal with participatory approaches, as they do not 'eliminate' power relations and may take for granted that "communities are bounded units" (Li 2007:234). Mosse (2005a) has described how PRA sessions conducted in Indian villages were in fact controlled by local elites (see also Cooke and Kothari 2001). This may relate to the fact that those who take part in PRA sessions are often the most literate within a given population, or those who have clear expectations of what interests they intend to preserve in a given project. Local authorities who engage with a project may "mobilise participation" in order to gain social capital and enough trust to then claim to 'represent' the community (Mosse 2005a:82), or may voluntarily withhold information from the project team. It may also happen that the project team may be ill-informed about local culture and power relations, preventing the organisers from reaching the level of information they were hoping for (Rew and Rew 2005), or from decoding the 'vested' interests of some of the individuals involved. It may furthermore be the case that local elites feel threatened by PRA sessions, as they are often facilitated by strangers for who encourage everyone to speak up, regardless of their social status, gender, age, or profession.

Additionally, participatory approaches and PRA techniques may be criticised for the information they disregard or are unable to adequately take into account, for example the "role of prices, laws, and militaries" (Li 2007:234). Indeed, participation "privileges a certain *type* of knowledge" (Mosse 2005a:83), and a certain type of people: that is, those who feel comfortable to speak in public, or who have the social capital and status to do so (*ibid*: 85). For example, members of a particular social stratum (caste), or other groups (e.g. women) may be silenced by the very format of PRA activities. Indeed,

> "The relationship between knowledge and agency (cognitive change and behavioural change) is such that the articulation of 'local knowledge' (perhaps through PRA) is shaped by relationships of power rather than transforming them (cf. Green 2000); although this is not to say that people are passive victims of external design" (*ibid:* 79).

Moreover, PRA takes place according to planned activities, which at times may not 'fit' with local and 'non-linguistic' forms of knowledge[46]. In other words,

> "participatory approaches to development encourage the adoption of specific organizational forms and a very specific conception of the person modelled on that dominant in the Western world. In the end, what PRA practitioners appear to be doing is to empower people to be citizens of the modern state" (Stirrat 2000:39-40).

Some anthropologists, such as Hobart (1993),[47] simply do not see a real potential for participatory approaches, because they believe that inputs from the 'bottom' can not change what has been planned from 'above'. Indeed, Mosse's study (2005a) of a participatory project in India has demonstrated that participation was largely oriented to "project deliverables", to the expectation of

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[46] It should be mentioned, albeit briefly, that Olivier de Sardan (2005) has differentiated between "methodological" and "ideological" participatory approaches. He discusses how "methodological populism" considers that participants may contribute their own and original knowledge to a project, compared to "ideological populism" which "disables scientific procedures" (2005: 9).
[47] "The rejection of 'planning from above' in favour of a 'bottom-up approach' does not, however, necessarily change matters, because the terms and the kind of action expected usually remained defined by 'superiors'" (Hobart 1993:15).

project results, as well as by to "relationships of patronage" (2005a:95; see also Cooke and Kothari 2001 and Li 2007).

In other words, participation, as a concept, takes for granted that the knowledge of participants will orient the project towards fulfilling their needs more adequately, supposing that 'communities' will most likely share a common understanding of these needs (Crewe 1997). Yet in addition to the local power relations that may impede the participation of all community members, other types of relationships between participants and project staff also emerge, and participation, it seems, is a process by which participants learn to deal with projects as a 'planned process' and serves to establish a relationship between project participants and project staff. As Mosse has observed, "rather than project plans being shaped by 'indigenous knowledge', it is farmers who acquire and learn to manipulate new forms of 'planning knowledge'. In this way, local knowledge becomes compatible with bureaucratic planning" (2001:32).

Participation has also been deemed a "new tyranny" (Cooke and Kothari 2001), meaning that participation may be "the illegitimate and/or unjust exercise of power" (*Ibid:* 2001). To Cooke and Kothari, participation as a discourse in development has become an "orthodoxy" – or "an act of faith" (Cleaver 2001:36) – proposed and enacted by development professionals belonging to a certain elite[48]. Participation, in this sense, can "become a way of talking about rather than taking action" (Rew and Rew 2005:37).

My own experience is that participation which encourage local actors to discuss their 'needs' and expectations regarding a given project may have the side effect of raising the level of hopes regarding the concrete results of a given project. PRA sessions may become places where participants find open ears in the

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[48] Cooke and Kothari (2001:15) indicated that participation is "constructed by a cadre of development professionals, be they academics, practitioners or policy-makers, whose ability to create and sustain this discourse is indicative of the power they possess". Harrison (2003:111) shares this view: "Clearly, aspirations towards participation, however genuine, take place in preformed relations of power and hierarchy".

project team to which they can voice all their desires, making it hard to discern what a project can and cannot do. Inevitably, solutions to their needs will not always transpire. As Rew and Rew (2005) have observed in participatory assessments, "facilitators usually failed to make clear a distinction between canvassing solutions and the ability to guarantee institutional actions" (2005:43).

Some development organisations, such as the World Bank, FAO, and UNDP, proclaim that participatory methods have been integrated into development projects.

Yet, the paradigm of participation could easily be 'rhetorically' manipulated by development institutions, rather than practically incorporated. As Peters (2000:6) observed:

> "…participatory approaches have been resuscitated yet again in a current context concerned with human rights, democratization, civil society, and popular social movements. […] their meanings and practical embodiment are so various as to be in danger of just being another development fad. […] All too often, however, participation has been part of the rhetoric of governments and private agencies without the reality of involvement and influence (Gatter 1993; Mosse 1996)".

Accordingly, there are some concerns that participation would open a door to the 'de-responsibilisation' of development agencies, which, in case of a development project's failure, could shift the responsibility to the local populations on the grounds of their increased participation. Bottom-up participation could provide a way for development agencies to escape accountability, since organisations suddenly become "mere facilitators" of development projects (Gow 2002:307) and their roles are "obscured […] as [a] politically conscious, strategically operating marketing organisation[s]" (Mosse 2001:33).

In fact, most development organisations claim to integrate alternative development approaches and participatory approaches into their projects, which has led some anthropologists to reconsider the term 'alternative'. To them,

"development alternatives have not remained alternative for long […]. It might be said that the alternative development approaches have often been co-opted to the point where there remain few real alternatives" (Kothari and Minogue 2002:9). This co-optation of alternative approaches may be perceived as another 'trick' of the mainstream forces of power to better control and quiet alternative voices.

It should be noted that the adoption of participatory approaches by organisations can be 'cosmetic', exploited to attract donor attention. Sometimes, it seems that 'participatory projects' have a better chance of being funded by donors. Thus, even if the vocabulary of participation has entered the official discourse of an organisation, it does not mean that participatory approaches have been adopted in practice.

In FAO, for example, and despite the LSP's efforts (as will be discussed below), alternative approaches have yet to be systematically used and integrated within the organisation, as much still needs to be done in terms of improving and mainstreaming bottom-up strategies. Nonetheless, FAO uses the discourses of participatory development and livelihoods in many circumstances[49]. Thus, the 'real' integration of participatory approaches depends on the particular development organisation, government, local NGOs and individuals involved in putting forth these approaches, among other factors.

It should be mentioned, however, that the LSP stands out as a counter example. The Programme truly aimed at mainstreaming alternative and participatory approaches in FAO (see below), and the professionals involved genuinely believed that these approaches had the potential to improve FAO's work. Some insights regarding whether the LSP achieved its objectives will be provided in the next section of this chapter.

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[49] This information, which stems from my fieldwork at FAO, has been confirmed by many informants.

'Relational Approaches' and Investigations

The dichotomy between 'alternative' and 'mainstream' development inhibits an appreciation of their respective dynamic characters (Neverdeen Pieterse 1998:360) and "has led to the institutionalised reproduction of antagonistic positions between constructive engagement and disengaged critical analysis […]" (Lewis and Mosse 2006a:6). However, cutting across this dichotomy and showing "the ways in which these definitions and meanings are contested and negotiated, [...]" (Gardner and Lewis 2000:18) is another body of literature within alternative development, written by anthropologists who have studied and focused on the struggles between different actors involved in development (Cernea and Kassam; Crewe 1997; Dove 1994; Ferguson 1994; Harrison 2003; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002; Mosse 2001, 2003, 2005a; Quarles van Ufford 2003; Stirrat 2000). Most of these anthropologists are themselves involved both in academia and in development organisations, often serving as consultants. Although they argue that the current development system is still needed, some also claim that neither discourse analysis nor participatory approaches[50] alone can provide deep enough analysis of the development system or adequate solutions in order to reach the poorest people (Li 2007; Mosse 2005a).

The originality of their work, which may be qualified as 'relational', stems from their own involvement with development organisations, allowing for internal ethnographic analysis and observation of the power relations and local negotiations occurring at project sites. They have looked at interactions within "interpretive communities" and between them: local actors, members of national governments, personnel from development organisations[51], and staff from donor agencies. In doing so, they have concretely shown how these categories of actors have diverging interests and different conceptions of "hope", "politics" and

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[50] These authors have also critiqued participatory approaches, and their views have been included in the above discussion.

[51] Only a few studies focus specifically on the struggles within international organisations (Cerna and Kassam 2006; Stirrat 2000).

"critical understanding" (Quarles van Ufford et al 2003:23). These actors, in their own time and fashion, may influence and steer projects to their advantage and according to their interest, so that in the end, the real benefactors of development projects may not correspond to their original 'target population'.

Looking closely at relationships in development has led to the identification of structural constraints of development policy and intervention (Ferguson 1994; Li 2007), and to the observation of the agency of the several actors involved (Crewe 1997; Dove 1994; Mosse 2005a; Mitchell 2002). In turn, these analyses have shed new light on some of the well-entrenched paradigms of development. For example, the very idea of a development's project 'success' or 'failure' was put into question as success and failure were found to be "socially produced" and to depend on the perspective of each and every actor, as well as on the terms used to described project objectives and associated "side effects" (Mosse 2005a; Harrison 2003). Both success and failure may occur where unexpected and diverge from the 'official' models (Mosse 2005a:162). In fact, "programs and the messy consequences of programs, are equally real, and both merit attention" (Li 2007:28).

They have also provided countless examples of how "blueprint" development narratives may be hard to "transform into plausible assertion" (Roe 1991:296). In fact, Mosse (2004) maintains that "good policy is unimplementable", because the motivations behind narratives are different from those driving practices. Accordingly, those working in development organisations have been described as "brokers and translators" (Mosse and Lewis 2006): they bridge the gap between policy and practice, especially when dealing with project implementation, which implies "translation"[52] from policy to practice and vice versa; and act as "brokers", "between development institutions and peasant society" (*ibid*: 13). Authors also highlight the fact that "brokers" between projects and communities may emerge

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[52] Translators "stabilize interpretations and produce meaning, social networks, and development success at every level – within donor policymaking circles, consultancy teams, and project staff as well as among the consumers of development" (Mosse and Lewis 2006:15).

from the local, national, and international scenes, and may play an important role in mediating the project's process of implementation (Li 2007:88).

A last example of structural constraints in development was provided by Li (2007) in her accounts of development work in Indonesia, where she was able to observe and identify some of the mechanisms through which development intervention proceeds. "Rendering technical" is one of the mechanisms she identifies (*Ibid*: 123), as a means by which development professionals 'translate' the problems lived by a given population into "technical terms" that they can then solve. "Rendering technical" is in fact a translation of the concrete reality into a more technical one, and in doing so, these concrete realities, according to Li, are "simultaneously rendered nonpolitical" (*ibid*: 7). Yet there is no guarantee that this translation is accurate, and in fact, according to Li's account, rendering technical often misses the point. However, this thesis will demonstrate (particularly in Chapter 6), that experts refer to more than their technical knowledge when "translating" the concrete realities of a project's participants into problems they can solve. Nevertheless, Li (2007) has demystified some of the processes through which development 'operates' based on practical observations 'in the field'.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT

To summarise, some anthropologists have found that there is something inherently naïve about suggesting alternative approaches to development (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Latouche 1993; Munck 1999; Sachs 1992). According to Munck,

> "the new 'Holy Trinity' of engendered, sustainable and bottom-up development may be a laudable political goal, but we must not confuse rhetoric and reality. [...] There is really no magic fix that would make development both viable and politically liberating at the same time" (1999:202).

Other anthropologists, however, have suggested alternative ways of improving the current system, mostly using people-centered and bottom-up approaches (Brohman 1996; Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; McGee 2002; Woost 1997) and have sought to understand the complex relationships that shape development practices (Dove 1994; Li 2007; Mosse 2003; 2005a)

Even though some anthropologists have dismissed this confrontation between academics and practitioners because it provides "no way forward" (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003:11), it is still nevertheless imperative to situate this research within a specific theoretical frame. As already discussed, this research is grounded within alternative development in two ways. First, by analysing the LSP (below), it offers an overview of how participatory approaches were seen as having the potential to solve problems that FAO professionals were facing in the field. Without critiquing participatory approaches *per se*, the research certainly touches on how some FAO employees – particularly those involved in the LSP – see participatory approaches as a way to bridge policy and intervention, notably by bringing FAO's work closer to the needs of those they are seeking to help. In doing so, it also demonstrates their will to "make development work" through engaging project participants in a more dynamic and interactive manner. Additionally, the LSP provides an example that mainstream development can be challenged, even within a very structured organisation, by a group of dedicated individuals promoting alternative approaches.

Second, this research contributes to the 'relational' literature described above by exploring the relationships of the professionals involved within the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994; see chapters 4, 5 and 6). In this particular case, the relationships discussed are located within the organisation itself, and concern the relationships of development professionals with their peers, their organisation, and with their own work. It is important to recall that this investigation remained

largely within the framework of FAO-HQ, and inside the LSP more particularly. However, chapter 5 will present a discussion regarding the relationships and situations of FAO employees within two FAO field offices, and explore the difference between the organisational structures of each.

THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH: GETTING TO KNOW THE LIVELIHOODS SUPPORT PROGRAMME (LSP)

In the wide FAO context, one's views and understandings of the role and actions of the organisation vary according to where one sits and what one does. During my time at FAO I was part of both a specific Service and of an extra-budgetary programme anchored in that Service. Working from this vantage point certainly shaped my experience of FAO, of the type of professionals I met, and of the working culture in which I was directly involved. I was employed by the Livelihoods Supported Programme (LSP) which was funded by DFID. The LSP's stated purpose was to:

> "enable the FAO field and regular programmes to be more effective in applying [sustainable livelihoods] approaches. If successful, the programme will contribute to the goal of improved field programmes, policies, and institutions that better support the livelihoods of the rural poor, by effective development interventions that assist in reaching the International Development Targets, as well as those of the 1996 World Food Summit" (LSP Programme Memorandum 2001:1).

Being part of this programme offered a useful window on FAO, as the LSP had members in all departments and provided an opportunity to meet professionals of different backgrounds. The staff and consultants involved in the LSP could be seen both as an "accidental community of practice" (Malkki 1997), and as an "epistemic community", in terms of bringing together "a set of relationships around shared meanings" (Mosse 2006b:945).

The history of the LSP is key to understanding the context in which this research took place as it gives an idea of the interests of the individuals I spent most of my time with, and describes how unusual this programme was within the FAO context. It is, in fact, the story of FAO personnel coming together in order to change the ways of working of their own organisation through finding a space within the organisational structure to put into action their vision of sound development work.

The history of the LSP, which is rooted in the concept of "participation" in development through Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) and in incorporating participation at work (Chambers 1983), also reveals the potential power of informal networks of individuals within a specific working culture and environment, and the possibility of negotiating with high management[53].

What follows is divided in two parts: one leading up to the establishment of the LSP, the second concerned with the structure and functioning of the LSP. It is not my intention here to assess whether or not the LSP has achieved its goals, but rather to describe the context in which it functioned, from the perspective of my involvement as a consultant and to highlight how different LSP was compared to the rest of FAO.

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[53] Although the expression "upper management" is equally relevant, FAO personnel use the phrase "high management" or "high managers" to designate their superiors. Accordingly, this is the phrase that will be used throughout this thesis.

1988 beginning of the PRA Network (voluntary and informal group)
1998 creation of the Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches and Sustainable Livelihoods (IWG-PA).
2000/01 Siena forum on operationalising SLA, and design phase of the LSP
2002 LSP gathers state-of-the-art knowledge in its different topic areas
2003 LSP moves catalytically into the field with its Sub-Programmes
2004/05 is fully up to cruising speed and engaged with a variety of partners
2006 works with partners and on transition and exit strategies

Before the LSP: Networks, Informal Working Groups and a Forum

Two core staff members interested in promoting participation in development founded FAO's PRA[54] Network in 1988. Established on a voluntary basis, the purpose of the network was to bring together FAO technical staff who were doing or wanted to do participatory work within FAO to share their experiences and knowledge of the new Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (later to become the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)) techniques (Chambers 1983; 1994), and to encourage team and multi-disciplinary work throughout FAO. The PRA Network had no funding, no specifically assigned officers and no 'official' structure: people "voted with their feet" (an expression that would later become a core principle of the LSP) to give their own support, to suggest initiatives, and then to find the resources to carry them out. The network was 'informal' in the sense that, over the 10 year period of its active phase, it had no official leadership and was not a

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[54] Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was then the latest wave of innovation in participatory approaches to work with rural communities in developing countries (Chambers 1989). The idea of PRA was to use participatory methods of assessing needs and understanding the context of work for development practitioners.

part of FAO's regular programme of work. Although some service chiefs were involved in the network, most members were technical staff from FAO, IFAD and WFP[55]. During its history the network had a membership varying between 60 and 100 members, reaching at times a maximum of 200 members. As Caroline, one of FAO's service chiefs involved in the network, once noted:

> "I saw the value of the informality of the network – and it is implied in the notion of participation. Sometimes it is hard to do things when they are formal. To be participatory you need a certain freedom of manoeuvre. I liked the fact that this network was driven by the bottom. […] There is also some value in informality in that it is not accountable to senior management. When things get controlled, they get distorted and put into agendas". (Caroline)

Few records from the network's activities remain from the period 1988 to 1993. Documents indicate, however, that the period from 1994 to 1996 was particularly active, and included exchanging of references and new publications on related topics; linking with other organisations and doing joint work with, among others, IDS, IIED, CIDA[56], and the World Bank; getting people together through brown-bag lunch sessions, where methods and field experiences in using PRA tools were discussed; and implementing training and guidance on PRA with funding from FAO's official staff training programme. Some members were also asked to comment on project designs. It should be noted that the members always carried out these tasks on a voluntary basis, meaning in addition to their normal work, and without any additional pay.

Within FAO, the PRA Network was evolving in parallel and/or inter-linked with participatory programmes such as the People's Participation Programme (implemented in the aftermath of the 1979 Word Conference on Agrarian Reform

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[55] The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are agencies based in Rome. Both also hosted 'livelihoods' programmes funded by DFID after the Siena Forum.

[56] The Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, UK) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) were partners of or mentors for the PRA-Network.

and Rural Development (WCARRD)) and the Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa (IDAF – a Fisheries Programme implemented in 17 countries of West Africa). Although FAO was officially 'pro-participation' in the early days of the PRA Network, the concept of participation was not included or embodied in the majority of project designs and implementation phases, but only in a small proportion of its projects. There was no particular institutional mechanism to require the inclusion of participation within project designs (in fact, this is still the case in FAO). What is meant here by 'participation' is mostly the participation of FAO project 'beneficiaries' in the project cycle, notably in the identification of their needs through Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA), so that projects could address these needs in a more adequate manner (Chambers 1996).

In the course of the history of the PRA Network, there were several attempts by some higher managers to 'capture' the network and oblige the Network to support specific elements of the managers' own official programmes of work. Members did not want the Network to be put under the control of specific sectoral units, however, and resisted these attempts. When the PRA Network needed a formal interface with the rest of FAO, a few service chiefs, themselves members of the Network (including Caroline), often provided the necessary links with senior management.

> "Different individuals in the house who were ambitious wanted to use that mechanism – this is my personal view – to get the people of the network to work for them, for their greater agenda. I am talking about some service chiefs and above. So, it was in my view, about who controlled the human resources. The whole "vote with your feet" principle became really fundamental to allow us to say no to these people" (Katherine)

In 1998 most PRA Network members ended up becoming involved in what was known as the "Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches and Sustainable Livelihoods" (IWG-PA). In that year four service chiefs associated with the PRA Network took the initiative to invite a small group of technical

officers drawn from across FAO (most of them already active in the PRA Network) to work with them to produce a manual on participatory approaches and to organise a workshop on sustainable livelihoods with UNDP. The service chiefs were able to make available very modest catalytic funding from their own Regular Programme budgets. As work on these two aims progressed, additional individuals were recruited to the process, which soon led to opening these working groups to the participation of other interested individuals, and to the addition of new work objectives.

At this point in time, virtually the whole membership of the PRA Network essentially 'slipped over' and became the IWG-PA, though it still involved significant participation from staff members of IFAD and WFP. As with the PRA Network, the IWG-PA was based on voluntary participation, but took a step towards more formality through the official participation and sponsorship by the four supporting service chiefs. Since participants had various interests, the IWG-PA membership decided to divide itself into four working groups, allowing members to choose where to invest their energy. These groups were: Community Directory on Participation; Stakeholder Evaluation of FAO's participatory projects and programmes; Natural Resource Conflict Management; and Sustainable Livelihoods.

The sub-group on Sustainable Livelihoods then organised the Siena Forum on "Operationalising Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches" which was held in March of 2000 (FAO 2001). The sub-group had approached DFID, who had just funded a major livelihoods project with the FAO Fisheries Department, to request funds for carrying out the Forum. DFID responded positively and the resulting conference brought together a number of agencies working at the forefront of Sustainable Livelihood Approaches[57] (SLAs), addressing the question of how to

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[57] PRA became with time a practical tool among others, and was included by DFID in a more general theoretical concept called Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches which aimed at maximising the participation of project "beneficiaries" in the field interventions of development organisations. Later on, SLAs were in turn found to be too narrow for some development

operationalise these approaches. Conference partners included IFAD, WFP, Care International, UNDP, FAO, and DFID itself, with FAO's Rural Participation Service (SDAR) being the official budget holder.

Warm-up for the Siena Forum included both an e-conference and the preparation of case studies on effective development projects from eight different countries[58] which had integrated participation and sustainable livelihoods approaches. The cases provided the concrete basis for discussions during the Forum leading to the identification of important grey areas and cutting-edge questions concerning livelihoods which needed priority attention (some of which became the themes of the LSP sub-programmes as discussed below).

Figure 6. "Grey areas" Identified at the Siena Forum.

1. What are the best entry points for SL approaches?
2. Do SL approaches add value for implementation?
3. If SL approaches help agencies understand the poor, do they help reach them?
4. Do SL approaches always need a policy dimension?
5. How much diagnosis and when?
6. Are SL approaches culture-bound?
7. Can SL approaches work in authoritarian regimes?
8. What do SL approaches imply for donor agencies?

Source: Inter-agency Experiences and Lessons: From the Forum on Operationalizing Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (Altarelli and Carloni, Rome, 2000)

Those who were at the Siena Forum remember it as an important event in building momentum across agencies to use SLAs. A clear indication of the success of the Siena Forum was that DFID assigned a consultant to offer

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practitioners so it became absorbed into the umbrella of "people-centered approaches" (PCAs) (see LSP working paper 5, 2003).
[58] These countries included Mongolia, Zambia, Honduras, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Mali, Ethiopia, and Malawi.

continued support the FAO livelihoods sub-group in preparing a concept proposal for carrying forward work on livelihoods in FAO: they designed the LSP.

Initial Steps towards the LSP (2000-2001)

The Siena Forum was seen as a success by DFID, not only because it was an effective practicum on the livelihoods concept, but also because at the time the grey areas identified were 'cutting edge'. In parallel, some of the Conference participants felt that change was needed at FAO for the organisation to become more effective, in particular that it would benefit from becoming more participatory and inter-disciplinary through the integration of a livelihoods perspective in daily activities. The language in the LSP Programme Memorandum reveals some of the underlying dissatisfaction with FAO's work:

> "This programme seeks to improve the impact of FAO and partner agency interventions at country level through the application of SL approaches and provide an opportunity for joint lesson learning to enhance the effectiveness of both FAO and DFID programmes. [...] The purpose of the LSP is to strengthen FAO as an institution. The programme aims to enhance FAO institutional capacity to respond to member nation requests for assistance in poverty alleviation" (LSP Programme Memorandum 2001:1 and 3).

The one and a half year transition from the Siena Forum to the LSP was neither easy nor straight forward. Follow-up meetings after the Siena Forum served to identify the future directions of SLAs in FAO, and what structures and actions might help catalyze institutional change. A serious and detailed design phase started with the joint effort of a design team of six to twelve FAO staff members working part-time but intensively and often informally for about six months, encouraged by DFID's strong support. However, there were conflicts and factions within the design team. Different groups had different interests and the team had to find a way to be as inclusive as possible in designing what would become the LSP sub-programmes (SPs).

There was general agreement, however, to not base the programme in any particular Service, but rather to find a more flexible structure that would encourage cross-departmental work on a range of themes[59], based on some of the grey areas identified at Siena. The reason for this was that Service chiefs would be reluctant to let their own staff contribute working time on outputs which would be 'credited' to another Service. In the end, after trying to find an alternative solution, it was decided that the LSP, for administrative and reporting purposes, would be anchored to the Rural Participation Service (SDAR[60]) of the Sustainable Development Department.

The design phase of the LSP was thus marked by a mixture of synchronic processes on which the different designers needed to find agreement: 1) the writing of an encompassing umbrella programme that would achieve results through the actions of various sub-programmes (each corresponding to the various interests in working on the grey areas); 2) the preliminary establishment of the 'ways of working', including an 'interim' Programme Coordination Team (PCT) which started its activity in July, 2000; and 3) the complications of finding an institutional home for the LSP within FAO.

> "Each sub-programme has a history of how it got into the design. Some topics were also added because they looked sexy to the donor, or because DFID's consultants were influential enough for the team to agree. Everyone had their "thing" they wanted to see included in the design, even within the small core team". (Georges)

At that point in time, DFID had an "evangelical faith in SLAs", as one informant told me. As of 1997, DFID had undergone organisational changes, and there was a strong core of professionals who believed in livelihoods and participation as a

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[59] This idea itself reveals that the design team perceived and probably experienced a general lack of collaboration between FAO services and cross-departmental work at the time.

[60] This particular service, SDAR, does not exist in FAO anymore, following the 2006 Reform. This service has been grouped under a newly created division, the Economic and Social Development Department, and the name of the division is Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESWD).

way forward in development[61]. These organisational changes within DFID at that particular time were instrumental in setting up and supporting the LSP.

> "LSP was seen as a chance to work outside the control of micro-management, as a chance to work in between officers with a privileged access to DFID's money. There was a great interest in making this work. Looking back, there was a lot of idealism in this relation between FAO and DFID". (Georges)

The project document was signed in October of 2001, with a budget of $US 7 million dollars over a 5 year period. In November of 2001 the LSP held its first retreat, to start "hammering out the details of how it would actually work" (Edward).

A key and highly unusual provision in the document jointly signed by FAO and DFID was that the Programme's budget would be managed by the LSP Programme Coordinator, who was responsible for budget matters to the LSP's inter-departmental Programme Coordination Team, rather than budget decisions being made, as is the usual custom, directly by FAO management.

Accordingly, once the LSP got the funding, there were several fights with members of FAO's higher management who attempted to gain their 'traditional' direct control of the funding. Some Department and Division chiefs were not 'livelihoods' or 'participation friendly', and several attempted to obtain control over the budget so as to channel the funds through their own programme of work. Their incapacity to recover direct control over the LSP budget was controversial and several documentary lines exemplify their attempt to recuperate the budget. The most important one was addressed from the then Director of the Sustainable Development Department to the Director General's office:

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[61] Mosse also refers to the changes in DFID's "policy regime", and observes that "life can be uncertain for a project which has outlived the policy regime that it served, and continues precariously at the margins of legitimacy" (2005:a:200). This was also the case of the LSP as DFID changed its focus from livelihoods approaches at the beginning of years 2000.

> "... we consider that the Division Director of the Rural Development Division should be the budget holder and have overall responsibility of the programme."

The request was forwarded to the then Permanent Representative of the UK to FAO, who answered the following:

> "... The design team spent a considerable amount of time on this issue. Their firm conclusion was that budget holder responsibilities should lie with the Programme Coordinator. They felt that this arrangement would provide the right balance of operational flexibility and accountability, and would encourage effective teamwork and interdepartmental interaction. [...] We are accordingly quite content with the arrangements as currently described in the Memorandum of Understanding and Project Memorandum."

It should be underlined that, as with the PRA Network and the IWG-PA, with the exception of the LSP Programme Coordinator, the LSP did not pay any salaries for the FAO technical officers who participated in its sub-programmes. FAO officers joined on a part time basis and continued to be paid entirely by their own home Services. What the LSP budget did contribute was what FAO calls 'non-staff resources', such as funds for travel, consultants, administrative support, training, publications, communications, meetings, and external contracts.

To recap, over the years, the driving force of the PRA network and the IWG-PA has been the conviction and dedication of the people involved. The PRA Network was created by technical staff, and service chiefs only joined later. The PRA Network remained 'free' to act, write and participate in what each member saw as a fundamental venture, especially if others could be convinced to "vote with their feet" and lend a hand.

The venue of the IWG-PA gave it a more structured and formal interface with the rest of FAO. Staff members who had strong interests in participation perhaps found themselves working in a more focused way in the IWG-PA, a situation which might have been more appealing for a few members, or too rigid for others.

Both the PRA Network and the IWG-PA continued to 'officially' exist in parallel with the LSP, but in practice became inactive as their members shifted their active attention to the LSP.

Timing was important in the evolution of the process of bringing an increase in participation to FAO. This drive from the 'bottom' converged with strategic development polices adopted by international and donor organisations – in this case DFID – around the same period and going in the same direction, that of putting poor people and their livelihoods at the centre of the development process. Moreover, the recognition by FAO in its *Strategic Framework 2000-2015* (FAO 1999b) of the need to reinforce its commitment to strengthening livelihoods of the poor through participatory approaches and methods, and to concentrate on inter-disciplinarity and partnership within and outside the organization, confirmed the group in their thoughts and actions, especially at the moment of the Siena Forum in 2000.

The LSP at Work

The LSP operated through two inter-twined elements: the LSP's 'ways of working', and the decentralised sub-programmes (SPs), which functioned as 'action arms'. This combination provided the channels to carry out the two stated objectives of the LSP: 1) mainstreaming of Sustainable Livelihoods/People-Centred (SL/PC) approaches within FAO through institutional learning and building FAO staff knowledge and capacity; and 2) enhancement and incorporation of SL/PC methods and principles into cross-sectoral field activities (LSP Programme Memorandum 2001:2).

An important characteristic of any FAO extra-budgetary programme is a relatively greater freedom of action, compared to the more rigidly programmed and supervised FAO "Regular Programme". Even more so than most extra-budgetary

programmes, the LSP's decision structure was in many respects largely autonomous from the rest of FAO. The programme had its own administration and management, from the decision-making body down to office supplies. The only element borrowed from FAO (aside from staff members) was office space.

The LSP: A Federation of Sub-Programmes

The LSP worked through teams of FAO staff members (permanently hired by FAO – not by the LSP) – and supporting consultants (hired specifically by the LSP). These teams, called sub-programmes (SP), tackled specific development themes through sustainable livelihood approaches. There were eight sub-programmes, each with its own budget allocated on an annual basis by the Programme Coordination Team (PCT) of the LSP. Each sub-programme was rigorously cross-departmental in its membership. Each of the SPs worked towards achieving some of the objectives within the overall LSP aims. The idea was that once the work of all was put together, all the LSP objectives would be covered.

Generally, the SPs worked to integrate sustainable livelihoods principles into FAO's work at headquarters and in the field, integrating their inputs in a catalytic fashion with FAO's existing Programme of Work and Budget. The LSP also served as a testing ground for interdisciplinary team approaches and sustainable livelihoods principles.

In keeping with the traditions of the PRA Network and the Informal Working Group, the SPs were developed around a group of interested people, each organised and supervised by a small nucleus of 'champions' called the co-conveners. However, it has not been always easy to either find or to keep these champions over the years, even with the presence of non-staff funding (I come back to this point below).

Each of the sub-programmes itself has evolved a niche for a range of actions, with respect to content, partnerships, geographical zones, methods and tools, outputs, results, outcomes, and impacts. The different SPs have maintained inter-relations between themselves in part through cross-membership, but mostly through the three LSP organisational 'structures' described more fully below, i.e. the Secretariat, the Programme Coordination Team (PCT) and the Operations Team ('O-team'). The sub-programme approach strengthened the capacity of the overall programme to respond to a variety of audiences and inter-related needs, be they field-based or institutional.

The sub-programmes can be divided into two groups according to their orientation:

i) The first group of sub-programmes deals with the improvement and field testing of selected methodologies required within Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches.
- Access to Natural Resources
- Participation, Policy and Local Governance
- Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development
- Natural Resource Conflict Management

ii) The second group of sub-programmes is oriented towards institutional learning and the integration of lessons learned.
- Institutional Learning
- Capacity Building in Cultural Context
- Mainstreaming SLAs
- Referral and Response Facility

Each sub-programme has produced a number of outputs or engaged in various activities, including, among others: workshops (both at headquarters and in a variety of countries), documentation and reports, tools and toolboxes, partnerships (internal and external), guidelines, consultancies, mini-projects, etc.

Most SPs have developed different action mechanisms to actively support officers in the field or within the house, including: offering complementary activities to existing projects thereby adding value to ongoing FAO projects; writing background documentation on themes related to the SPs; training and developing training materials; and mainstreaming of livelihoods through partnerships and collaborations with in-house or external partners, training sessions, sending consultants on the field, organising field staff briefing and debriefings, and lunch-time seminars.

Almost all of the sub-programmes (SPs) employed a 'supporting consultant' to backstop or carry out core and daily activities. As FAO staff members did not have enough time to carry out extensive LSP work on top of their 'regular work', supporting consultants, for the most part junior, were hired to do much of the actual work of keeping each sub-programme going. I was myself hired as a supporting consultant for the "Institutional Learning" sub-programme.

LSP Structure and Ways of Working

Part of the originality of the LSP lies in its working mechanisms which were mapped out during the pre-design and inception phases of the programme and continued to evolve over its lifetime. These ways of working are themselves based on the concept of participation. 'Participation' is not restricted here as the participation of 'beneficiaries' at project level, but emphasises the participation of FAO staff and consultants in the design and implementation of work and in the democratic ways of functioning of the LSP.

The LSP was coordinated through an inter-departmental structure whose management and decision-making group was the Programme Coordination Team (PCT). Members of the PCT served in their own individual capacity rather

than as representatives of their organisational unit. The PCT was supported by a Secretariat, and by the Operations Team (O-team).

The *Secretariat*, hosted by SDAR, included the Programme Coordinator/ budget holder (Edward) responsible for financial and administrative management as well as for coordinating the work plans of the LSP, and a Budget/ Administrative Assistant, as well as various consultants who have supported institutional learning functions.

The *Programme Coordination Team* dealt with the policy, governance and programming of the LSP. Membership was composed of the two or more co-convenors responsible for each sub-programme (obligatorily from different departments), the Service Chief of SDAR, the Programme Coordinator, representative(s) of the donor and a small number of 'co-opted' FAO staff members, to use Edward's term. A quorum required the presence of staff members from five different SPs. PCT decisions were taken through 'qualified consensus' of the quorum members, "which basically means that one stubborn holdout could not hold up the show, but the presence of two or three strong dissenters indicated that the matter at hand needs more work" (Edward). Supporting consultants to the sub-programmes also participated in the PCT meetings, but not as quorum members.

In the first year of the Programme a team-building consultant worked periodically with the PCT to help develop working methods and norms[62]. Rules clarification was especially needed at the time when resources became available. Some observers indicated that the arrival of resources crystallised power plays between individuals, making negotiations more difficult. The processes of meeting

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[62] Some of which included: decision making by qualified consensus; preparation of an agenda prior to each meeting (to be circulated ahead of time) providing members with an opportunity to add topics they would like to discuss and to prepare for planned discussions; rotation of the facilitator (chair) to spread ownership and avoid 'capture' of strategic positions by a potential faction; and circulation of decisions and information points after each meeting.

facilitation, team building and trust creation helped in taking decisions and finding ways of working that would make members comfortable with decisions regarding resources.

It was decided that one co-convenor from each sub-programme would be the budget holder for his or her sub-programme, the funds being used to carry out the SPs yearly work plan after approval by the PCT. Although allocating the total LSP budget annually among the existing sub-programmes was effective in spreading ownership and in decentralising, an important downside was that sub-programmes acquired a vested interest in maintaining their 'share' of the overall LSP budget. An unforeseen effect of this was that some sub-programmes (or some co-convenors) very strongly opposed the creation of new sub-programmes which they saw as a threat to maintaining their funding levels.

In the life of the LSP only one new sub-programme was added, the "LSP Referral and Response Facility". Although the creation of this new sub-programme was originally blocked in the PCT by the strong opposition of one particular sub-programme, four other existing sub-programmes felt so strongly that there was a need for one 'less planned' and more widely responsive SP that they agreed to contribute a part of their own individual already-approved annual budgets to bring the new sub-programme into existence.

The *Operational Team* (O-team), made up of the SPs' supporting consultants and the Secretariat, met weekly for short sessions on administrative housekeeping issues, collaboration between SPs, and information sharing. This was the most recently created functioning body of the LSP, organised and chaired by the Financial and Administration Assistant. The purpose of this body was to relieve the PCT of house-keeping issues that did not need PCT approval.

The dynamics of the LSP itself were based on some of the principles of SLAs, 'participation' being the most important one. According to many LSP members, the experience of the LSP has indeed demonstrated that participation, multi-disciplinarity and team work do add value to the products/ outputs, as well as providing a greater sense of ownership by the participants. These particularly flexible ways of working were for the most part breaking ground in FAO, and included:

a) an horizontal rather than a vertical hierarchical structure, with the result that all in FAO are welcome to participate, independently of their position within the organisation (consultants, staff members, or management).

b) a coordinated rather than directed programme, providing an opportunity for each SP – within its mandate – to determine its own priorities. The LSP Programme Coordinator as the overall budget holder was responsible to the Organisation for achieving the aims of the LSP. The Coordinator had a great deal of liberty, but could not move in directions which would not be supported by the PCT.

c) Multi-disciplinarity was a core principle of the LSP, its members coming from all of the different departments within FAO, and the two (or more) co-convenors of each sub-programme being obligatorily from different departments. This multi-disciplinarity was reinforced through LSP's partnerships in the field and through the range of thematic interests of the sub-programmes.

d) As already indicated, participation of members and partners was key in LSP's work, as it is in sustainable livelihood approaches, a principle which the LSP has been careful to apply in its own work. Fundamental to this participation

was the 'principle of attraction' and interest, in SLAs, team and multi-disciplinary work, and the availability of funding for complementary activities[63].

In addition to the above principles and ways of working, the LSP was particularly inclined to activities of monitoring and evaluation, and to lesson learning activities, both closely linked to one another.

Some Limitations of the LSP Approach

The LSP communicated knowledge about SLAs not only to its numerous clients and partners, but also within its own membership. It is hard to evaluate the level of impact this has had, as it is difficult to tell what exactly each individual has taken on board.

> "Yet, the SPs have done more than they have paid for in a way. More mainstreaming work has been done through individuals than what can actually be calculated." (Katherine)

Within FAO, the LSP has managed to work closely with individuals and services already convinced or pre-disposed to livelihoods-type of work, and these in turn have also convinced others. Certainly most FAO participants in the 2000 Siena Forum and many others who joined the LSP later on would probably have applied SLAs to some degree in their work in any case, but their presence and involvement in the LSP has provided cycles of positive reinforcement and a continuing support for the integration of livelihoods principles, as well as a platform where like-minded spirits could come together.

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[63] In sharp contrast to the LSP's strict principle of not paying FAO staff members for their time working with the Sub-Programmes, the FAO Services to which PCT members belonged were reimbursed by the LSP for the time actually spent in meetings of the PCT.

"The LSP membership in general – with important and essential exceptions – tended to be more process oriented rather than outputs oriented, so that while they always gave much space to thinking and discussing, they had to keep reminding themselves – or sometimes be reminded – about the need for outputs and concrete results. (Edward)

As already mentioned, the LSP was designed to be an encompassing umbrella for action-oriented sub-programmes, which meant that exchanges and discussions between the sub-programmes were necessary to link the work and experiences together. However, communications between sub-programmes on work content was impaired by time constraints, personality issues, and gulfs between the types of work undertaken by each more-or-less specialised sub-programme.

With the exception of PCT meetings, where discussion was more often on process, no really successful and enduring mechanism was developed for exchanges on content between sub-programmes. Providing systematic opportunities for 'technical' or 'practical' exchanges between the SPs (i.e. what people were actually doing), which could have also involved outsiders, remained an unsolved problem. The federation of SPs allowed the strong personalities involved to work quite independently, to the point where some members have maintained that the SPs were given 'control' instead of 'support'. This, combined with sometimes opportunistic behaviour and flexible ways of working, opened the door to manipulation or, at times, to losing sight of the objectives.

Staff participation in the LSP was woven around institutional constraints. 'Institutional participation' would perhaps have been greater if the staff members themselves could have been freed more frequently to take part in exchanges and other mainstreaming types of activities within LSP and FAO. In the PRA Network and the IWG-PA, taken as models for the LSP, FAO staff contributed the time and effort needed to achieve an agreed-on group goal, and then went back to their regular work. In the LSP, however, the work to be done demanded

continued effort over a period of years rather than a temporary one. As it became clear that the FAO staff members did not have enough time to 'participate' on a continuous basis, the PCT decided to hire consultants to carry out activities and deal with housekeeping matters. Co-conveners and other staff members involved have made it clear that without the supporting consultants, the LSP, and each of the SPs, would doubtless have failed to function.

Thus, active participation in 'production' was largely delegated to the supporting consultants. In other words, no formal channels were created to free up staff members' time, and no 'deep' organisational change was made to support participation within the work of individuals. Perhaps the LSP could have strengthened its contribution directly to the regular programme of work through seeking greater recognition from higher management, both in words and in committed actions. However, the fear of losing control of financial and human resources to the benefit of specific management agendas, inherited from the time of the PRA-Network, remained a preoccupation of the LSP members through time.

The LSP, despite its limits, has managed to bring together an important core of people interested in livelihoods, often independently of their interest in the funding. In the end, the ways of working and concepts of the livelihoods approach so central to the sub-programmes have been carried out and enacted by individuals. The programme has been shaped by their personalities, dynamics, interactions, interests and competencies (see chapter 4).

> "We were very idealistic. We all liked the idea, but there were difficulties in putting it into practice. LSP, with time and experience, and with resources and personalities, became something different than initially planned". (Donald)

The LSP should be seen as an innovative programme both in its ways of working and also for aiming to foster participatory approaches in FAO. It should be

mentioned in passing that many LSP participants were aware of, and sometimes shared, some of the critiques of participation explored previously. However, to them, participation often seemed to be the only viable alternative to top-down and conventional FAO work. It was better to include participation than not. In a way, the LSP aimed at bridging the gap Mosse (2005a) describes between policy and practice, by aiming to provide more tools to FAO's staff in developing closer collaboration with the people they sought to help. However, while Mosse insists that the "disjuncture between policy and practice is not […] an unfortunate gap to be bridged between intention and action, it is a necessity; actively maintained and reproduced" (*ibid*: 231), one can at least say that the LSP staff actively aspired to work in a more integrated manner, and, perhaps naively, to convert the rest of FAO in doing the same. Whether the programme succeeded is another story.

In other words, the LSP aimed at "producing new subjects" who would integrate participatory principles in their work, as discussed by Li (2007:139). This, in some sense, parallels Li's description of the CARE project in Indonesia's Lore Lindu National Park, which aimed at transforming "border villagers" into "new subjects who would adopt ecofriendly practices on their own land and respect park rules" (*ibid:* 138-139).

It should be reiterated that the LSP used the same 'language' as development projects in terms of the needs for participation, yet the 'targeted beneficiary' was FAO itself. LSP was an exemplary case of the fact that "participatory alternatives are no longer confined to the grass roots, but promote participation at the macro level (Mosse and Lewis 2006:5).

LSP's ways of working – combining them all together – were new to FAO, especially the cross-departmental PCT and the independence of the budget holder. Also rare in FAO was the horizontal structure of the programme, which meant that consultants and junior FAO staff could take part in all activities without fear of committing any hierarchical *faux pas*. Finally, the facilitated meetings

spearheaded by the LSP, which allowed greater participation for all members, became in demand within the rest of FAO by the end of the LSP (see chapter 6). It is the combination of these mechanisms that allowed dedicated individuals to take the lead on original activities with a view to mainstreaming SLAs.

I have mentioned earlier that whether LSP failed or succeeded was beyond the scope of this research, which was more interested in how the LSP came to be and in what it tried to achieve in FAO. To that effect, Mosse (2005a) reminded us that a project's "success or failure" is socially produced. However, it should be mentioned that the LSP underwent a final evaluation in 2007, carried out by one member of FAO's evaluation service and by one representative of the donor. While critiquing some aspects of the LSP, mostly regarding the sub-programme approach, the evaluation report also highlighted some positive points. It seems that the LSP's success or failure was not a black or white situation: the programme produced mixed results. The LSP's evaluation is thus a good illustration that "development success is not merely a question of measures of performance; it is also about how particular interpretations are made and sustained socially. It is not just about what a project does, but also how and to whom it speaks, who can be made to believe in it" (*Ibid* 2005a:158).

The Evaluation Report went into great detail, but for the purpose of this research, the main findings are presented in Figure 7 where some conclusions of the final report itself are provided. It should be mentioned that if some of these critiques may seem harsh and negative towards the LSP, the Final Evaluation Team (FET) nonetheless addressed many recommendations to FAO management in order to continue the work of the LSP and to secure "an institutional home for livelihoods in FAO" (LSP Evaluation Report, FAO 2007c:62). Some of these recommendations concerned the work the LSP had to achieve before the end of the programme:

"that the LSP revisit the 'grey areas' highlighted in Siena and build evidence from the sub-programmes to show what has been learned from this Programme. […]

[…] that the LSP prepare as soon as possible a definitive policy brief explaining how SLAs are a tool which can be used to greatly strengthen FAO's FS work, rather than a competing system.
The FET strongly recommends that the LSP embed both its process and content learning into the FAO knowledge management initiatives (see section IV.L above) and staff capacity building activity. (LSP Evaluation Report, FAO 2007c:63).

Yet other recommendations were directly addressed to FAO management. These included, among others, that a 'follow-on' unit be established in order to ensure that the LSP be included into FAO's Regular Programme; that FAO adopt some of the LSP's ways of working, more particularly regarding "team building […], cross-divisional planning, budgeting and management" (which the evaluation team considered as "rare capacities in FAO but very high priority under the current reforms"); and finally, that the use of the sustainable livelihoods approaches be reinforced within the organisation, more specifically in "FAO field operations, planning and coordination activities" (LSP Evaluation Report, FAO 2007c:64-65).

Hence, even if the Final Evaluation Team observed many shortcomings in LSP's sub-programme approach, management and functioning, the value of mainstreaming participatory approaches in FAO and of promoting cross-departmental and team work was underlined by the Evaluation team. The Evaluation team strongly encouraged FAO management to pursue the work initiated by the LSP within the organisation.

Figure 7. Summary of LSP's Final Evaluation Findings (FAO 2007c:60-62).

1) **On LSP's ways of working and end products**
   a) The LSP has "allowed a group of motivated individuals to develop areas of interesting work which they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to develop. […]
   b) The management system through a cross-divisional Programme Coordinating Team (PCT) composed of technical officers has been highly innovative […]
   c) […] The programme provides a useful model of ways to work across sectors and across departments and divisions. The lessons from this provide important learning opportunities for the whole of FAO. […]

2) **Issues with the Sub-Programme approach**
   a) The design of the LSP around a collection of sub-programmes led to some of the difficulties it has faced in building a unified and strategic programme approach to mainstreaming SL/PC approaches inside FAO […]. This has reduced the overall effectiveness of the LSP.
   b) […] The sub-programme approach allowed for a wide range of activities to be carried out, piloted and documented. However, what is lacking is any consolidation of the separate contributions from each sub-programme […].
   c) […] the intellectual focus for the programme was decentralised to the sub-programmes and was maintained at this level, losing the opportunities to develop a greater intellectual coherence between the sub-programmes and a more coherent approach to developing deeper understanding about SL approaches. […]

3) **Relations with Senior Management**
   a) In spite of repeated calls to do so, […] the LSP never was able to seriously engage with FAO senior management. Some in the LSP argue strongly for this as a means of maintaining the independence, flexibility and ability to work horizontally. […]

4) **Monitoring and communications**
   a) A programme focused on institutional learning and building staff knowledge and capacity should of necessity have a strong monitoring and learning system. The programme is however, characterised by a number of different initiatives to put in place monitoring and learning systems, most of which have failed or not been followed up.
   b) Similarly, the LSP has suffered from not having a consistent and strategic approach to communications.[…]

5) **Impact of institutional change agenda**
   a) With regard to probable lasting impact of the LSP, without the success of its support to Emergencies, it appears unlikely that the programme would be leaving a significant footprint behind. However, the work with Emergencies provides a notable success for the LSP […].
   b) The LSP experience clearly demonstrates the significant amount of time needed to effect policy, institutional, and behavioural change. […]

6) **Strategic partnership and the role of DFID:**
   a) The LSP's ambitious objectives were built on an assumption of the continued high-level presence of DFID. The disappearance of this relationship in 2003 left the LSP without this strategic partnership which reduced its ability to influence at higher levels of management. This was a serious loss to the LSP […]".

CONCLUSION

Within FAO's complexity, the LSP, the extra-budgetary programme in which I was involved, had its own unique structure, and in fact worked almost autonomously from the management structure of the rest of FAO. This is, however, only a partial truth as the co-conveners (and other sub-programme participants) who took part in the LSP were themselves primarily FAO staff members, and used LSP funds to complement their on-going work, or to achieve tasks they believed in and had now found funding to undertake. In that sense, the LSP is a persuasive example of how dedicated individuals working at the margins of a given structure according to their interests may at times succeed – completely or partially –, in having their ideas taken up by some units of the organisation.

The LSP can be seen as an exercise in alternative development in two ways. First, it aimed at convincing FAO professionals across the organisation of the value of using participatory approaches in development. Second, it was born out of an initiative undertaken by a few individuals who overtly wanted to bring changes to FAO ways of working, not only by making the work within the organisation more participatory, but also by encouraging team and multi-disciplinary work, and by working through a 'horizontal' type of management. In fact, the professionals who thought out the programme aimed to bring the various 'technical silos' within FAO to work in a more holistic manner. Thus, the LSP's "targeted beneficiaries", to use jargon normally attributed to development projects, were the FAO professionals themselves, who would use participatory methods not only in the field, but also in their HQ work.

I have not directly addressed the achievements or shortcomings of the programme. What is central here is the way in which the LSP came to be, the way it has functioned, and how it tried – and to some extent succeeded – to change the ways of working of a very structured organisation. The example of the LSP illustrates the emergence of alternative approaches within a large and

structured organisation. In this regard, the chain of events leading to the LSP is revealing and worth recalling:

a) Two individuals initiated the informal PRA-Network to share work experiences in using participatory approaches. The network started in 1989 and its memberships grew with time, to reach between 60 and 100 members.

b) At some point in time, some managers involved in the PRA-Network suggested forming a few sub-groups to undertake more formal initiatives.

c) One of these groups organised the *Sienna Forum on Operationalizing Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches* in 2000, which played a key role in building momentum around participatory approaches.

d) From then on, a small team, helped by a DFID consultant, designed what would become the LSP, a formal programme intended to remain as informal as possible, of which the principal objective was to mainstream SLAs in FAO. The programme lasted 7 years.

It should be clear that some staff and consultants involved in the LSP were aware of the several critiques of participatory approaches, as many had experienced and observed first hand the advantages and shortcomings of such approaches. Some were also critical of the LSP itself, or admitted finding difficulties in working in participatory ways within HQ (the most common criticism concerned the great frequency of meetings). Yet, they maintained their involvement on the grounds that improvements were needed in FAO, and working with the LSP was seen as a viable – and sometimes the only – alternative.

Having laid out the methodological and theoretical aspects of this research as well as the general and specific contexts in which I was involved, the following chapters will turn to the actors themselves, and focus on the 'home' rather than the 'house'. The next chapter will more specifically focus on FAO-HQ and the "lived experience" (Long 2001) of FAO officers.

CHAPTER 4

THE CREATION OF A 'HOME' AT FAO-HEADQUARTERS: STRUCTURE, ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND INDIVIDUALS

> "FAO is fortunately schizophrenic. It often preaches contrary things. It is not homogenous, and has bad internal communications. For example, FAO has recently published a handbook on organic agriculture while promoting GMOs" (Eva)

Eva, a long term consultant, summarises what many professionals in FAO think: there is a lot of room for manoeuvre for staff and consultants, and sometimes, within this schizophrenia, it can be hard to find coherence. As will be discussed in this chapter, there seems to be in FAO a mosaic of organisational cultures, corresponding to the "schizophrenia" Eva is referring to, but which are bounded by a few elements of an overarching organisational structure.

In Foucaudian terms, FAO can be considered as an organisation of 'global' governmentality[64] (the United Nations). To Foucault, governmentality cannot be reduced to "one" organisation (the government) (Foucault 1991), but rather involves a range of subjects creating "heterogenous entities: from politicians, philanthropists, and state bureaucrats, to academics, clerics, and medics" (Inda 2005:6). Chapter 2 has demonstrated FAO's many levels of complexity, as well as the diversity of niches, expertise, and sub-structures, and a parallel can be drawn: FAO management (government) is not capable of fully controlling "the conduct" of its employees (population) (Foucault 2000).

Foucault has indeed discussed in several ways how one entity, the State for example, is incapable of entirely controlling the "relations between men and

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[64] As clearly indicated by Inda, Foucault's notion of governmentality refers to "all those strategies, tactics, and authorities – state and non-state alike – that seek to mold conduct individually and collectively in order to safeguard the welfare of each and of all" (2005:6).

things" mostly because of the plurality of subjects – and their own inter-relationships[65]:

> "[…] first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth" (1980:122).

In other words, "the idea here is that while governmental practices might seek to create specific kinds of subjects, it does not mean that they necessarily or completely succeed in doing so. Individuals can and do negotiate the processes to which they are subjected" (Inda 2005:10-11). Similarly, this chapter will show that FAO's specialists produce and live various "regimes of truth" even from within the organisation (Foucault 1980:131), as well as consider the "three-fold specificity of the intellectual" (as identified by Foucault) – diversities with which FAO is rife:

> "that of his class position […]; that of his conditions of life and work, linked to his condition as an intellectual (his field research, his place in a laboratory, the political and economic demands to which he submits or against which he rebels, in the university, the hospital, etc.); lastly, the specificity of the politics of truth in our societies" (*ibid*: 132).

The last specificity, that of "the politics of truth" has been discussed in chapter 2 in the light of the current development system and related anthropological critiques. The focus of the present chapter is on the first two specificities, that of class position and that of the condition of being an intellectual, with an emphasis on the latter.

As Inda suggested, "it is important to look not just at the forms of collective and individual identity promoted by practices of government, but also at how particular

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[65] See Li 2007 for a similar point of view.

agents negotiate these forms – at how they embrace, adapt, or refuse them" (2005:11). Foucault, however, did not specify if the "art of government", which implies "a plurality of specific aims", could also contain and witness the articulation of opposite and contrasting views of the "common good" (Foucault 1991:95), as it is the case in FAO.

This chapter thus moves from general and specific research contexts previously described (the house) to discuss social and cultural aspects of FAO (the 'home'). I use the house/home metaphor to describe the process through which the 'house' becomes the 'home'. Compared to the house, the home does not have a particular structure as it pertains and develops according to one's personal experience, reality and lived relationships, which are built in relation to a defined structure.

'Home' is individually created, and is understood in the sense of a 'homey working environment'. Feeling at home in the work place translates into knowing one's way around in the organisation, not only physically within the building's architecture, but also in terms of knowing the wide range of resources available and using them to carry out tasks at the best of one's capacity. It also means being comfortable in daily interactions with trusted colleagues and members of the hierarchy, and developing a capacity for team work with what could be compared to a 'reconstructed family'. These reconstructed families may be more or less functional, and professionals will identify with them to various degrees. Thus, this chapter focuses on the 'residents' of FAO Headquarters and their created homes.

This chapter is rooted in and draws from anthropological literature on social organisation, mostly on Firth (1954; 1955) and Barth (1966) who respectively discussed the difference between social structure and social organisation, as well as different models of social organisation. In addition, this chapter is woven around conceptions of organisational culture (Hamada and Jordan 1990; Hirsh

and Gellner 2001; Scmircich 1983), including aspects of formality and informality (Bryant and White 1982; Freeman 1976; Scott 1998), hierarchy and management (Britan and Cohen 1980; Dubhashi 1990; Gupta 1990; Weber [1922]1968), and multi-culturalism and cosmopolitanism (Appadurai 1991, 1996; Hannerz 1996; Malkki 1997), borrowed from the subfield of the anthropology of organisations.

In leaving the realm of FAO's organisational structure to focus on the social organisation and organisational culture, this chapter delves into "the practice of everyday life", and on the ways in which "users operate" within FAO (De Certeau 1984). Professionals make use of FAO's organisational structure in various ways, thereby manipulating it in an active manner (*ibid*: 24). FAO is one thing; what individuals make of it is another and in the end, FAO becomes something at the interface of individual's interactions with the structure. In other words, professionals "metaphorize[d] the dominant order: they ma[ke] it function in another register" (De Certeau 1984:32). De Certeau compares this "difference in consumption" to the use of language:

> "It can use as its theoretical model the *construction* of individual sentences with an *established* vocabulary and syntax. In linguistics, "performance" and "competence" are different: the act of speaking (with all the enunciative strategies that implies) is not reducible to a knowledge of the language" *(ibid*: xiii, emphasis original).

Indeed, actors, depending on their particular working context, use several "tactics" and "strategies" in approaching everyday life, and in FAO this translates into, for example, the use of a combination of formal and informal channels: "By an art of being in between, [they] draw unexpected results from [their] situation" (*ibid*: 30). Professionals, indeed, "make do with what they have" (*ibid*: 18). De Certeau defines tactics as "opportunities that must be seized "on the wing"", as manipulating "events in order to turn them into "opportunities"" (*ibid*: xix, see also pp. 35-37). Tactics, however, do not have long lasting impact through time. In contrast, strategies may have a pervasive effect over time, and are defined as "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as

soon as a subject with will and power […] can be isolated" (*ibid*: 36). The present chapter aims at shedding light on these different tactics and strategies as ways of operating within FAO's bureaucracy.

Considering the diversity of actors, organisational contexts, and types of work within FAO, there will be here no search for an encompassing "logic" of practice. Rather, the focus is on highlighting the inherent diversity of statuses and corresponding practices of FAO professionals. The perspective is that of dehomogenising what could be seen from the outside as a rigid and set-in-stone organisation and of bringing forward the agency of the actors who are dealing with a compartmentalised world. Nonetheless, this chapter does contain discussions on some of FAO's shared norms as seen and lived from my perspective as an LSP consultant.

Because of the immensity of FAO and its multiple offices around the world, this chapter focuses on FAO Headquarters (FAO-HQ) where I have spent most of my time. To facilitate the presentation of the home and its dwellers, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section offers a brief tour of the HQ building and of a few structural and organisational elements which participate in the construction of a home, in turn contributing to the recognition of a person as an FAO employee. Second, using broad strokes, I provide an overview of the types of personalities to be found in the home and of their motivations to work in this particular organisation.

The third section focuses on the distinction between two broad classes of 'FAO residents': staff members and consultants. They enjoy different statuses within the organisation, affecting their respective attachment to the home, and their perspective on 'the house', as well as affecting their interactions with each other. The fourth and last section of this chapter presents some aspects making up FAO's working cultures, including considerations of formality and informality,

hierarchy and management, and multi-culturalism, and some in-house variations which participate in the general chaos described by Eva.

Throughout these sections, I have tried to include examples from both "normal" FAO and from the LSP in order to illustrate how these elements of organisational culture can vary from one unit of work to the next. Generally, compared to the rest of FAO, LSP offered more flexibility and informality, yet provided a more stable and supportive kind of environment for consultants.

A BRIEF TOUR OF SOME STRUCTURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE HOME

It seems that not all the structural elements of the house are equally important in creating the 'nest' of a home. Having a roof and supporting walls are undeniably necessary to any standing house, yet are features that have a rather limited role in how individuals will actually create their homes, the walls and roof being a 'taken-for-granted' part of the structure. In contrast, other more abstract elements of a structure may be appropriated and used in a variety of ways by equally various actors who will invest them with particular meaning. This resonates with Firth's (1954:4) distinction of the *form* and the *process*, which he considers as complementary, rather than opposed concepts. These elements of the house discussed below, refer to a type of social structure that "cannot be directly observed" (Firth 1954:6), and are the ones to be shaped and recognised by individuals as features of their homes, a process which unfolds through time (De Certeau 1984). However, these elements are not necessarily part of the physical architecture (yet can be), but may rather pertain to a different type of structure, that is, to the social structure broadly defining the home. This recalls Barth's (1966:2) discussion of social organisation:

> "Just as the description of a game of cricket is more than a description
> of its binding rules, so a description of a process of interaction should

contain more than a listing of reciprocal obligations. […] In other words, that the patterns are generated through processes of interaction and in their form reflect the constraints and incentives under which people act".

Since 1951, FAO has found its home in a big marble building of mussolinian architecture located in the centre of Rome, Italy. Mussolini had constructed this building to host his "Ministry for Italian Territories in Africa" (FAO 1985:48), an irony that some staff members call 'the ghost' of FAO, as this building was meant to host the seat of Italian colonial affairs. The immense grey-white building is bordered by the *Coloseum*, by the timeless ruins of the Roman Forum, and by the *Circo Massimo*. There is something romantic in the setting itself, grounded as it is in the coming of age of modern and Western society. The building clashes with the ancient scenery it is part of, yet these relics of antiquity give it a sense of both prestige and deep-rooted history.

Figure 8. A View of FAO's Building

Entering the building is an impressive experience, especially when you go for the first time as someone invited or as someone who has yet to become officially authorised to come and go freely. The building is surrounded by a fence and has entrances in each corner, which are controlled during the day by guards who expect you to show your building pass when you come in (though this seems to depend on the guards' mood…). Only the main entrance can be used by visitors, which is equipped with an 'airport-like' security machine, followed by a reception desk. Technically, no visitors are entitled to walk alone in FAO, so the receptionist calls a consultant or a staff member with whom visitors have an appointment. While they wait to be picked up by their hosts, visitors exchange an identity card of their own for a temporary FAO building pass that they have to give back at the end of the day.

As a newcomer, getting acquainted with the surroundings takes a while, and one goes through a process of "appropriation" of space (De Certeau 1984:97). The building itself is huge, and it looks the same everywhere: long corridors with endless numbers of brown doors. It takes time to simply know your way around, to grapple with the "rhetorics of walking" (*ibid*: 100), from your office to the cafeteria, for example, and to navigate without hesitation from one building to the next – as the big building is divided into sections that are all related to one another.

There are a few surprising features for the newcomer and one of them – at least for me – was the closed doors: long, dark, silent corridors with closed doors, which automatically bring into question the idea of team work. Some offices are big enough and have tables to host a few colleagues for a meeting. Otherwise, each service has a few rooms available on reservation for smaller meetings. Yet the closed doors hide the bustling working tempo, the tedious work on email and the many phone calls. Judging only by FAO's corridors, one would imagine that no work is being done. It suffices to open a door to see that this assumption is wrong.

Meeting and workshop rooms also include rooms donated by member-states most of which were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of them are richly furnished, even when donated by poor countries. Each meeting room is called by the donor's name: the Mexico room, the Ethiopia Room, the German room, etc. It takes a while to remember where each room is located in the building. I had to verify on the "intranet" each time to find the room number, which was also the case of many colleagues who had been in FAO for longer periods of time. Some rooms are more prestigious than others, and some hold more seats than others. For example, the luxurious Indonesia room, located on the eighth floor, is generally reserved for important events, and is where the DG holds his receptions.

There are some impenetrable locations in the building, such as a part of the fourth floor reserved for the DG's offices. This space has a single unique and guarded entrance, or closed and locked doors. If not with a specific invitation, no one can walk freely into this section of the building. The DG also has his own entrance and elevator.

The most amazing and enjoyable feature of FAO building is the eighth floor where the self-service cafeteria is located as well as the terrace with an incredible view onto Rome, perhaps the very best in the city. The terrace is a place where one can take advantage of Rome's beautiful weather. The eighth floor is also home to two coffee bars. Typically, FAO employees queue up at around 9 am to get their morning cappuccino, an important ritual for many. What is remarkable about the cafeteria and the coffee bars is the amount of work that actually gets done over lunch or coffee breaks. This would evidently be hard to quantify, but these more 'relaxed' atmospheres, I suspect, are when free discussions take place and when ideas and solutions come up. The terrace, cafeteria and coffee bars are congenial places for both work and social meetings as well.

FAO-HQ could almost be considered as a "total institution" (Goffman 1961). Without taking control over a person's life like prisons, asylums or boarding schools, everything one needs as a human being and more can be found within the building: newspaper stand, post office, bank, pharmacy, music/photo shop, bookshop, a coop (which offers movie rentals, dry cleaning, language courses, yoga and much more), coffee and snack machines, showers, a travel agency, a library, a commissary (a sort of super-market reserved for staff members or sneaky long term consultants who manage to get rights), a gas station (just outside in the parking lot, also reserved to staff members). There is also a medical clinic with a variety of services and where you can go see a nurse if not feeling well or before leaving on mission for health advice and necessary medication.

<u>Figure 9</u>. A View of *Circo Massimo* and Roman Forum from FAO's Terrace

The only recognised place where staff and consultants have an informal meeting place outside FAO is called "OTR", for "Over The Road", and it is located across the street from FAO. It is a typical Italian coffee/wine bar where everybody knows they can meet on Friday evenings. A few staff members go, but mostly consultants attend and organise into groups for late dinner or other activities. OTR as a place is literally on the road. The bar itself can hold about twenty people, and the rest stand up on the side walk or use the few tables available. From your seat, if you get one, you can almost touch the parked cars, and certainly have to speak louder when a bus passes by. OTR is often the theatre of work talks, although no one is supposed to talk about work on a Friday evening. OTR is also a place where rumours circulate, or perhaps even start, be they on specific individuals, newly formed couples, members of FAO's hierarchy, etc. In fact, it would have probably been possible to conduct a study based on conversations which took place at OTR…

Aside from knowing your way around, feeling at home at FAO has to do with many elements that are not directly related to the building, yet essential in creating a sense of home. The first element is to have a building pass, which can be compared to having in hand the keys of the house. Otherwise you remain in limbo, almost like a tourist. Until you manage to get your building pass, you are condemned to have someone pick you up at the reception every morning, an awkward period in which you still feel like a visitor in a place you want to call home. The building pass is one of the formalities aiming to 'naturalise' you as an FAO employee, in addition to completing a medical exam and signing your contract. Perhaps this is the ritual through which you become 'an adult', a member of FAO, or someone trustworthy of being in the building and walking about freely.

This building pass should always be visible and there seem to be a few fashionable ways to wear it. The older generation of staff members often have it around their neck or visibly pinned on their shirt, while young consultants prefer

to hide it in a pocket: it is not as 'cool' to wear it visibly. The important thing is to have it on you almost all the time as security agents may stop you, asking for your building pass.

Being attributed an office space and a computer also matters in settling in, but an even more central element is being provided an email account. In FAO, having an email account is the equivalent of a corporate identity, a type of password through which one can access internal information. An email is like a passport or a birth certificate, and a definite recognition that you exist in the 'system'. As every email address is structured in the same way, anyone who knows your full name can communicate with you and importantly, you can communicate with others. Without an email address, it would be close to impossible to be integrated in a given team, as most information in HQ circulates through email. Indeed, lots of information transits through email, through various lists established at the service and division levels and through the FAO 'intranet'. Having an email account is thus not only a way to communicate with others, but also necessary in order to be in touch with what is going on in one's immediate working environment and in the wider organisation.

Finally, a cornerstone of feeling at home in FAO consists in one's ability to master FAO's jargon and technical terms, which takes a while. I remember sitting in meetings and taking notes of all the acronyms I could not understand. There were whole conversations I simply could not follow, creating a rather uncomfortable situation especially when everyone else seemed to be following.

> "For your information, the attached file shows the PEs and MOs that are related to the FSNL cluster. Five are those PEs that were previously included in the cluster, in some cases with slight changes in titles. Two – from FO and FI – were not previously "designated" […].

Getting past the many acronyms used in everyday work is a full time job for a newcomer. However, the moment you seem on top of the game, you enter a new area of work and a new world of technical terms appears with it. Worse,

sometimes, the real meaning of vague terms (such as 'capacity building', 'knowledge management', 'supply-driven' for examples) remains unknown to many, and yet, most people act as if they understood the meaning. Mastering the language does not only mean that you understand it, but that you can also use it to communicate your ideas. Many times did I try to express something with the wrong terms and was saved by colleagues who could translate my thoughts into appropriate FAO terms.

> "There is a standard way of talking and writing, and standard ways of expressing things. I use them but don't always understand it. […] But this is a function of language and of the use of key words, like "capacity building", which can mean anything". (Jennifer)

As Jennifer says, it is possible to 'fake' the understanding of jargon by simply using the terms *à la mode* in conversations, where it would seem to fit. However, one can only do this for a certain amount of time for the sake of credibility. While building pass and email can be obtained with little delay (in less than a week), understanding and using FAO's technical language comes only with time, as the work unfolds.

Many more elements are needed to feel at home in FAO, including getting to know the people you work with (and importantly your supervisor), the work to be done, the tools at your disposal to achieve your tasks, your position in a team, work expectations, etc. Thus, having email and a building pass are essential in one's recognition as an FAO employee, and are part of establishing oneself in the organisational topography of FAO, this in addition to learning one's way around in the building and mastering some of the everyday jargon. However, these elements only represent the tip of the iceberg, and more will be discussed here about the less tangible elements of inclusion within FAO's working cultures.

FAO'S PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS

Without a doubt, a work place is primarily made of the people you work with. I thought I would be able to come up with a typical portrait of the FAO employee, but that was before I was exposed to the great diversity of FAO personnel. Nevertheless, using both interviews and participation, I was able to piece together a broad yet constantly moving picture of those who fashion the organisation. The situations described in this chapter may not be exclusive to FAO and probably occur in other development organisations as well (Cernea 2006; Mosse 2005a; Stirrat 2000).

Most, if not all my informants have graduate degrees, at least a Masters degree, and are specialised agronomists, veterinarians, forest engineers, fisheries economists, soils specialists, environmental scientists, etc. A few have degrees in social sciences (geography or political sciences for examples), and most sociologists and anthropologists I have met had PhDs. With time and helped by the compartmentalisation of the work, these professionals keep specialising further and become increasingly recognised for their particular expertise. In addition, because of the international character of FAO, experts often become specialised in one geographical region of the world and are solicited for the combination of their geographic knowledge (which also depends on the languages they can speak) and of their technical expertise. Once they are identified or rather categorised, it becomes harder with time to diversify this geographical or technical expertise. Some individuals are associated with specific countries, while others are associated to a region (East-Africa, South-East Asia, and Central America, for example) and thus have to develop a knowledge related to each country of a given region, but also about the wider regional issues that may affect these countries. These areas of expertise are developed through time, through living in various countries, or, in the case of younger consultants, through the accumulation of short-term missions (I come back to this point in chapter 5).

There are nonetheless a few common characteristics of FAO staff and consultants[66] regardless of the service they work for. For example, it is one of the UN requirements that staff and consultants must speak at least two languages of the five UN official languages. In reality, however, it is not rare, closer to the norm in fact, to find FAO staff and consultants speaking between three and four languages. Graduate level education is also a requirement which fluctuates with the type of work one is seeking. Aside from this, the rest depends on the 'match' between a job description and the profile and expertise of a given candidate.

In fact, I was never clear on the politics of employment at FAO. I have heard many times that there is a quota of employees per country, but could never verify this information in documents. For example, I was told a few times that my chances of being hired in the long term were low because I am Canadian and there were already too many Canadians in FAO[67]. Edward provided an explanation:

> "There is a quite formal and official upper limit quota for FAO Regular Programme[68] officers, which is based on a specific mathematic formula which takes into consideration a country's contribution to FAO's Regular Programme budget (and gives different weights to different grade levels, if my memory is correct). The quota for the USA for example, is somewhere around 10% of FAO Regular Programme staff.
>
> There is no quota for General Service Staff, nor for consultants, nor for project staff. Thus the LSP [as an extra-budgetary programme] was not officially subject to employment quotas, although we were under strong pressure from above to hire consultants from developing countries. Every member country is entitled to at least one FAO Regular Programme staff member, regardless of their contribution to the budget.

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[66] In his article "Cultures of Consultancy" (2000), Stirrat discerns another group which he calls "fixed-term" consultants, who are working permanently but on serial three or four years contracts. In FAO, longer fixed-term consultants generally enjoy the same privileges as staff members (or almost), and hold similar responsibilities. To simplify this discussion, I have included them in the 'staff member' category.

[67] This was again repeated to me in the fall of 2009.

[68] The notion of "FAO Regular Programme" Edward is referring to has been explained in Chapter 2.

If the "short list" of candidates selected for a particular post by a particular department contains someone from a "non-represented country" (i.e. zero FAO Regular Programme officers from there) then this candidate is likely to be designated for the post by central management, even if he/ she is much less qualified professionally than the others on the short list". (Edward)

In parallel, I have also heard that employees from 'developing' countries sometimes do not have the required competencies but were politically imposed by member-states, almost as a type of positive discrimination. Although FAO-HQ is part of the UN, it is quite noticeable, and it was confirmed by many of my informants, that in HQ most employees are from developed countries compared to those from developing countries. As Brian, a fellow consultant, said:

"Despite the equality in FAO's Council – one country equals one vote – the share of FAO staff and consultants coming from the developed world is far greater than those coming from the developing world. In many services there are no staff whatsoever from developing countries. And unfortunately, there is a stigma attached to those that do come from developing countries – that they are there because of political connections and not merit." (Brian)

According to the numbers in the 2007 Report of the Finance Committee entitled "Statistics on human resources", there are about 60% of FAO's personnel, including professionals and general staff, but excluding consultants, who come from developed countries. However, this is only a very rough estimation because the information is organised by regions, and not all the countries of the regions are equal in their "developed" or "under-developed" status. This estimation also includes staff from "Established Offices" which are dispersed over the world. It was not possible to obtain the breakdown by region of origin for only the staff working specifically at HQ. Moreover, these numbers appear to exclude the locally hired staff 'in the field' (as opposed to out-posted FAO staff officers). Of the 3264 employees included in this table, 1806 actually work in HQ, and 884 of them are employed for "General Service" (that is, staff dedicated to administrative matters including secretaries, administrative assistants, staff who work at the cafeteria, guards, etc.), most of whom are Italians. For the remaining 922

professional staff, one could suspect that the proportion of them coming from developed countries could be, in fact, higher than 60%.

Table 2: **Summary Table of the Number of Staff at HQ and Established Offices by Geographical Region**.

Region of origin	Number of staff at HQ and Established Offices ('developing' countries)[69]	Number of staff at HQ and Established Offices ('developed' countries)
Africa	505	
Asia	322	
Latin America and Caribbean	330	
Near East	154	
Europe		1621
North America		268
Southwest Pacific	18	46
Total (3264)	1329	1935
%	41%	59%

Source: Report of the Finance Committee: "Statistics on human resources", 2007.

During a discussion with Edward, who has worked for over twenty years in FAO, and in HQ since the beginning of the 1990s, he indicated that this situation was not from the lack of trying to hire staff from less developed countries.

"The staff selection operations I myself have been involved in would always give extra points to someone from a developing country. The problem is getting candidates who are sufficiently well qualified, which is often difficult. This difficulty does in fact sometimes lead to hiring people from developing countries who are not up to the task" (Edward).

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[69] These represent a rough categorisation of "developing" and "developed" countries. Regions, as broken down by FAO, include a variation of economically and socially "developed" countries, including "emerging" countries such as China and India. Some European countries, for example, can be considered as more "developed" than other neighbouring countries. However, these numbers provide a general idea of the origin of most FAO employees.

In addition, the recruitment of volunteers at FAO, a process which I have personally experienced, is certainly an 'implicit', though perhaps not intentional, case of discrimination towards young professionals from developing countries. Volunteering at FAO is a good way for young professionals to simply enter into FAO. Yet volunteering is reserved to a certain privileged socio-economic class of youngsters as FAO does not financially compensate volunteers, not even with a stipend to help with high Roman living expenses. I have mentioned earlier that I started in FAO as a volunteer – before being employed by the LSP. I could afford to be a volunteer because I managed to obtain a small grant from outside FAO, and because I had a wonderful partner at home willing to help with paying the bills. But I – a 'Westerner' in the low-average range of income – could afford to be a volunteer for four months, not for six months[70]. For someone of the similar income class but from a poorer country of Africa[71] of Latin America, for example, volunteering at FAO can become a *tour de force*.

Going back to drawing a portrait of FAO's professionals, I would like to insist on the presence of 'strong characters', who are a driving force in FAO, and have the capacity to "object"[72] and critique organisational decisions, ways of working, reforms, and objectives (Latour 2000, as discussed in Mosse 2005a).

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[70] Volunteer contracts are normally for six months.

[71] At the end of my volunteer term, I had to find a replacement for my position. We had selected one candidate from Africa with adequate competencies. After I contacted him to announce that he had been selected, along with information on the conditions, he wrote back to say there was no way he could afford it, so we were prevented from hiring a possibly good candidate. When I left FAO in March 2007, there were discussions to give volunteers a stipend to help prevent this 'discrimination'. However, in a time of budget cuts, most people had doubts that compensating volunteers would ever happen.

[72] According to Latour, "objectivity does not refer to a special quality of the mind, an inner state of justice and fairness, but to the presence of objects which have been rendered 'able' […] to *object* to what is told about them" (2000:115, emphasis in original). In many instances, FAO personnel, both staff and consultants, overtly critique the organisation, and perhaps the existence of a programme such as the LSP itself shows the capacity of internal actors to critique and bring changes in their own organisation. Cernea and Kassam's edited book (2006), also demonstrates the critical capability of internal actors: the book advocates for the relevance of greater inclusion of social research within the CGIAR Centers, and critically examine their own achievements and weaknesses. Co-authors, many of them employed by CGIAR Centers, are not shy to raise thorny and unresolved institutional and methodological issues hampering their work.

Once, during my work for LSP, my supervisor and a colleague asked me to accompany them as a notetaker in conducting a round of interviews with 'in-house' partners of the LSP to see what they thought of the programme and what would be useful for them in the future in terms of LSP work and funding. The three of us interviewed about five or six officers who had been in FAO for a while, and who were of senior ranks. We were amazed by the difficulty we faced in eliciting straightforward answers to simple questions. Our analysis was that these strong characters were highly educated, highly specialised, and wanted to talk about things they knew. I had a feeling that they felt entitled, and even compelled to speak about whatever they wanted because of their position. I then found out that interviewing confident, educated and specialised individuals with agendas was not necessarily easy, especially when the interview diverged from their agendas. Staff and consultants often have strong opinions on just about anything[73].

Yet these strong characters, for the most part, were generally highly motivated to work in FAO. The most popular stated motivation was about being involved in development and helping the poor, combined with an opportunity to work in an international and multi-cultural environment. The cosmopolitan character of FAO was thus an attraction in itself (I come back to this point below).

> "I am interested by the international environment (cultural exchange – communication), and interested by agricultural problematic and policy assistance at global level (resources management and sharing)." (Jordan)

Although a few mentioned that their motivation related to their pay check – "because I get well paid and believe in the mandate of the organisation" (Ben) – some explained their choice of working in FAO by the possibility to marry professional and personal lives and interests. As Stirrat indicated "[…] money is

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[73] Similarly, I have discussed earlier how almost everyone I met in FAO had their ideas regarding what I should do for this research, who I should speak with, the topics I should address, etc. See Chapter 1.

by no means their only interest and in general consultants are committed to 'development' although there are many arguments as to what development might be" (2000:35). In the case of Sophie, who is from Rome and who has an international professional background, FAO was the perfect workplace allowing her to live close to her family, while travelling every now and then and doing the kind of work she had always wanted to do.

> "Working for FAO is a personal and a professional choice. I wanted to work in the world of development because I think there is a need to do something. I also chose FAO because it is in Rome. I wanted to live in Rome (my family is here) and work for an organisation of the UN family." (Sophie)

In informal conversations, many colleagues had discussed their perceptions of the motivations of others. Hence, it did not come as a surprise when a few informants, asked about their own motivations to work in FAO, freely commented what they thought of their peers' motivations for working in FAO. This resonates with observations that "institutional actors self-anonymize, speak through others, or describe each other's motivation, opinions or positions so as to disguise their own" (Mosse 2008a:25). However, in this case, staff and consultants shared openly about both: their own opinions and their opinions about the work of others, their motivations and the organisation itself. Nothing indicates that they sought to disguise their own views, as they provided straightforward answers in both cases.

Interviewees' perceptions of their colleague's motivations were half negative and half positive. No one thought of themselves as being in FAO for the wrong reasons, and negative perceptions generally concerned the rest of FAO, rather than one's own working unit.

> "People here are far from the beneficiaries, so they have to be motivated by something else since they can't see those for whom they are working. When they go on mission, they come back with greater motivation. […] Here, many people are motivated by their salaries. In my department, however, it is not the case. People are genuinely motivated". (Cynthia)

Informants discussed negatively wanting to work in FAO for money or status (unless they were in it for the money themselves), and positively about wanting to make a difference in the world by helping the poor.

"I was idealistic and wanted to help the rural poor and make a difference. […] Some are motivated to help the poor. Others are here for career options to have power and make money." (Caroline)

Yet, other informants thought positively about their colleagues' motivations:

"I have friends all over the house and we believe in the UN, that it can make a difference in the world. I would say that in FAO, lots of people see themselves as being professionals: they put in time and do a good job. Lots of people are committed, professional, and have strong motivations". (Stephen)

Some also indicated that their motivations had changed with time, as they discovered the limits of working in FAO with regard to achieving their initial goal of alleviating poverty or working towards food security. As Pascale told me:

"I would say that 90% of FAO staff is dedicated to poverty reduction. I joined FAO to help reduce poverty in an idealist sense. Through time and experience I have become more cynical." (Pascale)

A nuance was offered by two informants regarding the differences in the motivations people from developed countries may have in working for FAO compared to professionals coming from developing countries According to them, professionals from developing countries have fewer opportunities for well-paid work in their own country, so that working for UN agencies, in general, is one of the scarce ways to earn more money than they could in their home country. In comparison, professionals from developed countries can potentially find similar work, with comparable salaries and conditions in their home countries. Accordingly, considering the gap in salaries offered by the UN compared to developing countries, professionals coming from these countries might be relatively more attracted to work in FAO for the salary and advantages. As

Joshua stated, professionals from developing countries would have more to gain in terms of status and social recognition from working at FAO compared to professionals from developed countries.

> "A large majority of people working here are dedicated experts in development, in spite of what gets said. Maybe it is different for administrative staff, but people believe in what they do and work hard. Past 7 pm, sit in the entrance and watch people leave: they work hard and they also work on Saturdays. But this is not recognised: they do it because they are dedicated and go out of their way. A large number come in between 6h30 and 8h in the morning. You learn to appreciate this after a while. Most people are not here for the salary. But there is a difference between staff from developing countries and Europeans. For the former, working in FAO is much more important because they get status and money and are motivated by that. Europeans are experts who do their work because they believe in it and the vast majority are dedicated. [...] (Joshua)

Staff and consultants involved in the LSP generally shared the same motivations as informants outside the LSP. However, they did have additional motivations to take part in the LSP. Primarily, professionals revolving in and around the LSP had in common their interest in livelihoods and people-centred approaches. The very existence of the programme and their involvement meant a motivation to work with participatory principles and to challenge the organisation's usual ways of working. As previously discussed, the LSP functioned on the principle that members were present because they were interested in the subject matter but also interested in team and multi-disciplinary work. Some participants stayed because they were learning, because they enjoyed the teamwork, and because there were financial resources available[74]. Being part of the LSP answered to a view that development should be carried out in participatory ways, coinciding with a set of personal values, as Josephine indicated:

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[74] However, it should be noted that FAO staff were not paid for working with the LSP, with the nuanced exception of the work of the LSP sub-programme co-convenors in the Programme Coordination Team for whom the modest amount of two weeks salary was reimbursed to their 'home' services each year. Thus, the extra financial resources available were to carry out work and projects of interest to the championing staff member. The funding was never for personal use (see Chapter 2).

> "LSP is at the heart of my work, values, development convictions and perspective: it is how I see, interpret, and understand the world". (Josephine)

Another motivation, also largely attributed to the availability and independence of supplementary financial resources, was the amount of freedom offered by the LSP in doing work which often complemented the professionals' own work, without having to report, or only in a loose manner, to the Programme Coordination Team or to any other hierarchical instance. As Marissa, speaking about her colleagues, well described it:

> "Most of them do not want to work under a top-down hierarchy and want to work towards development and poverty alleviation. That is the real motivation of the people involved in the LSP and why they are in FAO. If not in things like LSP, they feel they are bureaucrats following instructions that they do not find realistic and helpful". (Marissa)

Generally, many staff members and consultants interviewed discussed the need for intrinsic and individual motivations since there is no organisational system of rewards in FAO (see chapter 6). At the best, one can get verbal recognition from a supervisor for a well done piece of work, but this depends on the supervisor.

> "Rewards depend on your boss as there is a very weak reward mechanism in FAO. People derive rewards from their own work and from interactions with colleagues rather than from material things. If not, it is uneasy to work here" (Joshua)

Within FAO, the only official recognition one can get is a medal after twenty-five years of service. "FAO does not give recognition for good work […]. You get a medal after twenty-five years – no matter what you did" (Josephine). Thus, in a context where periodic salary increases for staff members are automatic, and most working conditions fixed, there is little room for motivations outside one's own satisfaction. Staff members are evaluated each year, but the rigor of the exercise very much depends on one's supervisor. This further explains why most

staff members and consultants in FAO have to be individually motivated by the mandate of the organisation.

> "Generally, the process of staff evaluations is the following: a form is given to the staff member who fills it in, and the supervisor signs on it after a little discussion, if necessary. It is not so stressful when you can fill it out yourself. It is the same form for everybody". (Edward)

Motivations are important in trying to shed light on the agency of FAO employees, as motivation can be considered as the 'engine' of agency. Hence, research shows that most FAO professionals are generally motivated by their work, but there is the perception that colleagues outside their service might rather be attracted in FAO for the salary and status. However, only two interviewees mentioned that their own motivation was their pay-check: all others invoked poverty reduction and food insecurity alleviation. Generally, I have seen in FAO dedicated individuals who work long hours. Also playing a part in professionals' motivations are status and sense of belonging to the organisation, as discussed below.

STAFF MEMBERS AND CONSULTANTS: TWO CATEGORIES OF PROFESSIONALS

There are many ways of 'being' an FAO employee but here two broad classes of 'FAO residents' will be considered. Aside from high management, staff members constitute a privileged class, earning good salaries, having lots of benefits, and above all, having job security, when compared with the situations of consultants. Staff members can hardly be fired even if they are not doing their job. As Joshua confirmed, "If you are a fixed term or staff member, it is hard to discontinue you. Now it is changing a little bit with budgets restrictions" (Joshua).

Staff members, both continuing and fixed-term, benefit from a range of options: paid trips to go back home once a year, paid holidays, paid school fees for their children, health insurances, commissary rights, etc. On the other hand, most staff

members I have met were increasingly affected by successive budget cuts which have reduced the numbers of FAO professional staff without a comparable reduction in the work expectations – which has meant an increase in the workload of remaining staff members. They were also affected by the Reform as discussed in chapter 2, and generally by any changes in the structure or in the work plans.

In contrast, consultants, at least most of the consultants interviewed, have far less enviable situations in terms of stability, let alone side benefits and salaries. Consultants work according to their "Terms of reference" (TORs) which are written on a case by case basis, depending on the work to be done. There are no standard formats. Sometimes, when staff want to hire someone in particular, TORs can be drafted specifically to fit the skills and competencies of this person, and it also happens that TORs can be written jointly with the consultant him/herself[75].

Consultants can benefit from a variety of deals, but the most popular are PSA contracts, which stand for "Personal Service Agreement". They cannot obtain a contract for more than eleven consecutive months, and have to take a mandatory break each twelfth month, a way for the organisation to not pay holidays for consultants or to avoid them building up legal expectations or hopes of continued employment. Every four years of renewed contracts (each year with the required one month hiatus), consultants are required to take a six month break from work with FAO, a period during which they are not paid. Temporary waivers of the six month break can be requested by service chiefs, but the logic behind this long break remains unclear for many people. For most consultants, however, having a yearly mandatory and unpaid break is not a fundamental issue. The problem is rather the uncertainty linked to the renewal of the contract after the break. This uncertainty often results in FAO losing good consultants who manage to find greater job security elsewhere. For these reasons, as Janice expressed:

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[75] Stirrat (2000) discusses a case where TORs are more detailed and rigid.

"There are growing tensions between staff members and consultants: staff members are hyper-protected professionals compared to consultants. Yet, it is this critical mass of outsiders who is now handling a huge amount of the work. There is too much of a discrepancy in the status of the two groups and there should be more of an equilibrium and a resource management strategy. It is difficult to get a sense of a team and it does not facilitate collaboration and rather creates competition." (Janice)

Janice is right in pointing out that FAO Headquarters is now filled with consultants. For the year 2006, the Finance Committee Report 2007 entitled "Statistics on human resources" indicates that 4,353 contracts have been signed in HQ only, for a total of 751 "person years". This means that through consultancies, HQ has cumulated the equivalent of an additional 751 full-time employees in 2006. Without having access to the actual number of individuals who were hired as consultants[76], the numbers roughly indicate that on average, consultants were given two-month contracts, or 17% of a year (FAO 2007:16). The maximum of eleven months for the duration of contracts is far from being the average length of a consultant's contract.

In comparison, HQ employs 1806 permanent staff, including directors, professionals and general staff. However, of this number, 884 are general staff, and 922 are directors and professional staff (FAO 2007:3). Considering that only 6 contracts were given to consultants for general service, the great majority of consultants were clearly hired for professional-type work. Thus, in 2006, at HQ, 922 full-time permanent professional staff worked on a daily basis supported by the *equivalent* of 745 person years of full-time consultants.

Consultancies have become, in fact, a type of human resource strategy mostly to lower the costs of employment. In FAO, according to Edward, it has been the

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[76] There was no possibility to find more information on consultants. The Report only compares the years 2005 and 2006, and does not go back in time. In addition, the Report does not discuss the "demographics" of consultants (age, gender, etc.). The report does not indicate the number of actual persons who were hired to fulfil the "751 persons/year".

case since the 1990s, which perhaps also corresponds to a worldwide trend in employment.

> "FAO has always used consultancies, especially for carrying out HQ work, and for specific support in field projects. At least for FAO, it was with the big cutback in external funding for multi-year projects, which trend probably became really marked in the early 90's [that's when the heavy reliance on consultants started]". (Edward)

Consultancies are perceived to be cheaper than hiring staff members. While this might be true on a short-term basis, it is without counting the costs of the time lost in mentoring new consultants, the difficulties in achieving quality work, and the loss of institutional memory (a point to which I come back below).

Originally, consultants were hired to fulfil specific time-bound tasks (such as writing documents, translation, etc.) or to bring in specific expertise needed for a short period of time, giving the organisation the flexibility to fulfil punctual needs. However, in a context of budget cuts and the non-replacement of retirements, consultants are hired increasingly as the 'right arms' of too busy and overwhelmed staff members, or at times for work that often no one else has any longer the time to do. Thus, in FAO's HQ context, staff and consultant generally work jointly on similar pieces of work. This situation differs from Stirrat's "transient teams of consultants" which are more likely to be seen in the field[77] (2000, see chapter 5). Marilyn, a consultant currently holding staff member responsibilities, provided a succinct portrait of the overall situation:

> "The human management in FAO is the worst ever, and that includes consultants. FAO is not retaining knowledge and building up your capacities. How can we be ambassadors if the organisation treats us like shit? It is o.k. to have freelance consultants, but using it as a strategy does not make sense. It will backfire: we are losing expertise, and it is not cheaper in the end. FAO should invest in people, if you know they are good, offer them salary and benefits to retain them. Stability is important as otherwise they will leave after

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[77] Mosse also discusses such teams of consultants in "Cultivating Development" (2005a)

two years if you keep them for two years on two month contracts…Hiring consultants is supposed to be "money saving". But that is only in the short run." (Marilyn)

This way of dealing with consultants is also perceived as a way to better control individuals who are paid for particular jobs and who can easily be discarded if not delivering according to expectations. Being in a situation of insecurity may limit what one can say and do while waiting for a contract renewal:

"Consulting in FAO is a management style utilized to keep everyone off balance and under pressure. […] For those inside the organisation – it can serve to keep everyone in line and stifle personal and professional growth. The latter thus influences the corporate credibility and acceptance in the international community". (Sam)

Like Marilyn, some consultants develop expertise and become more and more involved in ongoing and continuing FAO tasks. Importantly, they increasingly become the repository of specific knowledge that disappears when their contract ends. In this context, many staff members indicated that a consequence of the presence of too many consultants is that doing continuous work was becoming harder because of the difficulty to predict funds available to renew consultants' contract.

"Consultancies have a huge influence on the organisation. Many duties covered by professionals are now done by consultants which creates imbalances. Consultants work with low salaries with lots of responsibilities and visibility. And many of these will never get a post. Because there is no money, there is a general trend to not recognise the merits of those consultants". (Amy)

One of the major problems identified by staff members about consultants is that despite their high education level, most are young and do not have either hands-on or field experience, a great deficiency according to some experienced staff members.

"There are more junior consultants than before. Sometimes it is better because they have knowledge. But for concrete tasks, they do not have experience and nobody is happy with the work". (Pascale)

This lack of field expertise brings up some worries about the accuracy of the work and about the adequate competencies of FAO personnel to provide policy advice and to carry out normative types of tasks. Many see field expertise as crucial in one's capacity to perform such work (see Chapter 5).

"Now, normative work [i.e. developing recommended rules and regulations, providing advice to countries] is done by people who have never been in the field. They provide recommendations and policy advice, but unless this is based on things that work, it is useless. Ideally, people should have a combination of both. Advice should also be based in field experience rather than on years at university. Most professional staff think this". (Edward)

Another issue with consultancies is that since most are short-term, consultants often do not have an adequate amount of time to become truly involved and immersed in what they do, thus affecting the quality of their work. As the end of their contracts approaches, consultants spend time to figure out their possibilities for contract renewal, or simply start looking for other jobs, thus distracting them from their work. In addition, some interviewees pointed out that the organisation takes for granted that they will be there for short periods of time, and generally does not 'invest' in them through on-going training (language courses, on-going education, field missions etc.). As Sophie indicated, it is difficult to develop expertise in this context, and to build both capacity and confidence[78].

"Consultancies detract from the quality of the work. Because you never know for how long you'll be there, it does not allow you to develop an area of work. It does not give you the serenity to speak up to your supervisors, for fear of not being hired again. It does not give you that confidence. But, it might make you more accountable. […] Being a consultant is a tough life and I am not liking it. I would like a five year contract now because at the moment I can't have a vision, which is a tragedy of our time. It is also true that we are losing

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[78] Rathgeber (2006) also discusses consultants' incapacity to establish a long term vision of the work to accomplish.

> knowledge as people come and go. […] It is counter-productive: you invest in a person then they leave. […]". (Sophie)

At the individual level, living on consultancies makes for insecure and unsettling situations which are worse depending on whom one works for, on the size of one's family, or on the strength of one's ambitions, among other things. In at least three divisions, I have met consultants who lived off monthly contracts, and each month, they worried about being renewed or not. Sometimes, they were told the day before the end of their contract whether or not they still had a job. At best, they knew a week before the end if they would be renewed. These situations are hard for many consultants who are at an age when they would like to have families, or already do have a family, and seek a more stable way of life. Not having your contract renewed not only means that you cannot pay your expensive Roman rent, but also that you are constantly looking for a job.

Janice for example, in her thirties, is a mother of a little child, and had been working in FAO on contracts for about four years. She has worked for the LSP for a while, and often got 'shared' contracts with two other dynamic staff members from different services revolving around the LSP. Over the years, she had acquired a quite solid experience in and of FAO. However, after the end of the LSP, the two other staff members were not able to renew funding to hire her, so at the time of writing, she had been out of a contract for a few months and was still looking for one.

> "FAO's fragmented work and human resources are stressful. Now that I have a family, there is constant pressure to find something else, another contract. I find myself always thinking about the next thing. A problem in this is the interactions with other people. I fear that people always think you are looking for a job. It is ok with people you know, but you always look like you are selling yourself." (Janice)

Another representative case is the one of Elise and her husband Joe, both also in their thirties. Elise had travelled to Italy five years ago and had found a job in FAO. She got a very specific consultancy, and was lucky in the sense that she

was generally offered eleven-month contracts, with a few exceptions. Each renewal was very stressful because it was rarely clear, until the last minute, that there was funding available to renew her contract. Joe, for his part, was hired on monthly contracts, and sometimes found out the day before the end of a contract whether he could continue to work or not. He lived like this for two years, until one day, his contract could not be renewed. Shortly after, Elise and Joe got married, and decided to leave Rome to try and find more stability elsewhere, moving to Joe's home country. When they left, FAO lost two knowledgeable individuals. Elise had the feeling of having invested much into FAO over the years, with little in return on the part of the organisation.

> "For example, a consultant's work is never rewarded. The general attitude is that, if you do a good job, your contract will be renewed. This may be fine at the beginning, but after three years of being a consultant, a person expects to have some career growth. This is not possible in FAO. It is very difficult for a consultant to become a staff member or to even jump up to a higher professional level. Consultants do not have any of the benefits that staff members have and this also creates a feeling of resentment amongst consultants. In general, FAO culture does not promote career development or personal growth". (Elise)

Consequently, because of their conditions some consultants, regardless of their number of years at FAO's service, never really manage to feel at home or feel that they are a valuable asset for FAO. The general feeling is that they remain disposable at any time, no matter how dedicated and professional they are.

> "As a consultant I never really felt a part of FAO […]. I never at any point felt an allegiance to the organisation or a part of it. I suspect that this feeling of being an 'outsider' is increasing as a consequence of FAO's use of short-term contracts and consultancies. […] It is obviously a weakness for FAO, if the staffs representing the organisation do not feel a part of the institution they are representing. […]". (Toby)

Thus, experienced consultants end up leaving FAO after a while, at moments in their life when they are looking for more stability[79].

While many 'choose' to leave FAO, others, who are perhaps more established in Rome and who perhaps have families there, keep looking for FAO contracts and post possibilities. This incessant coming and going of consultants certainly has an impact on FAO's institutional memory. When some do as Elise did and simply leave, it is often the case that replacements have to be found to continue the work, generally in the same conditions, which means that a staff member has to take time to mentor this new person, and start at the beginning once more.

Consultants not only leave projects and ongoing work, but also take along with them the professional technical knowledge they have developed over time, as well as their hard-learned their capacity to 'navigate' in FAO. As Pascale, a staff member who often has to hire consultants, observed:

> "There is a loss of institutional memory. Consultants leave after the work is done, so there is no follow-up. Products are developed and then are never used because there is no champion. This is especially true of short-term work. There is also a loss of human resources. It is hard for consultants to get training paid for by FAO because of the procedures. Most consultants leave after two years to seek stability, yet consultants increasingly have bigger responsibilities". (Pascale)

Another category of consultants, however, – more established consultants with particular expertise that is in demand both inside and outside of FAO – have no problem living in greater insecurity, which enables them to retain a relative freedom with respect to FAO's bureaucracy. These individuals, generally older than the average consultant, usually have worked outside FAO or are sufficiently in demand within FAO not to worry about finding work. These individuals have an expertise they can trust, and do not absolutely depend on FAO for a future career, as they know they could easily find jobs elsewhere. They have chosen

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[79] Cernea (2006) describes a similar situation with regards to consultants involved in social research with the CGIAR system.

these lifestyles because they can obtain high salaries (though no benefits), negotiate their working conditions, and stay away from any kind of administrative business. However, it is important to emphasise that this case generally applies to older professionals, who have developed specific niches of work, and who perhaps came to FAO later in their career.

Karen, for example, is a single and dynamic woman, aged about 50, who has chosen to be a consultant because she enjoys her freedom. Aside from working part time in FAO, she also carries out work for an international NGO, and still has the rank of associate professor in a university of her home country to which she could potentially go back. She has developed a very specific niche of expertise and was very much in demand within FAO. At the moment I left, she had to refuse some of the offers. She shared her time between FAO and the NGO, and she constantly travelled around the globe.

> "I am also a consultant for an NGO as well and I work for both, so I have freedom. I chose what to work on everyday. […] I stayed in FAO because of the people as I found cool people to work with who are bright, trying to make a difference, sharp and interesting. […] A few people are like that, and some are now gone. As a consultant, I balance my life with other work. It is possible and I am choosing to be a consultant. I am not insecure" (Karen)

LSP consultants, in general, benefited from conditions somewhat different from those normally found in FAO. The financial situation was known ahead of time, and discussing a renewal was possible long before the end of a contract, which was therefore less stressful. Supporting consultants of LSP sub-programmes had contracts for as long as possible (eleven months) and were granted on-going training as needed. It was a policy of the programme – or at least of the coordinator – to offer young consultants as many tools as possible in view of building their capacity for the future. My colleagues and I were thus able to take in-house language courses, courses on presentations, on facilitating meetings, etc. For LSP consultants, the insecurity was more at the level of what the consultants would do once the LSP was over, but there was no fear associated,

or perhaps only in specific cases, with contract renewal during the time of the programme. From my point of view, we were FAO's most pampered consultants.

To sum up, one could say that there are two broad classes of FAO residents. The staff members have security of employment and possibilities for continuity in terms of work, building their capacities, and making career choices, but also have heavy work loads and many responsibilities. In contrast, consultants deal with uncertainty and perpetual beginnings, and yet sometimes also have heavy workloads and substantial responsibilities. The situation described above definitely reaches beyond questions of salary and benefits and rather speaks of organisational situations within which individuals encounter varying degrees of difficulty in carrying out their work and being recognised as professional members of the 'house'.

Doreen indicated that everyone in these two classes seems to be losing a sense of reality. On the one hand, staff members who employ consultants do not always have the capacity to supervise them adequately so as to ensure continuity in the work process. On the other hand, says Doreen, it is unrealistic for consultants to be hoping for a long-term job at FAO considering the context of budget cuts and the more recent Reform context, as discussed in chapter 2.

> "It is unrealistic on the part of consultants to think that they will become staff. The organisation is getting smaller and cannot pay for more people. It is normal for organisations to hire consultants, except perhaps for growing organisations. But consultant work is often under-supervised and under-utilised. It is good for them to have more orientation and guidance. Consultants produce outputs and if they are not supervised, their work just sits there and nothing happens, which is a waste of resources. Supervisors lack a vision when it comes to consultant work". (Doreen)

Permanent staff and consultants constantly mediate the ups and downs of their respective positions within the organisation through their daily interactions. If consultants in the past were hired for particular pieces of work and punctual

tasks, this is changing as some of them are currently employed to complement the normal work of staff members. The inequalities in both statuses, especially for consultants who carry out the same type of work as staff members, lead to a feeling of exclusion, or to a perception of being a less important member of the home. This, however, also critically depends on their immediate supervisor and on whether they feel appreciated, quite independently of their contract renewal.

ELEMENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

In chapter 1, organisational culture was defined as "a system of shared beliefs, symbols, values and assumptions which provide meaning and direct action in an organization at a given time" […] (Paules 1990:95). It was also noted that 'culture' in an organisation may serve several purposes in providing the "social or normative glue that holds an organization together" (Smircich 1983:344). 'Culture', in an organisational context, becomes "the property of a 'group' […], which 'persists over time' in the sense of being unchanging, and is 'shared' in the sense that there is consensus and no ambiguity" (Wright 1994:3). Contrary to the bureaucratic structure, the organisational culture is not written, is informal, intangible, often ambiguous even, and can only be revealed through "the patterns of attitudes and actions of individual organization members" (Smircich 1983:343).

FAO's organisational culture can be considered as an amalgam of sub-organisational cultures developing and pertaining to divisions and services, while sharing some of the norms, rules, and narratives of the overall organisation. Examples of shared norms have already been presented, and include UN requirements (mostly in terms of language spoken); the use of a jargon proper to FAO; the use of English as a common language; sets of rules and procedures for procurement, the use of funds, letters of agreement and employment; sharing a common workplace; being willing and ready to travel; etc. Similarly, shared narratives in FAO include its aims and mandate. Yet each department, division

and service has a particular part to play in fulfilling the wider mandate: professionals may primarily identify with their own part of the mandate. Other shared narratives may include the speech given by the DG (in January), which most professionals try to attend, the Strategic Framework (FAO 1999b), and the many documents published by the organisation.

These shared norms form a set of 'ground rules' for FAO employees, yet organisational culture in daily work is enacted within smaller units of work and varies according to many professional, personal, and inter-personal factors (see below). As such, FAO can be compared to a "parent" culture for these sub-cultures, which, like any child, seek to find a balance between the "need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents…and the need to maintain parental identifications" (Cohen 1972: in Hebdige 1979:77). It should be said, however, that over and above compartmentalisation of tasks and purpose, these sub-cultures differ mostly from the "parent" in terms of their ways of working and everyday practice.

From an insider's perspective, identifying with FAO becomes very broad and diffuse, yet in outside contexts, using FAO's identity makes life easy. From inside, the most understood identity lies at the level of the service, which is identified by an acronym of four letters, (the two first letters refer to the department, the third letter to the division, and the last one to the service itself[80]). A parallel can be made with national identity. If another Canadian asks me where I am from, my answer will be "Montreal". But if someone from another country asks me where I am from, my answer is likely to be "Canada".

> "I believe within FAO, more than an organisational culture, there is a divisional or departmental culture". (Elise)

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[80] For example, the LSP was based in SDAR (Sustainable Development Department- Rural Institutions and Participation Service), which became ESWD (Economic and Social Development Department - Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division) after the 2006 Reform.

As confirmed by Elise, organisational culture in FAO is generally related to the service or the smaller working unit one is part of. The sub-culture of a service or division depends on many factors such as the personality of the manager, the type of work to be done, the various provenance and personalities of immediate colleagues and collaborators, among other things. This forms a multitude of 'reconstructed working families', be they functional or not. Mara, a junior consultant, had just been confronted with three different working cultures in the recent past:

> "It is different in all the groups I worked in. It depends on people, not on the organisation. [In one service], people are thankful – the effort counts – but not anywhere else did I find such a supportive approach. [In this other group] it was different. They did not work together, and not with other services. They had strange relationships, but it was partly my fault: I was not happy in the group and did not make an effort. I was also missing directions so I had to work on week-ends. [The current group] I am in is a good group: inclusive, we have weekly meetings, people ask: do you have something to say? Most are young consultants – all of the same age, quite a homogenous group of thirty to thirty-five years old. Even if I do a boring job, I am still involved in group activities, so it does not matter in the end. I am in the loop. I learn a lot because I am involved in the process. In the other groups, I did more 'lonely' types of work and was never involved in meetings. This is not so much FAO, but depends on the people and what they make out of it." (Mara)

As discussed above, organisational culture also varies according to one's status within the organisation. Staff and consultants, for example, could be seen as two sub-cultures as their positions make them experience the organisation through two different lenses.

In the case of the LSP, each supporting consultant was officially identified as being part of the same FAO home service as their supervising FAO-LSP staff member (who retained their identity with the service they worked for). However, even though they had their office physically located in their supervisor's service, LSP consultants rarely interacted, or only on some occasions, with the staff of that service, and entertained no, or only weak, professional links with these

individuals (with the exception of one particular supporting consultant). Their identity thus related to the LSP where their working relations were located, but their LSP consultant and staff colleagues were physically dispersed within FAO.

What follows borrows from the anthropology of organisations, beyond human resource management itself, as previously discussed through the example of staff members and consultants. Indeed, human resource management strategies also have an influence on organisational culture. In the case presented above, an increasing amount of work in FAO has been sub-contracted to consultants hired on a short-time basis. Consultants rarely know ahead of time if their contracts will be renewed, and therefore live with a great deal of uncertainty, which serves as a unifying characteristic in forming their sub-culture within FAO. This type of human management strategy affects how practitioners carry out their work, the sense they construct of the organisation, and perhaps their loyalty towards the organisation. Among the many angles from which ethnographers may try to understand organisations from the inside, a few are particularly useful for understanding FAO's organisational culture, and are summarised here:

a) Understanding the role of individuals and their space for creativity

> "Many people do what they want and then it ends up being part of their mandate. These individuals succeed in marrying their interests with their work, but this comes with its share of problems. It takes time and it is a process". (Josephine)

Organisations' formal structures involve particular expectations of individuals which do not necessarily "coincide with personal interests and style" (Bryant and White 1982:46). The mutual understanding of these roles and responsibilities may conflict, contributing to "high rates of employee turnover and dissidence" (Paules 1990:95). Depending on the degree of hierarchy involved in the structure of particular organisations, individuals may have more or less freedom in the way they do their work, which can affect their efficiency, but also their motivation and sense of initiative, or agency. "How much freedom exists and how it is variably

located throughout the organization are important factors in understanding how discipline and flexibility are related to everyday operations" (Britan and Cohen 1980:15).

b) The role of formal and informal cultures and networks

> "There is an old sage advice – it is not always what you know, but who you know. Informal channels can always assist to facilitate operations, seek informal advice that may not be forthcoming through formal channels, and assist in avoiding pitfalls from lack of knowledge of the full scenario". (Sam)

Although informal networks may be quite beneficial in reaching organisational goals (Bryant and White 1982:47), informal networks can also be an impediment to organisational efficiency (Britan and Cohen 1980:19; Serber 1981). Identifying characteristics of organisational culture and informal ways of achieving goals may provide insights as to how this informal structure plays a role – positive or negative – in the work of the larger organisation. Formal and informal may play different yet complementary roles within an organisation. As Edward, a key informant to this research, remarked:

> "Formal organisations can be quite efficient in things which just require administrative action, but this becomes more difficult for organisations whose work requires original thinking or actions for which the administrative rules don't give good results". (Edward)

Formal structures themselves may also affect organisational efficiency in negative ways. Considering the difficulty of simply identifying the causes of inefficiency, there may be hardships for people who aim to bring changes to formal structures. Bryant and White (1982:45) consider the "tendency of bureaucracies to become rigid and routinized [and to] come to define loyalty in terms of adhering to rules" as a "pathology" of bureaucracies. Understanding the relations between the formal structure and individuals requires the analysis of the 'interface' between organizations and 'the people', "a situation for which

anthropological skills and awareness can be argued to be particularly suited" (Hirsch and Gellner 2001:5).

c) How culture and human resources are managed in organisations

Not only do employees have 'a culture', but a variety of sub-organisational cultures may emerge within the organisation. Hamada and Jordan (1990:6) consider that "complex organizations are characteristic of pluralistic societies and organization management include managing diverse cultural groups". It seems, however, that understanding how the culture of individuals may play a role in interactions, work efficiency, interpretation of expectations, etc. has "remained relatively neglected" in the realm of organisational studies (Harris 1994: 309). However, "the complexity of human life in the organization must be analyzed from a comparative, relativistic and human angle, rather than from the steely logic of scientific rationalism or economic reductionism" (Hamada and Jordan 1990:3-4)". FAO's numerous staff members come from a variety of countries and cultures and hold a great diversity of expertise. Besides sharing their common work place and related shared norms, most FAO employees are "out of place", as most do not live and work in their home countries. As already discussed, FAO employees form many "accidental communities of memory" (Malkki 1997), and, in Appadurai's terms (1991), are "deterritorialised". Cultural diversity is thus part of FAO's everyday reality.

Hierarchy, Management and Space for Initiatives

As discussed earlier, I did not personally have access to members of high management while I worked in FAO. My consultant status, and the type of work I was involved in, did not afford me this possibility. Even if hierarchy and management tend to be described in the literature as formal and rigid (Britan and

Cohen 1980) there is, in FAO, much fluidity implied in the practice of hierarchy and management.

There are different hierarchical levels at FAO which go along with the organisational structure made up of departments, divisions, and services (see chapter 2). In addition, there is hierarchical ranking between more senior and less senior staff members (P1 to P5).

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Figure 10. **Schema of hierarchy in FAO at time of research.**

Director General – FAO
    ADG – Department
        Division Director – Division
            Service Chief – Service
                Technical Officers (P1 to P5)
                Consultants
                    Volunteers

</div>

Broadly speaking, and omitting some specific intermediate ranks, the highest rank is held by the Director General (DG), followed by the Assistant Director Generals (ADG), who are in charge of departments, then the Division Directors within each of the departments, and finally the Service Chiefs. Staff members will primarily refer to their service chiefs who in turn work closely with the Division Directors. Consultants, however, will refer to their staff member supervisor, and are likely to have very little interaction with the Service Chiefs unless they are hired directly by them.

It seems that hierarchy, in an organisation like FAO, is often exercised or enacted through the control of communication channels. Depending on the personality of the Service and Division Chiefs, rules will be established for communication within a given service. In my case, if I needed to speak with my service chief, I would validate quickly with Edward, my immediate supervisor, and then contact her or her secretary directly to fix an appointment. Both my supervisor and I knew that she would not be offended that a consultant communicated directly with her. For other consultants, however, the situation was different. They were told to go through their supervisor for communication not only with directors, but also with senior staff members in their service.

> "Protocols and hierarchies are internal obstacles and go against efficiency. For example, a consultant cannot write an email directly to a senior officer. This slows down the process of work and through the intermediaries, the message gets filtered down. […] Hierarchy is very strong and there is no culture of exchange of ideas. […] Young professionals who could 'dust the organisation' are restrained from the beginning. Hierarchy impoverishes discourses and we can't have different ideas which could be taken into account". […]. (Cynthia)

If some consultants like Cynthia were told not to contact a certain range of officers directly, the situation seems worse for volunteers. Stephany, a volunteer, echoed Cynthia's observations: she felt particularly stifled and noted that hierarchy was in fact paralysing internal communications.

> "The mechanisms of discussion are very self-oriented in my point of view, while having followed some working group, I could see that most of the time, one or two persons lead the work orientation and the others say nothing or not much. […] The working culture is totally tainted by hierarchy, what counts the most at the end is your professional position and in my point of view it is the best way to stop real communication inside the house. We are supposed to work for the poorest, the weak and the forgotten of this world, but we find here a domination of self interest and glorification to work in an international institution for the advantages that it brings." (Stephany)

However, the respect shown within this hierarchy in terms of communication varies greatly according to the personalities of those in power, and on their

specific demands. As both Cynthia and Stephany alluded to, this hierarchy, if applied in a strict manner, does not leave much room for young consultants, and even less for volunteers. They deplored the fact that new ideas could not be communicated and that hierarchy in a way protected and encouraged self-centred and individuals of a certain rank who in any case, because of the seniority, had plenty of opportunities to express their opinions.

For consultants, hierarchy also translates as access to certain events and discussions in FAO. In plenary meetings for example, it is not very comfortable to intervene as a junior consultant, unless you are given specific permission. Some events and meetings could in fact be limited to staff members even though their outcomes might affect consultant's work. Service meetings, for example, generally convened only staff members.

In LSP, in contrast, there existed titles and specific roles but few hierarchical boundaries protected these titles. Edward, the programme coordinator, was a very accessible man, and worked with an open door policy. The Programme Coordination Team meetings, even with their few governing rules, remained an open forum for discussions where consultants could also share their opinions. The working mechanisms were perhaps not as top-down as in other instances, where a staff member gives a specific tasks to a consultant. In LSP, the roles were sometimes reversed, or perhaps more complementary primarily because consultants were carrying out the work on behalf of busy staff members, and had to inform staff about their advancements on a regular basis. Final decisions had to be discussed with staff members, but there was much trust invested in consultants since they were the ones conducting the work.

According to many informants, one of the reasons explaining the variations in hierarchy and in organisational culture, apart from personalities, is the absence of directives for managers in FAO. Indeed, there is no privileged management model across the organisation. No particular behaviours are encouraged for

managers, and they do not have to go through any kind of training to be managers in FAO: they are free to lead their team however they see fit.

> "The vertical structure, hierarchy, is born out of an American industrial model, taylorism or fordism. The supervisor has a strict control over his unit of work. He has the responsibility. Rapports between people are determined by hierarchy, which is typically American. Everyone does his work, without having exchanges. There is only one person in charge of overseeing the work. […]. This is how we work". (Michael)

In doubt, I interviewed a manager (i.e. my own service chief) who confirmed this situation. Since each manager is allowed a particular style, with no *a priori* expectations in terms of work incentives, team work, ways to apply pressure, and openness to discussion, it is perhaps a logical consequence that there are as many 'cultures' of work as there are managers.

> "Officers have lots of space for initiatives, but it depends on the type of managers they have, and if they are open to negotiation. Managers want to know what staff is up to, an open door policy so to incorporate initiatives in their work programme, as long as it is relevant. If not a priority, it is better that they deal with priorities first. There are two types of managers in FAO. For the first type, the staff do as they are told: you get guerrilla or warfare and staff end up [taking initiatives] on their personal time, which is more stressful. The second type, much more open and supportive, is more pleasant. […] There are no guidelines for managers in FAO. Not even in TORs. There was once a management course for [service and division chiefs] but it was not mandatory. I took it." (Caroline)

Staff members and some consultants take advantage of this loose approach to management to find space to innovate, especially when their managers are not so controlling. Caroline herself has implied that regardless of the management style, staff will manage to do what they see as relevant, especially when able to gather a group of interested individuals and gain peer recognition (see chapter 6). In cases of strict management, some staff members will find ways to take initiatives even if it means doing so on their personal time. In fact, many staff members interviewed confirmed their great liberty of actions. Jennae was one of them:

185

"Everybody does what they want, there is a great liberty of action. For example, I just met a consultant from [a service] and she does whatever she wants. In certain technical divisions, people are closely supervised, but many people do as they please. It is very interesting to have this possibility, but becomes difficult when establishing priorities. People are autonomous, and they are difficult to manage. […] Personally, I do what I want […] and I can choose what I want to do. From the moment you work, people ask you for things and collaboration. But it is lateral and does not come from above." (Jennae)

Jennae is a much respected staff member, seen as very dynamic and bright. No one could have suspected that she was working on her own in a way, and that the many important initiatives she took were not necessarily endorsed by her supervisor. Her discussion also confirms a perception shared by others that consultants often have more space to innovate compared to staff members who have to deal with administrative burdens. Eva, a long term consultant and LSP member (in fact, she was the only consultant who was also an LSP sub-programme co-convener), indicated that she would not want to become a staff member for fear of losing her liberty of action.

"People do what they want but it depends on their position and personalities. I never tried to become a staff member [so that I could continue] to be able to do what I wanted: if you become staff, your possibilities to take initiatives are curtailed. […] Lots of managers kill you off and won't allow you to do other things – like working with others – that they find unacceptable. Some managers are more or less flexible depending on their personalities. One officer I know told her manager to piss off. But for others, it is harder to do and their boss prevents things from happening". (Eva)

Some informants have indicated that being able to take initiatives not only depends on the hierarchy and management, but also on your personality, capacity, and credibility, which takes time to establish in the eyes of managers and colleagues. Being able to take initiatives comes with the recognition of one's competencies and expertise through time. Donald, for example, was recognised by his peers for having spearheaded an important topic long before it was in

vogue, a topic which has recently been recognised as core in a division of the new Natural Resource Management and Environment Department:

> "When I started, I had little space for creativity and was closely supervised. But I had a good supervisor. I led a big programme on pastoral populations and found lots of space. But it took another three-four years to get the space I wanted. I have earned it in a way; I started low and climbed up. […] To take your own initiatives, you need to prove that you deliver before you get the space. Plus you have your terms of reference, yet you are tempted to take on more. But you have limits of time and capacity. One learns to say no." (Donald)

Management in the LSP, as discussed in chapter 3, differed from FAO's 'normal' management. The LSP was coordinated rather than managed, and adopted a horizontal structure of work in trying to avoid rigid hierarchy. It thus worked backwards compared to the rest of FAO: proposals for work initiatives came from the sub-programmes, from 'below', because no instructions in terms of specific activities came from 'above'. The programme was designed precisely to give room to staff members who wanted to work on or with livelihoods approaches, and the programme coordination team allowed for this flexibility. Thus, by definition, micro-management within the LSP's sub-programme structure called for coordination, freedom of action, and team work. Top-down hierarchy was specifically avoided from the outset, as noted within the Programme Memorandum (or the project document) itself.

Formality versus Informality in FAO

"Organization", wrote Firth,

> "is concerned with roles, but not with these alone; it also involves that more spontaneous, decisive activity which does not follow simply from role-playing. […] People often do what rules lay down, but these rules alone are an incomplete account of their organised activities. […] Ultimately, the social structure may have to give way through a concatenation of organisational acts" (1954:9).

To work formally in FAO is to work *officially*, obeying to a set of rules (related to projects, reports, language, payments, staff employment, etc.) and requesting permission from a supervisor before taking on or being involved in a new initiative. Most officers and consultants would probably agree that "rules and procedures are needed to function. They are designed 'in theory' and have to be adjusted to work and made more effective. There are reasons behind the rules" (Doreen). However, even if it is widely recognised that informality may impair organisational efficiency (Britan and Cohen 1980; Seber 1982), almost all informants also agreed that working informally is much needed in FAO, as formal work is associated with rigidity, time consuming efforts, bureaucracy, and hierarchy.

It is difficult here to establish what *is* 'the formal'. Not only was I kept away from it as an LSP consultant, but informants themselves have a hard time defining it other than in opposition to the informal. The formal is said to be time consuming and bureaucratic, as it involves discussions, asking permissions and awaiting approvals from managers. In contrast, informants discussed more freely the concept of informality which means different things to different people. It is important to note that 'informality' does not mean "illegal" nor "less important" but rather refers to an ensemble of "tactics" used to achieve a given task (De Certeau 1984). For some, it simply means the liberty to contact collaborators freely and directly, or to take part in work that is not directly linked to one's task description without having to go 'on record' each time. As Pascale said:

> "FAO is a rigid system: how much time we spend on administration. It is much easier to keep things informal and it is quicker too. Not necessarily informal, but just not formal. Not illegal either, but through human interaction. Formal in FAO sense means official. For example, emails with FAO logo – slow because so formal and have to be cleared by service chief." (Pascale)

For others, informality goes further and involves rule-bending if necessary. Eva herself contributes to FAO's 'schizophrenia' by being a very effective rule bender.

Generally, rule bending happens out of good intentions, to make things happen, or to work more efficiently.

> "I am a "rule bender" and I like going around the rules because I get mad when I get blocked by stupid rules, especially when it is about budget stuff. Once I was in the field and the local staff had not been paid for a while. So I made fake documents for them to get paid". (Eva)

In fact, the main reason invoked to use informal channels by informants was because of the possibility to carry out work in a timelier manner, and is thus considered as more effective. This phenomenon has long been recognised: "It is one of the discoveries of modern industrial analysis that such informal structures are often the most effective in regulating working behaviour" (Firth 1955:3).

The recruitment of consultants is actually a good example of how informal channels are used to accelerate the process of hiring, which, without being illegal, is not a by-the-book procedure. Normally, consultants are supposed to be hired "democratically", to use Claudia's term (below), which means that for each piece of work, a formal selection process should take place with CVs in hand and a round of interviews. However, consultants are generally chosen because they are known, because officers know they can be trusted, and also because "you can get your friends to be consultants" (Ben). This informal way of recruiting is biased and towards the advantage of certain individuals who are not necessarily the best ones for the position. Concretely, using informal ways of hiring saves time during the recruiting process, but also in terms of supervision time given that staff know the consultants and vice versa, and that a trust relationships might have already been established.

> "Formality/informality is a double edge for institutions like FAO. Formal is too formal. There is rigidity and inability to communicate between divisions and departments. […] Informality can be dangerous, it can be a way of hiding and also "equality in informality" is an illusion. It conveys hidden hierarchy by being unsaid which can be worse. Informality also has rules and mechanisms, but they

cannot be controlled. It can be less democratic for example […] in the way you hire people […] a good case in point. But informality can be much more efficient. Formal hiring can be very time consuming but it is a more democratic selection process. Informal decisions are much quicker but perhaps not democratic. […]" (Claudia)

When I shared these thoughts with Edward, who has hired and supervised many consultants, he had the following commentary and nuance to bring regarding informality in hiring consultants:

"One learns with experience (and the associated costs) not to put a lot of trust in CVs, but rather more into face to face interviews and especially into unofficial evaluations by people whom you trust (in this context) who have worked with a candidate and can give you a candid evaluation of their competence for the job to be done. In my own case I tend to give my own gut reaction to a candidate somewhat heavier weight than the recommendations of others – having been burned a few times when doing it the other way around.

The bottom line is being able to get someone who can do the job they're hired to do, so that you don't have to end up doing it for them. Thus, the tendency to re-hire consultants who have proven they can produce, without each time looking further afield.

Hiring friends… hmm. I've never deliberately hired someone just because they were a friend. I've undoubtedly hired people who came to me with good recommendations from my colleagues who were their friends". (Edward)

Informality, as noted by Claudia, can have dark sides even if on the whole, informants have said that informality works better than staying in the formal channels. Claudia is right to point out that informality may exclude some people on non-professional grounds, or may take directions that are far away from any kind of clear objectives. Yet, without wanting to contradict Claudia, decisions in FAO are normally made formally, and informality more often occurs at the level of "background work" necessary and leading to making a decision. Formality and informality are not an either/or type of situation, but rather complement one another. Ultimately, informal work or discussions have to be formally recognised to continue their course. The "liminal" space created by the interplay between

formality and informality recalls Turner's (1967:93; see also Turner 1969) discussion of an "interstructural situation". "We are not dealing with structural contradictions when we discuss liminality, but with the essentially unstructured (which is at once destructured and prestructured)" *(ibid*: 98). The informal, to Turner, is structurally "invisible" (*ibid*: 99), and it is where people can "be themselves" as "they are not acting institutionalised roles" (*ibid*: 101).

Yet, the interface between formality and informality is where most of the work, in fact, probably takes place (Hirsh and Gellner 2001). It is often the case that discussions on a given topic start or take place informally between colleagues, and can then be recognised and made 'official' through the adequate channels, thus allowing for the work to continue.

To go back to the example of the selection of consultants, the final choice has to be 'cleared' or cautioned by a supervisor, who in a sense, will give formal approval to an informal choice that has been made, perhaps without knowing exactly how this candidate was chosen. As a last step, the proposed consultant then needs to be cleared by FAO's personnel service, which ensures that the candidate's background and experience – at least on paper – appears to be adequate for the particular job to be done.

Thus, in pursuing their professional interests, or when deviating from their normal programme of work, officers sometimes have to build their case informally, and once they feel solid and backed up by their colleagues, they seek approval of management who often end up in a position where they can hardly say no. In De Certeau's (1984) words, this is probably when a "tactic" gives way to a "strategy" which has a longer impact through time. For example, a staff member succeeded in bringing organic agriculture to the FAO agenda. "There would be nothing about it if it was not for her. She was highly committed and got extra-budgetary funding in addition to support from her group, which forced FAO to deal with it" (Stephen).

Depending on the type of managers officers are confronted with, some admitted to taking initiatives while keeping it as informal as possible, which was perhaps the case of the woman to whom Stephen was alluding.

> "In FAO, while frustrated by the heavy administration (you have always the impression to be asking for the moon when dealing with the administration), I feel relatively free to take initiatives, which is crucial to resolve problems as there are plenty of good individuals who are willing to go ahead and get across issues. So in short if you want to work in a smooth way, the best solution is to remain as informal as possible and have things done without asking any official support (a bit exaggerated but not so much!)" (Jordan)

The game between formality and informality is played differently in each of the services of FAO, which also has an impact on the general working atmosphere. A more informal atmosphere generally favours direct and cordial interactions between individuals. However, as was the case of Jennifer, when one is used to such atmosphere, having to then work with people in other services can be surprising, and lead *to faux pas* with the staff in place.

> "I am now between two cultures of work [she works with two services located in two different departments]. One relies more on rules. You have to ask for things a certain way, and you cannot pressure anyone. In collaborating with other departments, you have to learn that in some places, you are not allowed to do some things. I was simply looking for information and felt threatened. Here, in this department, you can knock on anyone's door." (Jennifer)

For some officers who normally play by the rules, there is a sort of envy towards those who can work informally because they are perceived to have the capacity to use the 'system' to their advantages and to work faster and more efficiently.

> "Generally I work by the rules, which works against me as I do not do well outside them. I do not know these avenues, but I have been with people who helped me through the informal channels. I tried to stay as technical as possible and outside the informal as possible. But you have to learn all the rules so you can break them. Lots of people

function like that and I find them smart. It does depend on your mandate and what you have to do". (Josephine)

In such a case of 'informality paralysis', a "tactic" is to pair-up with someone who can work informally, as Josephine did. In fact, to be able to manipulate the rules, one has to know them very well. Often times, the most resourceful staff in these matters are the general staff and supporting personnel (secretaries or administrative assistants). The range of tasks achieved by these precious individuals is broad, from holding keys to office supplies, to finding out how to deposit your pay check in your account, to keeping the books of a several million dollar programme, etc. I called our LSP administrative assistant "fairy-god-mother" because without her, and especially without her friendship, I was conscious of how terrible my life in FAO would have been. She knew every corner of FAO, and had developed an incredible capacity to manage the system or go around the rules if needed. She was very resourceful and the team simply praised her for being alive because we knew that not all administrative assistants were this kind and flexible. Thus, some professionals in-house are well placed or become 'key nodes' of informal channels, almost acting as 'articulations' between the informal and the formal. The capacity of my fairy-god-mother relied mostly on her great knowledge of the formal rules in the first place, so that she was then able to figure out informal ways to reach the same results.

LSP itself has a long story of informality. As explained in chapter 3, the programme evolved from the informal Network, and was created informally before being formalised into a real programme designed to remain as informal as possible! LSP was used by staff almost as an informal means to pursue their professional interests, while being a formal programme. The fact that the budget was largely independent from FAO's higher management made it possible to avoid many formalities. Despite an established functioning protocol through the Programme Coordination Team and related rules (see chapter 3), and even though the rules were generally respected, the horizontal structure of the

programme allowed for an informal atmosphere of work[81]. It should be said, however, that some staff and consultants refrained from working with the LSP because they felt it was too informal for them to be coherent. For Rose, for example, the informality of the LSP meant that the programme did not have a good enough sense of direction:

> "LSP is such a loosely defined programme. There is freedom to do and try out almost everything. In fact, perhaps there is too much space. The structure, individual attitudes and working culture make it so there is a lot of scope of interpretations of the decisions taken. Participatory decision-making takes a lot of time but it is great and stimulating of course. I believe the LSP would have had greater impact if there would have been more direction, but then it would have needed a different structure. […] The members of the Programme Coordination Team have rejected the idea of tighter coordination effectively preventing coherent approaches because it was not in the interest of the PCT members". (Rose)

Multi-Culturalism

Apparudai (1991) has established that a characteristic of the globalised world we live in – a world of "transnational connections" (Hannerz 1996) – is the deterritorialisation of the actors. In FAO, this idea takes on its full meaning. Indeed, professionals who work for the United Nations in general come from a variety of countries and 'cultures', and hold a great diversity of expertise. Most FAO employees have in common being "out of place", as most do not live and work in their home country. In this sense, FAO employees form an "accidental community of memory" or rather, many smaller "accidental communities of memory" (Malkki 1997). The working environment of FAO then, is multi-sited, multi-cultural and cosmopolitan all at once. One could thus say that FAO's culture is one that is constructed by actors coming from a global landscape, but that is enacted within a given unit of work, taking into account a panoply of elements

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[81] Some meetings, however, were more 'formal', more specifically when discussions revolved around budget issues, and towards the end of the programme, regarding the LSP's exit strategies, where staff members argued over money allocations.

including individual and national cultures, elements of the organisational formal/informal structure, and the diversity generated by the encounters and interfaces of these elements.

Hannerz's characterisation of the cosmopolitan and of transnational cultures loosely corresponds to FAO personnel. "…cosmopolitanism would entail […] involvement with a plurality of contrasting cultures to some degree on their own terms", in addition to having a "willingness to engage with the other", and refraining from negotiating "with the other culture but accept[ing] it as a package deal. […] The cosmopolitan may embrace the alien culture, but he does not become committed to it" (1996:103-104). Some nuance is needed, however, to bridge Hannerz's description with observations of manifestations of FAO's culture. First, FAO professionals on the whole want and do have to engage with a plurality of cultures, even if only to navigate their immediate environment at HQ. In this case, there is no real commitment to a foreign culture, just a mutual learning process of dealing with one another on a daily basis. However, this is different for those who do travel to the field and work as out-posted officers. They engage and commit to other cultures to various degrees depending on the length of their stay, the type of work they carry out, their personalities and interests (see chapter 6).

The international provenance and "multi-culturality" of staff and consultants is considered by many to be an attractive element for working in FAO. Unlike 'hierarchy and management' and 'formality and informality', multi-culturalism is not a trait of the organisation that may impact positively or negatively the work of the organisation or perhaps only in more subtle manners. Multi-culturalism is an intrinsic part of the character of the organisation and plays a role in the construction of the organisational culture in each of the working units. It may also influence one's 'sense of familiarity' with the organisation. From within, one can appreciate the richness of inter-cultural exchanges, and how they shape and colour one's working environment.

The presence of international staff and consultants gives way to all kinds of generalisations on national stereotypes which may or may not be true, depending on the individuals. For examples, Germans are said to be organised workaholics, the French are said to be chatty and at times flaky, Americans are too informal in their attitude while the Italians tend to be very formal. The list is endless, and everyone puts in their grain of salt. Someone once told me how Canadians were perceived: we apparently wear mountain gear even indoors and always have to be so annoyingly nice to everyone. These correspond to long lasting national stereotypes, and I have heard serious discussions on them, as well as friends teasing each other about their national backgrounds.

Yet, FAO's technical jargon, and certainly the use of English in almost all events and discussions (or the use of "globlish" or simplifications made to English to make it intelligible to speakers of different languages (Nerrière 2004)), in addition to the focus on the task at hand, tends to flatten these multi-cultural features. It was more during informal and personal conversations, basically outside work, that multi-culturalism can be more deeply appreciated. Indeed, in the midst or work, personalities were more noticeable than nationalities. It is always difficult in a working environment, especially when you do not know the individuals very well, to figure out which traits of a person are attributable to his/her collective or to their individual persona.

It happened that staff and consultants of a particular provenance would group together and form "accidental communities of memory" that were not related directly to work (Malkki 1997). These meetings generally took place between people who spoke the same language. I remember going to 'québécois' lunches, while my colleague from Venezuela attended a lunch with a bunch of Spanish-speaking people. However, with the high turn over within the population of consultants, faces at the table often changed. Beyond enabling use of a common language, these meetings were the occasion for discussing events occurring at

home, and served to relieve a certain nostalgic yearning for home. Even if in some cases people at the table had nothing much in common besides nationality and work place, it was a good way to make friends, and to socialise outside one's working environment, thereby building connections in other services.

Partly because of this multi-cultural environment, there is now no dress code in FAO: everyone dresses as they please, according to either tradition or however they feel that day. For 'Westerners' this translated into the capacity to go to work dressed as they want, even wearing blue jeans, though most people will make an effort on days when they have important meetings. As you climb up the hierarchy, men wear suits and women are dressed in 'business' fashion. This absence of dress code makes for a relaxed atmosphere, where saris and African traditional outfits are part of the landscape. Generally, it is 'in the air' that no one cares how you dress given that you are not scheduled to meet with the Director General. Still, I know of a few people who could not care less and would probably stick to their daily outfits even if they had to meet with the DG.

Cosmopolitalism was also a trait of the LSP. In my office alone, conversations were commonly conducted in four languages: English, French, Spanish and Italian. My immediate colleagues were from Italy, Venezuela, the United States and Britain. Surrounding staff members were from France and the Netherlands. Cosmopolitanism, as a will to "engage with a plurality of cultures" (Hannerz 1996), was almost a condition to take part in the LSP's activities. Yet, there were many degrees of "engagement" possible depending on one's daily work and involvement in the field. Marissa, for example, was a staff member dealing with donor countries; her cosmopolitan world was limited to what HQ could offer her, as her possibilities for travelling were limited. In contrast, Karen, a senior consultant who was also involved with an NGO, had more chances to actually engage with a variety of cultures outside HQ.

Multicuturalism is so much a part of the landscape of FAO that staff and consultants seem to hardly notice it anymore. In this context, evaluating how the various cultural backgrounds of staff and consultants affect the work of FAO would be dauntingly complex. However, everyone, notwithstanding provenance and culture, seemed to be able to find a 'home' in FAO. In that sense, FAO was a rather inclusive environment though this depended, again, on the service one would land in, on supervisors, colleagues and most likely on the type of work one carried out.

CONCLUSION

This chapter, based on my experience in FAO-HQ and on interviews, has presented elements contributing to a sense of 'home' in FAO and features of FAO's organisational culture which compose the employees' 'professional landscape', while highlighting, in passing, their intrinsic diversity. Entering into the relationships that inhabit FAO-HQ's 'house' and organisational structure has enabled an exploration of the "lived experience" (Long 2001) of the staff and consultants, providing insights about a few key elements:

a) FAO staff and consultants deal with various levels of complexity when working at FAO-HQ.

In addition to learning one's way around in the physical and social environment structure of FAO, professionals also have to gain knowledge and make use of the elements of organisational structure which characterise FAO, including hierarchy, human resource management, and the formal organisational rules more generally.

b) These organisational elements affect both the professional motivations of FAO's employees, and their personal lives.

In presenting a non-exhaustive discussion of the residents and motivations and of two different types of FAO residents (i.e., staff and consultants) the wide diversity and heterogeneity characterising the FAO-HQ personnel was highlighted. Moreover, the discussion provided insights into how elements of organisational culture, hierarchy and management, formality, and multi-culturalism all play a part in one's experience of FAO and in the creation of a 'home'.

c) Informality is an important mechanism through which professionals deal with formality and establish their rapport to the 'official' structure. However, relying on informal channels depends on one's personality and professional interests.

A professional's personality, motivation and status in the organisation play a role in how elements of organisational culture are perceived, experimented, appropriated and responded to by the various actors, thereby contributing to a sense of fluidity and multiplicity in the ways of 'being' a member of FAO.

For example, some employees may work well within the formal structure and may be satisfied with what they do, while others may feel constrained by the formal structure and may need to complement their tasks with professional initiatives that they see lacking, as was indeed the case with most staff members who became active with the LSP. Initiatives, as discussed earlier, may start and grow informally, but will eventually need to be formalised through official approval in order to be viable through time within the organisation. One could say that the informal is a space of change and of creativity, which stands a chance of bringing formal changes to the organisation if an open-minded manager cautions a particular initiative. Thus, the informal and the formal are equally negotiation processes, closely intertwined and enacted in everyday practice.

It seems that there exists a two-way negotiation process in the nesting of professional's 'organisational homes', in which both the organisation and the professionals themselves have a role to play. The organisation can make its residents feel at home through formal actions, such as setting up email accounts, offering career advancement and ongoing education, etc. For example, there are differences in how FAO treats its staff members and consultants. Staff are provided with more support from the organisation to feel at home and to create links of fidelity or loyalty with FAO, compared to consultants who have less possibility for recognition or encouragement, or in building their own competence

(as most of them have indicated). In a way, consultants must make a greater effort to feel at home in FAO, living always with the insecurity that they could potentially be 'kicked out' at just about any time.

Yet professionals themselves have to adapt to the organisation by learning the jargon, finding their way in the building, and learning the general functioning of the organisation. Depending on employees' personalities and the degree to which they feel 'at home', staff and consultants will deploy more or less agency in their work, using "tactics" and "strategies" (De Certeau 1984), including the use of informal channels and networks.

It should be mentioned that 'feeling at home' or not in a work place will have an influence not only in the quality of work one will provide, but also on the initiatives one is willing to undertake, thereby affecting the degree of agency one might deploy in practice. According to the discussion above, physical and structural elements do not suffice to make FAO staff and consultants feel at home. Feeling at home also depends on their perception of how they are being treated by the organisation, in turn depending on the personalities and management styles of their supervisors and their immediate working environments and working cultures. In other words, professionals' motivations may be affected by the type of reconstructed family they are able to find and to rely on in the work place.

This chapter has focused on the heterogeneity present at FAO-HQ in terms of organisational cultures and types of FAO residents. The next chapter will provide an overview of the "lived experience" of FAO professionals in two field offices, two very different types of FAO homes.

CHAPTER 5

FAO FIELD 'HOMES', PERSONNEL AND FIELDWORK IN WATERLAND AND IN MOUNTAINLAND

I was sent to Waterland and Mountainland as a livelihoods consultant. The title came as a surprise. It happened, in fact, when my colleague who was orchestrating my visit to Waterland, Eva, helped me revise my CV. The document came back to me with a bunch of revisions, but the most drastic one was right underneath my name, on the top and middle of the page, in bold characters: Eva had added "livelihoods consultant". I turned to her with question marks in my eyes, but she insisted and said it was not negotiable. The only thing I managed to negotiate with her was a crash course on what a livelihoods consultant is supposed to do. The course, or rather the conversation, seemed as vague as the title itself, and I was left to myself to discover the range of tasks I could achieve as a livelihoods consultant[82].

In travelling to both countries, I was puzzled by how different were the two contexts of work, by the great differences between the two FAO 'homes' in Waterland and Mountainland. In Waterland, I was involved mostly in a post-emergency situation, with some time spent on an ongoing development project called the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS, see chapter 2). It was the other way around in Mountainland, where I worked more closely with SPFS, and more occasionally on post-emergency projects. The most unusual feature of these missions was the time I had available. Instead of the casual FAO ten-day mission (which I discuss below), I was sent for a period of two months in each place (May-June 2006 in Waterland, and beginning of July to beginning of September 2006 in Mountainland). This was only possible because I worked for the LSP which had a very flexible approach to time spent abroad and because

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[82] Crewe (1997:74) describes a similar situation: "Thus, as an inevitable part of being a member of social order, I took on a body of knowledge, such as 'project cycle methodologies', gender awareness and how to do participatory rural appraisal."

funds were available. I also had the support of Edward, who felt that these missions would not only provide basic livelihoods assistance to FAO actions in two specific field locations, but also enable me to frame my HQ experience with the LSP in the wider FAO context. Indeed, moving from HQ to field offices called for adaptation.

This chapter draws on my experiences in both Waterland and Mountainland to continue the discussion started in chapter 4 regarding the diversity of actors and practices and the implications of being an FAO employee. However, instead of focusing on the 'home' that is HQ, this chapter travels to the field, where other kinds of FAO homes are created, thereby highlighting the differences with HQ, but even more importantly focusing on the differences from one 'field' to another: the geographical location, the general context of work, and especially, the personalities who shape and control the offices.

This chapter thus links together the two main themes of this research by illustrating the conditions of work of individuals in the field within the complexity present at various levels (HQ-field relations, field-field differences, local sectoral divisions and emergency versus development work, for example). The examples of Waterland and Mountainland shed light on the 'malleability' of an apparently rigid system in response to the agency and personalities of the human beings involved, and to the ever-shifting working environments and conditions. This chapter contributes to the overall thrust of the thesis through the deconstruction of the idea of 'one FAO', of a homogeneous organisation.

This chapter is divided into five sections, taking the reader on a tour of two different FAO field homes, and presenting the ways residents and visitors are involved in the creation and maintenance of these homes. The first section underlines the importance of fieldwork for the professionals working at FAO: most staff and consultants interviewed see great value in having field experience in order to carry out adequate work in FAO. The second section introduces FAO

field offices, and provides background information on the basic structures and elements which go into making up these homes.

The third section of the chapter focuses on the various personalities and characters who create the homes and give them life, without, however, being exhaustive: FAO Representatives who are in a sense the 'masters' of each of the FAO field homes, the frequent 'visitors' to the field homes, i.e. the visiting specialists who operate through the FAO mission system, the presence and lives of short-term consultants, examining how they relate to the field while on short-term assignments, and comparing their lives to those of experts on mission, or to the lives of international experts who used to be deployed for longer periods of time. Finally, the presence of national consultants is briefly discussed as well, opening a small window on the potential for differential treatment existing between national and international consultants. These actors or residents in a sense form reconstructed families, but as will be demonstrated, the 'Waterland family' was somewhat dysfunctional.

The fourth section of the chapter dives into the comparison between the field homes of Waterland and Mountainland, first describing the type of assignment I carried out and the contexts of work in each of the field offices, and then comparing the working atmospheres and the ways of working put in place by members of the local teams, and most notably by the FAO Representatives. I discuss how each of the field offices were organised and examine the influence of the personnel in place.

Since much of the discussion in Waterland revolves around emergency intervention, it seemed relevant to offer – in the fifth section of this chapter – an overview of emergency work by FAO in general, as a significant part of the organisation's funding now goes into emergency relief. The potential influence of donors, who fund FAO's work, is also tackled. This last section thus opens a parenthesis on emergency work, which is a compartmentalised world in and of

itself, within which figure many actors. This highlights yet another layer of the complexity which FAO staff and consultants have to deal with, resulting at times in conflicting situations between the different FAO departments.

I have chosen to use fictitious names for the countries visited, to provide extra protection to the staff and consultants. Field offices in each country form a small world, and some of the individuals discussed here, such as the FAO Representative, could easily be identified as they hold very particular positions. Thus, the names of the countries as well as the names of the natural disaster which struck these countries are fictitious. Only the name of the Special Programme for Food Security has been kept as this programme operates in more than 100 countries (FAO-SPFS website, January 2008).

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE FOR FAO PROFESSIONALS

The 'field' as referred to in HQ means not only the country offices spread around the world and the project locations, but also evokes each officer's experience of the field and their conceptions of what an ideal field experience should be. As discussed in the previous chapter, each technical officer tends to specialise in one country or a region, and is thus familiar with the corresponding offices, local staff, and local contexts: for each officer, 'the field' brings up different images and faces, and each has a different conception and experience of the field. Thus, the employee's construction of "social reality" (Dove 1994:336) in relation to the field is affected by many elements, including the political and social contexts, the people they meet, the type of work they do, their own view of development, and their position within the organisation. Even if there might be common memories or 'representations' of the field, there exists no formal or informal consensus on what should be an adequate field experience for FAO professionals.

It seems that the 'older generation' of FAO employees have had a different experience with regard to 'the field'. I remember being intimidated by one

particular woman, aged around fifty years old, who had spent many years in the field though not always for FAO. She referred to her 'international career' which meant that she had lived for long periods of time (two to five years) in different countries, only entering HQ late in her career. In her view, living abroad was crucially lacking among young consultants. She regretted that what she called 'international careers' seemed to have dropped from the radar, when they were so needed to conduct adequate work in FAO. She did not believe that ten-day missions qualified as field experience.

Her position reflected what a majority of officers generally think: there exists a strong and coherent relationship between "desk" and "field" (Mosse 2006b). In fact, there is a wide range of types of field experiences – not all of them have been developed equally, and not all staff have the same receptivity towards the field. Yet, all interviewed agree that field experience is required in order to do good work in FAO.

In some ways, this view of the importance of contextually-based knowledge recalls Malinowskian ethnographic field methods (Mosse 2006b), without, however, being comparable to "anthropological" or "ethnographic"[83] fieldwork involving long term stay, learning the language, and understanding the socio-cultural context as much as possible (see chapter 1 for an encompassing description). While some FAO officers certainly have greater knowledge of the field than others, what is described as "field experience" mostly concerns an ability to 'function' in another country – knowing the general and basic rules – as well as a certain knowledge of the political, social, cultural and economic context. This could be qualified on the one hand as 'operational' knowledge, though this does not exclude the fact that at the same time some FAO employees are testing

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[83] Ferguson (1994:29) has also argued that development discourses would be unacceptable to academia, and that academic types of discourses are sometimes excluded from development With regard to the fieldwork, I believe the same would apply: academic and development practitioners see fieldwork as important for very different reasons and serve different purposes, both answering to their "own ideological and institutional constraints".

"theory" against the "reality" of the field, and thus with time and experience acquire deeper levels of understanding.

Indeed, there are various degrees of field experience among FAO staff and consultants. Some officers have lived in various countries throughout their professional lives, while others were born and grew up in different countries as children of diplomats or development workers. In Joshua's case:

> "I grew up in development; it was like the family business. My father worked for the UN, so we grew up around the world. Life was about development work." (Joshua)

Then, there are those who have lived in the field for medium-term stays, a year or sometimes less in one location, and who have been moving around constantly. There are also those who have entered FAO as HQ officers and who have been on countless ten-days missions, and others who are still longing for opportunities to go to the field from HQ. It takes time to figure out who is who, and who has been where, but with time, officers recognise each other by their competencies, and those who have lived abroad for long periods of times are recognised for their specific knowledge of these places.

In any case, all professionals interviewed agree that everyone working in the organisation should have some first hand knowledge of the places they work in or on. Otherwise, narratives can only be unrealistic[84], to use Roe's expression

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[84] Ferguson (1994) demonstrated that issues of poverty are de-politicised by development agencies, and he labelled the development industry an "anti-politics machine". "The "instrument-effect," then, is two-fold: alongside the institutional effect of expanding bureaucratic state power is the conceptual or ideological effect of depoliticizing both poverty and the state" (*ibid*:256). From an 'internal' point of view, however, the perception of professionals is that technical tools, combined with a sound knowledge of a given regional reality, are best indicated in trying to solve poverty issues, and in FAO's case, with the help or approval of national governments and donors alike. Inasmuch as technical tools might exclude political considerations, the implementation of a project remains political especially when conducted in cooperation with the state, without, however, necessarily solving deep-rooted issues. It is beyond the scope of this research to discuss the ways project narratives are established and maintained within FAO. However, FAO staff insisted on the need to consider the local context as much as possible when doing normative work and in field interventions.

(1991). In other words, knowing the field is the only way to "make the best out of blueprint development and enter into a 'learning process approach'" (Roe 1991:288).

Interviewees have specified that field experience should be a requirement regardless of the type of work one carries out in FAO. Everyone encountered agreed that for all technicians acting in various sectors, field experience was considered mandatory, and it was an ideal for those who were still looking for their chances to acquire field experience. Some professionals had radical opinions regarding field experience:

> "You are not supposed to be in FAO if you have not been in the field, this is unacceptable. You have to live the problem, otherwise, you do not realise your privilege. I have no patience for people who have not been in the field. […] Field experience is never enough if you want to do development work. APOs[85] should all be in the field and HQ should be for retiring people aged of fifty and above". (Johanna)

Although some informants indicated that perhaps the staff working on administrative types of tasks could be an exception in terms of the need to be familiar with the field, others implied that knowing the realities of the field would provide administrators with a better sense of the reasons they worked for FAO.

> "It makes sense to know the field. [...] In the technical divisions, people need to have been in the field. There is lots of value added in seeing where the problems are, how countries are different and have their own issues. The more you are exposed to the field, the more you are exposed to issues" (Sophie).

But the field also has various levels to differentiate it (Dove 1994; Ferguson 1994; Li 2007; Mosse 2005b)[86]. There are the FAO Representations (generally located

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[85] APOs are Associate Professional Officers. Young professionals, generally aged around 30, can apply for these positions in their respective countries, and it is their country of origin which pays for their salaries while they work at FAO, or in other UN agencies hosting this programme. APOs are generally hired for periods of 2 years. See also Harrison (2003) for a discussion regarding APO's particular situation within the organisation.
[86] Some authors including Dove (1994), Ferguson (1994), Li (2007) and Mosse (2005a) have demonstrated - through their account of development projects and their own engagements as

in capitals), field offices (often far away from the capitals), and project work taking place in even more remote areas. Those who work on policy advising duties often have to stay in capitals as they are dealing with people sitting in ministries. Technicians, however, are more inclined to work outside the capitals where projects operate. Hence, in theory, one can be based in the capital and still be somewhat disconnected from certain regional field realities. Thus, what one person considers as 'the field' may not correspond to someone else's views.

> "Field experience has to be valorised, but without falling into religious advocacy. From HQ, it is easy to see things in a schematic way, clear, and simple. But when one has set foot on the field, you see that things are not so simple. Expectations are then more realistic, and the support you can provide to field operations is more relevant and realistic". (Jerry)

Additionally, field experience was valued not only as knowledge FAO professionals should have, but also as an indicator of attitude towards development work in general, and capacity to develop adequate sensitivities to people and working environments. That reality is not everywhere the same is an important notion for development workers in general.

> "From fieldwork, you learn that people are important first, not just the job. This was a big paradigm change for me. In some places, you cannot talk about work right away. You have to ask about the wife and kids first. […] You won't get that from a University or HQ. […] The field makes a difference in how one approaches and understands things." (Edward)

With the 2006 Reform, FAO increasingly became dedicated to knowledge management and it was made clear that FAO would redirect the core of its activities toward normative work rather than field interventions (see chapter 2). FAO was increasingly moving towards contracting local organisations to carry out fieldwork, which is supposed to be less costly for the organisation, and to help in

consultants - the great many types of actors and situations one may face when working in the 'field'. Any given situation may be perceived differently by a variety of actors at the national level, depending on their position, relationships, needs, and culture, etc. Some are project participants, others are part of the national government, and still others work for international organisations.

'building capacity' at the national level. Yet this change has been overtly criticised by many within FAO, as for them, the quality of normative work is intrinsically linked to and builds on the field work FAO can achieve, and importantly, their knowledge of the field. In fact, according to many, both should be part of a reciprocal loop.

> "It is too bad in FAO, a global institution, to take a step away from field operations as there is still a need for it. FAO has lots of experience and there is a dynamic on the ground that has been established. We will lose touch with reality, and will be unable to respond to needs. We cannot do only normative work, it needs the field. We need examples, pilots, lessons built into normative work" (Josephine).

By being less present in the field, some feared that FAO would lose its essence and importantly lose touch with the ones it is supposed to help. This resonates with the old debate on 'theory versus practice'. In attributing value to field work in FAO, staff and consultants are in some ways joining Black Knippers (1990) and Hobart (1993) in their claim that the links between theory and practice are too scarce in the world of development and must be augmented. In fact, FAO staff and consultants worried that by losing touch with the context of the field, they would become part of "a purified world of discourse, disengaged from the 'field' realities, unfettered by the contradictions of implementation" (Mosse 2005a:197). For all staff and consultants interviewed, "field" and "desk" (Mosse 2006b) are interrelated and feeding off one another. There cannot be accurate narratives – or "plausible assertions" (Roe 1991) – if there is a disconnect from the particular contexts of the field.

According to many in FAO, the articulation[87] between "desk" and "field" is crucial, vital in fact, in the fulfilment of the organisation's aims. Notwithstanding the various nuanced ways of perceiving the relationship of 'practices' to 'narratives'

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[87] Li (2000) borrows the concept of articulation from Hall (1985) to discuss indigenous identities in Indonesia. In the context of this research, however, the concept of articulation, "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions" (Hall 1996: 141, in Li 2000:152), is used to describe how professionals, in FAO's organisational context, face the challenge of constantly ensuring the links between practice and policy.

(Dove 1994; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994; Li 1997; Mosse 2005a, Roe 1991; among many others, see chapter 1), articulating the two is a commonly acknowledged and constant challenge for FAO's professionals, especially for those sitting in HQ who are isolated from the field *per se*. Knowing the field, therefore, constitutes the only possible guarantee – at some level – for more accurate narratives, meaning more contextually-based narratives. There was a general agreement with Roe's assertion that "practitioners will have to deal much more enterprisingly with a form of development that persists regardless and, at times, in spite of what is learned in the field" (Roe 1991:288). The staff interviewed aimed at including lessons learned from the field as much as possible in their ongoing work.

FAO staff and consultants constantly deal with bridging the differences – as best they can – between policy and implementation, or between 'documents' and 'concrete actions'. When "desks collapse into field" (Mosse 2006b:937), there can be hardships of 'translation' in terms of transposing the 'written' into 'action' and conversely transforming action into experience, and feeding it back into documents. However, if field experience may be difficult to integrate into documents – and so perhaps into the memory of the organisation – it is absorbed by the individuals, and transformative of their behaviours when they acquire a greater sense of reality as a "lived experience" (Long 2001). FAO's *virage* towards being a 'knowledge organisation' was of great concern for most, and many were highly critical of the damage that could be done to the quality of FAO's work if contact with field contexts was lost.

Thus, invariably, staff and consultants interviewed greatly valued field experience as an enhancement of the capacity to do relevant and adequate work in FAO. As one interviewee indicated:

> "Knowing the field creates two categories of people: those who know what they are talking about and those who "heard about" what they are talking about". (Amy)

Clearly, then, these two epistemic communities (Mosse 2006b:938) – those who know the field and those who do not – mark a divide between FAO personnel (I discuss this further in chapter 6). There was a wide recognition that knowledge and skills, and perhaps sensitivities, can only be gathered from doing field work, and that the 'experience' of the field does not equal 'knowledge of' the field.

FAO FIELD OFFICES: STRUCTURES AND FIELD REALITIES

FAO is different everywhere. None of the seventy-four country Representations are exactly the same. There is no blue print of what an FAO field office should be like as many factors contribute to shaping them: the local government, the local working conditions, the FAO Representative him/herself, the recruited staff and consultants, etc. The physical location and quality of FAO offices often depend on the generosity of the local government, or simply on the availability of buildings in a given city. FAO Representations are generally located in the capitals, with smaller field offices located up-country where projects and programmes are taking place.

Within the capitals, offices can have different structures, and I have encountered two different models while working in Waterland and in Mountainland. In one model, FAO offices were 'split' or distributed among different local ministries, as was the case in Waterland: the team working on agriculture had an office with the local Ministry of Agriculture, while the FAO fishery experts sat within the Ministry of Fisheries, for example. The idea behind this model is to enable FAO staff to work closely with the staff of local ministries and vice versa. However, as will be discussed below, this office configuration reproduces the sectoral compartmentalisation of HQ, and often prevents FAO officers from collaborating and sharing resources between them. I come back to this point below.

In the second model, the FAO personnel worked under the roof of the FAO Representation, as I have seen in Mountainland. Here more emphasis was put on the development and effective functioning of the satellite offices 'up-country', from which most staff actually worked. As will be demonstrated below, this form of office configuration seemed more propitious for collaborative work and frequent meetings between FAO professionals and teams. However, the relations with ministries were then left to particular individuals, which meant that the burden of entertaining favourable relations with the government rested on fewer shoulders. These configurations thus make for different working atmospheres and affect the communications between FAO personnel and their ties with the different ministries, as the examples of Waterland and Mountainland will illustrate.

Some Organisational Realities of the 'Field'

Technically, FAO is supposed to work closely with or for the local government, which is why most FAO offices are located within or close to government buildings. To be sure, good collaboration with the government does not depend only on the physical setting and proximity, but on the capacity and willingness of the government to work and collaborate with FAO, on personal relations with the FAO Representation and the ministries' staff, and on the capacity of the government to deploy staff to work specifically with FAO (such as the presence of agricultural extensionists[88] for example). In the case of Waterland the government did not have funds available to hire additional extensionists to work specifically with FAO staff on common projects. This meant that FAO staff often could not rely on their local counter parts, which sometimes slowed down the projects.

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[88] Extentionists in this context are in charge of "educating" and advising project participants on topics related to agriculture.

However, the physical setting does play a role in favouring (or not) concentrated, focused work and collaboration. The type of office itself might even be a factor in providing favourable working conditions. While travelling, one can see that government offices in poorer countries do not look anything like the offices of those in Canada, for example. Sometimes, what we take for granted as 'normal' working conditions, such as windows, phones, pens and paper, computers, internet, filing cabinets – everything that makes working life easy – are hard to find or become shared equipment in the Ministries of less well-endowed governments. I remember visiting the Senegalese Ministry of Fisheries, a huge tall building, crumbling under water infiltration, where the elevators did not work any more. When one has to climb up to the eighth floor in temperatures of over thirty degrees Celsius, one had best be fit.

At times, the governmental buildings where FAO offices are located are wet, dusty, cramped and stale. Sometimes FAO partnering organisations are also lacking in terms of facilities and equipment, which again can impede work and collaboration. This was experienced by Brian, a friend and fellow consultant who had to organise a workshop on land rights with a newly formed land coalition over in Sandland. However, it proved difficult to find a venue to hold the workshop: "They have ONE desk and that is it. We are working on buying them tables and chairs and a generator and maybe some computers" (Brian).

Security can also be an issue in some places. In Waterland for example, I was not allowed to go everywhere in the country, or I had to make a specific request to go in particular areas for security reasons, which meant that collaboration with satellite offices was in a sense geographically constrained. Beyond making collaboration difficult, the mental concentration of workers and the planned daily work can certainly be affected by emails such as this one forwarded to me once by Brian from Sandland:

> "[…] has received new information about a credible threat that an extremist group based in [Sandland] is likely to target western interests.

214

> Although the extent of the nature of threat is not fully clear at this stage, given the focus of extremists on the UN presence in [Sandland] it is possible that the primary target of this threat is the UN. Threats of this nature must always be taken seriously and staff are therefore requested to remain vigilant and alert".

Security was a problem for Brian in Sandland, who had to have his movements approved and escorted. The combination of security issues and office location and facilities can make for harsh working conditions:

> "Also because after spending a week in […] with no water to take a shower and no food for two days I came back […] this morning with UNHCR to find that the whole city is in locked-down. UN staff cannot circulate here because yesterday about 1000 soldiers from the […] army went through the streets firing in the air and shooting government cars because they haven't been paid for six months or so...the place is still very tense and we cannot leave the compound..." (Brian)

The internationally-recruited FAO professionals have to deal with such turns of event, in addition to dealing with the local context in which the offices themselves are embedded. Cultural features such as social conventions, religion, food habits, education, and ways to engage with others, can sometimes make the life of development practitioners either enjoyable or difficult.

An example was the food in Waterland. The Waterlanders enjoy spicy food, which, as a foreigner, you can enjoy only until your stomach catches on fire. When away from the capital, I ate local food, asking colleagues for things that were not so spicy, and paying particular attention to everything new that ended up on my plate. Still, colleagues would get a kick out of watching me turn red and sweat while eating food that was not considered spicy. When possible, however, and especially in the capital, most international staff would gather to frequent the few restaurants where international types of food were available. For me personally this was a way to preserve whatever was left of my stomach, not to fulfil a desire to eat with the expatriate community. For health reasons, I was

somewhat constrained food-wise, which kept me from integrating and sharing more with my national colleagues.

Field Relations with HQ: Office Personnel and Missions

Field offices across the world are filled with a mix of national and international officers. The quality of this 'arranged marriage' between the two varies from one office to the next, though there are a few constant features. International staff are often in decision-making positions and manage a crew of national officers. International staff are generally the ones bringing in the technical or specialised expertise (though not always) while national staff are generally supporting assistants, administrative personnel, and 'casual' labour such as drivers, cleaners, receptionists, etc. Perhaps a more frequent situation is best portrayed in the ephemeral passage of specialists who come on short missions to provide their technical inputs, what Stirrat (2000:35) has labelled "transient" consultancy teams, on a variety of issues. However, some field offices also have their own national specialists, as was the case both in Mountainland and with the SPFS team in Waterland.

It would be tempting to state that most decisions in field offices are taken by international staff, but this varies from one office to another. In the Waterland Emergency unit for example, decisions were left to the Emergency Coordinator, an international consultant (I come back to this point below). If international consultants and staff had, at most, a little more leverage than national consultants in making their opinion known, they did not play a role in decision-making *per se*, and there were no consultation or meeting mechanisms established. In Mountainland, however, the only international staffer with decision-making power was the FAO Representative, and I worked closely enough with him to observe that if he had the last word on every decision to be made, he also worked closely with his team through frequent meetings, in

addition to discussing important matters with his Deputy Representative on a regular basis. Without being able to assess the part played by the team in his final decisions, I will show further in this chapter that the simple fact of consulting the team about both the implementation and decision processes positively changed the working atmosphere in the office.

PERSONNEL IN FIELD HOMES: FAO REPRESENTATIVES, EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS

FAO Representatives

In simple terms, FAO Representatives are the local 'bosses' of FAO Representations. They have the authority, among other things, to release and request funds, ensure linkages with donors and local governments, manage staff, and supervise field interventions. FAO Representatives are or should be key individuals in the good functioning of FAO activities at country level, and are important in maintaining the links between field offices and HQ[89]. Yet FAO Representatives are nominated, or 'political appointments', to use the consecrated term in FAO, and have a diplomatic status. These political appointments are made by the Director General himself, depending on the daily politics, so to speak. However, as Edward remarked:

> "It is true that the decision on who to appoint as an FAO Representative is taken by the DG, but then so are the decisions on all FAO managerial posts, from Service Chief on up". (Edward)

FAO Representatives as a group do not enjoy a positive reputation among FAO staff and consultants. Most staff I have discussed with had doubts regarding the criteria on which the DG bases his decision to hire particular individuals as FAO

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[89] Staff and consultants within field offices maintain the links with FAO-HQ in different ways. There are the virtual links, through emails, phone and conference call discussions, the UN pouch (mail), and importantly, the movements of personnel going back and forth to/from the field, through what are commonly called missions (see below).

Representatives. I have often heard (but could not verify) that these positions were used to make or return favours to friends in various governments, or to respond to demands of donor countries. It is reported that these positions can be used as one element of leverage in negotiation of funding allocations to FAO: a country gives FAO money for a programme and one of its civil servants becomes the head of a country office, and vice versa. These political transactions are seen as negative by FAO staff primarily because there is no guarantee that the appointed FAO Representative has the required competencies: the selection process for Representatives is essentially opaque.

> "There are weaknesses in the FAO Representatives, in their persons. […] They think of themselves as ambassadors but they are not really active or proactive with donors and most do not know what FAO can offer. They are politically appointed, for example ex-ministries of agriculture, or sometimes donor representatives, and have been posted there as a favour. They are not always good administrators and are not informed of the wide range of work FAO does". (Marylyn)

Some interviewees even surmise that the current DG, although probably wanting to hire competent FAO Representatives, does not have an adequate way to evaluate the competency of FAO Representatives ahead of time, and may simply not be aware of on-going difficulties with FAO Representatives. Further, personal contacts between FAO Representatives and the FAO Director General are most likely rare and abbreviated.

Evidently, there was no way for a junior consultant to observe first hand any of these diplomatic transactions, but the results certainly are observable in the person of the nominated Representative him/herself, as noted above by Marylyn. Often times, Representatives have no previous experience with FAO, or no field experience, or no experience in agriculture or natural resource management, or indeed sometimes, simply no experience in management or human resource management. In addition, since FAO Representatives cannot serve in their own country (to avoid potential conflict of interests and pressures for corruption that may be entrenched in long established personal networks), some of them had

never visited their new host country prior to being nominated. Thus, while learning to navigate within FAO, many Representatives also have to learn the life and cultures of a country they are not familiar with, adding another layer to the complexity of their tasks and their adaptation.

Yet, FAO Representatives are by no means always incompetent, even if politically appointed, and it sometimes happens that highly-experienced FAO senior technical officers are nominated as FAO Representatives:

> "Some of the best FAO Representatives I myself worked with were FAO technical staff appointed as Representatives. Yet one of the worst FAO Representatives I have worked with had also been FAO technical staff, but he was not a good technician either!" (Edward)

FAO Representatives often have a lot of power locally, and some of them were recognised for their capacities to manage their office and to supervise their team well. Particular individuals were also recognised for being sensitive to the issues which the people in their host countries were facing and for finding creative ways to deal with on-going problems. Some of them use informal channels, as do the staff at HQ, in order to accelerate the work and minimise the dealings with HQ bureaucracy:

> "I have worked with the FAO Representative in […] who knows how to work the system and does not tell everything he does to HQ" (Stephen).

Representatives constantly have to go back and forth with HQ, for approvals of all sorts, especially for spending and procurement issues:

> "The FAO Representative wields considerable power within the FAO country establishment, but, at least in the case of an emergency context like [Sandland], FAO-Rome can supersede his authority rather easily by placing restrictions on spending authority. FAO Representatives are often well-entrenched in the host-country politics and this can surely help them understand the feasibility of project implementation (i.e. having the right political sensibilities) but it might also restrict them from pushing the envelop very far. I have experience

with two FAO Representatives […] and both seemed to be open to engaging on some of the more politically sensitive issues we were working on but they were also cautious". (Brian)

However, FAO Representatives, just like FAO-HQ managers, do not receive much guidance from FAO as to what is expected of them in terms of management styles or general performances (see chapter 4).

"FAO Representatives when hired in from outside of FAO will usually know very little about FAO's structure, function, and competencies. Nor do they come with an already-established network of colleagues in FAO on whom they can call to help make things move, or know who to contact for good professional advice. I believe that there is something like a one or two week orientation in HQ for FAO Representatives […], but this is far short of the time needed for someone to really understand how the organisation works" (Edward)

Only recently was there training offered to FAO Representatives and Emergency coordinators. The training, however, concerned Emergency preparedness, and did not offer guidance regarding expected or good management practices. Accordingly, it can happen that FAO Representatives go through long and sometimes slow learning processes, and depending on their personalities, will impose or not their ways of working, and their ideas of good FAO work. The examples of Waterland and Mountainland (below) will show differences in how the personalities of the FAO Representatives can influence the working atmosphere and staff collaboration in their respective offices.

FAO Representatives are generally supported by a Deputy Representative who is always hired at the national level. Hiring staff in positions of power at the national level may come with a share of issues, as Edward observed from his own experience in the field:

"You can imagine the difficulties of recruiting nationally at the level of competence required, as well as the difficulty of doing such recruiting independently of local political pressures, to say nothing of trying to keep the national FAO programme from being captured by special interests at national level" (Edward).

On the other hand, Deputy Representatives help foreign FAO Representative's 'grounding' in the local context, and provide for valuable links with staff at the national level who may be helpful for project implementation, political connections, information on local culture, etc. It is most likely the case that each field office establishes a particular division between the work of the Representative and the Deputy Representative. Generally, FAO Representatives have a greater role to play in finding funds for projects, whereas deputy Representatives may be more involved in overseeing field operations.

The Mission System

The Origins of the Mission System

The FAO Representations are frequently visited by a variety of experts who, as a group, are important yet imperfect glue between the decentralised offices and HQ. The field is visited by specialists, project managers, donor representatives, evaluators, etc, – the list can be long – coming from HQ, from one of the Regional offices, or from just about anywhere if they include multilateral and bilateral donors (i.e. national development agencies such as USAID, DFID, and the EU). In essence, individuals are requested either by HQ or by the country office to bring in/provide a specific expertise.

It should be briefly noted that the mission system has something paternalistic to it, perhaps stemming from the colonial heritage of development intervention, as it relies on the principle that the expertise is not local by definition, but will rather come from elsewhere (Crewe 1997). The colonial nature of development intervention has been discussed at length in anthropological literature (Bryant and White 1982; Cooper 1997; Cowen and Shenton 1995, 1996; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Eyben 2000; Ferguson 1997; Larrain 1989; Li 2007; Minogue and Kothari 2002; Owusu 1975; Pottier 1993; Rist 1997; Watts 1995; Williams 1978, 1995; Worsley 1984, among others).

Development, as a post-war endeavour was "something to be done to and for Africa, not with it" (Cooper 1997:65), and was to include poorer countries into an "industrial mode of production" (Esteva 1992:9). In this sense, "development has functioned as a mechanism of power for the production and management of the Third World" (Escobar 1991:676). Some authors see the dichotomy between 'donors' and 'recipients' as the continuation or reproduction of the colonial bureaucratic system (Bryant and White 1982; Li 2007[90]), as it supposes that donors "have a better understanding of a country's needs that its own government" (Crewe and Harrison 1998:69). Donors, however, justify their interventions by claiming "that the principal object of their development interventions is to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for all" (Minogue and Kothari 2002:181).

Accordingly, the notion of foreign expertise also stems from "evolutionist" conceptions that "all 'locals' (urban or rural, irrespective of class or training) are behind the 'Westerners' in terms of education" (Crewe 1997:73). This often translates into assumptions that 'western' expertise has more to offer compared to local knowledge, and at times, "the word 'local' is often used in an equivalent way to the discredited term 'native'" (*ibid*: 73). It indeed overlooks the necessity of contextually-based knowledge for the purpose of development. As Crewe observed:

> "Their body of superior knowledge does not exist in any objective sense, but relies on constant reiteration and renewal of development language, methods and rules. This process is silent so that the experts appear neutral in theory, while in practice they reinvent their powerful position". (*ibid*: 75).

Organisations of development such as FAO still rely on expatriate knowledge in both establishing policies and advising in situations of field intervention,

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[90] Li (2007) has indeed demonstrated that "trusteeship" has not changed over the years, yet moved from colonial aims, to state expansion, and then to international development, or what she calls "neocolonial iterations" (2007:282). I come back to this point below.

regardless of "its historical link to explicitly racialist theories prevalent during colonial times" (*ibid*: 73).

However, the reproduction of a 'colonial attitude' depends – according to my experience – on their personalities and views of development. As Crewe (1997) indicated:

> "Their practices must be watched within the context of their institutional affiliation, their gender, their nationality, their class and identity, for to sweep all expatriates into one pigeon-hole is as misleading as generalizing about 'locals' (*ibid*: 77).

Indeed, some specialists I have met were like open books and represented endless sources of information for their local counterparts, and really did provide useful guidance. One Brazilian expert was particularly good at opening dialogues with the local staff and at addressing their needs in terms of technical expertise rather than imposing his views. It was also clear how much he was appreciated by the local team. The other extreme was an HQ officer who visited Mountainland for two days shortly before I arrived. He was critical and negative regarding the work the team was doing, without, however, listening to what they had to say. The team was still recovering from the shock of his visit when I arrived and a team member told me he hoped this officer would not come back anytime soon. There is a sort of power relation that is established when someone comes from Rome, but again, it depends in part on the position of that person within the Roman hierarchy, and in part on their personalities and willingness to be at the service of the team in place.

Experts and the Mission System

Missions can be imposed by HQ for a variety of reasons such as activity monitoring, sorting through financial situations, discussion with ministries, project evaluations, etc. In the case of projects, funds are often, if not always, budgeted specifically for missions from HQ or Regional offices for the supervising unit (in

FAO jargon, for those who 'backstop' a project from HQ) and for specialists to travel and provide their expertise sporadically to the team in place. Missions from HQ last about ten days on average, and depending on the officer and their particular task, can be more or less frequent. Some HQ officers went on mission almost every month, others every once in a while. Some officers managed to combine their missions to different countries, leaving FAO-HQ for periods of twenty days to one month. Missions to one country can also be shorter than ten days, perhaps lasting only two to five days, especially in the case of combined missions to different FAO country offices of the same region. For example, when I worked on the evaluation of an FAO Fishery programme in West Africa, I visited two countries within ten days (see chapter 6). It should also be mentioned that missions can also be requested, when needed, from the various field offices.

Opinions on the efficiency of the mission system vary. Missions are considered either too short or too long, depending on whom you talk to, but mostly depending on one's overall field experience. For experienced professionals, carrying out work based on short-term missions might not always be a problem. However, staff and consultants whose knowledge and experience of the field is limited entirely to a series of short missions do not benefit from the same credibility. As Sophie indicated, it does not mean that professionals who have lived in the field do better work than those who know the field through missions:

> "I have met people who have lived in the field for 5 years but did not see the added value to their work. Others who have been there for 10 missions have acquired better knowledge". (Sophie)

Because of the time constraints, most missions tend to be highly organised and structured in order to maximise the amount of work done in a short time period[91]. However, the fact that missions are so tightly structured is also seen as a shield

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[91] Mosse (2005b) also discusses this issue of structured and time-constrained visits to the field sites.

which prevents the staff from learning about the local context, giving them little freedom to actually see and live the field outside FAO's work.

> "Missions are too short and too organised. Staff use business class and 4 stars hotels and a lot of money goes into this. We attend 3 day workshops 50 km away from the capital and we are welcomed with FAO banners and everything is organised ahead of time. That is not the field. People have really lived the field fifteen years ago". (Cynthia)

However, what one can understand from a short mission depends not only on one's previous experience in the field, but also on one's personality and capacity for interpersonal interactions.

> "You can through short missions get to re-know a country. I went back to [a country of Latin America] after thirty years, and knew a lot even if it has changed. Part of the network I knew still existed. Sometimes, missions are better than nothing". (Edward)

Since most funds for missions are to be found in individual FAO projects and programmes it is very difficult to quantify the amount of money spent by the organisation on missions. One thing certain, however, is that missions are expensive. In addition to their normal salary, officers and experts get paid generous *per diems* which are determined according to the destination (for example: in Waterland, I was given 120$ a day to pay for hotel and three meals, but in Mountainland, which is more expensive, I was given 183$ per day for hotel and three meals) and flight tickets (either the ticket itself for staff, or a lump sum for consultants who have to arrange and pay for their tickets themselves).

From a field perspective, missions from HQ are often said to be useless and time consuming for the team in place. When I was in Waterland and Mountainland, I was told by local teams about how much time they spent with experts on mission, coordinating the visits, and answering to the needs and demands of experts who left reports and recommendations behind them that in the end, seemed to be rarely taken into account. I was told many stories of specific visiting experts who

cared and were more conscientious than others, of those who drank a lot during their mission, or who disliked local foods, etc.

From an HQ perspective, however, missions are generally the only concrete link of HQ staff with field realities. Returning experts have to produce a report to be submitted to their supervisor, and sometimes to the project donor (in FAO jargon, a BTOR, a Back-to-Office Report). Missions are often the only way to de-virtualise relationships with the field, and for the professionals sitting in HQ to take stock of some contextual realities of the team in place, at least as much as possible given the timeframe of the mission. Otherwise, in between missions most discussions and contact with field officers are done through email and phone conversations. Missions are also an occasion to put faces on many names. In other words, missions have the merit of briefly connecting or re-connecting HQ staff with field realities, even if for a short period of time, and in spite of a tight schedule.

Long-term, Short-term, International, and National Consultants

The Decreasing Presence of International Long-Term Staff and Consultants in the Field

Aside from the presence of FAO Representatives, the presence of long-term international officers is diminishing in the field, as already discussed. Indeed, just as in HQ, short-term consultancies are increasingly 'in vogue' as a working condition in the field, or as a human resource management strategy, especially with regard to emergency situations. As discussed in chapter 4, the underlying assumption behind this strategy is that it is less costly for the organisation to hire staff and consultants on an *ad hoc* basis, when needed, even in cases when the job to be done corresponds to an ongoing need for the organisation rather than a punctual task. Although no one ever tried to actually put an opportunity cost on these consultancies, there are concrete losses in terms of human resources – in terms of trained and 'FAO-knowledgeable' human resources – and in terms of

institutional memory, as observed in chapter 4 in regard to HQ. As Toby, an international consultant met in Waterland said:

> "At the country level with a high turn over of international staff, […] a lot of the memory is dependent on national staff who tend to work for FAO for long periods. These national staffs pass on their knowledge to incoming internationals. How this works between countries, regions, programmes, I have no idea. It struck me that the institutional memory was locked in individuals, thus leaving FAO vulnerable to memory loss as staff depart or move to another country". (Toby)

This decreasing presence of long term international staff predates the recent 2006 FAO Reform but was exacerbated when FAO's intention to become a knowledge management and normative organisation was reaffirmed, thus increasingly leaving aside field activities, or encouraging FAO to contract field operations to local organisations. In a sense, this answered to anthropologists' critique which advocated giving more space to and building the capacity of local expertise in development work, so that people in the field would own the means to their own development (Cernea 1995; Chambers 1997).

Before, just like the FAO Representatives, FAO's internationally-recruited employees were out-posted for periods of time varying usually from two to five years:

> "FAO (and other development agencies) have always used an important number of consultants. What is new is that in earlier times, a field project would have at least as many person/months (often much more) of the long-term international experts, more than the person/months of the short term field consultants. The short term field consultants would usually have been supervised by and work directly with the long term field staff. (For example, when I was running the sub-project in [Africa], about 2/3 of the person/months in my staff inputs were longer-term consultants (and APOs) and about 1/3 short term national and international consultants). What is really different now is that the longer-term international field staff are virtually absent from the field scene (at least for FAO). […] The vast preponderance of FAO field inputs by international experts is now done by short term consultants." (Edward)

Long term contracts allowed development workers to take along their families, register their kids in local schools, and perhaps find a better balance between professional and personal lives. Edward himself is a good example of this. After six years in FAO HQ, he was out-posted for ten years as an FAO fishery programme manager based in West Africa. His family successively lived in two different African countries where his son attended school, and where his youngest daughter was born and lived the first years of her life. By living in poor regions of West Africa, Edward and his family learned about the local culture, learned foreign languages, developed networks around professional and social life, etc. When I travelled to West Africa for a programme evaluation, I happened to work in one of the countries Edward and his family had lived in for many years but had left more than a decade ago. Some of the local team members I met still remembered Edward and his wife, and some still worked on initiatives Edward had helped launched.

On the Lives of Short-Term Field Consultants

Just as described for HQ (see chapter 4), even decision-making positions in the field are now often filled through short-term consultancies, generally for periods of time varying from two to eleven months. It should be mentioned however, that a distinction has to be made here between field 'consultants" and field 'staff'. Field staff generally have year-long contracts which give them the right to FAO staff benefits, including home leave, school fees, and importing/ exporting their families to the working country. However, during my visits to Waterland and Mountainland, I met only a few individuals with actual 'field staff' contracts. Hence, the remaining of this section focuses on 'field consultants'.

Short-term consultants' contracts may be renewed and often are, but consultants cannot count on being renewed and cannot plan ahead. This short-term aspect changes much of the professionals' relations to the places in which they work,

and especially the ways they can afford to integrate themselves and learn about their host country. For example, consultants who have children may find that a six-month contract is not enough to justify moving an entire family to a foreign country. Yet, sending children to a local school, to continue with this example, offers an opportunity to learn about the local school systems, to meet local families outside work, to find out about local customs and holidays, etc. This is a simple example, and perhaps officers who move to foreign countries more typically send their children to international and private schools, which are also attended by local population but perhaps by the most well-off classes. Still, such considerations illustrate how development workers could learn a great deal about a place by being personally involved in the wider society outside work, offering occasions to bond with people of different socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic identities, and religious beliefs.

Thus, by not having options to become personally involved through getting a driver's license or buying a house, for example, consultants lose important opportunities to learn about possibilities and constraints of the local social, economic and political contexts. Short-term consultants find themselves a bit 'locked into' their working conditions and have fewer possibilities to acquire knowledge about the country they work in. Although there is never any guarantee of one's capacity to get immersed in the local culture, depending as it does on many external and personal factors, facing the necessity to socialise outside work and outside a community of expatriates may help. Short-term contracts have thus changed the lives of development workers, and the type of field work they experience. Their contact with work places is more sporadic, shallow, and marked by the lack of possibilities for personal involvement outside work. Their short-term consultant status comes with difficulties in establishing a normal life, not knowing how much time they will be in a place, and being far away from their families and social networks.

Consequently, short-term consultants find themselves in constant processes of adaptation. When one arrives in a new place, it takes a while to orient oneself easily: finding the grocery store, the market, the post office, a place to stay, where to go and where not to go, let alone dealing with the local bureaucracy and learning the basics of the local manners sufficiently not to insult anyone. Soon after this 'orientation phase' follows an 'adaptation phase'; yet once familiar with the environment and ready to reach deeper levels of social and cultural understanding, consultants typically have to leave, and perhaps start over in another country.

In addition to 'floating' in their host country, consultants are isolated from their on-going social and family lives and have to deal with somewhat long periods of physical and emotional separation from their loved ones, and vice-versa.

> […] we are living our real life (it's real in Sandland or Rome or wherever for us). But we forget the things that make up the real life of our families and friends (and used to be part of our real life). It's something I have been thinking a lot about lately. (Brian)

To cite a *cliché*, time is a relative concept: six months to learn about a new place and a new job is a short period of time, yet six months away from family may seem like a life-time. I have met many consultants who missed their families terribly, and who spent ludicrous amounts of money on telephone bills. But problems really arise when consultants are offered a contract renewal. If employed originally for a period of six months, a three-month extension may not seem that much longer, and the salary is almost too good to pass up, especially when one does not know when the next contract will be (I never dared asking for numbers, but at least two consultants I met in Waterland emphasised this). Even if families agree on the extensions, managing long term relations becomes more and more difficult as the time spent away adds up.

In most cases, international consultants end up dedicating themselves to their work, sometimes the only way to forget about their loneliness. Some consultants'

situations were frankly heart breaking: one man was so lonely that he started to drink, another one was longing to find a team to play sports with, one was away from his kids and found it very difficult, etc. They ended up working many hours to deal with their loneliness. Brian himself was deployed to Sandland to work on land tenure for what turned out to be a period of thirteen consecutive months, yet his longest individual contract was only four months. He experienced hardships in coping with being away while having to do difficult work in a country he was at first unfamiliar with:

> "The continual transience of being a consultant, especially in a hardship/conflict post, is both mentally and physically tiring. You stick to doing work to occupy your mind, and it comes to dominate your perspective on everything. The exciting existence you are leading makes ordinary life back home seem uneventful and boring. It makes it hard to connect with the people you have left at home. And it even makes it harder to go back home." (Brian)

Within these few months, depending on where they are out-posted, international consultants mostly rely on or form an 'expat' community with which they 'hang out', thereby creating and re-creating "accidental communities of memory" (Malkki 1997), – or 'reconstructed families' that are continually reconstituted. This is true especially where there are important language barriers and where the local culture is difficult to integrate, as was the case in Waterland. This expat group quickly becomes a refuge, a safe haven, yet is constantly disrupted by the frequent movements of consultants coming and going. In fact, lots of work discussions take place in social encounters simply because it is the only subject this community of memory has in common. These discussions, however, may also be the occasion for individuals to express themselves about how they feel regarding certain pieces of work, about their colleagues, and about being away in general. This group is central both in terms of professional life (in the case where they have to work together), and in terms of keeping emotional balance on a personal level. Hence, this reconstructed family is where guidance can be found on just about anything, with face-to-face interaction being a welcomed change from phone or internet conversations with far-away relatives.

Among the community of expatriates in Waterland, from FAO and other organisations, a prevalent discourse concerned the difficulty of working in Waterland because of the hardships in understanding, let alone becoming integrated within Waterland society which was described as closed in on itself. Expatriates had managed to establish extensive networks: there had probably never been that many Italian restaurants in Waterland before, and I went to many dinners where big groups of expatriates from all over the world were gathering. In fact, the expatriates (the French, the Germans, the Italians, the Americans, etc) were so numerous that some of them had started businesses (restaurants and hotels mainly) to make a living serving, primarily, other expatriates.

In addition, national consultants who could potentially provide linkages between international consultants and their own culture (and here I am writing as if there was only one culture in one country, which is never the case), are often busy with their own family lives and cannot possibly guide and welcome all incoming international consultants. As a result, international consultants from various international organisations often hang out together in expensive venues.

It seems that, compared to long-term out-posted development professionals, consultants on short-term contracts are disadvantaged in terms of their possibility for knowledge acquisition and in terms of opportunities for personal involvement in the field. Short-term consultants end up in positions where they cannot really take root in the sense of being able to establish a 'normal life'. There is no good verb in English to describe this, but in French, the most adequate verb that comes to mind is 'vivoter', meaning 'not entirely living', or as translated in the Oxford Reference French-English dictionary: "to struggle along".

HQ officers who go on ten-day missions do not have to struggle so much with being in and out of a country (or perhaps do so in different ways). Their visiting expert status is much clearer, and expectations of what they can achieve in ten days are different. It is bearable to stay in hotels for that period, to eat in

restaurants, to rely on taxis, and efforts to 'blend in' and acquire knowledge on the country are not so pressing, as it is understood that they knew the 'basics' prior to arrival (unless it is their first mission), and that they came for specific work-related reasons. In the space of ten days consultants and officers have to work long hours and do not have much time outside work. After ten days, however, they go back to their homes and families, and go on with their normal lives until their next mission. Unless they very frequently go on mission, the impact on their personal life and families differs greatly from that of short-term consultants.

Short-term consultants may also be disadvantaged in their capacity to communicate with HQ for various work-related issues or in accessing information, let alone living with problems related to the continuity of the work. This is especially true of consultants who are new to FAO, or for those who end up in the field for the first time, as in Brian's case:

> "I think a major obstacle for the organisation is that no one really […] knows the rules of the game, this is in regard to personnel matters, to procurement, to budgeting, etc...There is no proper training for field staff, and when you get there you spend most of your time learning the rules by making (and being scolded for making) mistakes". (Brian)

Short-term consultants do not necessarily have to visit HQ after their assignments: they can potentially leave the FAO system completely after their assignment and it can be difficult to keep contact with them. Some of them have to visit HQ or a Regional Office for debriefing, depending on their work, and will perhaps be kept in mind for future work. While they are employed by FAO the short-term consultant's link with HQ also depends on the nature of the work they have to achieve. If they are out-posted in one of the satellite offices, chances are they will not need to be in contact with HQ, and will instead stay in touch with the FAO Representation in the capital. However, those who serve as information officer, for example, or who manage the administration of projects, will have to be in touch with HQ personnel. Without implying that all short-term consultants

should necessarily be in contact with HQ, having links with HQ provides an opportunity for greater ties with the organisation's resources, be they virtual or human.

If they are not somehow linked to or 'grounded' in FAO's system, it is easy for the organisation to lose touch with them and with the content of the work they have carried out, thus undercutting the continuity in the work. A good example of the difficulties of work continuity is provided by this email from a consultant who had just been deployed to replace someone in a country where an important natural disaster had struck. The handover process, as illustrated in this email, was particularly difficult, enough so that this consultant had to figure out for himself what his job would entail:

> "I arrived [...] on Sunday to replace […] for five weeks. [My predecessor] was extremely busy responding to requests from […] as well as dealing with a number of ongoing issues and requests from Rome. During those first few days I had to meet […] and others, as well as get up to speed on what was happening and what was required. On Tuesday afternoon I drove to […] to meet the officials of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock as well as co-chair the livestock cluster meeting on Wednesday and move on to […] to repeat the exercise there on Thursday. Before returning to […] Thursday evening, [my predecessor had] left for the UK on the early Thursday flight so I did not see him again. Today, Friday, I am getting to grips with what now needs to be done but I regret that some things may slip a little in the handover process".

On National Consultants: Differences Between Field Personnel

It is most likely the case that this international consultant was helped by the local national team in getting up to speed with the task at hand. National consultants are very much part of the landscape of field offices, often forming the majority of the staff. Perhaps the presence of a large community of expatriates in Waterland, and its relative absence in Mountainland gave a 'structural' reason for the differential treatment of international consultants and national consultants alike. In FAO and in the UN system in general, there exist standard contracts for both

international and national staff, but although the title of the contract is the same, the conditions are different. International staff is paid according to 'western' rates, whereas national staff working in their own country are normally paid according to local UN standards (though these are still higher than the local average). Contracts and pay rates, both national and international, also take into consideration one's experience and education level. Despite these standards and rules however, it seems that this system can be manipulated by the local management.

It was while carrying out specific tasks in the field that I came face-to-face with this differential treatment. In preparing for my mission to Waterland, a few officers in HQ who were told about my upcoming mission emailed to ask me to carry out some work on their behalf while I was 'in-country'. The requests ranged from checking on the nutrition situation, meaning to verify if the team had incorporated aspects of nutrition in their work, to asking me to verify how the local staff was connected 'virtually' to the rest of FAO. While I had to turn down the nutrition request since I did not have the relevant expertise, I felt I could easily look into the national staff interconnection to the FAO digital world which did not require much additional work. As part of the 2006 Reform, FAO has launched a new system for knowledge management purposes, as well as a 'Wiki' to facilitate the transfer and sharing of information between FAO employees across sectors of intervention and across the world. One of the staff members responsible for this initiative had also asked me to submit the pilot FAO Wiki to the staff in the field and to ask them if they thought it could potentially be useful for them.

Looking into the local FAO virtual scheme obliged me to do a quick analysis of the office situation. In the capital's offices most FAO employees had their own computers, whereas in up-country offices not everyone had a computer to work on, and there was sometimes only a single computer in an FAO 'up-country' office equipped with a very slow dial-up connection. If the connection itself worked fine (depending on day and season), the presence of only one internet

linked computer may (or may not) – have slowed down the progress of work. But in terms of connecting national FAO staff virtually to the wider FAO system, the potential certainly remained low.

For those working in the capital, I started by asking what kind of information the staff were getting from HQ. "Nothing" I was told. The reason is that most national consultants did not have a FAO email account, were thus not registered on any FAO 'listserv', and therefore were not receiving information through FAO about what was going on in Waterland in general, let alone the wider FAO world.

Not everyone had an FAO email account, so I asked why. To have an FAO email address, it turns out, you have to be classed as a 'consultant'. Yet most of the local technicians working on data compilation – experienced men and women – or those who worked in the management of human resources were not considered as consultants (or only a few of them were), but rather as 'casual labour'. This lumped them right in the same category as the drivers or the cleaning ladies. This was most likely a way for the office to save money. Not only do national consultants earn less money than international consultants, but they may *de facto* be denied their competency level. Although it is likely that most national consultants do not have the same levels of 'technical" education as international consultants, and tend to have shorter contracts, as described by Rathgeber's analysis of the social scientists working in the CGIAR system (2006:59), there is no apparent reason to lump all national staff into one category of workers. However, the personnel in Waterland were not in a position to refuse contracts as casual labour or to negotiate their working conditions for fear of losing their job.

The UN system of employment is designed so as to recognise an individual's competencies. Those who manipulate that system can make it more or less fair. This kind of manipulation through differential treatment rarely happens to international consultants (at least not to international consultants I have met), or

would happen on a different scale. At worst, international consultants could be offered an unsatisfying salary for their competencies, and would have either the opportunity to negotiate, or to decline the job and find similar working conditions in their home countries for comparable salaries. I had written a note on this situation in my BTOR:

> "In HQ and country offices, the organisational link with the organisation is through e-mail. People from each FAO department receive a number of information regarding their departments and the larger organisation through mailing lists. […] Most of the local staff located in and outside [the capital] have "casual labour" contracts (which the consultant finds is a kind of informal work within FAO as these contracts are also given to specialists) and do not have FAO e-mail addresses, share small, and at times inadequate offices, and are quite left out of the "capital" loop, even more so of the FAO-wide loop. These consultants do not develop a sense of belonging to the organisation, which creates a fragile situation concerning the continuity of the work. Country offices have set up "g-mail" accounts for the purpose of their work; […] these national consultants seem to be a "lower class" of FAO employees as they do not share the same benefits of the international consultants. Some national specialists are at times barely recognised as such." (BTOR, Waterland, July 2006).

Harrison (2003) also describes a situation where a local, senior, experienced employee who was "native of the province and believed he had good understanding of its problems", found himself in a difficult situation.

> "While he had had years of experience, creating an understandable belief that he should be accorded respect and status, he was forced to live in poor housing, with no transport or visible evidence of his position. The FAO workers were half his age, white, and newly arrived in Zambia. However, they were paid international salaries which enabled them to live in comfortable housing and have 'personal' vehicles in addition to the project vehicle. […] These symbols of difference – in power, in resources and in choices – were obviously present among the many other expatriates in the town" (2003:107).

As discussed in chapter 4, having an FAO email address is a form of corporate identity. It is a form of recognition that one exists in the system, that one is part of the wider FAO. Importantly, it is a way of relating to others, and of being

integrated into a working group, at least in terms of access to information. Having FAO email also provides an identity or a password allowing one to use other web-based information systems and to be included in list serves for updated information. Having access to an email account is an essential key to organisational integration and inclusion in corporate culture. Although professionals may not get a sense of working for a large United Nations type of organisation – they may develop, through tools such as email, a sense of belonging to the local version of FAO, and in the Waterland case, to a particular unit or department of FAO-Waterland. Yet, if organisations like FAO generate a wide range and great number of emails, it is important to have a choice and to decide what is useless or not depending on what you do. Evidently, many Roman emails were not relevant for the Waterland team, but sometimes relevant information would have percolated through. For example, at the time of my visit in Waterland, FAO was undergoing the 2006 Reform which contained changes that could potentially affect field offices and the way they worked. I ended up informing many employees myself of the existence of this reform.

Here was my answer, in an informal email, to a staff member who asked me to look into this:

> "I keep my eyes open for connections – and sometimes have time for a discussion with staff on what types of tools they need. Basically, I am discovering that most people working here know zip about FAO and are generally not connected to anything going on in HQ. I have also discovered that some national consultants on contracts are actually not considered as FAO staff and thus have no FAO email accounts and know even less about the Organisation. They work on "g-mail accounts" [...]. We are very far from any type of connection with the rest of FAO."

This staff member politely thanked me for the information I provided. However, I was a simple messenger in this endeavour, and was not informed of whether or not constructive outcomes followed in terms of better connecting field offices to HQ, and in linking a variety of specialists from different parts of the world who work on similar issues.

Although international consultants, in different and personal ways, may experience isolation and solitude that no salary could compensate, national consultants also face challenges when working for an international organisation such as FAO, not only at the professional level, but also at the personal level. As already discussed, international consultants have to mediate and adapt to the working environment created by the personnel in place, and also to the local cultural context all at once. Reciprocally, national consultants deal with incoming staff and consultants of various cultural backgrounds, expertise, and expectations, and equally have to adapt to FAO bureaucracy within the field offices. Although these field offices emulate the structure of FAO-HQ and work through established mechanisms and official rules, field offices can be transformed by the different personalities employed locally, thereby reshaping the way FAO's work is carried out at the local level, and calling for adaptation by the personnel. I come back to this point below.

To sum up, the contextual elements described above, as well as the actors who play a role in field offices, serve to establish the basics of an FAO-field-life scene, where the lives of development workers unfold. Before the 1990s, more international personnel worked out in the field on a long-term basis, at a time when projects also tended to be longer. Currently, short-term consultants and visiting experts are 'in vogue' as a human resource strategy, a strategy that often prevents them from getting to know thoroughly the place they work in, often to the extent of requiring them to get by on 'snapshot' views of their field settings.

This account not only highlights the internal gap between "field" and "desk" (Mosse 2006b) but also between 'ideal' (expected) and 'real' field experiences. If field experience is recognised, at least informally, by all professionals as important to do adequate work in FAO, the ways in which the human resources are formally managed do not easily allow fulfilling these expectations, at least not any more. Importantly, if field experience is almost a 'consensual requirement' among FAO staff and consultants, FAO itself does not have official requirements

in terms of 'field' experience (though it does have requirements in terms of 'professional' experience). However, field experience can often become a priority at the time of recruiting consultants. Candidates who have field experience may be privileged when compared to others who otherwise have similar expertise or education, for example, but little or no field experience. Depending on the type of work and the sort of person they aim to hire for a specific job, the FAO professionals in charge of hiring may give more or less importance to field experience, and thus end up taking a *de facto* position on behalf of the organisation when they hire someone who corresponds to their 'ideal' qualifications for a development worker – i.e., with field experience.

EXPERIENCES IN WATERLAND AND MOUNTAINLAND

Contexts of Work

Waterland, a country about the size of the State of New York, USA, was struck by the natural disaster TIM in 2004. It is estimated that about 50 000 people lost their lives in Waterland, mostly in the south-east region of the country, affecting particularly the fishing communities. In the few days following TIM, over 1000 NGOs and International Organisations landed in Waterland, which was a sort of disaster in itself. Some worked on housing and immediate care for rescued people who were without a roof, others on medium-term recovery including agricultural field rehabilitation and rebuilding schools, etc. The coordination of the activities between NGOs, International Organisations and the different ministries involved was extremely difficult, especially considering that some NGOs simply refused to collaborate with governments (I come back to this point later). A lot of inputs or materials were given out to affected populations in the form of boats and fishing gear, food, blankets, infrastructure, etc. The result was complete chaos, and stories illustrating this blunt but true assertion abound, specifically about the difficulty of estimating the casualties among the fisher folk families, and accounts reporting the donation of boats of such poor quality that they actually put the lives

of people in danger. Some families ended up with three boats in their backyard even though they were not in the fishing industry prior to TIM. This situation reveals a lack of consideration for the limits of fishery resources, though the more optimistic FAO staff speculated that the hulls would serve no further purpose than as rain-water tanks.

I was sent to Waterland eighteen months after TIM occurred to follow up on work already started by my LSP colleagues, Eva, Karen and Sophie, who had given training on how to incorporate livelihoods into an emergency response, a training that included Waterland's FAO staff in general, national and international consultants. Eva, who was in charge of the training, proposed that I travel to Waterland to follow up on how livelihoods had been used in FAO's TIM response, and to see how another team of FAO, working for the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) was also using livelihoods. In other words, this mission was a follow-up to the livelihoods approach training provided by the LSP, to see if the team in place had integrated and put in practice some of the lessons learned during the training. Officially, as my terms of reference show, I was to:

> "[…] document lessons from the field in terms of best practices and response options in emergency situations. The primary role of the consultant will be to document and analyse field-level activities and the implementation of project activities related to livelihoods, for project […], and all other emergency projects with livelihoods components […] and others. In collaboration with the reporting and information officer in [Waterland] produce brochures on FAO livelihoods activities in [Waterland]. In addition, the consultant will document lessons and capacity from SPFS to see how they can be fed in [emergency] activities. (Terms of Reference, May 2006)

My mission to Waterland was thought up in Rome, and 'accepted' through email by the staff in Waterland, and to this day, I remain unsure why it was accepted. The team in place in Waterland had not thought of 'field' expectations concerning my mission, so it was difficult for me to make myself really useful to them. I was on an 'HQ' type of assignment and remained a visitor for the entire period I was there, and was but rarely included in the team work. This is not to blame the team

of course, but I could see that other kinds of consultants, with other types of expertise would have been more useful to them at the moment I was there. The Emergency unit provided me with an office space and welcoming staff helped me find a place to stay, gave me a cell phone and drove me to work every day (mostly for security reasons). Everyone was very nice to me and answered all my questions so that I could fulfil my Roman assignment. Indeed, this was the bright side of this mission: if I was not included in the team *per se*, I was not prevented from carrying out my work, which I realise could have happened, had professionals refused to collaborate.

In talking to my Waterland colleagues, I later understood that it was not only me who felt like a permanent visitor: there was little team spirit overall, as everyone did their work individually. Team meetings were quite rare, as well as occasions for team work.

In contrast, my mission to Mountainland was very different mostly because it was requested by the FAO Representative of Mountainland in order to implement livelihoods in his on-going programme of work. Although I was unsure what this would entail, I was to carry out the following activities:

> "The consultant will assist the FAOR in:
> - Reviewing the conceptual coherence of the Livelihood strategy of the Representation as it is being applied in the field activities;
>
> - Reviewing how the strategy for sustainable agriculture as the base line for sustainable rural livelihoods is being or not being institutionalised in Mountainland;
>
> - Explore the differences in emergency and SPFS projects in Mountainland and see how lessons learned can be exchanged between both. (Terms of Reference, July 2006)

Although it was another two month mission funded by the LSP, the fact that the mission was requested by the FAO Representation changed everything: my work was to be in line with their expectations, rather than reporting to HQ. I was thus

involved in the work from the start. There was no office space available for me, so I was accommodated in the small conference room located at the junction of the FAO Representative's office, the deputy representative's office, and next to the FAO Representative's very kind and friendly assistant. From there, I could keep an eye on daily activities, the comings and goings, and sometimes the FAO Representative would stop by 'my office' to chat for a few minutes, telling me about what was going on and about daily events.

In Mountainland, the disaster NATE killed about 700 people but caused damages to the lives of an estimated 470 000 people depending on agriculture for subsistence (American Red Cross website, March 2008). Flooding and landslides caused the loss of agricultural fields as well as problems with the sanitation systems of many villages, enough that the food security of entire regions of the country was jeopardised. At the time of my visit, a year after the event, FAO and many other development organisations had managed to restore most of the fields, but much still needed to be done in terms of recovery. FAO was just starting three emergency projects in different regions of the country, and was continuing the work started by the SPFS. In Mountainland the SPFS was deployed on a much larger scale than in Waterland, occupying six field offices across the country. When the NATE disaster occurred, everyone within these offices was put to work on the disaster needs assessments, which was key in quickly responding to the NATE disaster (I come back to this point below).

Despite the terms of reference cited above, I travelled to Mountainland without knowing what I would be doing. In a way, I was an LSP consultant lent to Mountainland to do whatever they needed there. When I arrived, I was given time to "float" around and to accompany the Representative in field visits to meet the team and to understand better the issues proper to each context, the various projects, and the way things were done in Mountainland. After a while, the Representative decided that the most needed task for me would be to give

training sessions on livelihoods and to simply take part to ongoing activities and support the team 'livelihoods-wise' as much as I could.

The Atmosphere of Work, Personalities and Ways of Working

Waterland

As I have mentioned above, FAO in Waterland was spread over five different offices in the capital alone, this without counting the satellite offices located across the country and the numerous intervention sites. The office of FAO's fisheries department was located in the Waterland Ministry of Fisheries, the staff of the Agriculture department who worked for the SPFS Programme had a small, dark office within the Ministry of Agriculture, the staff dealing with Emergency had their own office in the city centre, the FAO Representation was located in the United Nations compound of the capital, and two days before I left Waterland, I found out that two FAO officers were working out of the Ministry of Forestry. Most international short-term consultants worked in the Emergency unit, except for two (one senior and one junior) who worked for Fisheries. The rest of the FAO-Waterland team was composed of national consultants, with the exception of the FAO Representative himself.

As discussed earlier, while this setting perhaps helps in maintaining good relations with the ministries FAO is engaging with, it prevented collaboration between the different FAO departments. This model, in fact, replicates the compartmentalisation of HQ.

The most striking example to me was the relationship, or rather the non-relationship between Emergencies and the officers based in the Ministry of Agriculture working for the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). The SPFS team had been operating in Waterland for about two years before TIM occurred. Thus, when FAO established the Emergency unit at the beginning of

2005, the SPFS team already had experience in working in Waterland, let alone that they were 'Waterlanders' themselves. However there were only rare exchanges, if at all, between the two teams, not even when the Emergency unit was delivering agricultural inputs to affected farmers, or when the SPFS could have used some of the infrastructure and offices of the emergency unit in different parts of the country, as some of their intervention sites were quite close. As I wrote in my BTOR:

> "Time is a major constraint in Emergencies, and the comparison with ongoing development projects is uneasy. However, many activities done by SPFS could be undertaken in rehabilitation projects […] as more sustainable types of activities can be implemented in this time span. Generally, the vocabulary of "sustainable development" could be better integrated in recovery/rehabilitation projects. […] SPFS could have shared with [the emergency unit] two important elements: in-country experience and ideas for activities that have already proven successful in Waterland" (BTOR, Waterland, July 2006).

This distance between in-country FAO offices seems to have provided fertile ground for turf battles. Because most damages caused by TIM were done in the fishery sector and industry, the Emergency unit collaborated with the FAO Fisheries department, sometimes through tense relationships. FAO Emergencies had the funds while FAO Fisheries officers had the technical expertise, and they did not always agree on the work that should be done, perhaps because of what could be called a 'cultural divide' in terms of work priorities: the Emergency unit, in relief mode, wanted to work rapidly and to spend donor money quickly whereas Fisheries officers were aiming to use the funds in a more sustainable manner, with a longer term vision.

Disagreements, in fact, were quite strong, and it came to a point where one of the senior international fisheries consultants could not see when, where, or how an agreement could be found at the local level. Accordingly, he wrote a letter that was circulated to professionals and managers in both FAO Emergencies and FAO Fisheries departments, not only in Waterland but also in HQ:

"[TIM] has opened the door on philosophical and organizational issues within FAO that need to be addressed. The philosophy of the emergency division of FAO is generally to move rapidly to address immediate emergency and early rehabilitation concerns. This is to restore the tools and dignity of the affected peoples and enable them to resume their livelihoods. The philosophy of the technical renewable resource departments is to focus on medium and long term development in keeping with the principles of sustainable and responsible management. This follows the mandate for the organization and is strongly supported by its members. Although different departments exercise these two philosophies, they should not be exclusive. These two philosophies need to be integrated and merged to enable FAO to address emergency relief operations within the principles of responsible and sustainable management. To do less would be irresponsible as an international organization. [...]

The dilemma facing the FAO team at that time lay in the choice of spending the funds on equipment, with a focus on fisheries, irrespective of absorptive capacity and consequential resource and sector impacts, OR to try to meet the needs of the fisheries sector and fishers in a manner reflecting the FAO principles of responsible and sustainable management. In essence this dilemma reflected and still represents the core of the concerns in procurement and distribution and the core of the differences of opinions in the team in Waterland. [Emergencies] appropriately adheres to the normal emergency experiences and practices for procurement and delivery while Fisheries adamantly adheres to the core FAO principles of responsible and sustainable fisheries renewable resource management. The mutual support and cooperation between these two Departments, although paid lip service on the surface, is well known to be very poor in reality and is in fact a source of much conflict in the internal "turf" squabbles in HQ. This core concern cannot help but emerge at times in the team in the field despite considerable efforts of all parties to be cooperative at the field level in presenting one face of FAO to the country and public."[92]

Although explicit in addressing the causes and nature of the disagreements between Fisheries and Emergencies, this letter does not reveal the extent to which this debate was a problem for the technicians in the field who felt like they had to fight to do their work. Concretely, disagreements concerned the type of

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[92] I have permission from the author to use these parts of his letter.

fishing gear to be distributed, or even questions as to whether gear should be distributed at all. In essence, the fishery technicians wanted to think more about the sustainability of the actions taken, whereas in the Emergency Unit the concern was mostly about spending the funds within a certain time, to deliver inputs to people. If such a letter went to HQ, it is because agreement could not be reached within the country offices regarding a common approach to emergency response. This also means that the FAO Representation of Waterland did not take an active role in mediating this situation. As I wrote in my BTOR, collaboration between the different FAO units did not seem to be a core value of the Representation in Waterland:

> "At the moment the consultant visited Waterland, there was no collaboration between the different FAO units present in Waterland. [They] worked on their own, as they are also physically located far away from one another. While this strategy is useful to help the coordination with the different ministries, it does prevent the various FAO staff to easily collaborate with each other. As a result, for the external eye, there seems to be four FAOs in Waterland, five including the FAO Representation. The consultant perhaps does not have sufficient experience to understand well the role of FAO Representations in general, but it seems that it should be the role of the FAO Representation to create links and trigger collaboration between the various projects on the ground. Projects could be strengthened by the value added of the expertise of each team member, and could also combine experiences when working in similar areas – perhaps even share costs in some instances." (BTOR, Waterland, July 2006).

The author[93] of the letter cited earlier was a little less diplomatic in an email in which he commented on my BTOR:

> "[…] She has highlighted several of the concerns that have been noted from the field for the full TIM period. […] I would note that the political appointment of the FAO Representative has a negative impact on the management capacity of that office, and its ability to manage the coordination between components and sector offices. I would note that

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[93] This senior officer ended up resigning from FAO shortly after he had written and shared this letter, as there was no indication coming from HQ that positive actions would be follow on his letter. He had been in FAO service for more than a decade.

the lack of cohesive association and cooperation between departments of FAO also does not foster a common face for FAO to the community, and its processes often take away the "human face" for which FAO was known in the past".

Sitting in the Emergency Unit in Waterland, I was able to observe that each of the Emergency projects were independently managed by an international consultant, who sometimes oversaw two or three projects at the same time, depending on their scale. These projects were mostly focused on inputs delivery, though some of them involved local NGOs as partners in the recovery of entire villages. There were few occasions to share their experience, as they only seldom met, and their contacts with the rest of the team were generally limited. Every one of them worked in a specific area of the country, though some overlapped, and individually reported to the Emergency Coordinator. Their interactions were thus limited, not only between themselves, but also with the national staff and consultants who supported them in their tasks. Generally, as a rule, each project manager has a counterpart at the national level. In Waterland, however, if a national project director were employed, they were rarely consulted – or even put to work in one case – by the project manager. The working atmosphere that percolated, at least in the Emergency Unit where I worked, was one where everyone did their work individually with few interactions and occasions for team work and information sharing.

Comparatively, the SPFS team seemed to be working in a parallel world, as they had very little contact with the other FAO teams working in Waterland. The team was formed entirely of national experts in agronomy, aquaculture, animal health, water management, etc. They were working with a long term sustainable development perspective, with a tiny budget (US$ 1.6 million over a period of four years, compared to US 25 million for post-TIM recovery), which they used in creative ways. They were trying to increase the capacity of farmers and villagers to take initiatives so as to diversify their income sources, as well as towards increasing agricultural production and diversifying their crops. The team worked in multi-disciplinary ways, each one bringing to the table their specific expertise

and making it available to the project participants. I spent most of my time with the SPFS team travelling to villages, where they attended assemblies of producer organisations to discuss their on-going activities and the next steps to be taken, following the Community Development Plans they had previously established together. I wrote in by BTOR:

> "SPFS in [Waterland] seems to be successful in conducting a sustainable, long term project. Some weaknesses can be identified […], but on the whole, this project seems to be a good example of sustainable development, involving the communities as much as possible mainly through the producers' organisations, and putting the emphasis on food diversification. In fact, the project is so successful that the government of [Waterland] is currently 'training trainers' in order to be able to replicate this project in about 15 000 villages in [Waterland]" (Draft Report on SFPS, June 2006).

Members of the team tried as much as they could not to impose their ideas of what should be done, and helped the participants with what they wanted to do. But their budget was so limited that they sometimes could only suggest activities they knew would work. Activities varied[94] greatly but generally started with the establishment of a rotating fund at the community level managed by the producers' organisations, which also enabled producers to buy equipment and seeds in the long run.

Mountainland

The Representation in Mountainland was set up very differently from the one in Waterland. Everyone from all programmes and projects worked closely and directly with the Representation, which was located in the compound of the Mountainland Ministry of Agriculture. Aside from the FAO Representative and two volunteers, all team members were themselves from Mountainland. All team

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[94] These activities included, among others, mushroom production, pepper and cinnamon cultivation, ornamental and consumable fish (through aquaculture mostly), growing home gardens and ornamental plants and flowers, etc.

members were located in one of the six country offices, with the exception of a mobile team of national specialists who sporadically visited all the country's offices (nutritionist, monitoring, education, agronomist, etc.) and administrative assistants. There were no other international staff members or consultants in the office.

The FAO Representative had, however, set up a team of international visiting experts who travelled to Mountainland every now and then, when needed, to provide technical support to the team. Most of them came from the FAO Regional Office or from other countries of the region. The ones I met while in country were specialised in nutrition, watershed management, and agronomy[95]. There was a feeling among the local team that they were in possession of the expertise needed to solve their own problems, and the staff was provided opportunities, or encouraged to pursue opportunities to attend training events so as to continue building their own capacity. Unlike in Waterland, there was no Emergency unit created in Mountainland, as the NATE disaster had not attracted much funding from the international community, and funds and projects could be managed from the Representation.

Compared to Waterland, there was in Mountainland a sense of team belonging, trust, and much dynamism among the officers. The team had a more acute sense of confidence in their own competencies (rather than relying on expatriates for expertise) and belief that they could deal with the tasks at hand themselves. This team sense, however, also partly emanated from the personality and beliefs of the FAO Representative himself, who acted as *de facto* coordinator of all the FAO projects and programmes going on in the country, made sure that everyone participated in coordination efforts, and that at least project directors knew what was going on just about everywhere in the country.

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[95] These consultants may be comparable to the ones Mosse describes – including himself – in his book Cultivating Development (2005a :133). They visited Mountainland frequently. As I have met them only once, it is difficult to assess their "knowledge" of Mountainland, or whether they "failed to determine project practice, while succeeding in generating policy theory out of it" (*ibid*:35). However, they seemed appreciated by the local team members, with few exceptions.

Contrary to many FAO Representatives, Mountainland's Representative was not 'politically appointed', and he was no stranger to FAO, to the region where the country is located, or to field work. He had been travelling across this region of the world for more than thirty years, and during his time at FAO, close to twenty years, he had been appointed as a sustainable development officer based in a Regional Office. He became Representative in Mountainland in October 2005, and his staff liked to joke about two hurricanes striking Mountainland at the same time: NATE, the hurricane which damaged a large part of the country, and the new FAO Representative.

Team meetings were frequent in Mountainland and even mandatory in some cases. Each Monday, every project director drove to the capital for a meeting to share their progress and discuss issues they were facing with the Representative and the Deputy Representative. Other occasions for meetings were quite frequent, mostly through the rotating team of specialists who also reported to the Representative.

The FAO Representative of Mountainland had high expectations of his team and, since his arrival, had made many changes to the way things worked at the Representation. Aside from the establishment of weekly meetings and of the rotating team of technicians, many team members were shuffled around in their positions, new employees were hired, and the Representative had made significant changes to the working approach used for the implementation of projects. When I first arrived to Mountainland, some team members were still confused about how this would all work, as I indicated in my BTOR:

> "On another level, the team is slowly coming out of a period characterised by consecutive changes: NATE, a new chief, new ways of working (foci), a new conceptual framework (inclusive of livelihoods), and a new SPFS project director. In all this process, some team members have been hired while others have been displaced and have changed functions. Many team members have recently joined FAO-[Mountainland] (less than a year), and most of them are at the end of their twenties. The consultant thinks that time has come for a series of adjustments and clarifications of the

methods, concepts, and objectives of the work in order to ease the way towards the end of this "transition" period. This kind of conceptual clarity would equally benefit the teams who are starting new projects in offering them the proper guidance" (BTOR Mountainland, September 2006).

The Representative was a holistic thinker, someone who believes that sustainable development cannot do without an integrated approach, or without a long-term and encompassing vision of the task at hand. This was very obvious in his conversations with many: there were moments when he was hard to follow as he had made all the invisible links in his own head. With this kind of vision and attitude, there was little division between FAO programmes and projects in Mountainland. To him, bringing activities together in a coherent whole seemed to be the only way forward.

Bringing activities together under an umbrella programme was done through the establishment of four working themes: 'social organisation', *milpa* (maize and beans), diversification of crops, and home gardens. Every project had to plan their activities according to these themes, and each team member – either from the rotating team or within the satellite offices – was in charge of one of these aspects of work. This approach in a way forced the FAO team members to take into account social, political and economic issues related to agriculture, and made it necessary to involve project participants as much as possible. At the time of my visit, the Representation was hoping to better include the concepts of the livelihoods approach so to encourage the dialogue and ongoing communication between FAO team members and project participants.

Comparing Waterland and Mountainland

In contrast and as already discussed, the approach of the FAO Representative in Waterland was very different and mostly characterised by the absence of an overarching approach or vision. Each FAO unit/sector was working on its own. The FAO Representative was generally inaccessible, or only by appointment. I

met him only once to tell him I had arrived, as the personnel from the Emergency Unit insisted I do, almost as a diplomatic visit. The visit was very short, and my first impression was that the Representative was evasive, to the extent that I wondered if he actually spoke English well. All I knew about him was second hand information: everyone with whom I discussed the Representative in Waterland commented on his overall incompetence. He apparently was new to FAO, and was appointed for political reasons, yet no one in my environment could explain how and why. Most mentioned that the actual work in the Waterland FAO Representation was achieved by the Deputy Representative who enjoyed a good reputation as a thorough agronomist and who seemed very dynamic. Neither of them, however, had taken the initiative of bringing their team to the same table.

> "Opportunities for open, public discussions were very limited. With a prevailing culture that avoids both positive and or constructive negative criticism, it was difficult to encourage real debate and discussion about issues and ideas. [The Emergency Unit] had no real forum for exchanging ideas, collective discussion and planning. At the level of field implementation and project management, there was more opportunity to promote discussion and debate among national FAO staff, but channelling the outputs of these discussions to the national level was difficult because no mechanism existed to bring together ideas and inputs from the field". (Toby)

Yet, there was another influential personality in Waterland: the Emergency Coordinator, who managed the office with authority and a hand of steel. The Emergency Coordinator was always busy, and even if our offices were located two doors away, an email had to be sent to set up an appointment. Permission for just about everything had to be requested, and many rules were to be observed. I remember a discussion with one of the drivers who told me how difficult it was to be the Emergency Coordinator's driver: he could not speak in the car, or put on music, and he felt like a servant. The Emergency Coordinator, it seemed, did not have much regard for the national staff of Waterland, and did not maintain relationships outside work with anyone in the office. From my perspective, the personality of the Emergency Coordinator shaped the working

atmosphere of the office in that some consultants, both local and international, felt they were constantly walking on egg shells. Here is how the atmosphere of work was described by Toby, one of the international consultants:

> "Hierarchical, autocratic, paranoid and intimidatory. Hierarchical, in the sense that FAO staff like to hide behind their designations and positions within the organisational structure. Very few appeared relaxed enough or confident enough of their positions to enable, encourage or facilitate others by discarding their rank and status and empowering subordinates. Autocratic, as a result of a lot of top down decision making, by individuals in positions of relative power, offering little room for discussion or external input. Paranoid, linked to the failure to empower others, a tendency among senior staff to seem to 'guard' their positions, as if they did not feel secure in their jobs or positions. Intimidatory – most criticism was destructive and public (within the organisation, i.e. c.c.'ed to Rome). The hierarchy was used to good effect by senior staff to intimidate subordinates, who had no direct access to the shadow world in Rome." (Toby)

In Waterland, I found that the presence of the many expatriates acted as a barrier preventing them from finding opportunities to know the local staff and learn from them. Short-term consultants or colleagues who had previously arrived in Waterland had acquired a certain knowledge of the country, had identified their favourite places to eat, and had lots to say on their own perception of the local cultures. For newcomers, colleagues' personal opinions may influence – though unintentionally – one's views on a given place. In Mountainland, I spent most of my time with Mountainlanders, and I remain under the impression that I learned much more about Mountainland than I did about Waterland.

Perhaps this feeling of having been more included in the work of Mountainland was related to differences in local values regarding the integration of newcomers. The expatriates in Waterland had 'warned' me about the difficulties in integrating to the local culture, and I could see in the office that most national consultants were shy and somewhat difficult to 'access'. However, I soon realised that this situation was mostly applicable to the national staff in the office. In travelling with the SPFS team – who were all from Waterland – to many remote villages, I discovered a very welcoming culture for foreigners. Villagers gave us food, asked

me to take pictures with them, and gave us an infinite number of extra-sweet tea cups.

If Waterlanders were sometimes shy, they were welcoming, and could be very direct. When I first travelled with the SPFS team, it took about five minutes for the team leader to ask me his burning question: "Miss Genny, why are you not married?" When I came back in the capital, I took more time to interact with the national staff. To help in that process, I was assigned to a desk in the same room as the women working on the human resources. This was the occasion of interesting and endless discussions, and I was sad when the Emergency Coordinator asked me to change desks on the pretext that there were confidential transactions happening in this office. I also noted that it was the same with the drivers: as soon as I was alone with them, they became very talkative.

Thus, I do not believe that it was only differences in local cultures of welcoming newcomers that gave Mountainland's office a greater 'homey' feeling, even if Mountainlanders were welcoming and warm to the extent that good-morning kisses were daily routine at the office. Rather, I believe it was the office atmosphere that played a part in feeling at home or not. In Waterland, I felt that the national consultants were more subjected by the authority in place, and were not treated as equals to international consultants and visiting experts. In contrast, the Mountainland office was led by the charismatic 'father figure' of the FAO Representative who was omnipresent and stimulating, but the staff did not fear his authority, while taking him seriously and showing respect. Perhaps the simple fact that the Mountainland team had more confidence in its capacities and actually worked as a team changed their relationships with international consultants and visiting experts, giving the office a greater sense of familiarity and taste for team work.

This comparison between Waterland and Mountainland shows that the structure and organisation of the field offices, the human resource management, as well as

the working atmospheres mostly created by the personnel in place, affects the sense of belonging, the relationships between international and national staff, and the general morale of the teams. From these observations, one can infer that this may in turn impact the quality of the work and the types of intervention which may be favoured by FAO offices. What follows provides further comparison of diverging visions of FAO work, this time through emergency interventions.

EMERGENCY AND DEVELOPMENT: COMPLEXITY IN COMMON

The letter of the senior international consultant in fisheries cited earlier indicated that there were some differences in the ways of working of the FAO technical departments and the FAO Emergency Divisions. He was not the only one to note this situation:

> "Emergency funds represent the largest source of funding for FAO. The autonomy that appears to be associated with emergency funds has resulted in two FAOs in [Waterland]; the Regular Programme and the Emergency one. There are very few connections between the two, even at the level of Emergency Coordinator and the FAO Representative, and virtually none lower down and nothing at the level of projects.
>
> This creates confusion for the partners, government and NGOs, perhaps also for the donors. Different / parallel line management sets up competition between the Regular Programme and the Emergency one. This is counterproductive for FAO, as it presents an incoherent image of the organisation to anyone who doesn't know the details about the two programmes and creates confusion. Similarly, this does not encourage or create synergies between similar FAO activities in the same country. Emergency must slot in under the regular programme and not be seen as something separate from it." (Toby)

As already mentioned, FAO has two realms of intervention: development and emergency. Toby was right in indicating that FAO's largest source of extra-budgetary funding comes from emergencies. In fact, the total annual amount for Emergencies, increasing over the last few years, had by 2007 become almost as large as the total annual funding for the Regular Programme. For the year 2006-

2007, FAO received US$ 162 million of extra-budgetary funds supplementing its Regular Programme, and US$ 617 million of extra-budgetary finds for emergency assistance (Programme of Work and Budget, FAO 2007:30). In total, FAO received US$ 779 million of extra-budgetary funds for all purposes while the annual funding for the Regular Programme was 877$ million. Given the importance of the Emergency Programme component, I am opening here a parenthesis to discuss how emergency intervention – or humanitarian affairs – constituted an independent world parallel to long-term sustainable development intervention, and how these parallel paths seldom cross each other.

Although this section focuses on the complexity of emergency intervention (or humanitarian aid), it is still only presenting the tip of the iceberg. Emergency work in Waterland constitutes a good example of how multiple actors may be involved, including the presence of powerful donors who oversee the implementation of the projects they fund. This account of emergency work is offered to illustrate yet another level of complexity of FAO's work, which at times creates conflicting positions within the organisation, between development and emergency intervention.

Emergencies in FAO and the UN: A Brief Overview

As already discussed, during my stay in Waterland, I spent about half my time with Waterland's Emergency Unit and the other half with SPFS, and was struck by the difference in the mentalities of these two FAO worlds. Emergencies was in relief mode, trying to provide the promised supplies and working fast, whereas the SPFS was more interested in long term development and in the sustainability of the impacts while working with a very limited budget.

Aside from having more funds than the SPFS team, and from having on board international consultants, an important difference between the two units was the prevalent discourse in the Emergency unit relating to the constant 'lack of time'. If

objectively there was no need to rush eighteen months after TIM as emergency interventions were not anymore part of a 'saving lives' dynamic, the race was about spending donor money on time. This omnipresent discourse had a paralysing effect on taking the time to truly consider sustainability, and prevented many discussions or initiatives from taking place. All activities that were perceived as time consuming were *de facto* eliminated from the work plan, including activities such as thinking and brainstorming, coordination between FAO projects, human resource management and capacity building of the team – all the 'intangibles' that could potentially make for a stronger and more knowledgeable team, and favour coordinated interventions.

This 'lack-of-time' discourse, however, was only the tip of the iceberg, beneath which lurked the complexity of large-scale emergency interventions. In this case, it was clear that there was a "pressure to meet targets and disburse underspent budgets", which had "influenced the programme choices that were made in the first place" (Mosse 2005a:116).

In comparison, the context of the emergency response to NATE in Mountainland was quite different. NATE was much smaller in scale, even though it was catastrophic for the affected farmers, and even if it threatened the food security of entire regions of Mountainland. However, the international community had not responded to this emergency with funds: it was FAO, under the direct request of the DG, which managed to find a very modest amount of funds for immediate relief and agricultural field reconstruction. Therefore, the type of response was much different than the one in Waterland in terms of immediate relief funds (340 000$ compared to 25 millions in Waterland (FAO website 2007)). It was only one year after NATE that the FAO Representation managed to secure funds from three donors for moderate size emergency projects in Mountainland to respond to NATE's damages.

The contrast between these two types of emergency responses, and also the difference in the mentalities between the Emergency Unit and SPFS in Waterland, revealed the general lack of connections between emergency responses and development in Waterland. Although many staff and consultants encountered in Waterland saw this connection as important and were individually working towards linking both, there was no overarching and open dialogue regarding this matter. As I wrote in my BTOR at the moment of leaving Waterland:

> "The consultant was surprised at the amount of people working on this transition [between emergency and development] on their own, within their own sector of FAO-[Waterland] (in agriculture and fisheries), in [the Regional Office] (all sectors), and in HQ. Such a strategy for longer-term development calls for multi-disciplinary teams (involving all the FAO departments present in [Waterland]) and for ongoing and built-in dialogue with the government (a good example is the Fishery strategy developed by the Ministry of Fisheries with the help of FAO-[Fisheries])." (BTOR, Waterland, July 2006).

While these un-coordinated bits and pieces of reflection were going on within FAO Waterland, they were also happening at the level of the UN. Indeed, the compartmentalisation within FAO's emergency intervention was symptomatic of the compartmentalisation of a wider and overarching system of which FAO was part. However, the prevailing compartmentalisation of the UN system has been long recognised, and called forth official UN-sanctioned efforts to pull these 'fragmented' entities into coordinated groups during emergency work.

An appreciation of the attempted structuring of emergency coordination would start with the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is responsible for the coordination of the activities of the different humanitarian organisations operating at country level when a disaster occurs.

> "The Mission of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors

in order to: alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies, advocate for the rights of people in need, promote preparedness and prevention, **and facilitate sustainable solutions**" (OCHA website, March 2008, emphasis mine).

OCHA works through various coordination committees (such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its many sub-working groups, and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)). It operates through a cluster approach, one organisation being designated as the lead agency for the coordination of each cluster. There are eleven clusters (see Table 3) in addition to three "cross-cutting issues" – environment, gender and HIV/Aids.

This cluster approach

 "was proposed as a way of addressing gaps and strengthening the effectiveness of humanitarian response through building partnerships. Moreover the cluster approach ensures predictability and accountability in international responses to humanitarian emergencies, by clarifying the division of labour among organisations, and better defining their roles and responsibilities within the different sectors of the response" (Humanitarian Reform Website, March 2008).

Funds for emergency relief are collected by OCHA through several mechanisms, mostly the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The CAP is not only a funding mechanism, but also a planning tool in which several organisations unite to request funding from the international community for specific crises. A CAP is launched every year (since 1992), and OCHA is then responsible for the management of the funds. However, the CAP target is generally not met: "in 2006, 63% of the CAP funding requirements were met, the highest since 2003" (OCHA website, March 2008). In contrast, the CERF has been put in place since 2006 to "save lives through the provision of quick initial funding for life-saving assistance at the onset of humanitarian crises" (OCHA website, March 2006). In other words, the CERF allows funds to be immediately released in the case of a sudden disaster which could not have been planned ahead of time, and to provide timely response to

those in need. However, not all donors contribute to these funds through OCHA, as some of them continue to provide funds directly through organisations such as FAO.

<u>**Table 3**</u>. **The Cluster Approach of the Humanitarian Reform − 11 Clusters and their Lead Agency.**

Agriculture	FAO
Camp Coordination/Management: IDPs (from conflict)	UNHCR
Disaster situations	IOM
Early Recovery	UNDP
Education	UNICEF Save The Children - United Kingdom
Emergency Shelter: IDPs (from conflict)	UNHCR
Disaster situations	IFRC (Convener)
Emergency Telecommunications	OCHA/UNICEF/WFP
Health	WHO
Logistics	WFP
Nutrition	UNICEF
Protection: IDPs (from conflict)	UNHCR
Disasters/civilians affected by conflict (other than IDPs)	UNHCR/UNICEF
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	

Source: http://www.humanitarianreform.org (March 2008)

OCHA works not only with the various agencies of the UN system, but also with governments, bilateral donors and NGOs (which often have their own priorities). Sometimes, however, some NGOs refuse to participate in the coordination efforts because they refuse to work with potentially corrupt governments or do not agree with the actions being undertaken by the UN agencies.

When I was in Waterland, I had the opportunity to attend one of OCHA's coordination meetings. It was hard to imagine what kind of collaboration had been taking place soon after TIM, but eighteen months later, coordination boiled

down to lists of who was carrying out which project. The meetings had become more like an information session rather than coordination efforts, but the presence of so many international organisations and NGOs was nonetheless indicative of their interest in collaboration.

A Few Words on Emergency Work at FAO-HQ

At the FAO HQ level, emergencies are managed through three services of the Emergencies Division of FAO Technical Cooperation Department. One service deals with sudden emergencies, another with ongoing crises, and a third with policy issues. Additional *ad hoc* groups units will be set up to deal with large-scale emergencies, such as the Avian Flu, earth quakes, locust infestation, etc. The Emergency Division itself does not employ long-term technical experts because of the impossibility of foreseeing needs related to future humanitarian crises: their work literally depends on the number and type of disasters occurring in the world. Therefore, Emergencies needs the support of the specialised technicians who are part of other FAO technical departments and services (Fisheries, Agriculture and Forestry Departments). However, the technical staff of these other Departments are generally fully committed and engaged in the work for FAO's Regular Programme, and thus can seldom be freed on short notice, as is required by the nature of Emergencies.

Different theories were discussed during my interviews in regard to this issue: some informants said that collaboration was difficult because of the difference in objectives (rapid relief versus sustainable development), others blamed the emergency division as a whole for not involving enough technical services, and others, mostly from the emergency unit, blamed the technical services for not being flexible and rapid enough in responding to requests in a timely fashion. Technical services in FAO are deeply engaged with work plans of FAO's Regular Programme, and because of a lack of funds, cannot hire a "buffer" component of

'extra' staff or consultants who could be instantly released for emergencies. Each staff member and consultant is tied up in their on-going work, and freeing them (even if their salaries for the period of 'secondment' would be eventually reimbursed by Emergencies) is not always an option.

> "For [Emergencies], the main problem stands with the technical divisions which do not any more have the capacity to backstop projects correctly and have to rely on consultants, who may rotate very quickly, without the time to establish the confidence relationship required to work efficiently – this is no more an issue if the consultant is on board on the long period." (Jordan)

Different mechanisms have been put in place to try to cope with these difficulties at the FAO level. The Emergency Division has been engaging in a rhetoric of "building back better" (a phrase which is very much in vogue in the whole UN system as well), and of increased inclusion of livelihoods in emergency response, even using livelihoods as coordination mechanisms, thereby opening the door to more flexible approaches to emergency responses. Partnerships with FAO's technical divisions, including for example Animal Production and Health, Food and Nutrition, Forest Resources Development, Land and Water Development, Rural Development, and Environment and Natural Resources, were established (FAO & Emergencies website, March 2008). However, turf battles still take place daily with the technical services, and many individuals are involved in trying to link both. As an example, a consultant told me how much confusion there was in FAO regarding the Avian Flu, between the emergency unit responsible and the technical service which was also working on the issue. His daily work basically consisted of bridging the gaps between both.

The Influence of Donors

In addition to all these negotiations at the UN and then at the FAO levels, staff out-posted in the field in the aftermath of an emergency also themselves have to

deal with the donors. At country level, FAO relief interventions are organised through projects funded by various donors, just as for 'normal' development interventions in the field. The difference with development projects lies in two elements: emergency projects usually have greater funding, and they are more important to donors politically because they attract media attention, generally proportionate to the 'scale' of the disaster. It is thus important to donors to ensure either their direct visibility, or the visibility of the organisations they choose to fund for relief intervention.

It should be mentioned in passing that donors, in the context of emergencies, have more control over the use of 'their' funds, in comparison with normal development projects which are often the result of long negotiations between the development agency such as FAO, the national government, the donors, and local partners. Indeed, the nature of emergency intervention itself, generally aimed at rapidly fulfilling *ad hoc* and vital basic needs, and for which funds have to be released rapidly, leaves little time and room for negotiations with governments and local actors.

In this context, the difficulties of the "development apparatus" with addressing deep-rooted political issues and with adequately responding to the 'real' needs of the poor identified by Ferguson (1994) with regards to development work apply , fully, and perhaps even to a deeper extent, to emergency interventions. Emergency interventions do away with 'local politics' when trying to help the victims of a sudden natural disaster. On the other hand, when funding emergency interventions, donor governments are also seeking to gain political visibility and strengthen political support within their own country, sometimes more than within the country they are helping. Providing funds for emergency relief may be kept in the record of a government's positive actions which in the end may help them in gaining and maintaining popularity within their own country.

Full treatment of the question of politicisation (or "anti-politicisation") in emergency relief actions however, would lead us too far from the main thrust of this section's line of analysis (and the supporting research information), which is to deconstruct the image of 'monolithic' donors and highlight the complexity of their relations with FAO staff. But it remains that emergency interventions may be compatible with Ferguson's thesis of the "anti-politics machine". More research would be needed, however, to determine if nuances may be brought to Ferguson's assertion when applied to emergency intervention, as some authors have done in the case of development work (Harrison 2003; Mosse 2005; Li 2007).

Going back to donors, they themselves tend to work in compartmentalised ways, through privileged thematic areas, and generally through a clear divide between the funding provided for emergencies and that for development interventions. The European community, as an example, has two agencies: one for emergencies (ECHO – European Community Humanitarian aid Office) and one for development (EDF – European Development Fund). As soon as emergency activities are considered as falling into development types of activities, funds are either cut or refused for these activities. Donors also have their own thematic interests, and will finance both emergency and development projects accordingly. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will fund projects according to the following priorities:

> "In the broadest sense, programming is concentrated in five sectors which directly relate to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — a unique approach to achieving sustainable development built around a partnership of the global community. These sectors, along with a crosscutting theme of gender equality or equality between women and men are: Governance, Health, Basic Education, Private Sector Development, Environmental Sustainability" (CIDA website, March 2008).

Soon after I arrived at FAO, I met a representative from CIDA at HQ[96]. She confirmed that CIDA now tends to provide increased funds for emergencies, as extra-budgetary funds, which was not, according to her "very frequent in the past". She also confirmed that there were many actors involved in the relationships between Canada and FAO, making for a complex web of relations. Within CIDA, there is a specific unit working with the United Nations, which is linked and helped by the staff working at the Permanent Canadian mission to FAO and WFP, and by the FAO professional in charge of donor relationships with Canada. In addition to CIDA, members of Health Canada and Agriculture Canada, two other Canadian Agencies, are also working with various staff members in FAO from different departments, depending on the type of work. Moreover, some staff from the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also involved with FAO. Thus, for FAO staff, Canada was represented by more than one face. She noted:

"The Permanent Mission to FAO also served as a hyphen between agencies [Canadian and from the United Nations]. There are no real rules for the communication between agencies. They are "heavy" organisations. With internet and email, it becomes very difficult to retain any control over communications. The Mission should always be informed. But it also happens that partnerships are formed directly in the field between FAO and CIDA".

For example, Agriculture Canada – another Canadian governmental agency – is helping to finance an FAO-led programme, the "SARD" Initiative (Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development). On SARD's website it is indicated that the "Government of Canada" is providing funds. In fact, I know that it is Agriculture Canada providing the funds, as I was there when the negotiation with the SARD manager began in FAO.

"The Government of Canada is supporting the development and establishment of a Resource Facility, a key component in the

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[96] Her schedule was very tight, as she had planned meetings one after another during her three day stop in Rome. We thus arranged for a phone interview, to be held after she had arrived and settled back into her Canadian office.

communications strategy of the SARD Initiative. The Resource Facility will be an internet-based inventory of good practices and other SARD-related materials. This material will be disseminated online, but an important element of the Resource Facility will be to ensure that this information reaches disadvantaged groups who do not have access to internet resources. A Canadian-sponsored Resource Facility Manager will coordinate these activities" (SARD website, February 2009).

If is difficult to assess whether this situation is representative of various donor countries in the world. If it is the case, however, one can imagine how complex, perhaps even confusing, dealing with donor representatives can be from a FAO perspective.

Donors have a lot of say regarding what happens in the field, perhaps more so in emergency types of intervention than in 'normal' development projects, as they have more direct control over the budget. They may be convinced to change project activities under certain conditions. In fact, from what I could witness, donor flexibility may occur at the field level, often in regard to very particular issues.

I remember accompanying a consultant to see his project's donor[97], as he was trying to convince them that livelihoods activities could be useful in one particular community we had just visited. This community was in fact a post-TIM resettlement, located in an arid and remote place, on a rocky terrain and deprived of water. UNHabitat was building the houses, and FAO was to bring in rainwater collection tanks along with 'kits' to grow home gardens. But the two hundred and

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[97] If some staff in the field may contact donors directly for discussions (as was the case of the consultant in Waterland) this is not the situation for the transfer of funds, which must go from the donor to FAO HQ Rome, which then in turn must first authorise expenditures and then transfer funds to the field. These multiple steps can lead to delays and difficult situations. For example, at the time of my mission, the SPFS staff in Waterland had not been paid for three months, the money apparently being stuck somewhere between the donor and the Roman bureaucracy. In Sandland, Brian, as a consultant who actually had to spend funds, also went through hardships: "[…] An FBA is a 'Field Budget Allocation'. This is the process by which authorisations to spend funds from the donor are sent from Rome to the project [the actual transfer of money from Rome to the bank "in-country" is yet another separate operation]. These authorisations often take a long time to process in Rome. Because really, the management of money (besides information) is so disorganised in FAO. Most of the budget funds are actually kept in Rome, then doled out to the field. The budget allocations for the field are always messed up for some reason […]. (Brian)

eighteen families who were to be relocated in this settlement had no possibilities for farming anymore, and were located quite far from the sea: income activities were thus very limited. They needed more than homes and gardens to earn a living, so the consultant wanted the donor's approval to move on with diversifying livelihoods activities, using examples from SPFS (ex: growing mushrooms or flowers). He took me along to provide support for his own view that SPFS's activities would be beneficial within the context of his project[98]. (I never knew whether the suggestions were accepted.)

In this context, FAO professionals have to juggle donor interest with the field realities they are observing, while being sometimes limited by FAO rules or by the local context (local rules of resource management, local government collaboration, cultural boundaries, etc.). Donor pressure may result in making professionals undertake activities they disagree with, or, in the best of cases, in engaging in a dialogue with the donors to negotiate permission for the interventions that they see fit with the reality they are facing.

Another example was the case of fishing gear, which was an enormous part of FAO's intervention in Waterland. A fishing gear expert was hired to provide his expertise on the type of fishing gear being distributed by FAO. He travelled all around the country where fishing gear had been distributed and was astonished to find FAO gear on the black market, piling up in back stores, and he also noticed that some of this fishing gear was against the Waterland fishing laws, potentially putting some fish resources in danger. Finding out that FAO's equipment was already feeding the black market was negative enough, but of even greater concern was that the Emergency unit still had millions of dollars to spend on fishing gear, eighteen months after TIM. The best he could do was to suggest the acquisition of other kinds of fishing gear. Not spending the money that was still left, even if it was perhaps not needed, or would have been needed

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[98] This is similar to a discussion by Mosse (2005a:134). "In relation to the donor, 'insider' consultants establish significance, deliver expert judgement and report progress".

differently or elsewhere, was not an option for either the donor or the FAO Emergency unit. Although I was unable to attend the meetings that followed his report, I was told that a fair amount of negotiation had taken place subsequently with the donors in order to make the suggested changes.

These are not unusual situations. Some donors, I was told, are more flexible and adaptable than others. Li (2007) has discussed at length the roles and aspirations of trustees – or donors who fund development projects. As she mentioned, not all trustees act in similar ways: "They are variably open to critical commentary by other experts, to observations about the effects of their programs, and to the reactions and demands of the people they intend to help" (Li 2007:278). For example, ECHO, the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office, according to an emergency officer I met, was one of the most demanding donors.

> "ECHO, as a donor, keeps a tight control over projects. They verify everything. Email exchanges can last for over a year just for little technical details. […] It seems that the staff at ECHO has to justify their presence as officers!" (John)

Donors and Project Rules

An emergency programme is made of various projects funded by different donors, all of which taken together do not necessarily make for a coherent whole, and which do not usually have strong reasons for coordinating actions between the various projects. This apparently is not peculiar to the response to TIM in Waterland but rather corresponds to a permanent and widespread 'matter of fact', which also applies to the development world. Each donor has a way of controlling on-going projects, and should there be changes to the plans, permission has to be requested from the donors. Thus, if FAO officers see that providing more fishing gear does not make sense, to continue using this example, it does not

mean that permission from the donor to work differently or change the planned project will necessarily be granted[99].

An example of the limits imposed by this 'donor/ project approach' was the situation in Mountainland. The FAO Representation there had impressed the HQ-Emergency staff by the way they had handled the emergency situation. On the request of an emergency staff member at HQ who wanted to know why the response to NATE was so rapid and coordinated, and how the model could possibly be replicated elsewhere, I had started documenting – mostly through interviews with local actors and email exchanges with HQ – how the Mountainland Representation made things work in the aftermath of NATE. The key to Mountainland's quick response turned out to be that in the face of the sudden national disaster the Representation had stopped all other ongoing activities so that all team members were released to work on the needs assessments, no matter what they were doing before, and no matter what project they were working on. In doing so, the Representation had necessarily pooled all their resources in common, and so transcended the usual working divisions imposed by the differently funded projects.

However, a halt to my document came from Mountainland: in requiring the Representation's staff to work together, project rules were broken locally and no publicity on the case was needed. The staff preferred that HQ's knowledge of the situation remained superficial rather than detailed. Each project, whether emergency or development, is its own entity, and each project budget includes its own staff and consultant salaries, vehicles, supplies, computers, etc. These resources, however, are not supposed to be shared between projects, mostly because they are not funded by the same donor. Not the personnel, nor the vehicles, nor even the office supplies. In reality, however, these divides between

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[99] There are many questions here, which are beyond the scope of this research, regarding whether donor funded projects and programmes really match the needs of poor people in the first place (Li 2007:281). It should be mentioned that sometimes, "donor agencies like DFID are themselves increasingly removed from the contingencies of development". (Mosse 2005a:237).

projects are hard to maintain, and it is not always productive to do so. On the one hand, the Representation was congratulated for its quick and effective response to the NATE Hurricane, but on the other hand, the lessons learned could not be extracted because rules had been broken. Their 'recipe' was flexibility, but the price of flexibility was breaking the rules.

These considerations of donors and project rules, seen in the context of the emergency work in both Mountainland and Waterland, illustrate yet another realm of FAO's work in addition to development intervention, which adds another layer of complexity that characterises the organisation. It should be stated, in passing, that some professionals I have met had strong opinions about donors, but also on the organisation's relations to donors which is sometimes seen as being too open to donors' 'manipulations':

> "I do believe however, that FAO needs to assure itself that extra-budgetary funding merges with an accepted approach and goal of the organization itself, and is not just focused on someone or some pet project area. [...] Donors should merge their donations with the objectives of the organization, but many have vested interests, e.g., Italian funding for Italian consultants and Italian technology. The organization should have the intestinal fortitude and support of members to refuse such aid, and alternatively, members should be genuine enough to avoid vested interest approaches to assistance". (Sam)

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

This chapter provided an overview of FAO field homes and of some of the various levels of complexity faced by the professionals when working from field offices. The chapter discussed the great value accorded to field experience for and by professionals working in FAO, and addressed the different structures and elements composing FAO-homes at country level, and the various FAO staff and consultants working in the field who create and form the FAO homes. This non exhaustive account on FAO field offices' personnel included FAO Representatives and their Deputy Representatives, visiting experts on mission, and the many consultants – international and national – who carry out the daily work from the field. Experiences in Waterland and Mountainland were then compared, illustrating the fluidity of FAO structure, as well as the many layers of complexity one can expect when travelling to the field.

Mountainland and Waterland Representations were perhaps two extremes on a spectrum, one very compartmentalised and the other one trying to pull together as a single office with a shared vision. I cannot assess, however, how different or similar they might be from other FAO Representations located elsewhere in the world. It should also be noted that also the above description corresponds to a particular moment in time and may have changed since[100].

FAO offices, despite some bureaucratic imperatives, are more or less the sum of their actors even if embedded in the same FAO system. Personalities and expertise, through agency, convictions, and competencies, shape the ways of working, the working atmosphere, and most likely the field interventions as well, even in an organisation like FAO which *a priori*, may seem very rule-bound and rigid.

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[100] This entire research corresponds to one particular moment in time, in 2006. Many changes – including in the positions and opinions of the FAO personnel I interviewed then - may have occurred since.

In doing development or emergency work, expectations of the diverse actors vary, depending on their expertise and on their status in FAO (national or international staff, experts on mission, short-term or long-term consultants), and so does their individual contribution, or rather, the depth and quality of their involvement in the field. When one discusses the 'development industry', it *de facto* includes all these actors and many more who are 'outsiders' to the organisation, but who also influence its work, notably the donor community, as discussed above.

I think my own bias was most likely visible in the presentation of these two field homes: I found that the strategies of the Representation of Mountainland were more flexible and creative (and probably more likely to yield 'good' results, though I was not there long enough to be able to verify this) compared to the compartmentalisation practiced by the Waterland Representation. The Waterland approach seemed more 'paralysing' in terms of being less conducive to useful dialogue, either between co-workers or with the beneficiaries of the different projects, and less able to benefit from the expertise of the national consultants, visiting experts, or short-term international consultants. In comparing SPFS in Mountainland to SPFS in Waterland, the Waterland team seemed more isolated from other FAO resources and from experienced colleagues, and had little support and guidance from the FAO Representation. They worked on their own, seemingly maintaining more relations with the donor representative than with the rest of FAO.

To continue the 'home' analogy, the Representations of Mountainland and Waterland could be compared to two 'reconstructed families'. In Mountainland, the different family members got along well, operated under the presence of a charismatic father figure, and worked together as a team. If they at times had some trouble in identifying with the father figure *per se*, they felt a sense of belonging towards each other, and could be counted on to help each other when needed. Their 'unity' also projected an image of 'one' FAO in Montainland.

In contrast, the reconstructed family of Waterland could be qualified as dysfunctional, as the residents of the home interacted in a very limited way, and mostly when unavoidable. They lived in different houses of the same city, but rarely visited one another. There was no charismatic figure endeavouring to sit everyone at the same table (and some team members there would probably have been very reluctant to sit at that table in any case).

In Mountainland, project boundaries were harder to maintain because of the desire to work holistically under an umbrella programme for the whole FAO-Mountainland. There seemed to be many advantages in having such a programme despite the bureaucratic difficulties. Not only did it enable a shared vision of the interventions needed to improve food security, but it also lessened the compartmentalisation between the FAO units, favouring team and multi-disciplinary work through frequent meetings. In addition, the sharing of staff and of information between projects allowed for a greater range of expertise and competencies to be brought in while creating, among the staff, a greater team sense and an awareness of the available resources.

Still other benefits could be projected from this type of cohesive work, but much more time and dedication would be needed to fully assess the impact of such an integrated approach. Advantages could potentially involve: shared costs (thus economic benefits); greater flexibility of management; increased communication of lessons learned; increased benefits from shared experience and expertise between projects (in terms of what works and what does not work in a given area); joint opportunities for capacity building of the staff and consultants; and shared policy work that would enable projects to reach their full potential of implementation and to obtain governments' collaboration. However, the Mountainland Representation, may have been perceived, from an FAO-HQ bureaucratic point of view, as more 'delinquent' in terms of breaking FAO rules.

This comparison between Waterland and Mountainland – including considerations at the level of both development and emergency – shows that structural and organisational elements, including important aspects of the structure of human resource management, may affect how 'at home' employees feel, and hence also affect their motivations to carry out quality work. The personalities and relationships which shape the working atmospheres and one's sense of belonging also appear to have an important impact on the attitudes, work and morale of the personnel, be they staff members or consultants.

This chapter has painted a landscape as seen through windows onto two FAO field homes. The next chapter will illustrate how a few actors may deploy agency and leadership through their charisma, networking abilities, and professional skills. It will discuss how these individuals may take initiatives which may eventually become endorsed by FAO (or not), or at the least be recognised by their peers. A short discussion will present 'facilitated meetings', which are emerging in FAO with the potential of giving voice to a greater number of people, opening more subtle ways to evolve organisational change in FAO. Lastly, the chapter focuses on appraisals, both in terms of the answerability and of the recognition of the various actors of the FAO scene. The next chapter thus enters more deeply into the individuality of some staff members and consultants working for FAO, both at HQ and in the field.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPRINT OF PERSONALITIES ON DEVELOPMENT WORK: CHARISMA, NETWORKING AND EXPERIENCE

When I first started with the LSP, Edward, the coordinator of the programme, greeted me with a two-hour meeting over green tea to introduce me to the program and discuss what my job would entail. I knew ahead of time that my most important task would be to write up the history of the LSP, but I also suspected that the line in my Terms of Reference (TOR) which said "any other tasks as required" would fill most of my days. Although I was eager to find out what I would be doing, we did not get to that part just yet. Edward was obviously passionate about the LSP and had much to say regarding the programme he had been coordinating since 2002. When Edward departed to attend another meeting, I left the room with a head full of names and information and in my hands eight pages of confusing diagrams and notes on the LSP that Edward had made while speaking. We had agreed that I would try to digest that information throughout the day as I was organising my desk and dealing with administrative procedures (getting my building pass, signing my contract, etc.).

During this meeting, Edward explained the functioning of the LSP and spent much time discussing the founding principles of the LSP (see chapter 3 for an encompassing description of these principles). To Edward, LSP was not just a group of thematic sub-programmes relating to livelihoods but a philosophy of work. Most LSP members had joined the programme not only because of their interest in livelihoods, but because of the LSP principles and ways of working. During his presentation, Edward insisted on what he called the principle of attraction, meaning that the LSP members took part in the programme because they wanted to, in addition to their regular tasks. He discussed how the staff members who joined the LSP were 'champions' of specific projects that they carried out or coordinated. Without a real interested champion, Edward was convinced, projects were rarely carried out successfully to the end.

This term 'champion' caught my attention because it resonated with the anthropological concept of "agent" (Giddens 1979; Ortner 1997; 2006), and, in this particular case, agency in leadership. It meant not only someone who was responsible, but someone with enough experience and charisma to lead a team in accomplishing an assignment carried out from beginning to end. A champion has interpersonal tools and strategies needed to accomplish tasks, and should, in principle, be a positive leader and, at times, a mentor. But for Edward, a champion was above all, someone who passionately defended a cause and moved initiatives forward.

In the LSP context, these champions were motivated because they were in charge of projects that they had themselves conceived or that they considered important. Projects and ideas had to be approved by the LSP's Programme Coordination Team (PCT), but there was little interference by other members who were in any case busy dealing with their work and moving their own projects ahead.

As presented in the introduction and chapter 2 of this dissertation, the anthropological literature on development portrays organisations of development as rigid entities (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995a; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993, among others), thereby overlooking the flexibility that often characterizes 'bureaucratic' behaviour and the influence that individuals may have on development and organisational processes. While chapters 4 and 5 sought to dehomogenise FAO by looking at differences between the physical components at HQ and in the field, the present chapter focuses on 'agents' and their personal influence on work processes.

So far, I have argued that even in apparently strictly defined organisations such as FAO, professionals can deploy astuteness, agency and leadership in pursuing given tasks, or in addressing parallel goals. A champion's charisma, networking

capacities and professional skills can play an important role in shaping the work of an organisation. However, only some personalities possess these leadership skills and qualities.

The idea of a champion is illustrated below through examples inspired by my experience in HQ, more precisely in the context of the LSP. They are agents at work who have enough credibility to influence processes and outcomes of tasks or projects. Agency is considered here as a multi-dimensional complex of qualities including charisma, networking and professional skills, which confer credibility on agents or champions of change, who will at times challenge or even subvert authority in order to reach their goals and put their vision into motion (Conger 1989).

The first section of this chapter tackles three personal and professional attributes: charisma, networking abilities, and technical skill and experience. The sub-section on charisma presents the example of the Central American (CA) project, an FAO project implemented in a country of Central America in which a charismatic project director played a distinctive role in expanding project activities, making this project one that was recognised as 'successful' by FAO personnel. The second example presents the case of Eva, an LSP consultant working at HQ, who was particularly skilled at networking, showing how she pulled her network together for the organisation of a workshop on "livelihoods as a planning tool" which was attended by members of high management. Lastly, the sub-section on 'technical skills and experience', the combination of which will be henceforth labelled as 'professional skills' discusses how these two intertwined attributes are necessary to give professionals the credibility and confidence needed to become leaders. This is illustrated through the comparison of two field missions on livelihoods: one mission performed by Monique, an experienced consultant, and my own mission in Waterland, previously discussed in chapter 5.

Generally, charismatic and networking professionals stand a greater chance to be heard in an organisation and hence to bring about change (Conger 1989). The second section of this chapter discusses how this situation may become modified through the emergence of facilitated meetings at FAO. Facilitated meetings, as will be explained, have the potential to make more varied voices heard within the organisational context, bringing change in a more subtle and unexpected manner within the organisation.

The third and last section of this chapter discusses appraisals from two different angles. The first one concerns 'answerability', signalling how professionals may be held responsible for their actions when they negatively influence a development project or task. To illustrate how difficult it is in FAO to make professionals answerable, I provide the example of the "Fisheries in Africa Programme" (FAP), for which I was hired as a member of the final evaluation team. The second aspect of appraisal concerns 'recognition', the acknowledgement of the positive contribution of champions to development projects or given tasks. Currently, FAO does not have an established system for rewarding good performance. The case of Doreen presents peer recognition as a mechanism for rewarding champions, but also discusses her own unusual case of *ad hoc* yet formal recognition within the FAO context.

In summary, this chapter explores elements of leadership by presenting examples of how charismatic, networking and experienced types of leaders, or champions, end up giving personal color to the work they carry out, and in the process bring change to the organisation. This chapter also highlights that professionals rarely work alone, and achieve their everyday work with their peers' trust and recognition, which empowers them to take initiatives.

CHARISMA, NETWORKING AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

The Role of Charisma in Organisational Leadership

The concept of charisma as elaborated by Max Weber ([1922] 1968) is "probably the most widely used Weberian concept in anthropology" (Keyes 2002: 248), yet, charisma remains hard to define (Adair-Toteff 2005; Conger 1989). Weber dedicated a good part of his work discussing charisma as a form of authority, without clearly defining the concept he was using (Adair-Toteff 2005:189). In fact, Weber identified three types of authority: legal (bureaucracy, law), traditional (economic) and charismatic (*ibid: 2005*). Weber's aim in discussing charismatic authority was to understand "the question of how non-coercive political authority is established" (Keyes 2002:249). Even if Weber did not clearly define charisma throughout his work (Adair-Toteff 2005), Dow (1978:83) has provided an encompassing summary of Weber's notion of charisma:

> "In Weber's original formulation, charismatic authority is said to exist when an individual's claim to 'specific gifts of body and mind' is acknowledged by others as a valid basis for their participation in an extraordinary programme of action. The leader's authority and programme are thus specifically 'outside the realm of everyday routine and ... [therefore] sharply opposed both to rational … and to traditional authority…. Both … are … forms of everyday routine control… while charismatic authority … is … a specifically 'revolutionary force'. In this sense, 'charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits'. It 'rejects all external order…' it 'transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms. …'. 'In most potent forms, […it] overturns all notions of sanctity.' Instead of respect for rational rule and tradition, it compels 'the surrender of the faithful to the extraordinary and unheard-of, to what is alien to all regulation and tradition and therefore is viewed as divine…".

Dow has identified above several principles of charisma as described by Weber, which Conger (1989:35) has later described as a "constellation of behaviours". Even considering the difficulty of defining charisma *per se*, Conger noted that "charismatic individuals are certainly not subatomic particles invisible to the

human eye. Quite the contrary, they are exceptionally visible" (*ibid*: 21). Following the above citation, charisma is a gift, an extraordinary quality of individuals, and charismatic leaders have revolutionary "programmes" which aim at breaking with the "existing order". Weber saw charisma as being "naturally unstable" and involving a "divine mission" (Weber [1922]1968:1114). Importantly, he also indicated that the "charismatic hero [...] gains and retains [charisma] solely by proving his powers in practice" (*ibid*: 1114), and described charisma as personal, irrational, temporary, and unusual (Adair-Toteff 2005:191).

Thus, in Weber's view, charisma is in sharp contrast with the "existing order". Social and political order or forms of domination, to Weber, pertain to bureaucratic, legal, or traditional forms of leadership:

> "The "validity" of a power of command may be expressed, first, in a system of consciously made *rational* rules (which may be either agreed upon or imposed from above), which meet with obedience as generally binding norms whenever such obedience is claimed by him whom the rule designates. In that case every single bearer of powers of command is legitimated by that system of rational norms, and his power is legitimate insofar as it corresponds with the norm. Obedience is thus given to the norms rather than to the person. [...] *Rationally regulated* association within a structure of domination finds its typical expression in *bureaucracy*. *Traditionally* prescribed social action is typically represented by *patriarchalism*. The *charismatic* structure of domination rests upon individual authority which is based neither upon rational rules nor upon tradition" (Weber [1922]1968:954, emphasis in original).

In short, "Weber conceived of the emergence of charismatic authority as posing a challenge to existing authority based on tradition or on rationalized bureaucracy" (Keyes 2002: 249)

Ideas and conceptions of charismatic leaders have changed since Weber wrote about forms of authority (Conger 1989; Lindholm 1990; Smith 2000). Charismatic leaders currently occupy different levels of institutions, organisations, or private companies, and are not necessarily social and political leaders 'with programmes'

followed by large numbers of people. As Lindholm (1990:6) wrote, "charismatic attraction" is "a way of talking about certain emotionally charged aspects of social interactions, both at the level of mass movements, and in small-scale, everyday social life". Weber referred to charismatic political leaders as "heros" who had a "rational determination of means and ends" (Adair-Toteff 2005:197; Weber [1922] 1968:1116), and to religious leaders such as prophets or magicians in relation to "supernatural or sacred power" (Keyes 2002:248; Weber [1922]1968:1112). However, charismatic leaders can operate at a much smaller scale, in a service of FAO for example, and may make their mark just about anywhere people live or work with others. Weber, who distinguished between charismatic and bureaucratic power, may have had a hard time imagining that charismatic individuals could invade the bureaucratic space, as can be inferred from the following quote:

> "In radical contrast to bureaucratic organization, charisma knows no formal and regulated appointment or dismissal, no career, advancement or salary, no supervisory or appeals body, no local or purely technical jurisdiction, and no permanent institutions in the manner of bureaucratic agencies, which are independent of the incumbents and their personal charisma" (Weber [1922]1968:1112).

To be followed, wrote Weber, charismatic leaders may prove their capacity in practice. In the context of FAO, this translates into the professional capacity to uphold one's promises, or to lead a team in achieving a given assignment. This relates to a second point made by Weber: charisma only exists if recognised by others, or else it is insignificant, to use Friedland's term (1964:20; see also Adair-Toteff 2005:195; Weber [1922]1968:1113). In this sense, charismatic leaders have to develop persuasive arguments to attract and retain their followers. Lindholm (1990:7) has described charisma as a relationship, "a mutual mingling of the inner selves of leader and follower". Weber, however, feared that charismatic leaders were "irrational", because of their unpredictable, unstable and non-permanent nature ([1922] 1968). He was concerned about the ethics and

responsibilities of the charismatic leader, a point to which I come back in the last section of this chapter.

Hence, only a few people are charismatic. Weber himself had identified charisma as an extraordinary feature. In Lindholm' (1990:7) words: "This magnetic quality that is the essence of charisma is one that a few people are thought to "have" as part of their basic character: charisma is not learned – it exists, just as height or eye color exists". Yet, the charismatic needs a relevant "message", depending on the "social situation" or context in order to be recognised and supported (Friedland 1964:21).

In addition, some charismatic individuals may experience a desire to bring about change, or to be agents of change (Tanner Pascale and Sternin 2005:1), which Weber characterised as the "revolutionary nature of charisma" (Weber 1968:1115; Adair-Toteff 2005:198). However, charismatic individuals are not necessarily conscious of their charismatic power, and may not always have a clear programme of action. They may, however, have a vision underpinning most of their actions, as it was the case for the LSP members who wanted to change FAO's ways of working (see chapter 3). Weber did not foresee the possibility of charismatic leaders arguing for the status quo within social and political spheres. Regardless of their intentions, charismatic leaders may not all have coherent programmes of actions supporting their desire for change.

Weber argued that charisma transcends "the routines of everyday life" ([1922]1968:1134). By definition, then, charisma can be described as the "specifically creative revolutionary force of history" (*ibid*: 1117). Once change has occurred and is transforming "into some more continuous social organization and institutional framework", Weber wrote, it becomes "routinised" (Eisenstadt 1968: xxi; see also Friedland 1964:19).

> "When the tide that lifted a charismatically led group out of everyday life flows back into the channels of workaday routines, at least the

> "pure" form of charismatic domination will wane and turn into an "institution"; it is then either mechanized, as it were, or imperceptibly displaced by other structures, or fused with them in the most diverse form, so that it becomes a mere component of a concrete historical structure" (Weber [1922]1968:1121).

In fact, as Friedland (1964:19) has argued: "Charisma is crucial to Weber's system of analysis as the basis for the explanation of social change". This is specifically what the charismatic individuals involved in the LSP were after: changing FAO's ways of working by making them more people-centered and, thus, more capable of alleviating poverty in the long term. The hope of the LSP members was that the changes they were proposing would become 'routinised' in FAO, in a Weberian sense. Thus, in the context of organisations, charismatic leaders, who are not necessarily managers, may bring about change in unexpected ways. They may challenge formal leadership to undertake initiatives which they perceived as beneficial for the organisation. As Conger (1989:18) wrote: "Because of their creativity, inspiration, unconventionality, and vision, charismatic leaders are potential sources of enormous transformation for organizations".

Charisma and a Central American Project[101]

The following example of the Central American (CA) project is a case in point where a charismatic leader made a difference in an FAO project. Originally designed as a three-year purely 'technical' project, the CA project ended up lasting for fourteen years (1990-2004) and dealing with the social and political spheres of the project participants. Even five years after the project was over, it was remembered in FAO, at least in the service where I worked, as one of the

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[101] I keep the real name of the project confidential in case a brochure project is ever published by another consultant. In doing so, the participants and team members who worked for this project are also kept anonymous.

most 'successful'[102] project implemented by FAO. This unusual degree of success was apparently made possible largely through the remarkable contributions of one particular individual, the charismatic project director, who will henceforth be called Peter.

I came to know about the CA project through the LSP. It was my first week at work. Edward called me in to participate in an assignment he described as an interactive interview to gather knowledge about the CA project. The team consisted of two junior consultants, Amy and myself, who would do the ground research and write up the document, and two senior officers, Ben, who had been in charge of backstopping the CA project from HQ for many years, and Edward himself, who had kept an eye on the project for many years, and visited the project sites once it had been completed to, as he put it, see for his sceptical self if there was really any truth behind the glowing reports from the field. Edward would put a jar of pistachios in the middle of the table and we would talk about the project. Amy and I, armed with colourful cards, markers, and pin boards, were in charge of taking notes and asking questions aimed at keeping the conversation going. Edward and Ben, however, did not need us to push the conversation forward: it seems their discussion could have continued endlessly with or without us.

Edward and Ben were passionate about the CA project. They explained that they considered the CA project to be one of the most sustainable in FAO, a fact that was recognised by many other officers. The purpose of our meetings was to

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[102] By 'successful', Ben and Edward meant that the CA project had the potential to last through time and have sustainable and positive impact on people's lives. The project had also been done with massive participation from the local population. In addition, the project had not only focused on technical agricultural aspects, but also on social and political dimensions. It is not the point here to analyse what makes a 'successful' development project. Rather, the CA project had the reputation of having been successful and Edward and Ben wanted to identify the reasons why and make them known to a wider audience. This goes back to Mosse's view – already discussed in Chapter 3, that "development success is not merely a question of measures of performance; it is also about how particular interpretations are made and sustained socially. It is not just about what a project does, but also how and to whom it speaks, who can be made to believe in it" (2005a:158)

tease out the key elements underlying the success of the CA project, which would eventually result in an LSP-funded small brochure aimed at sharing the lessons learned during the project period. The brochure was to be designed for officers and managers in organisations and governments, who are involved in making decisions on the process of rural development, as the CA project was a prime example of where the principles of livelihoods actually worked. In Edward's words, the brochure was to "tell the story" of the CA project. A draft of the brochure was completed after only a few meetings, but in the end was never published, a point to which I come back later. The sections of the draft brochure[103] used in the following discussion were primarily put together by myself, based on Edward and Ben's conversation.

The CA project, implemented by the local government with the technical support of FAO, initially financed by UNDP, was supported in its later stages by the Netherlands. Originally the project aimed at stopping soil depletion caused by the extensive use of the slash and burn technique in this region. However, because of the presence of a charismatic leader, the project ended up expanding its activities by eventually putting in place organisations for local governance as well as institutions for secondary and adult education, thereby directly impacting the political and social life of the project participants. The project targeted a very poor and geographically isolated region of Central America where, at the end of the 1980s, between 70% and 75% of the families were considered to be living in conditions of extreme poverty (that is, on less than a dollar a day) (CA project document). The project team used participatory methods and principles of good governance to strengthen local bottom-up organisations.

With time, the major objectives of the project included:
- "Improving food security and farmer's earnings through training and experiment with improvements in local farming systems;
- Promoting and strengthening community institutions;

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[103] I have the permission to cite parts of this unpublished brochure.

- Incorporating women into the communal structures;
- Assisting in further developing the network of existing communal "banks.""
(CA project document).

As the group discussion progressed, the key reasons for the success of this project started to emerge. Several of these reasons were discussed at length by Edward and Ben, including 'team building' (i.e. spending time developing a common set of objectives and building trust relations among team members and with the communities); time (the fact that the project unfolded over a long time period); finding a balance between demand-driven and top-down considerations; the use of an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach; respecting the attachment of local farmers to small-scale farming while working on ways to improve production, etc.

Edward and Ben came to agree that the presence of a charismatic leader underpinned these factors, which answered to that leader's vision of sustainability and 'good' practice in project implementation. The project director, Peter, basically served as the 'glue' holding the project team together, and as a propelling force to make the project go beyond its original objectives. In wanting to identify the necessary and replicable conditions for the success of this project, Ben and Edward came to earmark "charismatic leadership" as one of these necessary conditions:

> "[…] IMPORTANCE OF CHARISMATIC CHAMPIONS: Charismatic champions are key in building trust and, in the case of the CA Project, it was precisely trust that led local farmers to invest experimentally in the project's proposed technologies, at some risk to their own food security. The role of the project manager was crucial to the success of the project. The project manager had a combination of qualities that made him a great project manager: honesty; charisma; hands-on orientation; constant presence in the field; able to generate trust; […]; a long-term strategic vision; a focus on cultural survival and natural resource management and on what can be done to help people in that capacity – based on local and contextual realities; the drive to sell his ideas in the field, to the donors, and to the governments; dynamic."

Ben and Edward spent long moments recalling this project director who, according to them, was an incredibly gifted individual. Under his influence, the project unfolded using a participatory approach through which the team managed to gain the trust of project participants. Edward, however, insisted that Peter was not only charismatic: he was also an experienced technical professional, which conferred on him the necessary credibility to be respected by virtually everyone involved in the project. In this sense, he was able to deliver what he had promised to the project participants, thereby maintaining their participation in the project and confidence in the project team over time. As Conger (1989:94) wrote: "To be a charismatic leader, it is not enough simply to have an inspiring vision or great powers of persuasion. The charismatic leader must also be able to build trust in his or her abilities to transform the ideals of a vision into reality."

Edward and Ben also recalled how Peter was capable of imagining solutions that would not be too disruptive for the participants, and which sometimes had little to do with the original project document. For example, in the course of the project, Peter found that there was a need to train local people to become agricultural extentionists[104] so that the farmers could continue the work after the project was over, thereby increasing the sustainability of the project. He thus found funds, other than those promised by FAO, to create, within the project area, a system of "Community Technical Institutes" from already existing secondary educational institutions. These newly created or transformed institutes had a clear educative mandate and, from what Ben and Edward recounted, ended up being key to the sustainability of the project by educating teachers, farmers, extension agents, and, more recently, people who have became mayors in their own communities.

On the ground, Peter had a strategy of attracting different partners around specific local aims and objectives. Thus sub-projects (on farming, health, education, roads, water management) would usually include not only farming

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[104] As defined in chapter 5: Extentionists are in charge of "educating" and advising project participants on topics related to agriculture.

family groups, but also – depending on the aims – the local government authorities, the Church, and leading local families. Through these partnerships, the project ended up helping to set up a Community Development Association which would group together the strengths of each community. The Associations would look after the distribution of resources offered by the project (technical and experimental, never subsidies), with an eye to the long-term development of their community.

Ben and Edward invoked Peter's capacity to put his holistic vision in motion, even in the harsh context of having to change long-lasting practices (such as the slash-and-burn technique) to preserve natural resources. His charisma gave him the necessary drive to 'sell' his creative solutions to the project participants and across the different governmental levels (Conger 1989:6). However, putting this vision into motion meant very hard work for himself, and he expected that the members of the project team would work equally hard. This corresponds, according to Conger, to another characteristic of charismatic leaders: "They are thorough and demanding, yet the reward of their praise is so confirming that subordinates describe it as an 'emotional high' and, therefore, work hard for their leader's commendation" (*ibid*: 7).

Yet, Ben also discussed at length the problems that arose in dealing with Peter from an HQ perspective: he rarely sent in reports on time, if at all, and did not use HQ as a resource but rather often indirectly challenged a leading role for HQ authority since he wanted to do what he saw best from his field perspective. To some extent, Peter did not give much importance to written project document objectives and planned activities *per se*. He most likely agreed with the project objectives, but saw them as incomplete compared to the needs he met once in the field. His holistic vision led him to seek creative solutions to improve people's situations. This is in line with Conger's (1989:12) observation that charismatic leaders like to take risks by defying authority, which they see as necessary to bring about change. However, Peter did not consciously seek to challenge

authority – or rather, challenging authority in itself was not Peter's aim. He was after a coherent approach to field intervention, and could hardly stick to what was requested of him in the project document. Peter, in fact, would have welcomed FAO's support for his initiatives. But, replied Edward, this did not matter so much because the project worked very well on the ground, at least for the local population that benefited from increased food security, institutions for local governance, and training institutes.

It is impossible here to recount all the initiatives that were undertaken over the fourteen years of the CA project. However, there was no doubt in Ben and Edward's minds (who themselves together cumulated some fifty years of 'development' experience) that Peter's charisma played a central role in the success of the project intervention. At the beginning of the project, he alone held together the project team, and convinced participants of the worthwhile aims of the project and of the positive results that would be seen with time. Later in the project's evolution, he was able to build a support network around the framework of the project, including both the Church and the local authorities in order to strengthen the community's institutions in the pursuit of common goals. He was also capable of approaching other donors to fund activities complementary to the project's original plan, thereby increasing the project's impact and sustainability. This resonates with Mosse's observations:

> "It goes without saying that development projects generally are never simply 'implemented' by single-sized actors through formal structures or responsibility; they not only require (and bring into existence) a range of unscripted inter-institutional broker roles, but also need extensive informal networks of support, built personally through relations of trust and maintained through an out-of-sight 'economy of favours and obligations' existing at the margins of legitimacy (or maybe in some cases legality)" (2005a:125).

The ultimate proof of Peter's charisma, according to Edward and Ben, was that he had managed to gain the farmers' trust without having to pay them a subsidy to take part in the project's activities.

The charisma of this individual was in fact a "constellation of behaviours" (Conger 1989:35-36) and an amalgam of other elements of personality that included: technical skills, a vision (which Conger deemed as the "corner stone of charisma"), creativity in terms of finding the means to achieve his vision, a capacity to work informally, and, according to Ben, to persist even without the approval of his colleagues. Thus, charisma might constitute the backbone of trust relations, but it alone does not suffice: promises have to be fulfilled through practical actions and results.

Charisma, as demonstrated by the CA project, is what serves as an inspiration at the beginning of a project, but it must be converted into concrete results over time. In the case of Peter, his charisma was paired with great professional skills which led to the fulfilment of promises he had made to the local population and to the national project team. This example demonstrates how a 'planned' intervention in a technical project document was 'manipulated' or complemented by a charismatic individual. In other words:

> "There has to be a single project model – given privilege in the text – but there are always several readings of it, several shadow or subordinate models and rationalities validating action from different points of view or operational positions (of fieldworkers, managers, consultants, etc.)." (Mosse 2005a:40-41).

Peter's way to manage this project differed from FAO's 'normal' interventions in that the project ended up broadening its scope compared to FAO 'traditional' field activities focused on food security. The CA project perhaps left a different 'imprint' on beneficiaries as it sought to deal with locally crucially important social and educational issues.

Charisma, however, is not just a talent or a capacity of an individual. It must be recognised by others, as Weber long ago established (Weber [1922] 1968; see also Lindholm 1990). In this sense, charisma is subject to interpretation and perception: some might consider a particular individual charismatic, and others

not (Conger 1989:22). In the context of organisations, the recognition of charisma often articulates with networks of like-minded individuals, creating momentum and buy-in around certain principles or causes.

Networking Capacities

I was surrounded in FAO/LSP by many individuals with the capacity to build and maintain networks of interested individuals. Networkers do not necessarily have to be wholly charismatic, but need a certain dose of charisma to attract people to their networks in the first place. They share some abilities with charismatic leaders, including their capacity to 'preach' their ideas and be persuasive (Conger 1989:6).

When seeking references on 'network theory' the library search engine yielded a wealth of books in different disciplines: electricity, biology and biomechanics, neurology, wireless networking and communication networks, knowledge management, information technology, mathematics, etc. The word "network" itself, as Latour (2005:131) notes, "has too many meanings!" The idea of "social networks" has long been used by anthropologists studying social structures (Barth 1981; Levi-Strauss 1969; Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Radcliffe-Brown (1940:2) loosely defined networks as "forms of associations to be found amongst human beings", through which "human beings are connected by a complex network of social relations". "A particular social relation between two persons", continued Radcliffe-Brown (1940:3), "exists only as a part of a wider network of social relations, involving many other persons".

Barth ([1972]1981) has used the concept of network in his analysis of models of social organisation and shifted the emphasis from "structure" to "individuals" and their relations with others within a given social organisation. He proposed "the analysis of networks, in place of structuralist macro-analysis" (*ibid*: 136). In doing

so, Barth focused on various types of networks, and on the different kinds of lived interactions by various forms of social organisations, as he was interested in "comparing kinds of social systems" (*ibid*: 119) and in identifying the part played by individuals in shaping these systems: "the events through which statuses, relations, and groups are made manifest also have their form determined by the actor's codifications of tasks and occasions" (*ibid*: 121). Eva, in the case presented below, not only influenced the "codification of her task", but also created a network of individuals who shared her interest in her work.

For the purpose of this chapter, a network can be defined as "an interconnected group of people; an organization; *spec.* a group of people having certain connections (freq. as a result of attending a particular school or university) which may be exploited to gain preferment, information, etc., esp. for professional advantage" (Oxford English Dictonary, Online, January 2009). In the context of a bureaucracy, networks are formed through professional relations between individuals that can be formal or informal. At times, the boundaries between specific networks may be 'blurred' as professionals may be part of more than one network. Depending on their activities, some networks may also overlap at least momentarily. For example, the LSP was a formal network of professionals, but many of these professionals had or were part of similar informal networks of professionals they interacted with on a regular basis. As Freeman (1970:2) wrote: "all groups create informal structures as a result of the interaction patterns amongst members".

Professionals in FAO rely on networks to seek information, ask for non-hierarchical advice, request collaboration of colleagues for specific tasks, build multi-disciplinary teams with complementary strengths, find a basis for collective actions, brainstorm, find external sources of funding, etc. Beyond providing a strategy to facilitate everyday work, networks also correspond to a "search for new connectedness around shared, reconstructed identities", in this case, professional identities (Castells 2000:23).

The following paragraphs present the case of Eva – an Italian woman in her late thirties – who has built a personal network around the cause of livelihoods, which also fed off and overlapped with the LSP network. Some professionals who were not in the LSP but interacted with Eva thus became *de facto* linked to the LSP. In fact, the LSP immensely benefited from Eva's connections to different professionals. Eva was a strong advocate of livelihoods and of participatory approaches to development. Without being particularly charismatic, her strong arguments and inter-personal skills gave her the capacity to sell her bright ideas and to rally other professionals to her cause. One of her greatest achievement, as will be discussed below, was her capacity to reach members of high management who then used her arguments to mainstream livelihoods principles within FAO or to support other purposes of their own.

I came to know Eva well because, together with another consultant, Mathilda, I had the privilege of sharing an office with her. Our office occupied a particular space assigned to the LSP. Edward had been fighting with the administration to retain it because it was big enough to hold three desks and a table for team work. This table was used for meetings, but also for visiting consultants who needed space, or for short-term consultants who were waiting to obtain their own desk space. Eva herself made prolific use of this space. Her desk was located in the middle but we could hardly see it as it was always buried underneath precarious piles of documents which constantly threatened to fall off. Everyone who entered our office for the first time commented on this situation.

Eva did not have time to spare for cleaning her desk or reporting on her work in writing. In fact, she barely used her desk space except as a surface for documents collected through various meetings or for emailing on her computer. On a typical day, Eva would arrive around 10h, leave her coat on her chair, then leave for a few meetings before showing up again at the end of the afternoon. Eva was laid back, slow paced, often wearing jeans, and rarely stressed about things unless someone important was waiting for a document or if she felt a

specific situation that arose was critical. When there was a deadline to be met, she generally did everything at the last minute, or disregarded the deadline. Edward, as her "boss" and colleague, often had to make her promise to accomplish something that he needed from her, or to offer her an interesting deal ("I will do this for you if you do this for me"), as she rarely made a point of getting everyday business done. She was not interested in recording what she did. For example, obtaining from her an annual report for her sub-programme activities was a *tour de force*. Edward's strategy was often to sit down with her so they could do together whatever he needed, or to ask another consultant to sit with Eva and squeeze information out of her.

Adding to this was the fact that Eva worked officially part-time, but was in demand on more than a full time basis. Several times a day, different consultants and officers would stop by our office asking two questions: "Is Eva around?" and "When do you expect she will be here?" The first question was because most people who worked with Eva knew she did not come in every day. Eva was not a permanent staff member but acted like one and was treated like one by her peers. She had been offered permanent positions but had refused, wanting to maintain the freedom allowed by a part-time contract.

Mathilda and I often received phone calls or emails from people looking for Eva. Typically, they called on Eva's phone and let it ring a few seconds, and then one of our phones would immediately ring: "Could you please ask Eva to call me back as soon as she gets in"? I even received emails a few times that said, "Don't say anything to her but please let me know when she gets in. Thanks". Even if at times Mathilda and I had to play at being Eva's secretaries, sharing an office with her was certainly enriching and it kept us alert. We met many officers in FAO who were members of Eva's network, and because of the free table in our office, Mathilda and I attended many meetings we were not supposed to. It was a good opportunity to learn how things worked in FAO, or, rather, how Eva did things in FAO.

Another characteristic of Eva was that she was a very strategically resourceful and persistent individual. If she was stopped from doing something, she would generally find a way to reach the same results through informal channels or through convincing the right person that the effort was worth it. Sometimes she won by the strength of her arguments, other times because she had the right person on her side (I will come back to this point). 'Persistent' here is not meant in a negative way: it simply means that she generally succeeded to move initiatives forward, even if it meant that she would use informal or creative means to do so, including stretching the truth a bit, but it was always for a good cause. In my case, she took me along to several meetings as a 'notetaker' and, with Edward's approval, arranged to send me to Waterland.

In addition to her capacity to work informally, Eva had a gift for networking. She maintained an extensive network of colleagues, some of them shared by the LSP, which extended into almost every part of FAO – including the field – and beyond, to other Rome-based agencies such as IFAD and WFP. Sometimes, when meeting someone new, I would say I worked for the LSP: "Oh, yes, with Eva?" Her network was strengthened by the fact that she spoke four languages fluently.

The particularity of Eva's network was that, beyond her professional circle, it was also made up of friends. She only saw a few of them outside work, but she connected with most of them on more than a professional level. She knew who had kids, who was married to whom and who was going out with whom, things people had done in the past, and sometimes things she was not supposed to know about: affairs, secret couples, secret applications to other jobs, etc. Perhaps because of this combination of professional and personal affinities, in addition to her ability to listen, she also managed to put her network members in contact with one another, advising on good consultants, on who would provide good advice for a particular assignment, or who knew whom of relevance. Eva, thus, was adept at assembling groups of interested and interesting people. She

was generally able to count on members of her network when time came to move her own initiatives forward. Yet she did not seem to make any special effort to network. As with Peter's exercise of charisma, networking was not a specific or exclusive activity she carried out each day, but something done through everything else she did, in a very natural way.

While a consultant with the LSP Eva had conducted much work with one of FAO's Emergency Units. She succeeded in convincing them of how useful livelihoods principles could be in strengthening FAO's response to emergencies and had cultivated a close working relation with the staff and consultants of that service, who often called on her for advice. In Edward's words:

> "The impact [of her work] with Emergencies was so strong because she was able to show how a livelihoods perspective could actually help solve important and pressing problems which the managers in that unit were facing, problems for which they had not yet found workable solutions, or for which integrating a livelihoods approach really strongly improved their existing solutions." (Edward)

In other words, Eva's technical competence was the backbone of the inclusion of livelihoods in FAO's emergency work, as in the case of the charismatic director of the CA project discussed previously. Eva started by convincing three or four people individually within that service until a snow-ball effect gained momentum.

In the case in point, Eva had invited her network to participate in a workshop on how to use livelihoods as a planning tool, to which members of high management were invited and to which they actually attended. Eva was a master at organising workshops on livelihoods or at sneaking into her colleagues' workshops to present a section on livelihoods. Sometimes she strongly suggested it; other times she was invited to do so.

Eva had already carried out the same training workshop in the field, in the context of a larger workshop/seminar for the FAO Country Representatives in Africa who have to deal with a continuing series of ongoing crises. Favourable reports from

some of FAO's Representatives on both the workshop's content and the ways in which they were using it in their own work – which Eva took care to make known to higher management – induced some FAO managers already attracted by livelihoods concepts to actually commit their time to participating in the workshop. In a sense, this workshop was the culmination of many of Eva's efforts to mainstream livelihoods at FAO.

The objective of the workshop was two-fold: train and increase the capacity of other staff members to give these workshops in the field and at HQ, and discuss how to financially handle the growing demand from the field for such workshops, since the LSP itself was formally coming to a close. As Eva herself wrote in her concept note on this workshop:

> "The number of potential FAO staff who could organise and facilitate these workshops is very limited so far and there is a need to build the capacity of a group of fifteen-twenty people through a training of facilitator's workshop which will be organised in HQ. […] Once this group of FAO facilitators is running, FAO [Representations] and other potential users would be informed about the possibility of using or requesting HQ support on livelihoods-based facilitation for planning. […]" (Eva's workshop concept note, February 2007)

The participants in the workshop were thus already convinced of the relevance of livelihoods, as most of them already used these concepts in their everyday work. The participants included well established staff members and long-term consultants. Looking closely at the crowd – as usual, I was brought in as a note taker –, it was mostly composed of members of Eva's network, to whom Edward would refer as the 'usual suspects'. The real breakthrough of this workshop in terms of attendance was the presence of members of high management, as the workshop was opened and closed by two Service Chiefs and an Assistant Director General. Their presence signalled important support for livelihoods in FAO, especially when combined with the fact that all the staff members who requested permission to attend the workshop were granted permission to do so by their own service chiefs.

It seems that Eva reached members of high management through two channels. The first was through members of her network, including high-level staff members who themselves had access to high management. In particular, Eva was supported by a Service Chief who had been working closely with her and the LSP for some time. He succeeded in bringing his own supervisor (an Assistant Director General) to the workshop, albeit for a short time. Secondly, Eva used her visits to Regional and field offices to meet FAO Representatives who would then use their influence to support her proposals by making official requests to HQ. Consider the email she wrote as an introduction to her concept note:

> "Dear […],
>
> Please find attached a short Concept Note on providing livelihoods-based facilitation to FAORs and FAO Country teams in order to assist them with some of the Planning processes they are engaged in […]. This is to follow-up the various discussions with [X] in Bangkok, [Y] in Johannesburg and [Z] in Rome. There is a wide and inter-divisional group of people potentially interested in supporting this activity (mostly in cc in this message) as well as initial demand from the countries. The LSP may still be able to mobilise some limited funds to help get it off the ground. I look forward to discussing this further with you and all those interested".

Even if requests to hold workshops seemed to emerge from the field, the workshop itself remained largely an HQ exercise. Following Eva's habitual patterns, the decision to hold the workshop was taken at the last minute (there had been hesitation because the LSP was closing down and could not assure follow-up to the workshop). We worked until the week before trying to find staff from the Regional Offices to participate in the workshop, but the invitations were made on too short notice for professionals to find time and obtain the authorisation to fly to Rome. However, Eva managed to secure the presence of two staff members from other Rome-based agencies, IFAD and WFP.

Participants in the workshop came from different departments of FAO, and most of them were staff members, generally strong characters and natural champions.

The facilitators of the workshop, Eva herself and Karen, a very experienced facilitator[105] and LSP consultant, constantly had to review their workshop planning as the participants entered into discussions that deviated from the workshop's purpose. For example, the presentation of the 'livelihoods framework' – aimed at showing participants how to teach and discuss this framework – led to a discussion on the principles themselves and on what was missing from the framework. The "five capitals" at the basis of the livelihoods approach (physical, financial, social, human, and natural capital)[106] were said to be incomplete without political capital, and even cultural capital. In addition, instead of simply carrying out the proposed exercises for the workshop, the participants started to offer substantive comments and ultimately found the exercises unclear. To use a simplified example, there was an exercise featuring the UN Reform and how livelihoods could help plan this reform. The team that had to deal with this topic started to discuss the relevance of the reform, and lost track of the objective of the exercise. Even if these deviations were in fact a distraction from the purpose of the workshop, they were also a testimony to the quality of the participants who were not satisfied with simple presentations and exercises. In the end, the participants' interactions provided an occasion to deepen and enrich the uses of livelihoods approaches within FAO. However, what Eva and Karen were trying to do, i.e. give participants tools to 'teach' livelihoods principles, did not work so well.

Eva's natural talent for networking constituted a strength in terms of leadership. It allowed her to build a team which shared similar interests, providing individuals with greater leverage to 'sell' their ideas, or, as in the case of Eva, to be heard at a high management level within the organisation. Eva, like Peter, was highly competent as a livelihoods expert, and thus had the professional skills required

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[105] See next section for a discussion of facilitated meetings.

[106] The idea of "the five capitals" at the basis of the livelihoods approach originates in the work of Pierre Bourdieu who discussed the idea of social and cultural capital as "immaterial forms of capital" ([1983]1992) opposing it to capital in economic and physical terms. This is a cornerstone of Bourdieu's work, and discussions regarding social, cultural and symbolic forms of capital can be found in many of his writings (*ibid*; 1977; 1990a; 1990b).

maintaining her network over time. It should be noted that she was helped in her networking capacities by the fact that, as a co-convener of the LSP, she had at her disposal 'seed money' with which she could provide moderate and partial support for solutions to some of the problems members of her network faced. In that sense, part of Eva's leadership lay in the fact that she was a resource person for many in her network, not only through her wise advice, but also because of her capacity of actually supporting solutions to problems financially. Eva was an example of the fact that "actors are network effects" (Law 1999:5), herself being strengthened as a professional by her network. In other words, her "social personality", – what Radcliffe-Brown (1940:5) has defined has "a position occupied by a human being in a social structure, the complex formed by all his social relations with others", – was largely identified with her network.

Building Credibility: Professional Skills Acquired Through Experience

Going back to the writing of the CA project brochure, the team ended up dissolving and putting aside the brochure after four meetings recounting the history of the project and hours spent reading documents and drafting the brochure itself. The problem was that we were lacking a dedicated champion, or, as Edward often said, we were missing "someone in the driver's seat". Neither Edward nor Ben had more time to dedicate to the writing of the brochure itself, and, as much as my colleague and I wanted to, we did not have the required experience to produce a convincing brochure, or to relate the narrative in a manner that would appeal to eventual readers.

Working on the CA project brochure provided another opportunity to observe how technical skills and experience are enmeshed in building up the credibility of leaders. If technically I could write the CA brochure, I did not have the required experience to understand the importance or give the appropriate weight to each of the elements discussed by Edward and Ben. I could not tell the story right. This

issue of experience became an important one because, from then on, it seemed to me the word was on everyone's lips. Not only was it used in the context of recruiting consultants, but also regularly for task assignments, as when there was a need to send someone to the field. Often, the term 'experience' would be used negatively, because it was generally the case that young professionals lacked experience, which would translate into different terms such as "too junior", "too academic", "too by-the-book", etc. There was rarely someone who had too much experience, unless there was no money to pay them. Thus, my experience with the CA project brochure exemplified how champions should have sound technical skills and sufficient experience both to carry on their work and to convince others of the importance of that work.

As Weber ([1922]1968) established years ago, and as previously brought up, charismatic individuals need to develop persuasive arguments in order to gain recognition or a following, to use Lindholm's words (1990). In the context of FAO, these arguments are based on professional technical skills, acquired through education and experience over time. If technical skills and experience are not "personality traits" *per se*, they certainly are part of leaders' "professional personality" (to invoke Radcliffe-Brown's term (1940)), and influence one's perceptions and understanding of the work to be done. Technical skills improve through practice and through gaining different work experiences in various contexts. Hence, time and 'opportunities' play a role in shaping one's professional skills. In an organisational context, having sound technical skills and recognised experience, a combination that will henceforth be called 'professional skills', confers credibility on leaders (Conger 1989).

This theme was particularly central within the LSP because of its high number of junior consultants compared to permanent staff. The LSP, as discussed in chapter 4, treated young consultants well by providing good working conditions. We were provided an opportunity to deepen our personal interests and knowledge (i.e. FAO language classes, workshops on facilitation and

presentation, etc.) as long as such training could be construed as beneficial for both us and the LSP. Yet this investment in young consultants did not make all the professional staff happy, as sometimes our lack of skills meant more work for them. Sandra, an energetic, experienced and overly busy FAO staff member often insisted that we were too young and inexperienced. "Young people know nothing", she said. "They come straight from academia and are disconnected from the field".

If professional skills are clear requirements for the charismatic and the networkers, it does not mean that every talented professional will be inclined to take initiatives or act as champions in their everyday work. When I discussed this matter with Brian, a fellow consultant and friend, he observed that there were, according to him, many professionals at FAO with considerable work experience who were not leaders or agents. They did little or nothing in terms of taking initiatives and stuck to a minimum amount of work. Yet, as junior consultants, we had both been working with experienced staff, or knew of experienced staff members who were taking on more initiatives than humanly possible. This was the case with most professionals involved in the LSP.

On Training for Development Work: A Few Words

An underlying question was to identify which professional skills seem most important in development work. First and foremost, there is the multi-dimensionality of the work. In addition to technical knowledge (agronomy, nutrition, biology, livelihoods, for example), experts also have to develop sets of skills enabling them to work in inter-disciplinary teams, in different countries of the world, in different socio-cultural contexts, with various kinds of participants, and within a given bureaucratic context, among others[107].

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[107] For revealing accounts regarding the diversity of development contexts, see Li 2007 and Mosse 2005a (among others).

I have discussed in chapter 5 how field experience was considered as very important by staff and consultants for doing adequate work in FAO. However the role of 'international field officer' (i.e. staff who were deployed in the field for long periods of time and who moved from country to country), according to some staff members, was slowly disappearing at FAO. In 2006, I met Nadine, a long-term staff member in her late fifties, who had just resigned from her position. She was very angry and bitter toward the organisation, notably for becoming a 'normative' organisation (instead of privileging field interventions), but also for the lack of recognition it gave to its dedicated professionals. In her long resignation letter addressed to the Director General[108], she underlined the fact that her own professional skills seemed to be obsolete[109]:

> "One day when I went to complain to my service director, he told me that my profile (agronomist engineer and economist, multilingual, a long and concrete experience in the field in Africa, Latin America and Middle East, a recognised specialist with published technical documents) was obsolete and corresponded to what FAO did not need anymore…He also said, later, in a staff meeting where I had brought to discussion the subject of the lost notion of the "international officer"[…], that this was also an expired notion. Since then, I have put much energy into trying to understand what FAO needs now and why technical expertise seemed so 'out-dated' and 'obsolete'. I have asked so many questions and made so many suggestions which have remained unanswered, that I ended up resigning from my post". (Nadine, resignation letter, translated from French, January 2006)

As Nadine pointed out in her letter, a career as an 'international officer', to use her words, means having in hand diverse assets and skills, in her particular case, being an agronomist and an economist, speaking several languages, and having long-term and established field experience. Such a set of skills allows one to cope with the multi-dimensionality of the work, and is generally acquired over time. Accordingly, it is impossible to learn how to be a development worker on a

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[108] Nadine has shared her letter with me and agreed that its content could be used for the purpose of this research.
[109] Quarles van Ufford *et al* (2003) report a similar case featuring a senior member of a Dutch NGO who perceived his knowledge, acquired through time, to be an obstacle to the new orientations of the NGO.

school bench. Indeed, "such qualities are learnt 'on the job' through what amounts to an apprenticeship system, and, as far as I know there are no formal training systems for development consultants. Those who are 'unprofessional' are simply not employed on future consultancies" (Stirrat 2000:35).

This can be contrasted with other professions, engineers for example. Engineers must have a common body of education before choosing a specialty. Depending on what they do, a company seeking qualified engineers according to their need will hire specific types of engineers: mechanical, civil, biomedical, chemical, or electrical, for example. This is not the case of the specialists who work at FAO, as they do not share a common body of knowledge on development, on food security, or on any encompassing issue relating to FAO's mandate. Rather, they all have different technical backgrounds. In addition, development workers have to deal with human beings and their multi-dimensions. Unlike engineers, the work development specialists are doing can rarely be boiled down to mathematical and physical principles learned in a classroom (unless they are statisticians). At FAO, few professionals have studied "development" *per se* – at least its theoretical foundation –, or domains related to food (in)security (except for agronomists and nutritionists).

Of the nearly fifty professionals whom I interviewed, I found that only Brian had graduated from a development economics programme. Others had different kinds of background including political science, plant biology, agronomy, rural sociology, economics, international law, animal health, geography, nutrition, anthropology, etc. Although there exist many different development programmes in universities and schools all over the world, only a few professionals in FAO have gone through such programmes. So, once they are hired by organisations such as FAO, technicians have to learn on-the-job about development itself and the related skills it requires, which may take time. Likewise, many social scientists, in time, find themselves acquiring more technical types of knowledge.

Without implying here that one can only think about development issues after having studied it in school, it does seem logical that giving some thought to the encompassing concept of development itself would open doors to a different vision of the work. It is impossible to foresee or predict whether such knowledge on development would change FAO's overall results, or the daily practice of staff and consultants, but as Claudia, a fellow anthropologist, has observed:

> "Development is not a straightforward issue. It needs a lot of thought, but it is so taken for granted in FAO that it is not even discussed. Staff members have technical education, and there are no questions about the ethics of development". (Claudia)

As discussed briefly in the introduction of this dissertation, there is no or very little open discussion or debate in FAO regarding what development is, its different implications, or whether and how it should be practiced[110]. Development is an underlying assumption in FAO, part of the sub-text associated with its mandate, but there is no overarching organisational vision or definition of the concept. Recently, during the 2006 Reform, the vocabulary of "sustainable rural development" as emphasised in FAO's *Strategic Framework* (FAO 1999b), was more or less eliminated, at least superficially, by the abolition of the Sustainable Development Department. Hence, the encompassing concept – and vocabulary – of 'sustainable development', even if it was at times only cosmetic, has disappeared from the nomenclature structure of FAO.

It seems that working in development – with all its aspects of human beings and life – entails more than acquiring skills and building experience over time that cannot be learnt at school, or it is more than a 'package' within a given profession. No matter one's particular background, and even for those who have

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[110] This lack of unity or of unifying concepts was also noted by the recent International External Evaluation: "There is no consensus on broad strategy that delineates how the Organization is to respond to challenges and opportunities, on what is high priority and what is not, on which functions to retain and which to shed, on resource needs and how these are to be provided. FAO's efforts are fragmented and its focus is on individual components of its vast challenge rather than on the full picture". (IEE, July 2007:2)

studied development and who then have to develop a technical expertise, learning to work in development is a process which unfolds through time as one slowly builds a "toolbox of expertise".

As mentioned in chapter 4, FAO, has not determined what qualities or set of tools makes someone a good and competent development worker in line with the mandate of the organisation. The criteria for hiring professionals in FAO depend on the specific task at hand (and thus often depend on technical background) and include a few UN-based requirements, such as speaking more than one language.

In a sense, the staff members who designed the LSP (and who, prior to the LSP had organised the PRA Network and the Siena Forum – see chapter 3) were proposing standards defining adequate development experience and skills that they would have liked to see internalised, or routinised within FAO. To them, experienced 'international officers' should be knowledgeable of the principles of the sustainable livelihoods approach, and able to integrate them into their work, including working in multi-disciplinary teams (to do holistic work), and relying on participatory approaches in general. Without directly suggesting criteria for the hiring of personnel, the LSP was proposing a method of work that FAO staff and consultants should have in their toolbox of expertise in order to increase FAO's chances of alleviating poverty. As indicated in the LSP – Programme Memorandum:

> "There is growing awareness that SL approaches can contribute to increased impacts on the livelihoods of the poor. However, in order for FAO to apply these approaches effectively and widely throughout its field programme, there is a need to reinforce the institutional mechanisms required to mainstream SL approaches and to strengthen the technical capacity of FAO and its partners to apply SL approaches." (LSP – Programme Memorandum, 2001:9)

The above considerations in regard to professional skills led me to compare two livelihoods missions executed by two consultants: one senior, Monique, and one junior, myself.

I met Monique briefly at HQ when she came to do a debriefing on her latest mission and gave a presentation of what she had accomplished. The country she worked in, like Waterland, had been the victim of a large-scale natural disaster, a combined earthquake and volcanic eruption, greatly affecting the agricultural sector. A great many crops and livestock were lost, so the government of the country had requested a rehabilitation strategy from FAO. Monique's mission was to elaborate a rehabilitation strategy for a region of the country using livelihoods principles in collaboration with the local government. Monique was around fifty years old and had many years of experience as a livelihoods consultant.

The result of Monique's mission was a report which included a rehabilitation strategy planned to unfold over an eighteen month period, and which was written with and for the local government, with the goal of ensuring not only the rehabilitation, but also to 'build back better' through increasing the possibilities for resilience of the population in case of future disasters. This strategy focused on three main objectives, according to her report, including the "improvement of the farm production system"; the "development of agri-business and income diversification"; and the "increase in support to the community and government institutions in the rehabilitation and development".

Monique's end-of-mission presentation at HQ sounded grounded in reality, in line with the local needs, and based on livelihoods concepts with the agreement of all the partners. I could not help but think retrospectively of my own mission in Waterland. What if I had had more experience? What more could I have accomplished as a livelihoods consultant? What initiatives could I have

undertaken? In other words, what would experience and greater technical skills have allowed me to do better?

Our respective missions differed greatly but had a common basis in livelihoods within the context of disaster rehabilitation. Monique's TORs were more encompassing than mine, and answered to a request by the local government. Therefore, Monique did not have to convince anyone of the relevance of the livelihoods approach when she arrived on site as the relief effort was ongoing. In my case, I was sent to Waterland by HQ long after the disaster had occurred, and there was no national strategy elaborated for the rehabilitation phase. Mine was an after-the-fact mission, and FAO professionals based in Waterland were not using livelihoods in their efforts towards recovery.

Monique was successful in bringing to the same table FAO staff and government officials, and in using a participatory approach to come up with the strategy. In Waterland, however, I was unable to bring together the different FAO teams around the theme of livelihoods. In fact, I did not invite such a coming together while I was in Waterland. I was junior, did not have Monique's credibility, and I was afraid that my invitation would be refused, primarily on the pretext of lack of time. My arguments and vision were not sufficiently honed to convince the different professionals of the need for such a meeting. In this sense, I could not be a champion for livelihoods principles, at least not a credible one.

A good example of shortcomings caused by lack of overall experience happened to me during a district meeting I attended in Waterland. The local government had elaborated a "livelihoods development plan" with the help of staff from the International Labour Organisation (ILO). I attended this meeting with an emergency consultant who, having spent more than a year working in the emergency unit of FAO-Waterland, appeared disillusioned by the government's efforts for the country's rehabilitation.

This plan presented at the meetings mostly discussed employment and community infrastructure, but did not consider the livelihoods cycle, including seasonality and the availability of natural resources, in addition to the context of continuous and numerous interventions by different donor agencies, NGOs, and international organisations. The "livelihoods" label on the document seemed misleading as it was mostly an employment strategy, and lacked an encompassing and holistic approach that would have made this development plan sounder. While listening to the presentation, I took notes on the document on simple suggestions for identifying the missing links, and gave them to the consultant who accompanied me so that he could ask related questions to the presentation panel.

However, the consultant refused to ask questions in front of the audience (I later discovered that he was a very shy man). Once the presentation was over, he told me that we needed to hurry as we had to reach our final destination before dark (roads are dangerous in Waterland and it is safer to drive in daylight). My mistake was to stop there. Looking back, the comments I wished to make were relevant, and there were many ways I could have provided them to the local team. In the first place, I could have risen to the occasion and asked the questions myself. Or I could have said something when I was briefly introduced to the district officer in charge of the plan, sent him suggestions via email, found a moment for a phone conversation, or even arranged for a meeting during my stay in Waterland. Another avenue would have been to ask Edward or Eva's opinion via email on what should be done in such a situation. Eva and Monique, I am sure, would have done something. I 'froze' because I thought that my comments were probably not worth it, and also because I was unsure how to communicate with government officials in Waterland's context.

My status as an inexperienced junior consultant did not yet afford the credibility or the self-confidence necessary to facilitate interactions between the Waterland teams, or propose punctual interventions in the governmental sphere. In other

words, I did not possess the adequate skills and experience enabling me to be proactive and deploy agency beyond my mission's TORs. In fact, my lack of experience meant that I ignored a range of activities I could have undertaken. I had not yet acquired an adequate toolkit that I trusted and so it felt more comfortable sticking closely to my TORs (see chapter 5).

The above discussion illustrates the point that professional skills, here understood as the combination of technical skills and experience acquired through time, are critical for demonstrating leadership. Even if charismatic and networking individuals may initially 'charm' their colleagues, they will eventually have to make their mark to retain their "followers" (Lindholm 1990). Professional skills represent the cornerstone of one's professional personality (Radcliffe-Brown 1940), not only shaping one's individual work performance and capacity for sound leadership, but also defining whom they interact with and how.

BRINGING ABOUT CHANGE: GIVING VOICE THROUGH FACILITATED MEETINGS

Charismatic and networking professionals, on condition of possessing rigorous professional skills, have potential to bring about change within organisations through innovative work and leadership (Conger 1989). Such professionals are most likely the ones who 'stand out in crowds', and may therefore have greater chances of being heard within their organisation. However, a recent phenomenon in FAO may change this situation by allowing more 'quiet' yet experienced voices to be heard, by giving a voice to professionals who may be less charismatic or less inclined to work with others, or to operate through networks: these are facilitated meetings.

Facilitated meetings constitute an emerging and different form of communication with the potential to enable more reserved personalities to participate in collective action and work. Facilitated meetings are not particular to FAO, but rather

correspond to a world-wide movement (Schuman 2005), and are used in organisations as well as in other settings such as project sites where participatory approaches and PRA methods are used (Mosse 2005a; Li 2007; see below).

The use of facilitated meetings in FAO was greatly expanded by the LSP, which framed this kind of meeting as one of its ways of working. The LSP's Programme Coordinating Team (PCT) meeting were always facilitated by a rotating chair (i.e. the meetings were chaired by a different individual each time). The chair would give each key player a turn and a chance to speak, controlling the time spent on each topic and making sure conversations were constructive. However, PCT meetings were only partly 'facilitated', because they were merely chaired (albeit by LSP members familiar with facilitation methods and principles). The LSP had many other fully facilitated meetings on its schedule, including the annual retreats, many *ad hoc* informal brainstorming sessions, and "after-action reviews"(which consisted in discussing – within a certain format and facilitator-led protocol – an event retrospectively to draw out the lessons learned for the future).

Simply put, facilitation consists of an amalgam of communication strategies proposed to a group of individuals and led by one facilitator generally using visual tools, and focusing on constructive conversation and problem solving. Trained facilitators design activities with various objectives in mind: "sharing knowledge and brainstorming, consensus building, problem solving, work planning, etc." (Basic Facilitation Skills, International Association of Facilitators, December 2008). Karen, an LSP consultant who was also an experienced facilitator recognised by the International Association of Facilitators, noted that facilitation was useful for the following reasons:

> "I think facilitation allows: everybody to participate – managers also participate and listen to their staff; to do a lot more work than expected (you can get loads of work done in thirty minutes); to put people together in a creative space. Facilitation is great for people who like people". (Karen)

As the LSP was very fond of facilitated meetings, I was given a chance to take a facilitation course called "Facilitation 1: Guide Group Participation", where I learned the basics of facilitation. The teacher defined facilitation in the following words: "the art of guiding people through processes towards agreed-upon objectives in a manner that encourages participation, ownership and creativity from all involved". During the first part of the course, we reflected as a group on why facilitation was potentially useful in FAO. The group identified several reasons[111]:

- "Go beyond international political issues, but also beyond the politics of FAO;
- Involve a greater number and diversity of players in reflecting upon strategic issues;
- Soliciting inputs rather than providing them;
- Provide occasions for bottom-up discussion and decision making;
- Strengthen rather than oppose executive authority;
- Ownership of the results: the product of discussion is owned by the team;
- Make better use of in-house competencies".

In their brochure "Basic Facilitation Skills" available online, the International Association of Facilitators defines the facilitator as:

"[...] someone who uses knowledge of group processes to formulate and deliver the needed structure for meeting interactions to be effective. The facilitator focuses on effective processes (meeting dynamics) allowing the participants to focus on the content or the substance of their work together" (International Association of Facilitators Website, December 2008).

In other words, the facilitator is a neutral person whose role is to facilitate dialogue and exchanges between groups of individuals, regardless of the theme, by keeping them focused on the defined objectives of the meeting. Qualities of a good facilitator, according to the brochure, include "openness, honesty and

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[111] At the end of the training session on facilitation, I told the participants and the teacher about my research and asked if I could use the notes I had taken during the course for that purpose, keeping their identities anonymous. Everyone agreed and gave me their permission to use my notes on our discussions. Most of the participants to this workshop ended up being valued informants for my research and their interviews have been used elsewhere in this dissertation.

fairness, consistency in action, focus, active listening, accessibility, flexibility, assertiveness and enthusiasm" (Basic Facilitation Skills, International Association of Facilitators, December 2008).

Facilitated meetings are often built around five simple questions: Why? Who? When? Where? What? (International Association of Facilitators website, December 2008). Generally, the facilitator is made aware of the reason for holding the meeting and of the goal to be reached through facilitation. The facilitator then designs the meeting accordingly, and sets up an adequate environment usually involving pin boards, cards, markers, etc. The brochure provides examples of the basics in planning a meeting or workshop to which I have paired examples from the LSP 2005 annual retreat (see Table 4 below).

Facilitated meetings or workshops often start with the elaboration of an agreement on 'ground rules' which should be followed by everyone to ease the meeting process. These ground rules can vary from time to time, but some of them are indispensable, including turning off cellular phones, listening to everyone, being present at all times, etc. The facilitator may ask the group to add rules of their own, which is a way for the facilitator to control the specific group dynamic as generally, colleagues will suggest rules in order to control bothersome behaviours of peers.

Activities of facilitated meetings can be quite simple but allow thinking about one thing at a time, sometimes, depending on the facilitator and on the group, leading to unforeseen links being made and decisions taken according to the meetings' objectives. It is through different conversational techniques that participants may have their say in unexpected ways.

Table 4. Relevant Questions in View of Preparing a Facilitated Meeting.

Questions[112]	Example of LSP Annual Retreat
"**Why:** Why is the meeting being held? What tasks are planned? What is the overall goal of the meeting? Is this meeting only a part of a larger goal? Has this been written down?"	Discuss "what have we done" and "what we want to achieve in the future"
"**Who:** Who is invited? If decisions need to be made, are the right people going to be present? Who is not going to be there? How does attendance affect successful completion of tasks? Who cannot come? Who is not invited? Why?"	All the LSP members and a few honorary members, in addition to professionals the LSP would like to welcome as members and who have previously shown interests in joining. Some LSP members were flown from their field locations to Rome for the occasion.
"**When:** When is the meeting scheduled? How long should it be? Is there enough time? If it is close to lunch or dinner, should it be catered?"	Every year, at the beginning of December. The retreat lasts 2 days and a half and all meals are catered.
"**Where**: Where is the meeting to be held? Do you and the participants need directions, suggested lodging, and airline recommendations? Are there adequate resources (overheads, flip charts, white boards) available? How is the room arranged? Is the room appropriate for the task? You might decide it would be better to have the meeting outside on the lawn! "	Away from FAO, in a hotel located about an hour drive from Rome. The idea is to keep people away from their emails, phones, and daily concerns. The LSP was fully equipped with its own supplies of markers, pin boards, cards, etc. which were carried to the hotel.
"**What**: Consider possible group dynamics. Do the participants know each other? How well? What is the history of the participants? How long have they been meeting? Have they had specific problems working together in the past? What are potential problems with this meeting? Can they be mitigated or eliminated before the meeting begins?"	Staff and consultants generally know each other, and it can be a challenge to keep them from talking during the workshop. Another difficulty is to break up small groups of friends that have form over time and to allow colleagues to get to know each other better.

One example of a communication technique used in facilitated meetings was the *World Café*. This method was used in LSP meetings to discuss emerging themes professionals would like to work on in the future.

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[112] Source: Basic Facilitation Skills, International Association of Facilitators, December 2008

The *World Café* unfolded as follows. Everyone was sitting in small groups of four or five individuals around coffee tables covered with scratch paper and colour felt markers. The facilitator revealed the first question and the groups started to work individually on the answer, recording the highlights of the conversation directly on the table. After a couple of minutes, each group would designate a person to remain seated at the table, and the rest of each group would randomly move to other tables. The person who was designed the table 'host' in a sense became the table's memory and briefed the new group on what had already been discussed before the facilitator unveiled the second question which built on the first one. The cycle of discussion started again. The *World Café*s in which I participated generally presented three or four questions which built on one another.

During the LSP' annual retreat of 2005, the facilitator offered the group the possibility of using this activity to a) take stock of the current assets and skills of the LSP and b) reflect on the future of the LSP. We collectively answered four key questions: 1) What are the assets and skills of the LSP? 2) In the best case scenario, how would you describe what will be in place five years from now? 3) What has to happen or be put in place in the next two years to support the previous question? 4) What will you or your associated sub-programme do in 2006 to put it in motion?

Answers to the questions were then transcribed from the paper tablecloth to coloured cards by each table host and pinned to the wall for everyone to see (one idea per card, Edward would often remind us). The facilitator then summarised the group's ideas before asking the participants to each use two stickers (each one a big coloured dot) to silently vote on the ideas they believed were most important for the LSP's future.

At the annual meeting I attended, the participants used this procedure to select and give priority to four of the many themes which had been proposed by the

table groups: "Programming" (which meant linking up with other groups working with livelihoods in FAO); a "Marketing approach to donors" (which meant finding funds to continue mainstreaming livelihoods in FAO after the LSP was over); "Governments and Interest Groups" (to use the last year of the LSP as effectively as possible in linking with other groups interested in livelihoods); and "Championing" (to find staff who could continue championing livelihoods after the programme was over). Participants remarked that "Programming" was very similar to "Governments and Interest Groups", so the two ideas were merged into one.

The facilitator then asked the participants to come and put their name on the board in view of turning these identified themes into working groups (along with identified and committed members), each working group being responsible for writing up a document containing a follow-up strategy for their chosen theme. I became a member of what would be known as the "LSP marketing strategy" and worked on this with other colleagues, mentored by Edward and another consultant, for most of 2006.

The *World Café* method made use of different communication strategies which had the potential of allowing several types of individuals to express themselves. We had worked in small groups rather than in the bigger plenary group, we had silently voted on our favourite ideas, and we had ourselves subscribed to a given working group. Considering that within about two hours a group of forty people agreed on the next steps to be taken for the LSP's future, one could say that the *World Café* was quite effective.

The *World Café* is only one example of a communication technique used in facilitated meetings. Other activities included brainstorming techniques, group assessment methods, consensus building techniques, prioritisation matrices and so on, using a mixture of individual and collective thinking. Generally, these methods allow for ideas to emerge and to be discussed regardless of who came

up with them. Depending on the group's aim in using facilitation, most facilitated workshops will end by reaching an agreement on the solutions or work priorities identified, whether approved by consensus or by a majority. To ensure continuity, it is often the case that working groups will be created to follow up on the agreement reached during facilitation, as was the case during the LSP retreat. The facilitator generally leaves these decisions to the group but will help in this capacity.

Facilitated meetings are not without their issues, however, as discreet voices could still remain silent throughout facilitation. It is also true that the effects of hierarchy can rarely be completely eliminated even in the presence of open-minded managers. Informal or less obvious power plays also occur between individuals concerning which external facilitators most likely remain unaware or cannot change.

During the course on facilitation, one participant asked the teacher how to deal with power issues within facilitated meetings. The teacher answered that it was possible to find a balance using different discussion techniques and activities through the design of the event. However, this depends greatly on the relationships established between the participants prior to the workshop, on the type of manager, on the personalities of the participants and on their relation to and interpretation of hierarchy, among many other factors.

Aside from hierarchy and power relations, the success of such meetings also depends on the degree of divergence of opinions between the participants, their real desire to participate in an active manner in the meeting, and the 'chemistry' between the participants and the facilitator. Techniques used by facilitators are thus not completely impermeable to hierarchy and power relations, nor can the design of facilitated interactions completely guarantee participation.

Additionally, one consultant once warned me about what he called 'facipulation', a marriage between 'facilitation' and 'manipulation'. To him, the chair or the facilitator has some room for manoeuvre in influencing the individual and collective brainstorming processes towards what he/she perceives as the best ideas. Facilitators may influence individuals notably through the way they summarise some ideas, include/exclude some, or simply emphasise the ideas they prefer. This is possible in cases where the facilitator is familiar with the group of participants or with the thematic of the workshop.

This is partly why there was a 'rotating chair' during the LSP PCT meetings, so that the person in charge of the session would change each time, reducing chances for someone or one faction to repeatedly control (and this capture) the discussion process. In the case of the LSP retreats, they were facilitated by Karen, the LSP's most experienced facilitator who was also an LSP consultant. She could have 'facipulated' many times, but was very much trusted by the LSP team who generally saw her as impartial, mostly because she refrained from speaking as an LSP consultant when she was facilitating our meetings.

Facilitation, although not always guaranteeing participation from everyone, has the merit of opening the doors for an increased numbers of voices to take part in collective brainstorming and decision-making. In addition to the stated objectives of the facilitated workshops *per se*, there are collateral benefits to these meetings in terms of team building, networking, and creating collaborative environments. Through these meetings, colleagues may learn unexpected things about one another, and these discoveries, be they at the personal or professional levels, may trigger new partnerships and open doors to new initiatives. This type of bonding can happen during the workshop itself but also during the many moments when colleagues will share a meal, take a break, or sip a coffee.

Since the practice of facilitated meetings is not yet widespread in FAO, it is hard to assess what its impact will be on the work of the organisation. There were

clear signs, however, that facilitated meetings were gaining ground in FAO. Towards the end of my time at FAO, I was allowed to attend a workshop for three services of FAO that were grouped together through the 2006 Reform (see chapter 2). The new Service Chief introduced the workshop as important for everyone's future, as a first step in a process of defining what their future work would entail. The objectives of the workshop were to "create a team environment, to understand who we are and define our core values, to identify future directions of this newly created service, and to build a road map for the future". Everyone pertaining to these services, including the general staff, was invited and encouraged by the service chief to participate as much as they wanted during the workshop. As far as I could witness, everyone had a chance to voice their ideas at different moments of the two-day workshop, through the various activities proposed by the facilitators. The service chief openly encouraged new ideas, and no one I have spoken with felt stifled by her presence in any way. At about the same time, two other newly created services requested Karen to facilitate their service meeting after the Reform process.

> "I have recently turned down six jobs within FAO [as a facilitator]. There is a need for more room for facilitators, for staff to become facilitators. […] More and more, people see value in it. (Karen)"

It should also be noted that if my experience of facilitated meetings was mostly gained at HQ, the practice is also being used in many field offices, through participatory approaches (Li 2007; Mosse 2005a). In fact, it should be emphasised that facilitated meetings have long been used within PRA exercises. Generally, local facilitators are hired to conduct participatory workshops. The staff of the Mountainland office, for example, often used facilitated meetings among themselves to discuss their programme of work, but also in the framework of projects as a basis for participatory approaches to learn about participants' needs and priorities.

As discussed in chapter 3, participatory approaches can be "tyrannical" (Cooke and Kothari 2001), in that their very format may impede the participation of some

and exclude others, or encourage the participation of very specific individuals. However, in the context of HQ, facilitation tends to put everyone on the same foot, in a context where participants have similar levels of education and are generally already familiar with subject matter and with the structure of meetings (see chapter 3 for a discussion regarding participatory approaches).

APPRAISALS: ANSWERABILITY AND RECOGNITION

Weber had important reservations about charismatic forms of authority, and Dow (1978:92) asserted that Weber, in the end, discouraged charismatic forms of authority because of its potential irresponsibility. To Adair-Toteff, however, Weber "endorse[d] the notion of the charismatic leader" while "being well aware of both the strengths and the weaknesses inherent in such authority" (Adair-Toteff 2005:191). Weber's concern was precisely the *responsibility* of the leaders (Dow 1978:88). As Dow (*ibid*: 90-92) indicated, "Weber specifically condemns the quality of irresponsible release which is inherent in all forms of the original charismatic formulation". However, Weber included the "sense of responsibility" in a discussion of the three virtues leaders should have: passion, eye-measure, and sense of responsibility (Adair-Toteff 2005:197). According to Eisenstadt (1968), Weber was living a paradox when it came to the relation between charisma and responsibility:

> "It is in the charismatic act that the potential creativity of the human spirit – a creativity which may perhaps in some cases be deranged or evil – is manifest; and it is not only the potential derangement, but such creativity by its very nature and orientation tends to undermine and destroy existing institutions and to burst the limits set by them. Similarly, on the personal level, charismatic predispositions may arise from the darkest recesses and excesses of the human soul, from its utter depravity and irresponsibility of its most intensive antinomian tendencies; while, on the other hand, charisma is the source of the fullest creative power and internal responsibility of the human personality" (1968:xx).

In light of Weber's reservation regarding charismatic authority, Conger (1989:20) admitted that "charismatics are not always the appropriate leaders for organizations; sometimes, they can be more disruptive than constructive".

In the context of FAO, the term 'responsibility' translates into answerability of the personnel. While this chapter discusses the possibilities for personal influence on development processes through charisma, networking and professional skills, it is worth noting that there are difficulties in FAO in holding professionals answerable for their actions through the current mechanisms of appraisal, as well as for giving them recognition for positive performance. Thus, while this system does not strongly discourage laxity or incompetence, it does not encourage staff and consultants to perform quality work within and outside their prescribed terms of reference. As Karen once put it:

> "The organisation can fool you in thinking you are doing a good job, but that is because you are not called on doing a bad job". (Karen)

The brief discussion below is divided into two sub-sections. The first one presents observations regarding answerability made when I was hired temporarily from the LSP to work as a livelihoods consultant on the evaluation of a livelihoods and fisheries programme, the "Fisheries in Africa Programme" (FAP)[113]. The second sub-section presents the rare case of Doreen, an outstanding staff member who, in addition to being widely recognised by her peers, also received recognition from management in various forms.

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[113] FAP is not the real name of the programme. In order to protect the other members of the evaluation team, I chose to keep the name of the programme confidential.

<u>Answerability in the 'Fisheries in Africa Programme' (FAP)</u>

The FAP was a Programme, composed of a variety of projects, which started in 2000 and ended in 2007. It was a US$ 35 million dollars programme financed by the United Kingdom through DFID. According to the FAP programme document, the programme was to:

> "…seek to reduce poverty in coastal and inland communities by improving the livelihoods of people dependent on fisheries and aquatic resources. It will do this primarily through the development of social and human capital in fisheries-dependent communities, by enhancing the natural assets of those communities, and by supporting the development of appropriate policy and institutional environments. Twenty-four countries in North, West and Central Africa (for short West African region) will constitute the case-study area where the livelihoods of a large number of poor people (an estimated 5.3 million in direct employment) are dependent on the use of aquatic resources" (FAP Project Document, September 1999).

The FAP relied on the application of both the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) in building activities to improve the livelihoods of fisher folk communities of West Africa. This programme, implemented in twenty-five countries, was the first programme in FAO to officially use a livelihoods approach: it was not only about fisheries, it was about the fisher folks and whatever they needed to improve their living conditions. Thus, the FAP ended up initiating a variety of activities through three regional pilot projects (each involving four countries) and almost ninety smaller community projects financing local initiatives. Activities related to fisheries (post harvest, inland, and coastal fisheries), micro-credit schemes, sensitisation to AIDS, were all on the agenda. In this sense, the FAP was quite a loose programme providing funds for a vast array of activities according to local needs.

In general, project and programme evaluations can be carried out for a number of reasons, including accountability, impact assessment, fund spending, human resource management, etc. It is perhaps the case that different organisations follow different schemes of evaluation according to their own 'evaluation needs'.

In the case of FAO, the organisation is part of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), and works in collaboration with UNEG to define the purpose of evaluations[114].

Accordingly, programme or project evaluations should look at results and accomplishments, without necessarily questioning individual contributions to projects. Following UNEG, FAO, in its Programme Evaluation Report 2007, follows this trend of result-based evaluations, stating that:

> "All the programmes and activities of FAO, financed from the regular budget of the Organization (from mandatory assessed contributions) and those financed from voluntarily contributed extra-budgetary resources, are subject to evaluation. The policies for evaluation of these programmes have been set by member countries in the Governing Bodies and the Director-General. Evaluation is designed:
>
> a) *For accountability on results*, particularly in terms of evidence of contribution to sustainable impacts for the benefit of member countries; and
>
> b) To assist decision-making by the Governing Bodies, the Organization's management and individual member countries as part of *a results-based approach to decision making*" (FAO, Programme Evaluation Report 2007, emphasis mine)

Evaluations in FAO are conducted by a specific service called PBEE – the Programme, Budget and Evaluation Service. They are thus conducted internally, and, in the case of programmes that are funded externally, jointly with a representative of the donor. In fact, there are two types of evaluation bodies in FAO: the evaluation unit, PBEE, which produces public evaluations, and the Audit, which is mostly financial, and of a confidential nature. However, audits – perhaps precisely because of their confidentiality – have the capacity to be more

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[114] "Purposes of evaluation include understanding why and the extent to which intended and unintended results are achieved, and their impact on stakeholders. Evaluation is an important source of evidence of the achievement of results and institutional performance. Evaluation is also an important contributor to building knowledge and to organizational learning. Evaluation is an important agent of change and plays a critical and credible role in supporting accountability". (UNEG, April 2005:1)

severe with the professionals involved in a given project, especially when funds have not been well allocated or used, or when financial miscalculations border on mismanagement of personnel. As Joshua, an experienced evaluation officer pointed out:

> "Audit is financial, but not only: auditors are not machines, they are people. They look at more than money, but they cannot really fire people". (Joshua)

In contrast, evaluations are public, and do not precisely look at financial questions. As indicated earlier, evaluations look at the accountability of the results and not really at the individual contribution of the personnel working on the project, or only indirectly, even for the professionals in decision-making positions. Compared to audits, the public nature of evaluation prevents the assessment of individual contributions:

> "Audit provides a report card, but is highly confidential. Evaluations look at higher questions, and are public: this is why you cannot point fingers at individuals". (Joshua)

For the case in point, I was hired as a livelihoods consultant to provide support to the evaluation team composed of one FAO staff member and one representative of the donor. The team visited a total of nine countries of West Africa (personally, I visited four out of these nine countries) through very short and structured missions which lasted about five days per country. As the evaluation team was learning about the FAP, it became obvious that the potential of the programme had been impaired by the presence of a weak manager. Without being sure of his technical capacity, his general attitude signalled a lack of interest in the FAP, in livelihoods, and toward his team members. For example, the FAP had undergone a mid-term evaluation which clearly pointed out some difficulties the programme was undergoing, along with corresponding recommendations. However, the manager chose not to implement these recommendations and continued to lead

the programme in different directions. He had an attitude of '*laissez-faire*' which was criticised by many of his team members in different countries.

Indeed, different FAP team members who worked in different countries and at a variety of tasks had complained about the manager mostly because of the difficulty they found in communicating with him. The programme manager was known, among other things, for his tendency to easily dismiss the initiatives others had undertaken, to lack an encompassing vision of the programme in terms of planning and overall integration of activities, and for making last minute changes without consulting his team members or even warning them. Many team members had tried to discuss their views of the project from a field perspective, including the problems they faced in everyday work. The manager was simply not receptive to their ideas.

Even if the manager's negative influence on the FAP was constantly brought up to the evaluation team, it was impossible to discuss the issue within the evaluation report, even considering the number of complaints we had recorded from the FAP team members. When I inquired to the evaluation team leader and supporting staff member about why we were unable to bring this situation to light, the reasons provided included: the evaluation report was to be public and this meant that we could not point at specific individuals; the team members had perhaps complained because of personal issues that we did not know about; we did not have formal and straight-forward evidence of the incompetence of the manager, especially taking into account that he had not been in place during the full period of the programme; etc. All that could be said regarding this issue was contained in the following lines:

> "There was a disconnect between the work being conducted in the field and overseen by […] Rome. It is not evident that there was a clear picture within the Programme of all that was being implemented […], why, and the associated results and lessons learned". (FAP Final Evaluation Report 2007:41)

This brief example shows the difficulty, at least in FAO's organisational context, to identify and address the negative influence of managers through a programme or project evaluation. As confirmed by Joshua, the "individual accountability of bureaucrats is fairly weak". As discussed in chapter 4, every year, staff members, unlike consultants, undergo an individual evaluation process. However, this exercise is taken more or less seriously, depending on the staff member and his/her service chief. It is often the staff members themselves who fill out the draft form, which is then discussed with their service chief, who then most often signs off the evaluation with little or no changes.

In case of poor evaluation results, after the initial six month probation period for an FAO staff officer is over, and especially is the officer has been around long enough to sign a "continuing contract", there is not much that management can easily do in terms of sanctions. I have heard of staff members being 'put aside' by their managers, who stopped giving them work while they remained on the payroll. In the service where the LSP was based, this was the case of two officers: they came to work every day but had little to do (although they were probably willing to work). In the context of budget constraints, this situation tends to be changing, but the change is only slowly taking place. The only change that was noted by Joshua was that it was harder for someone on a three-year post (at HQ for example) to renew a long-term contract when a negative evaluation had taken place.

FAO's Rewards and Peer Recognition

In contrast to issues related to the negative influence of individuals on projects or programmes, there is the more positive influence of champions, as demonstrated by the examples of Peter and Eva, who both took initiatives that surpassed their mandate. As discussed briefly in chapter 4, there is no established system of performance recognition or rewards in FAO. As previously indicated, staff

members receive an annual automatic salary increase, the conditions of work are fixed, there are no performance-based promotions, and every employee receives a medal after twenty-five years of service regardless of their achievements. As Joshua indicated, this system is not based on performance, and can hardly be considered to provide incentives to do good work.

> "There are no bonuses, no promotions: the system is not based on performance, but rather on seniority and politics. (Joshua)

Additionally FAO provides little direction for its managers, and accordingly, there are few formal FAO-wide definitions of expected performance. Since managers are more or less free to run their services in terms of management style, expectations toward staff members may vary from service to service. However, the situation is different for consultants: in case they do not perform according to expectations, their contracts would simply not be renewed, or they would not be considered for future assignments.

In this context, peer recognition becomes an important incentive motivating staff and a powerful form of appraisal. Individuals can be recognised for many reasons including their specific area of competence, their hard work and constant delivery, having built strong networks, or their general good advice, among other traits. Yet, as Doreen's example will show, other forms of recognition exist in FAO, but only the rare individual may benefit from them.

A Case of Informal and Formal Recognition

Doreen was one of these exceptional staff members. Her case is interesting because she was widely recognised among her peers for the quality of her work, and also managed to earn the recognition of high management in FAO. Doreen was a bright, dynamic and experienced woman in her late 40s with incisive arguments on just about every topic, which is why she was often asked for her

opinions by her colleagues. She was specifically recognised for her capacity for "strategic thinking" in the words of Josephine. Doreen has a PhD in anthropology, speaks at least six languages, is a mother of two children, and has become a master at multi-tasking.

She was a former member of the LSP and had participated in the design phase of the programme. Since then, she had been appointed head of a particular initiative in her service, which meant that her time was very limited, partly explaining why she put a halt to her participation in the LSP. I had the opportunity to work with Doreen as a volunteer and knew how busy she was and how many requests she received for collaboration of all kinds on a daily basis.

Because she was 'semi-autonomous' in her work as the leader of a rather big multi-stakeholder project, or perhaps because of her close working relationship with her (then) service chief, Doreen was regarded as a figure of authority within her service, or at least as having influence on decision-making. She was a natural champion, able to raise funds outside FAO, and capable of 'selling' ideas to higher management. She was also recognised as having high expectations of her colleagues, as she did for herself, and the quality of her work was highly appreciated by many. Doreen could be quite severe, especially when she found that her colleagues were complaining rather than working at finding constructive solutions. Doreen liked the word 'constructive'. She would accept (and give) criticism if she found it constructive, and whenever there was a problem, she was on the look-out for constructive solutions.

One example of her influence was when Doreen's undertaking of an informal project – in addition to her regular work – to write an article for a symposium, following which a book would be published. Even though the subject of the article was related closely to her work for FAO, but no one in FAO expected busy staff members to publish in addition to their normal work. Doreen, however, managed to obtain her service chief's approval for her dedicating some time to the article,

and also for financial support to travel to the symposium. Moreover, Doreen managed to recruit the support of a few trusted colleagues to work on the publication itself (they ended up being acknowledged as co-authors).

Doreen was recognised and trusted by her peers because of her positive/constructive attitude, hard work, concrete and quality accomplishments, and because she also consulted her colleagues and valued their input. It was also because of this capital of trust and credibility that her colleagues were able to accept the tougher sides of her personality. Such peer recognition thus seems to build up from collaboration and joint work, by identifying colleagues' strengths and the development of a relation of trust.

The case of Doreen reveals other ways in which the organisation may recognise the performance of some individuals. Like all staff members, Doreen went through the formal personnel evaluation process each year, generally with outstanding results. However, she told me that her greatest form of recognition was when her superiors called on her for specific tasks or meetings aside from her daily work. When I interviewed Doreen, she listed some of the meetings and special events she had been invited to which included the following:

> "Being requested to represent FAO on many occasions, including the World Conference on Sustainable Development, and the World Food Day; being often used as a spokesperson and having to deal with the press; being selected by the DG to lead an Inter-Departmental Working Group as part of the reform process [there were twenty of these groups]; being considered in her service as an alternate for resource mobilisation which is normally a full-time position at the division director level; participating in numerous donor negotiations for millions of dollars; being chosen to be part of the training programme for FAO leaders even if not a director; being chosen also as one of the four people to facilitate one of the DG's seminar for brainstorming with governments; etc."(Doreen)

In this sense, Doreen benefited from a rare form of recognition: some of her actions and ideas were being "routinised" by the organisation in a Weberian

sense. Doreen had also been offered more senior positions in the past but had refused because "the subject was too narrow, or it was too political, or I did not have much confidence in the group. It is hard to create a group I would have liked to work with" (Doreen).

Doreen, like Peter and Eva, had a strong personality and sound professional skills that afforded her the drive and capacity to convince her peers of the importance of certain pieces of work whenever she needed their collaboration. Compared to Peter and Eva, Doreen generally played by the rules, and most of the initiatives that she led, assigned to her by her superiors, required her to work in creative ways. In a way, she was given formal work in which she had freedom to innovate. Yet, she still saw informal channels as important:

> "The organisation is slow and the outcomes are undefined. You want to challenge it without making it sick, making it stronger in the end, because your DNA mixes with it. But you need a group to fight the strong. It makes it less damaging and keeps you focused. That is the benefit of an informal group: to find ways to continue and to find other channels. That group is also important to celebrate our little success and to recognise the work. It enables people to grow". (Doreen)

However, Doreen's example is unusual in terms of the recognition she gained from her superiors. Her case was very atypical in FAO, although she was certainly not the only one performing beyond expectations. She indeed observed that there was a bit of jealousy towards her because only a few of her equally dedicated colleagues were recognised in similar ways. Yet even if she felt that her efforts were recognised by her superiors, Doreen mentioned that there were other creative ways to reward people that were not in use at FAO:

> "There are other ways of rewarding people, and there is room to innovate. For example, sabbatical years, organisations swap, having the opportunity to go back to university, etc. We tend to think in limited ways, but there are other ways of recognising people's work besides promotions and "thank you"." (Doreen)

Thus, if Doreen had been unhappy with her role, she could have made things happen in other ways: she had the capacity to work informally if needed, was able to go around rules, could ask her peers to review her work, could contact other professionals directly including potential donors. "You have to be creative," she said. She also was part of different networks of individuals, networks which she used as resources to achieve work objectives but also for obtaining support from her peers. Doreen was in FAO to work, and work she did with all her dedication and thoroughness. She once told me:

> "The space for discussion is limited. Either you work or you talk about it. At the beginning, I did a lot of talking. Now I only do it if it is crucial because it takes time". (Doreen)

Doreen's example shows that even in an organisation where formal mechanisms of performance recognition are weak, it remains possible – albeit rare – to be recognised officially by senior management. Given the rarity of recognition from above, peer recognition takes on an important role in providing incentives and motivation for professionals to maintain a high standard of work. Peer recognition becomes a way to sanction, approve and support professionals' initiatives, share similar interests, and conduct collaborative work. Nonetheless, because peer recognition does not depend on the 'official' organisation, it pertains to the informal realm, and it may be influenced by the personalities and organisational culture of each unit of work.

Although it is difficult in FAO to make managers and staff members answerable, it is perhaps equally difficult for outstanding performances to be formally recognised. Therein lays a paradox: development work is enacted at the individual level and thus individuals have influence on development processes; yet it is hard to assess individuals' answerability or performance in general within the organisation. Hence, Weber's concern regarding the responsibility of leaders – in the FAO context – remains accurate and actual. Although assignments and projects are largely influenced by the personality of particular individuals, in the

end, it is the *results* that are evaluated, not the skills and professionalism of the individual who has achieved those results. In this context, peer recognition might be a powerful form of recognition and certainly a motive for collaboration between professionals. However, peer recognition is highly sensitive to personal judgements and professional interests. Peers will more easily recognise colleagues they feel comfortable working with, with whom they share values and have established a trust relationship.

CONCLUSION

Within agencies such as FAO, professionals give life and shape to the work they do, leaving their personal imprint on the projects they carry out. This chapter has provided examples of how different professional personalities and types of leaders, namely the charismatic and the networking types, may bring about change in a development organisation, provided that they have the necessary professional skills. Peter, Eva and Doreen had specific leadership skills and undertook various initiatives that both fulfilled and transcended FAO standards and expectations, through various kinds of 'interventions' and with various practical implications. This was also the case with numerous other staff members involved in the LSP.

The first section of this chapter presented two personalities who took initiatives in their work at FAO following their respective understandings of what constitutes good and relevant work, thereby bringing change within the organisation in their own way. The first was the charismatic leader of a project in Central America who turned a technical project into an all-encompassing one that also dealt with the social and political lives of the project participants. The second example featured Eva, an LSP consultant, who has a natural talent for networking and who used her strong relationships and arguments to achieve her professional goal to mainstreaming livelihoods approaches in FAO.

Both 'charismatics' and 'networkers' can 'operate' on the condition of having demonstrated skills and experience. Otherwise, these leaders would not achieve the same credibility which is at the basis of the trust relation they establish with their "followers", to use Weber's term. In other words, there is a sort of co-dependency: without the trust and support of their colleagues, earned due to their sound technical skills, these individuals would not be able to pursue as many initiatives as they do to reach their professional goals. Hence, professional personalities are in part constituted through social recognition.

"Within these networks of practice, both human actors and nonhuman actants (such as artefacts and devices) are related through a series of negotiations and defined in terms of the ways in which they act and are acted upon" (Mosse and Lewis 2006:14).

The second section presented an emerging way of conducting meetings in FAO, through facilitation. I chose to discuss facilitation because it has come to be more widely used in FAO – both in the context of HQ and in the field – and gives voice and space to others, besides natural or hierarchical leaders, to express themselves. Within these facilitated meetings, through the use of varied communication techniques, more reserved types of individuals have a greater chance to share with their peers ideas that they would otherwise not communicate within their regular work environments. Facilitated meetings may have the potential to bring about change in FAO in unexpected and subtle ways.

When discussing charismatic leaders, Weber expressed his concern regarding the responsibilities of these leaders (Weber ([1922]1968). In FAO, this translates, as presented in the third section of this chapter, into two different forms of appraisal – answerability and recognition – of the personnel. The discussion showed the organisational difficulties in holding professionals answerable in cases when they negatively impact their work, as in the example of the FAP programme manager, as well as in rewarding those professionals who positively influence their work, exemplified in a way by the exceptional case of Doreen. Professionals are left largely to themselves in terms of motivations and incentives from the organisation to carry out their work adequately or outstandingly, which is why peer recognition becomes such an important source of motivation and support in FAO.

Charisma, considered by Weber as a form of authority, can be seen in an organisational context as a driving force for bringing about change (Weber [1922] 1968). However, in order to do so, and as the examples of Peter, Eva and Doreen show, they have to be trusted by their peers. Without peer recognition,

they would probably not have achieved as much as they had professionally, and perhaps would not have been able to champion their respective projects and causes. In the FAO's context, they did not find comparable support from the organisation's higher management, at least not in the cases of Peter and Eva.

Leadership ability via charisma, networking, and demonstrated professional skills empowers individuals within the organisation to take initiatives toward 'satisfying' outcomes. Empowerment in the work place can be defined as "any process that provides greater autonomy to employees through the sharing of relevant information and the provision of control over factors affecting job performance" (Newstrom 2007:181). Often, individuals do not need to be given control by management, but will assume it on their own and will rely on peer recognition for strength and incentive.

Intuitively, one would believe that professionals such as Peter, Eva and Doreen should have positive influence on the organisation, as all of them carry out their work with passion and with the best of intentions. No matter the type of manager in place, these individuals would accomplish work in which they believe. As Karen once told me:

> "You cannot keep good people from following their passion and doing things that light them up". (Karen)

Such behaviour can be considered "functional" because it accomplishes something (Griffin and O'Leary-Kelly 2004), but determining to what extent – and if it is compatible with organisational goals – would require an efficiency study. It is likely, however, that their own professional objectives are not so far from those of FAO, but that their initiatives often diverge from FAO standard ways and expectations. In the case of Peter, this would have meant sticking to the originally planned project activities and providing timely reports. Conger (1989:18) has suggested that organisations would benefit from harnessing the strengths of

charismatic individuals, which also applies to networkers such as Eva, and dynamic leaders such as Doreen.

> "If managed well, charismatics can be of great help to organizations seeking to adapt to changing environments, for they challenge the forces that blunt expressions of strategic vision and an inspired work force".

In this regard, perhaps the example of Doreen speaks to what happens when the strengths and skills of a professional are harnessed by management, as she worked closely with her Service Chief. Her work was 'mutually' beneficial from an organisational point of view, and she was formally encouraged to pursue initiatives that "light her up", to use Karen's terms, and her expertise was channelled positively by management. In contrast, Eva's aim of mainstreaming livelihoods principles (which was formally supported by the LSP) was more marginal in FAO's context and required more work in order to be recognised by FAO management.

Despite the scale of FAO and what seems to be a rigid bureaucracy, some individuals from inside pursue directions they see as relevant, and due to their cumulative practice, end up affecting the wider FAO. They use "tactics" and "strategies" to carry out work that is complementary or in addition to their prescribed and formal workloads (De Certeau 1984). In the examples presented above, the professionals did more work than expected, and achieved it using uniquely personal strategies.

Peter did all the work included in the original project design, but found additional funds to take initiatives that according to him would make the project more sustainable over time. Eva, who worked for the LSP as a consultant was less constrained by bureaucratic rules, but incorporated in her network staff members from various departments, who sometimes had to request official permission to follow her in her endeavours. In doing so, she had helped in 'converting' many in FAO, including a whole formal division, to livelihoods principles. And Doreen

continually offered her best and always did more than requested. Peter, Eva and Doreen performed out of their own motivation and passion, with the support of their peers. Their incentives to continue were intrinsic, rather than being provided by the organisation, and were in accordance with their beliefs and work ethic.

Such personalities are uncommon in FAO (perhaps as in most organisations), but the emergence of facilitated meetings may provide opportunities for less prominent professionals to share their ideas and influence the work of the organisation more generally. The fact that the organisation is neither holding professionals accountable nor rewarding champions for taking initiatives or carrying out work they see as relevant makes for an atmosphere of *laissez-faire*. In this context, peer recognition provides a very meaningful incentive supporting professionals in their endeavours. Organisational change at FAO is thus happening in part out of peer-supported individual motivations, allowing them to leave their personality imprints on their work.

CONCLUSION

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN 'AGENCY' AND 'STRUCTURE' AT FAO: CONCLUDING REMARKS

> "Although improvement seldom lives up to the bill, the will to improve persists." (Li, 2007:276)

This research has sought to investigate the "lived experience" (Long 2001) of the professionals working at FAO, looking at their motivation to work in development, at their interactions with and within the complex and compartmentalised organisational structure, and at how they marry their professional interests, official tasks and their aspirations. It aimed to understand some of the "disjunctures[115]" (Quarles van Ufford *et al* 2003) faced by these professionals when working in various contexts pertaining to FAO's organisational 'worlds' and how some particular individuals try to cope with them. "Studying up" (Nader 1999) has enabled entry to the realm of interactions between the professionals and FAO's complex structure, illustrating how their own individual agency may engage the organisation to accomplish innovative work.

It is important to recall briefly that within the anthropology of development literature, I have situated this research as an exercise in 'alternative development' (as opposed to 'alternatives to development[116]'), taking the view that although the current 'development system' may play an important role in working towards poverty alleviation, important reforms and improvements are needed in order to benefit the poor in a more efficient manner (Brohman 1996; Cernea 1995;

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[115] Let us recall that Quarles van Ufford *et al* (2003:3) have defined the concept of "disjunctures", as "incompatibilities or contradictions, both in the daily routines of development and in its macro contexts" which are experienced by development professionals.

[116] As discussed in the introduction and chapter 2 of this dissertation, some authors question the concept of development itself and critique the current "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994) for being inefficient and prefer to discuss *alternatives to development* (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Latouche 1993; Munck 1999; Sachs 1992). They see international organisations as monolithic and have described them as bureaucracies established to foster western values and capitalism (Crush 1995; Escobar 1995a; Marglin 1990; Rist 1997; Staudt 1991; Tucker 1999; Williams 1978).

Chambers 1997; Li 2007; Neverdeen Pieterse 1998; McGee 2002; Mosse 2005a; Woost 1997). This position was also shared by many of the professionals working at FAO, including staff members and consultants involved in the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP). They believed that alternative development, in this case participatory approaches and Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (SLAs), both in practice and as an analytical framework, could potentially improve the quality of development work.

This ethnography responds to a need raised in recent anthropological literature to better understand the internal bureaucratic mechanisms and the professionals employed in organisations of development (Cernea and Kassam 2006; Crewe 1997; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Ferguson 1997; Harrison 2003; Lewis and Mosse 2006b; Li 2007; Mosse 2005a, 2008a; Quarles van Ufford 2003). These authors have looked at interactions in development between a variety of actors: the professionals themselves, project participants, government personnel, and donors. My research contributes to this body of literature by focusing on the professionals working at FAO (mostly those at HQ), the organisation of development where I have "studied up" (Nader 1999). In fact, this research has taken "a closer look at the actual knowledge practices of the experts and professionals who constitute the field of international development" (Mosse 2008b:119).

It should also be reiterated that it is through the Livelihoods Support Programme (LSP) that this investigation was able to explore an alternative model of work within FAO. Indeed, the LSP constituted a very particular niche compared to more normal and formal FAO units, and an illustration of the way that alternative approaches can emerge within such organisations. The movement leading to the creation of the LSP programme came from the 'grassroots' of the organisation itself, with the hope of bringing improvement to FAO's work through participatory approaches.

In a sense, the LSP sought to modify FAO's internal narratives through adopting an alternative discourse – based on the value of participatory approaches and analysis of the actual livelihoods of poor people – that would enable FAO staff and consultants to work differently, while remaining within the framework of FAO's structure (Roe 1991). While the results at field project level could not be assessed within the scope of this research, the LSP created and opened up an organisational space, at least in HQ, for participatory approaches.

Before looking more closely at the findings of this research, some of its limits should be reiterated. For instance, by concentrating on the "desk" (Mosse 2006b) and on the professionals working within FAO's organisational structure, this research has not analysed their relations to project participants and interventions, or critiqued FAO's policies. Rather, the focus was on the 'lived experiences' of the professionals from an organisational perspective, which has provided little opportunity to explore the results produced by the professionals who were the subjects of the research. This was achieved through exploring the "disjunctures" they were facing at the organisational level, "disjunctures" which they saw as barriers in terms of carrying out their official work with satisfaction, thereby revealing some of the constraints affecting them professionally and personally.

ON 'DISJUNCTURES', STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

This research was articulated around two core themes: 1) illustrating the multi-level compartmentalisation of the organisation and of the work itself (maintained by what Ferguson (1994:18) referred to as a "complex structure of knowledge"), and 2) portraying some of the diversity of actors on the FAO scene to provide insights on their agency and the organisational space in which they pursue their initiatives. Focusing on these two themes allowed teasing out some of the "disjunctures" faced by FAO's professionals. These "disjunctures" related to the complexity of the organisational structure (compartmentalisation and

decentralisation), to the numerous types of activities undertaken by the organisation all at one time in parrallel, to the rigidity of formal work, to hierarchy and management, to the professionals' own positions and status within FAO, to their conditions of work, and to their relationships with colleagues and other actors on the development scene.

'Disjunctures' Related to the Complexity of the Organisational Structure

On Compartmentalisation

FAO's organisational context was described in considerable detail (chapter 2). It is worth recalling that FAO is structured as a complex bureaucratic organisation, with myriad departments, divisions and services, united by the overall aims and mandate[117] of the organisation (chapter 2 and appendix 5). Each division and service within the organisation focuses on a particular topic related to food security (a very complex issue itself, see appendix 10), resulting in over one hundred working units within FAO.

Informants have discussed many times the difficulties of achieving cross-departmental and multi-disciplinary work in such an organisational context, such work sometimes being called for in the context of the complexity of the issue of food security. In practice, however, professionals do not necessarily *have* to interact between different working units. Plant biologists for example, may find they have little to do with veterinarians. Or, some departments deal with similar issues independently: the Forestry Department, (which deals with forestry aspects of natural resource management) falls outside the recently created Natural Resource Management and Environment Department – with consequences for how they operate in the field and raising the possibility of

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[117] Officially, FAO's mandate "is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy" (FAO website 2007).

working at cross-purposes. Nestled down in their own particular working unit, some professionals could, and many perhaps do, more or less 'forget' the rest of the organisation. Many professionals interviewed have discussed the hardships experienced when conducting collaborative work within FAO, even when the subject matter of two different units do happen to clearly overlap.

On FAO-HQ and Decentralised Offices

Although, the organisation is headed by its HQ located in Rome, FAO is also partly decentralised and the bureaucratic complexity of its HQ is reproduced around the world through a web of FAO Regional Offices and of country-level Representations. Chapter 5 has discussed professional and personal hardships linked to missions, to short-terms consultancies, and to maintaining links with HQ while working in the field. The chapter highlighted the many differences between two actual FAO field offices in particular, the differences being attributed to the personnel in place, the national context, the physical location of the office, and the task at hand.

On FAO Activities

The work of FAO-employed professionals is articulated around four main types of activities, including the implementation of field projects, policy advice, knowledge management and dissemination, and providing a meeting place for nations where they can discuss issues related to food security.

Although FAO has traditionally worked on implementing long term development projects, it is increasingly active in rehabilitation and responses to emergencies, yet another level of complexity (see chapter 6). Taken together, these activities – described at length in Chapter 2 – are very large in scope and translate into a wide range of practical applications. In fulfilling these activities, FAO

professionals "articulate" (Li 2000:253, based on Hall 1996) between multitudes of information, a great many people and contexts, and between practices and discourses. They also juggle other professionals' interpretations of discourse and practice. 'Articulation', in Hall's sense, is an everyday challenge for many in FAO, both at HQ level and in the field, where tasks of articulation are 'complexified' through involvement with many external actors, including national governments, donors and project participants.

On Organisational culture

These multiple layers of structural complexity combined with the scale of the organisation have encouraged the evolution of a somewhat rigid bureaucratic system (some of which pertains to the nature of the United Nations' system), including sets of rules regulating the organisation's activities, the organisational chart and governing bodies, the ways in which FAO formally and officially functions in terms of processing information, and dealing with human resources, with procurement, and with fund allocations.

Other organisational and formal elements play a role in 'naturalising' professionals as FAO employees, including building passes, desk space, email accounts, and a working knowledge of FAO's jargon. In this 'naturalisation' sense, FAO can be considered as *one* organisation. However, this research has shown that FAO can also be considered as an umbrella organisation containing within it numerous smaller units differing in terms of their particular purpose and organisational culture, in which employees accomplish their tasks. Organisational culture in FAO unfolds at the level of smaller units, which, in reality, work largely independently from one another (chapter 4).

Agency and the LSP: Coping With 'Disjunctures'

Agency refers to the interplay between the structure that is FAO (the 'house') and the practice and agency of the professionals (their created 'homes') and their professional *persona*. To be sure, agency means the capacity of an individual to take actions outside given constraints or conventions or to challenge a given framework for action (Giddens 1979; Long 2001; Ortner 1997). In the context of FAO, agency means a capacity to innovate even within the formal administrative system to achieve assignments which may or may not be directly related to official tasks. In practising agency, some individuals put their personal stamp on the work they carry out, and in some instances their initiatives may be recognised or even "routinised" – in a Weberian sense – within the current work of the organisation. This corresponds in some ways to the case of the LSP, as previously explained.

Agency, as explored throughout these chapters, generally served the twin purpose of bridging some of the organisational 'disjunctures', and of allowing professionals to undertake initiatives beyond their prescribed scope of work.

Attention was given in this research to the motivation of professionals to work at FAO, their conditions of work, and their status within the organisation. The research borrowed concepts from the anthropology of organisations in order to elaborate on characteristics such as formality and informality, hierarchy, and multi-culturalism (most FAO employees are foreigners and are "deterritorialised (Appadurai 1991), which allowed for exploration of the internal functioning of the organisation and identification of places where professionals may find room for manoeuvre. Inspired by a few particular individuals met at FAO, the research attended more closely to leaders' personality profiles, mostly through the notions of charisma and networking (chapter 6). It was concluded, however, that effective leaders also need experience and strong arguments so as to build up and maintain their credibility in order to obtain peer support.

The personality traits of the professionals involved in the LSP were briefly discussed in chapter 3. Many staff members who were attracted by the LSP had both strong characters and a desire to bring changes to FAO's ways of working. They had found in the LSP a set of opportunities and strategies to create a programme of work for their LSP sub-programme (given that others in the same sub-programmes agreed), and thus to undertake what they felt to be promising initiatives they could not have pursued otherwise. At times, these autonomous, strong and inspired strong characters, despite the 'democratic' functioning of the programme and its advocacy for team work, became very independent in terms of leading their own sub-programme, even relatively independent from the LSP itself.

Within FAO, the LSP offered professionals an alternative, or opportunities to bridge some of the "disjunctures" stemming from the complexity of the bureaucratic structure. Generally, it was both through LSP's purpose (mainstreaming participatory and livelihoods approaches) and ways of working (coordinated rather than managed, multi-disciplinary and team work, flexibility in managing its own funds) that some professionals found themselves working in an 'alternative' context when compared to FAO's 'normal' structure. Moreover, as the LSP brought together personnel from various services across FAO, the programme provided an opportunity to bridge the various compartmentalised units, achieving a certain degree of team and cross-departmental work.

It would be difficult to assess with precision to what extent agency may help in coping with some of the organisational "disjunctures" (organisational structure, decentralised offices, wide range of activities). While the disjuncture pertaining to the structure remained, individuals were momentarily, at least, able to cope with them enough to continue on their work, while combining a widening of professional interests with 'normal' official work (which was especially the case for those involved in the LSP).

Interactions Between the Structure and Agency: Two Observations

The identification of some lived 'disjuctures' and the exploration of agency enabled two observations.

1. The structure itself does not produce anything: the people within do.

> "Instead of ascribing events and institutions to the projects of various actors, an anthropological approach must demote the plans and intentions of even the most powerful interests to the status of an interesting problem, one level among many others, for the anthropologist knows well how easily structures can take on lives of their own that soon enough overtake intentional practices.[…] The thoughts and actions of "development" bureaucrats are powerfully shaped by the world of acceptable statements and utterances within which they live; and what they do and do not do is a product not only of the interests of various nations, classes, or international agencies, but also, and at the same time, of a working out of this complex structure of knowledge" (Ferguson 1994:17-18) .

According to this research, some nuances apply to Ferguson's assertion. If discourses and "acceptable statements" (Roe 1991) force, to a certain extent, a sort of organisational conformity, in practice, "structures" do not always "take on a life of their own". Individuals, through constant interactions among themselves and also within, against, through, and over the structure, manage to innovate beyond the realm of "acceptable statements" and official behaviours (Roe 1991). Within and beyond the development machine, discourses of development do not simply 'float' over and above the practitioner's head: they are produced, enacted, sometimes re-created and even ignored by the professionals, according to their personalities, beliefs, professional background, and experience.

Although FAO professionals do use organisational jargon and do take actions within a given framework, it does not mean that they *only* work formally and according to their official task description. They deploy agency in formal or informal contexts, in HQ or in the field, to produce innovative work. Perhaps a great deal of agency is not needed in carrying out the routines of everyday work,

347

yet it is required in undertaking actions that fall outside one's prescribed scope of work. Given that development and emergency relief work are not strictly repetitive in nature, having the capacity to find creative solutions to unexpected problems may be a crucial asset for the professionals working at FAO.

Thus, the 'structure', the 'complexity' of the organisation, and the 'agency' of its professionals interact within a reciprocal loop which deepens the heterogeneity present in the organisation. Professionals take advantage of this organisational complexity and heterogeneity to manifest agency and take initiative – at times exploiting the 'cracks' in the system – and when they do, they generate greater heterogeneity of work, in turn further deepening the complexity of the organisation. In this sense, the interrelations between agency of the personnel and the complexity and heterogeneity of the organisation feed off one another, constantly recreating this cycle. In other words, the practices of FAO professionals both follow and exploit the structural, geographical and organisational compartmentalisation of the organisation.

Without being able to assess whether this has a positive or negative impact on the organisation or on its employees, I observe that it sometimes happens, as was the case of the LSP, that changes stemming from initiatives are "routinised" in a Weberian sense, and formally adopted by the organisation.

2. There is a great diversity among development practitioners and they are not 'only' experts.

This ethnography has provided an opportunity to unveil the great diversity of development practitioners who work at FAO, showing that these professionals are not 'simple bureaucrats' obeying a sets of rules; they are highly educated, are motivated by their work, and demonstrate agency in their interactions with the structured organisation that is FAO, even when it means transgressing the rules or (usually discretely) defying their superiors to achieve ongoing work in a more effective manner or innovate to pursue goals in which they believe.

348

These professionals have different expertise in terms of their disciplinary backgrounds, of geographic specialisations and field experience, specific work experience, and set of languages spoken. These all contribute to shaping their professional *persona*. There is thus no single profile for 'the development worker' as they vary tremendously in who they are, where they are from, and what they can accomplish. This is especially true of FAO where many technicians are employed from a variety of fields and sub-fields (see Chapter 2). Their perceptions and practices of development are not homogenous: there is no distinctive mould according to which FAO development practitioners are produced. Thus, when one discusses the 'development industry', it *de facto* includes all of these actors.

Accordingly, 'experts' are never only 'experts'. While practicing development, they rely on technical knowledge (Li 2007), but also on their personality traits, their experience, and their perception of 'good' practice, in achieving results while facing complex situations, whether in HQ or in field offices. Beyond "rendering technical" (Li 2007:123), professionals also analyse problems and make decisions based on more than and beyond their technical knowledge, and they may put into practice their "will to improve" in very personal ways (Li 2007). Professionals combine several "strategies" and "tactics" (De Certeau 1984), through using both formal and informal channels and networks, and by working at the margins of the structure, seeking creative solutions, as was the case of many staff members and consultants involved in the LSP. FAO's work, beyond organisational structures and discourses, is shaped and mediated by the professionals themselves.

Authors who have written on development discourses, although addressing deep and serious critiques of the development endeavour, may make an abstraction of practitioners that loses sight of the *person*. Accordingly, the findings of the present research challenge some of the work by anthropologists of development who have made overly-broad generalisations regarding the professionals working in international organisations, underestimating the importance of the 'expert' who

349

actually carries out the work (Escobar 1995; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Latouche 1993; Munck 1999; Sachs 1992).

It should be emphasised that the diversity of professionals also speaks to the differences between the ideal and the real images of experienced development professionals. As already indicated, field experience was considered by all FAO professionals interviewed to be crucial for doing quality work (to ensure that they understand the complexity of the issues they deal with) and in building experts' professional *persona*.

Yet, the current working conditions of young consultants and professionals have changed compared to those of more senior staff who have lived in different countries for long periods of time. Young consultants are confronted with the reality of having to learn about the field through short-term consultancies and missions. 'Field experience', understood as relatively deep operational knowledge of particular countries or regions, is currently difficult for the younger generation of workers to acquire. Accordingly, they will become different types of development workers, as they will gain their experience differently, which may perhaps change their rapport to the relation between policy and intervention in development. Yet, professionals agreed that learning about development work could only be done 'properly' from the field itself, and that everyone working at FAO should, somehow, acquire 'field experience'.

However, the professionals' attachment to the 'field' somewhat contradicts Mosse's assertion that "the disjuncture between policy and practice is not, therefore, an unfortunate gap to be bridged between intention and action; it is a necessity; actively maintained and reproduced" (2005a:231). While Mosse drew this conclusion after long years of fieldwork, this research has revealed that professionals within the organisation, and especially those who engaged in the LSP, are making a constant effort to bridge practice and policy, and to bring the organisation's work closer to field realities.

For instance, it was one of the LSP's objectives to work towards bridging that gap by building FAO staff's capacity to take stock of field realities though participatory approaches and livelihoods analysis. The general perception was that this gap *had* to be bridged in order for the organisation to fulfil its mandate. This explains partly why most professionals were dissatisfied with FAO becoming a "knowledge organisation", which they feared would only increase its distance from the field. Many expressed their apprehension that this would disconnect (further) FAO's work from the realities of the field and they would agree with Mosse that such a "managerial" approach to development would "privilege[s] policy over practice" (Mosse 2005a:237).

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR DEPLOYING AGENCY

In the course of this investigation, a number of specific enabling conditions were identified which may play a role in facilitating or impeding the deployment of agency by employees, in allowing them to take initiatives, or in allowing them to produce work around and above their official and prescribed sphere of activities. Following up on the assertion that 'structure' itself cannot produce outputs and on the recognition of the presence of a great diversity among development workers, three enabling conditions for development workers to deploy agency were identified:

   a) their position and status within FAO;

   b) their capacity to use both formal and informal channels; and

   c) their leadership ability and capacity to gather a group of interested individuals around a cause.

It should be mentioned that in fact, enabling conditions may pertain to the structure itself (as in the case of the workers' position and status within FAO), or may stem from the individuals (their leadership ability), or from both (their capacity to use both formal and informal channels).

a) Position and status within FAO

As discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, there are different types of residents within the FAO homes who establish over time particular relations with the organisation, and whose sense of belonging to the organisation may vary. 'Feeling at home' depends in part on their perception of how they are being treated by the organisation, which in turn depends on the personalities and management styles of their supervisors, as well as on their immediate working environments and working cultures. Feeling at home or not in a work place will play a role not only in the quality of work one will provide, but also in the kind of initiatives one is willing to undertake, thus affecting the degree of agency one might attempt to deploy. 'Feeling at home', in a sense, can be considered as one enabling condition for undertaking initiatives.

In that regard, two different contractual positions in FAO were contrasted: staff members and consultants (chapter 4). Staff members enjoy relative job security and different types of benefits, including school fees for their children, periodic paid trips to return to their country of origin, a retirement pension, and a range of other important benefits. Most of these staff members, however, deal with very heavy workloads, their number having been significantly reduced over the last decades without a proportionally accompanying reduction in FAO's workload. On the one hand staff members who are more secure in their employment may feel freer to innovate, yet they are also frequently overwhelmed by more diverse and time-consuming administrative chores.

Working along with the staff members are numerous consultants, both at HQ and in the field. Consultants are professionals hired on short-term contracts who do not have job security. They are generally hired for punctual assignments, but increasingly work on the basis of repeated short-term contracts in support of FAO's on-going activities, often serving as right hands for busy staff members. Consultants interviewed felt they could not invest themselves in their work as much as they would like because their employment situation forces them to be on

the look-out for the next contract, with FAO or elsewhere. Thus consultants often remain in FAO only until they find more stable opportunities for employment elsewhere.

These 'occupational inequalities' among the professionals working at FAO influence how they respectively 'feel at home'. In contrast with staff members, some consultants who hope for a contract renewal may prefer to maintain a low profile and remain strictly within their terms of reference, while others will rather try to do more than expected, hoping that their skills will be noticed and their contracts renewed.

b) Capacity to use both formal and informal channels

Formality represents all the elements that are associated with the *official* organisational structure of FAO while the informal realm is where individuals find their room for manoeuvre, may deploy agency, and create 'homes' within FAO. Professionals communicate with one another, come up with solutions to problems, think about projects, brainstorm and even contact donors informally, sometimes to fulfill their official tasks, other times to pursue work they see as relevant, yet outside their prescribed 'official' work. However, for their initiatives to have a lasting impact or be endorsed by the organisation, their actions have to be sooner or later formally recognised by the proper authority.

Although rules are needed to ensure the functioning of the organisation and to provide a framework for coherent actions (forestalling chaos), working informally is also necessary in FAO, as formal work is associated with rigidity, time consuming efforts, bureaucracy, and hierarchy. Working informally was said to be quicker and generally more effective. It seems that those who know and command formal rules may have a greater capacity to go around them. Some

individuals, such as in the case of Eva, become key nodes in informal channels, mediating between the informal and the formal (see chapter 6).

The line between formal and informal may thus be a fine one, and both are intertwined and overlap to different extents. In fact, the relationship between formality and informality is largely determined by individuals, depending on their character and their will to achieve work beyond the formal sphere: some prefer to generally play by the rules, some admittedly bend or 'transgress' rules that prevent them for doing what they want (and think necessary), while others situate themselves somewhere in between, depending on which channel seems more efficient in the circumstances. In fact, problems with formal rules arise when they prevent professionals from achieving their work effectively, as stifling initiatives, or as complicating rather than simplifying things.

Many considered the capacity to work informally as a strength, even by those who admitted to generally playing by the rules: a certain level of 'deviant' behaviour allowed to maintain useful levels of flexibility and experimentation. Deploying agency in FAO thus seems to be enabled by a capacity to use a combination of formal and informal channels to carry out innovative work.

The LSP itself was a good example of the combination of both, formal and informal work. Even though it had a formal position as it was officially anchored as an official programme in one service, the atmosphere was very informal, and most projects and activities started informally. The LSP was a formal programme that adopted informal ways of working. In fact, the programme was seen by many in FAO who were not associated with the programme, and at times by some staff and consultants involved, as 'too informal'.

The informal is a space of change and of creativity in FAO. Informal initiatives may eventually be approved by an open-minded manager, and become formalised, or "routinised". This is when a "tactic" becomes a "strategy", to use De

Certeau's words (1984). Thus, in pursuing their professional interests, or in deviating from their normal programmes of work, officers sometimes build their case informally, and only once they feel certain of the backing of their colleagues, do they approach management, who may then find themselves in a position where they can hardly say no. In this sense, peer recognition and trust relations take on an important meaning for those who undertake initiatives, as this is where they find the confidence and support to continue on.

c) Leadership ability and capacity to gather a group of interested individuals around a cause

In addition to one's status in the organisation and one's capacity to use formal and informal channels, it seems that one's leadership ability is another enabling condition for innovation in FAO. In this regard, two types of natural leaders were discussed – a charismatic and a networker – who have in common the demonstrated capacity to draw people to their respective causes (chapter 6). These leaders were able to attract and retain their 'followers' because their sound technical skills and experience gave them the necessary professional credibility, while their personalities enabled them to establish trust relationships. Such passionate charismatic and networking leaders, often unsatisfied with the *status quo*, yet working within the 'allowable' (and often very informal) confines of the organisation, may be able to bring change to an organisation.

Peter, the charismatic leader of the CA project, had managed to expand the scope of an FAO project in a poor region of Central America to include socio-cultural considerations. He transformed a limited and purely technical project – focused on food security – into a broader long term and more sustainable project (including even aspects of local governance) which lasted for fourteen years. This project director managed to partner with different local authorities and organisations, and found funds, in addition to those allocated by FAO, to expand the project following the vision he was continually evolving along with the

participants. According to Edward and Ben, who had witnessed the implementation of this project from afar, it was Peter's charisma, combined with his sound technical skills, which had been pivotal in expanding the project's scope, making it more sustainable over time. It could be supposed that Peter re-wrote the project's narrative so as to change the actions which would follow (Roe 1991).

Eva, for her part, was the core of a network of FAO professionals interested in livelihoods. She was an LSP consultant and co-convener, passionate about mainstreaming livelihoods approaches in FAO because she strongly believed that this could lead to better results in the field. She had a natural talent for networking, and was capable of building teams around the shared interests of their members. Eva was able to reach members of high management who also, at least momentarily, gathered around her cause, which was a considerable breakthrough for the mainstreaming of livelihoods in FAO. Like Peter, Eva was highly competent as a livelihoods expert, and thus had the experience and professional skills required to build and maintain both her credibility and her network. Eva's network was greatly strengthened by her marked capacity to relate to the members of her network on a personal level.

PATHS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this investigation have shed light on the current understanding of the lived experience of development professionals and the organisational context in which they are involved. However, some outcomes of this research have practical implications that will require future research in order to seek deeper levels of comprehension and to explore constructive strategies aimed at improving the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994).

<u>*On the Added Value of a 'Shared Vision':*</u>

As observed during fieldwork and as confirmed by informants, FAO's professionals work in a compartmentalised organisation characterised by a weak corporate vision. Without here implying that professionals are 'free' to do whatever they want, and without denying that many constraints limit their practice, informants have indicated that while they are influenced by the organisational structure and the official discourse that frame their actions, FAO as an organisation does not have a strong corporate vision with which employees can identify.

Aside from already existing FAO-wide 'corporate narratives' – the FAO Director General's communiqués via email, the great many documents published by FAO, on paper or on the web, and FAO's *Strategic Framework* (FAO 1999b) – professionals primarily identify with their working units in terms of its specific form of organisational norms and practice (chapter 4). Perhaps because of, or in relation to, this observation, there seems to be little 'glue' binding together the different working units in the organisation, as each working unit is host to its own various form of organisational culture. This was particularly demonstrated by the example of the arguments between FAO 'technical services' and FAO 'emergency' in Waterland (chapter 5).

However, 'corporate vision' is too strong a word to describe the overall framework of FAO: rather, a type of 'shared vision' or 'shared values', composed of an ensemble of principles and a range of shared approaches – beyond mere work objectives – would be more appropriate. Indeed, there is no indication that a single strong 'corporate vision' in FAO would be desirable (in part because it would be hard to ensure that it would necessarily be a practically 'relevant' vision, rather than a merely theoretical or political one). The appropriateness and effectiveness of such a 'shared vision' would largely depend on how such a vision would evolve, and then be imposed and subsequently enforced; indeed, such a vision would be an easy prey to the whims of leadership and to changes in

leadership (although in FAO's context, defining a 'shared vision' would require the approval and participation of FAO's member-states). A strong corporate vision could potentially create resistance on the part of some professionals, despite providing a clearer sense of direction to which others might respond as well.

Hence, it seems that the combination of and interactions between the weak corporate vision, compartmentalisation, and the inherent complexity and scale of the organisation play important roles in confining the 'nesting' of organisational cultures to each of the working units with which professionals identify. Future research could potentially explore the impact of this state of affairs on the work of the professionals and elucidate what a 'shared vision' could encompass and how it could be evolved in ways that professionals could have confidence and recognise the lessons of their own experience in many of its principles – without ways of working and ways of thinking being strictly imposed from above. Currently, views on what makes a good development practitioner vary from one person to the next, depending on their experience and understanding of FAO's objectives.

A few more questions would be relevant: how can an organisation such as FAO, which employs highly educated and experienced professionals, possibly find the right balance between a 'shared vision' and working principles most would respect while still allowing enough flexibility to allow sufficient space for professionals to continue taking positive initiatives and achieving goals that they find rewarding? Would a more engaging set of values have an impact on the motivation of the professionals and on the quality of their work? Could a 'shared vision' also enhance the sense of belonging of the professionals towards the organisation, whether they are in HQ or in field offices?

On the Working Conditions of Practitioners

One finding of this research concerns the adequacy of working conditions for FAO's employees, not in terms of benefits or salaries, but rather in terms of providing opportunities for personnel to acquire experience and skills in order to achieve their tasks satisfactorily. Consultants in particular, have indicated that their short-term contracts do not give them enough time to conduct quality work, and that working under these conditions does not encourage the development of their sense of belonging toward the organisation (chapter 4). Regardless of the type of work or of the discipline that they practice, however, the quality of FAO's performance depends on reliable and knowledgeable professionals. FAO could, in the long run, benefit from providing young consultants and professionals with ongoing learning opportunities and more stable terms of employment so that they could eventually play important roles in the organisation's future.

It must be reiterated that both staff members and consultants are highly motivated by their work and often seek employment in FAO in order to put into practice their positive motivations to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and the goal of making the world a better place. Although they are invariably committed to FAO's mandate, and despite being well paid officers or consultants, their involvement in trying to solve a global issue may lead to paying a personal price in terms of loneliness and hardship in living abroad. Their families, in turn, share that burden. Mosse indicated that "aid agencies have little to say about such matters of global power and impoverishment. Thus they were established to solve problems they do not create" (2008b:119). Staff members and consultants, likewise, are also engaging in solving problems they did not create.

By observing the agency of the professionals and their high motivation, the importance of FAO personnel in 'making FAO work' has been underlined, and questions regarding their capacity to conduct quality work in the current FAO context seem all the more relevant. Many concerns were raised by FAO personnel regarding difficulties they experienced in carrying out adequate work,

including the overwork of long-term staff members, the hardships related to ten-day missions, the short-term contracts most consultants are offered, the absence of opportunities for long term involvement in the field, and the absence of an adequate reward system. This may partly explain why some take initiatives on their own, quietly transgress rules, or take part in programmes such as the LSP which cut across many of the usual barriers. Future research could perhaps help determine what kind of 'working conditions', considering FAO's context (including its complex governance) and the type of work it aims to achieve, would enable professionals to carry out more satisfactory work through enhancing their capacity to invest themselves in their work.

Although this last reflection on working conditions and commitment by FAO staff is based on the current reality of human resource management at FAO, perhaps a more immediate question concerns the use of consultants at FAO. Most of the consultants who expressed the greatest dissatisfaction were the ones who were contracted to 'act' as staff members rather than being employed for specific 'punctual' tasks. While consultants are needed in FAO to carry out specific and technical work on an *ad hoc* basis, consultancies were not originally thought of as a means to provide continuing support for ongoing work of the sort done by staff members. Yet, as demonstrated in chapter 4, this is increasingly the case at FAO. If consultants are going to be involved in FAO's ongoing activities, further research should be carried out to determine whether it would make more sense to offer them conditions that would encourage them to invest themselves in carrying out quality work – yielding both economic and human resource management benefits – and seek to enhance their sense of belonging, making them feel at home.

On the Impact of the Agency of the Professionals

Another finding of this investigation regards the great diversity of professionals working in FAO and their capacity for leadership and agency. According to this

research, the agency of the professionals does have an impact on FAO's work, but establishing whether or not the sum of their initiatives is 'positive' in terms of FAO's objectives would be very difficult, even with the best monitoring and evaluation methods. It is one thing to observe agency, leadership and the resulting outcomes, but quantifying them, or even trying to "fit" them unambiguously into specific categories of FAO work objectives, is quite another.

After conducting research and being immersed in FAO for almost two years, it seems to me that the observed "deviance" of professionals is generally "positive" for the organisation (Heckert and Heckert 2002). One can presume that initiatives 'from below' stem from direct experience, as well as from reflection on ways to improve the quality of the work. Consequently, it would be relevant to understand how innovations from below, at least the ones that are found to be positive, could be incorporated into wider FAO work strategies and encouraged by higher management.

Care is called for, however, in defining what constitutes a 'positive innovation'. Although the agency of FAO professionals makes the organisation do 'more', it remains to be demonstrated that this makes the organisation more effective. The outcome depends on whether or not the professionals in taking their initiatives end up doing so in line with FAO's objectives. Supposing, for the purpose of this discussion, that FAO's objectives are well conceived in the face of the enormous challenge of alleviating food insecurity, ensuring that the agency of the professionals is put to the best service of these objectives would entail an organisational capacity of the agency to 'harness' the positive achievements of its 'deviant' professionals, which, in the context of the FAO, is not currently the case.

On Cross-Departmental and Multi-Disciplinary Work

Another relevant question which can be posed on the basis of this research concerns the strong compartmentalisation of FAO, which according to many of its employees prevents collaborative work across departments, divisions and services. Recalling that food security is a multi-level problem which according to specialists calls for holistic solutions (Collomb 1999; Lappé *et al* 1998; Maxwell 1996; McMillan 1991; Sachs 2005; Sen 1981, 1999; Young 1997; Ziegler 2002, 2005; see Appendix 10), one wonders if such a complex problem as food security can be effectively addressed in a context where collaborative work is so difficult. Can the necessary holistic solutions be found without valorising and encouraging inter-disciplinary approaches to FAO's work? This question needs to be placed in the context of what FAO can actually achieve in terms of its mandate, remembering that the organisation is not the only player in the global food security scene and that the primary responsibility for alleviating food insecurity lies with the national government and peoples of each nation.

However, to do so, FAO would need to find the means, both managerial and financial, to support and encourage collaborative work with more than lip service, by providing both time and 'evaluation points' for professionals to interact and learn to work together. Collaborative and inter-disciplinary work, in the form of realistic principles and practices, should probably be supported by a 'shared vision', as discussed earlier. Future investigations could bear on confirming whether or not inter-disciplinary work is truly beneficial – and to what extent and how so – when working on crucial problems such as the food security of future generations. This is a very wide question that should be broken down into many smaller ones that tackle issues related to the complexity of food insecurity itself, of human resource management, of management and organisational practice within FAO itself, and also of organisational culture.

Finally, the research was conducted in the context of the LSP, an externally-funded programme aiming at mainstreaming alternative approaches within FAO and for FAO practitioners. Without implying here that the programme should serve as a model, it has been evident that the LSP nonetheless managed to diffuse information on livelihoods approaches within FAO (through different channels, including publications and networkers such as Eva), to recruit personnel who worked "extra" for the programme, with the aim of having a long term effect, notably on the emergency work FAO is carrying out – which now represents a significant portion of FAO's overall expenditures. Recalling also the example of Eva's work, her efforts to mainstream livelihoods approaches had 'positive results', particularly when she was able to make these approaches operational enough for the professionals to use them, and when her work was formally endorsed by members of higher management (chapter 6).

Some ways of working adopted by the LSP produced results in terms of mainstreaming alternative development components within a rather structured organisation, which permeated some of the organisational cultures of FAO's working units. For example, the LSP has demonstrated not only that it was possible to bring such approaches within mainstream development, but also that a few ways of working, such as having a truly interdisciplinarily-controlled budget (as contrasted with the usual control by service or division chiefs), were crucial to this process.

It could be useful here to recall some of the recommendations that were made to FAO's senior management in the context of LSP's final evaluation. While the conclusions of the report were not very enthusiastic about the achievements of the programme itself, the Evaluation team recommended that FAO should adopt more permanently certain strategies put into practice by the LSP, notably in terms of "team building and in cross-divisional planning, budgeting and management", which the Evaluation team characterised as "rare capacities in FAO but very high

priority under the current reforms, the Strategic Framework and the new planning model" (LSP Evaluation Report 2007:64).

Perhaps a relevant question for future research would be to better understand to what extent programmes such as the LSP may bring positive results in terms of the organisation's objectives, and provide extra motivation for the professionals who engage in them. What is the value added in terms of the results of such programmes? Would it be in the interest of the organisation that such programmes play a greater role in bridging "disjunctures" and in opening up spaces for creative work?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Escobar (2008:130) has asked: "What other kinds of theoretical and political claims can we possibly make with the insights of ethnographies of modernity?" In this case, research findings show that some individuals working from within organisations may not be as controlled by organisational rhetoric and discourses as it may seem to outsiders. Indeed, "studying up" (Nader 1999) and gaining an insider's perspective on FAO has provided a unique opportunity to shed light on the realities of development practitioners, in order to take stock of the diversity of FAO professionals and their capacity for agency and leadership in challenging its organisational structure. This ethnography of the "desk" has provided insights on the 'lived experience' of FAO professionals from an organisational perspective.

In doing so, this dissertation has highlighted the "disjunctures" inherent to the organisational structure, closely related to the complexity, compartmentalisation and management of the organisation. For FAO employees, these disjunctures correspond to additional practical challenges in working towards food security alleviation, itself a very complex issue and the *raison d'être* of FAO.

In their efforts to overcome these barriers at least momentarily, professionals deploy agency through a set of tactics and strategies involving working informally, taking part in informal networks, and participating in 'alternative' initiatives such as the LSP. Motivated by their commitment to FAO's objectives, these dedicated individuals manoeuvre within this complex bureaucracy while pursuing their professional and personal aspirations to help alleviate food insecurity and poverty.

In exploring avenues for and mechanisms of agency, the research has revealed that 'experts are not only experts'. Indeed, their technical knowledge constitutes only one part of their professional *persona*. Staff and consultants, in the context of their work, contribute their entire 'selves' – including their general knowledge, their common sense, their capacity for adaptation and for team work, their ways of conceiving development and their own cultural backgrounds. Hence, a great deal of individuality feeds into the ways professionals carry out their work.

Taken together, the interactions of the professionals with the organisational structure and the individual personal qualities invested by the experts in their work have an impact on the way development work is carried out on behalf of FAO, both at HQ and in the field, since it is ultimately these professionals who put FAO's work into motion. In the end, the interplay between practice and agency of professionals and the bureaucratic disjunctures encountered not only affect how development work is conducted by these dedicated FAO personnel themselves, but also FAO's work more generally.

It is my contention that the observations and reflections offered in this dissertation regarding the lived realities of development practitioners should be taken into account when constructing an anthropological critique of development work. If 'alternative development' seeks to improve the current development system, solutions must emerge from the realities of the professionals working in development. It is only by considering the interactions between both the external

and the internal elements of the organisational structure of the "development apparatus" (Ferguson 1994), most definitely including the agency of the professionals involved, that a critique of development can be constructed which offers more realistic paths for problem- solving, in order to work more effectively towards poverty alleviation.

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American Redcross	www.redcross.org/
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)	www.cgiar.org
FAO	www.fao.org
Humanitarian Reform	www.humanitarianreform.org
International Association of Facilitators (IAF)	www.iaf-world.org
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)	www.ilri.org/
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)	http://beta.irri.org/i
International Water Management Institute (IWMI)	www.iwmi.cgiar.org
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	www.ocha.org
Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS)	www.fao.org/spfs/en/
United National Development Programme (UNDP)	www.undp.org

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: FAO Membership as at 17 November 2007.

Afghanistan	1 December 1949
Albania	12 November 1973
Algeria	19 November 1963
Andorra	17 November 2007
Angola	14 November 1977
Antigua and Barbuda	7 November 1983
Argentina	21 November 1951
Armenia	8 November 1993
Australia	16 October 1945
Austria	27 August 1947
Azerbaijan	20 October 1995
Bahamas	8 November 1975
Bahrain	8 November 1971
Bangladesh	12 November 1973
Barbados	6 November 1967
Belarus	19 November 2005
Belgium	16 October 1945
Belize	7 November 1983
Benin	9 November 1961
Bhutan	7 November 1981
Bolivia	16 October 1945
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8 November 1993
Botswana	1 November 1966
Brazil	16 October 1945
Bulgaria	6 November 1967
Burkina Faso	9 November 1961
Burundi	19 November 1963
Cambodia	11 November 1950
Cameroon	22 March 1960
Canada	16 October 1945
Cape Verde	8 November 1975
Central African Republic	9 November 1961
Chad	9 November 1961
Chile	17 May 1946
China	16 October 1945
Colombia	17 October 1945
Comoros	14 November 1977
Congo	9 November 1961
Cook Islands	11 November 1985
Costa Rica	7 April 1948
Côte d'Ivoire	9 November 1961
Croatia	8 November 1993
Cuba	19 October 1945
Cyprus	14 September 1960
Czech Republic	8 November 1993
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	14 November 1977
Democratic Republic of the Congo	9 November 1961
Denmark	16 October 1945
Djibouti	14 November 1977
Dominica	12 November 1979
Dominican Republic	16 November 1945
Ecuador	16 October 1945
Egypt	16 October 1945
El Salvador	19 August 1947
Equatorial Guinea	7 November 1981
Eritrea	8 November 1993

398

Estonia	11 November 1991
Ethiopia	1 January 1948
Fiji	8 November 1971
Finland	27 August 1947
France	16 October 1945
Gabon	9 November 1961
Gambia	22 November 1965
Georgia	20 October 1995
Germany	27 November 1950
Ghana	9 November 1957
Greece	16 October 1945
Grenada	8 November 1975
Guatemala	16 October 1945
Guinea	5 November 1959
Guinea-Bissau	26 November 1973
Guyana	22 August 1966
Haiti	16 October 1945
Honduras	16 October 1945
Hungary	6 November 1967
Iceland	16 October 1945
India	16 October 1945
Indonesia	28 November 1949
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1 December 1953
Iraq	16 October 1945
Ireland	3 September 1946
Israel	23 November 1949
Italy	12 September 1946
Jamaica	13 March 1963
Japan	21 November 1951
Jordan	23 January 1951
Kazakhstan	7 November 1997
Kenya	27 January 1964
Kiribati	15 November 1999
Kuwait	9 November 1961
Kyrgyzstan	8 November 1993
Lao People's Democratic Republic	21 November 1951
Latvia	11 November 1991
Lebanon	27 October 1945
Lesotho	7 November 1966
Liberia	16 October 1945
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	24 November 1953
Lithuania	11 November 1991
Luxembourg	16 October 1945
Madagascar	9 November 1961
Malawi	22 November 1965
Malaysia	9 November 1957
Maldives	8 November 1971
Mali	9 November 1961
Malta	5 October 1964
Marshall Islands	12 November 1999
Mauritania	9 November 1961
Mauritius	12 March 1968
Mexico	16 October 1945
Micronesia (Federated States of)	29 November 2003
Monaco	2 November 2001
Mongolia	12 November 1973
Montenegro	17 November 2007
Morocco	13 September 1956

Mozambique	14 November 1977
Myanmar	11 September 1947
Namibia	14 November 1977
Nauru	2 November 2001
Nepal	21 November 1951
Netherlands	16 October 1945
New Zealand	16 October 1945
Nicaragua	26 October 1945
Niger	9 November 1961
Nigeria	11 October 1960
Niue	12 November 1999
Norway	16 October 1945
Oman	8 November 1971
Pakistan	7 September 1947
Palau	12 November 1999
Panama	16 October 1945
Papua New Guinea	8 November 1975
Paraguay	30 October 1945
Peru	17 June 1952
Philippines	16 October 1945
Poland	9 November 1957
Portugal	11 September 1946
Qatar	8 November 1971
Republic of Korea	25 November 1949
Republic of Moldova	20 October 1995
Romania	9 November 1961
Russian Federation	11 April 2006
Rwanda	19 November 1963
Saint Kitts and Nevis	7 November 1983
Saint Lucia	26 November 1979
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7 November 1981
Samoa	12 November 1979
San Marino	12 November 1999
Sao Tome and Principe	14 November 1977
Saudi Arabia	23 November 1948
Senegal	9 November 1961
Serbia	3 June 2006
Seychelles	14 November 1977
Sierra Leone	9 November 1961
Slovakia	8 November 1993
Slovenia	8 November 1993
Solomon Islands	11 November 1985
Somalia	17 November 1960
South Africa	9 November 1993
Spain	5 April 1951
Sri Lanka	21 May 1948
Sudan	13 September 1956
Suriname	26 November 1975
Swaziland	8 November 1971
Sweden	13 February 1950
Switzerland	11 September 1946
Syrian Arab Republic	27 October 1945
Tajikistan	20 October 1995
Thailand	27 August 1947
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	8 November 1993
Timor-Leste	29 November 2003
Togo	23 May 1960
Tonga	7 November 1981

Trinidad and Tobago	19 November 1963
Tunisia	25 November 1955
Turkey	6 April 1948
Turkmenistan	20 October 1995
Tuvalu	3 December 2003
Uganda	19 November 1963
Ukraine	3 December 2003
United Arab Emirates	12 November 1973
United Kingdom	16 October 1945
United Republic of Tanzania	8 February 1962
United States of America	16 October 1945
Uruguay	30 November 1945
Uzbekistan	2 November 2001
Vanuatu	7 November 1983
Venezuela	16 October 1945
Viet Nam	11 November 1950
Yemen	22 May 1990
Zambia	22 November 1965
Zimbabwe	7 November 1981

APPENDIX 2: Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

APPENDIX 3: Addendum to Contract: FAO Legal Agreement.

The title rights, copyrights, and all other rights of whatsoever nature in
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APPENDIX 4: Letter of presentation and questionnaires sent to interviewees

Dear …

If you are receiving this, it is because you have demonstrated some interest or at least sympathy for my research project. I am now sending you a questionnaire to **1) get YOUR views and 2) better understand where and how LSP fits into the larger FAO picture.** My sense of ethics would like to remind you that I am doing an ethnography of LSP-FAO, done in the framework of my PhD research in anthropology, for which I have the appropriate legal agreement with FAO.

For confidentiality reasons, questionnaires are being sent individually. The confidentiality of your answers is guaranteed, and would be enhanced if you sent it back to my personal email address […] from your personal address. **If you agree to answer, it will mean that I can use the information for my research, always with respect to your confidentiality. It is perfectly ok to overlook questions you are uneasy answering.**

I KNOW you are busy and this is why I have attached a **short** questionnaire and a separate document with extra questions, in case you have time. Your contribution would be very useful and greatly appreciated. Please, kindly revert back to me by **March 20th**.

I am also available at any time if you would prefer to discuss these issues face to face. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me (ext xxxxx, office xxx).

With kind regards,
Geneviève

PS: If you think of other people in FAO who would provide helpful answers, please do not hesitate to forward this questionnaire. Simply let me know to how many people you have forwarded it so that I can keep track of how many are out. Thanks!

SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name (*facultative*):
Position/department/ general tasks:
Role in LSP:
Education:
Years in FAO and career development (where did you start and where did you end up?):

Your work in FAO
♦ Why do you work in a place like FAO? What got your interest in working with LSP?

♦ How are you contributing to the LSP's mandate through your work? How are you contributing to FAO's mandate through your work?

♦ When working in a big organisation such as FAO, individual work behind team/service efforts can be hard to recognise. At what moments, in your work for LSP and for FAO, do you consider your efforts or individual work to be recognised? How?

♦ How much space do you have to discuss, exchange and take initiatives in your work? In LSP? In FAO? What enables this kind of space within LSP, and within FAO (mechanisms, individual attitudes, working culture, etc.)?

♦ Consultancies are more and more common in FAO. How is it affecting your work? How is it affecting the work of the FAO? Of LSP?

LSP and the FAO's Reform
♦ How did the reform affect you personally? Has the reform affected the work you are doing for LSP and for FAO?

On multi-disciplinarity
♦ LSP has been fostering multi-disciplinarity in the work place. What about multi-disciplinarity in FAO? How is multi-disciplinarity important to your work? Why, why not?

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!!!

PLEASE SEND TO:[…]

EXTRA QUESTIONS

Name (*facultative*):
Position/department/ general tasks:
Role in LSP:
Education:
Years in FAO and career development (where did you start and where did you end up?):

FAO`s mandate:
♦ According to <u>you</u>, what is LSP's mandate?

♦ According to <u>you</u>, in your words, what is FAO's mandate, and where does LSP fit?

Formality versus informality
♦ In both LSP and FAO, do you sometimes have to use informal channels to get your work done? Why? What kind of informal channels/ways?

Organisational culture
♦ How would you characterise the organisational culture (ways of working, informal and formal relations, etc.) in your service or division? What about the organisational culture of LSP?

♦ Do you think people at FAO, in your service, share some common aptitudes, qualities and traits other than their professional background? How about the people in the LSP?

LSP and the FAO's Reform
♦ Given the FAO reform, is there still a need for extra-budgetary funded programmes such as the LSP? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes and how could LSP-type of programme be a part of such a process?

♦ Do you think the reform will help FAO in achieving its mandate?

On bureaucratic structures
♦ Considering the mandate of FAO, do you think that the current bureaucratic structure of the organisation provides the adequate means to reach the goals (ex: food insecurity alleviation)? Why and why not?

♦ Would you consider LSP as an alternative organisational structure? Do you think a structure such as the LSP could work on a bigger scale?

On funding
♦ Your perception of the role of extra-budgetary programmes and projects in FAO, such as LSP and FNPP, or even emergency funds?

♦ According to you, what is the wider role of donors in FAO? How do they influence the work your service does, at HQ and field levels? How?

On organisational memories

♦ In your opinion, how is a memory (i.e. transmission of accumulated experience and knowledge) important to an organisation such as FAO? To a programme such as the LSP?

♦ FAO is currently putting in place tools for knowledge management. Do you think this is necessary? For FAO? For programmes such as the LSP? Why?
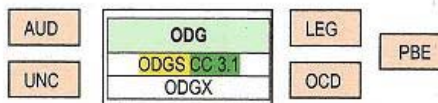
Conclusion
♦ Any references/documents to recommend?

THANK YOU SO MUCH – AGAIN - FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!!!

PLEASE SEND TO:[…]

APPENDIX 5:FAO's Organisational Chart: An Overview.

*Highlighted services indicate the presence of LSP members.

AUD		ODG		LEG	
UNC		ODGS CC 3.1			PBE
		ODGX		OCD	

Agriculture	Forestry	Fisheries	Natural Resources	Economic and Social	Technical Cooperation	Knowledge and Communication	Administration and Finance
AGDM - Crisis Management Centre (CMC)	FODP - Programme Coordination Unit	FIDI - Fishery Information, Data and Statistics Unit	NRDC - Secretariat, Comm. on Genetic Res.for Food and Ag	ESDG - Global Perspectives Studies Unit CC 3.2	TCDP - Programme Coordination Unit	KCDP - Programme Coordination Unit	AFDC - (FAO) Credit Union
AGDP - Programme Coordination Unit	FOE - Forest Economics and Policy Division	FIDP - Programme Coordination Unit	NRDP - Programme Coordination Unit	ESDP – Prog. Coord. Unit	TCDS - Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit	KCDA - International Alliance Against Hunger Secretariat	AFDM - Medical Unit
AGA - Animal Production and Health Division	FOEL - Forestry Information and Liaison Service	FIE - Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and Policy Division	NRDS - Secretariat of the Sci. Council to the CGIAR	ESA - Agricultural Dev. Economics Division	TCA - Policy Assistance and Resources Mobilization Division	KCC - Conference, Council and Protocol Affairs Division	AFDP - Programme Coordination Unit
AGAH - Animal Health Service	FOEP - Forest Economics, Policy and Institutions Service	FIEL - International Institutions and Liaison Service	NRC – Env., Climate Change and Bioenergy Division	ESAC - Comparative Agricultural Development Service	TCAP - Field Programme Development Service DFID off.	KCCM - Meeting Programming and Documentation Service	AFDS - Shared Service Centre
AGAL - Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch	FOI - Forest Products and Industry Division	FIEP - Development Planning Service	NRCC - Mountain Resources Management	ESAE - Agricultural Sector in Economic Development Service	TCAR - Policy Coordination Service	KCCO - Conference, Council and Government Relations Branch	AFDU - Security Service
AGAP - Animal Production Service	FOIM - Forest Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Service Activity 3.1	FIES - Fishery and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service	NRCR - Rural Dev.Service	ESAF - Food Security and Agricultural Projects Analysis Service	TCAS - Agricultural Policy Support Service	KCCP - Protocol Branch	AFF - Finance Division
AGE - Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture	FOIP - Forest Products Service	FII - Fish Products and Industry Division	NRCB - Climate Change and Bioenergy Unit	ESAG - Global Perspectives Studies Unit	TCE - Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division	KCE - Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building Division	AFFC - Central Accounting Service
AGL - Land and Water Development Division	FOM - Forest Management Division	FIIT - Fishing Technology Service	NRCE – Env.Assess. and Management Unit	EST - Trade and Markets Division	TCEO - Emergency Operation Service	KCEF - WAICENT Outreach and Capacity Building Branch	AFFR - Financial Operations and Systems Service
AGLL - Land and Plant Nutrition Management Service	FOMC - Forest Conservation Service	FIIU - Fish Utilization and Marketing Service	NRL - Land and Water Division	ESTG - Global Information and Early Warning System Service	TCER - Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policies Unit Activity 3.5	KCEL - David Lublin Memorial Library	AFFT - Treasury Operations Branch
AGLW - Water Resources, Development and Management Service	FOMR - Forest Resources Development Service	FIM - Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Division	NRLA - Land Tenure, Mgt and Inst. Unit CC 3.1	ESTM - Commodity Market, Policy Analysis and Projections Service	TCES - Special Emergency Programmes Service	KCEW - WAICENT Knowledge Exchange Facilitation Branch	AFH - Human Resources Management Division
AGN - Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division	FON - Forestry Policy and Information Division	FIMA - Aquaculture Management and Conservation Service	NRLW - Water Dev. and Mgt.Unit	ESTT - Trade Policy Service	TCI - Investment Centre Division	KCI - Communication Division	AFHL - Legal Matters
AGNA - Nutrition Assessment and Planning Service	FONL - Forestry Information and Liaison Service	FIMF - Fisheries Management and Conservation Service	NRR - Research and Extension Division	ESS - Statistics Division	TCIE - Europe, Near East, North Africa and Central Asia Service	KCII - Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch	AFHO - Human Resources Development Service
AGNC - Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission	FONP - Forestry Policy and Institutions Service CC 3.4, SC 3.4	FIP - Fishery Policy and Planning Division	NRRR - Research and Extension Unit CC 2.12	ESSA - Socio-Economic Statistics and Analysis Service	TCIP - Asia and Pacific Service	KCIM - Media Relations Branch	AFHP - Human Resources Policy, Planning and UN Common Systems Branch
AGNP - Nutrition Programmes Service CC 3.5, SC 3.2	FOP - Forest Products and Economics Division	FIPL - International Institutions and Liaison Service		ESSB - Basic Food and Agriculture Statistics Service	TCIS - Southern and Eastern Africa Service	KCIR - Public Relations and Promotions Branch	AFHS - Social Security Branch
AGNS - Food Quality and Standards Service	FOPE - Forest Economics Service	FIPP - Development Planning Service CC 3.4		ESSG - Global Statistics Service	TCIW - West and Central Africa Service	KCT - Information Technology Division	AFS - Administrative Services Division
AGP - Plant Production and Protection Division	FOPP - Forest Products Service	FIR - Fishery Resources Division		ESSS - Country Statistics Service	TCO - Field Operations Division	KCTP - IS/ICT Projects and Governance Service	AFSI - Infrastructure and Facilities Management Service
AGPC - Crop and Grassland Service	FOR - Forest Resources Division	FIRI - Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service		EST - Trade and Markets Division	TCOM - Field Programme Monitoring and Coord. S.	KCTU - IS/ICT Support Service	AFSP - Procurement Service
AGPP - Plant Protection Service	FORC - Forest Conservation Service	FIRM - Marine Resources Service		ESTG - Global Information and Early Warning System Service	TCOS - SPFS Management and Coordination Service CC 3.2		AFSCM - FAO Commissary
AGPS - Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service	FORM - Forest Resources Development Service			ESTM - Commodity Markets, Policy Ana. and Projections S.	TCOT – Tech. Coop. Programme Service		
AGS - Agricultural Support Systems Division				ESTT - Trade Policy Service			
AGSF - Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Service: CC 3.3, CC 2.12, SC 3.3				ESW - Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division LTU, Coordinator, Budget holder, CC 1.1, CC 2.12, CC 3.1, CC RRF, SC 2.12, SC 1.1			
AGST - Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service							

3

APPENDIX 5 – (1): FAO Departments

Agriculture and Consumer Protection	Forestry
AGDM - Crisis Management Centre (CMC)	FODP - Programme Coordination Unit
AGDP - Programme Coordination Unit	**FOE - Forest Economics and Policy Division**
AGA - Animal Production and Health Division	FOEL - Forestry Information and Liaison Service
AGAH - Animal Health Service	FOEP - Forest Economics, Policy and Institutions Service
AGAL - Livestock Information, Sector Analysis and Policy Branch	**FOI - Forest Products and Industry Division**
AGAP - Animal Production Service	FOIM - Forest Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting Service Activity 3.1
AGE - Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture	FOIP - Forest Products Service
AGL - Land and Water Development Division	**FOM - Forest Management Division**
AGLL - Land and Plant Nutrition Management Service	FOMC - Forest Conservation Service
AGLW - Water Resources, Development and Management Service	FOMR - Forest Resources Development Service
AGN - Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division	**FON - Forestry Policy and Information Division**
AGNA - Nutrition Assessment and Planning Service	FONL - Forestry Information and Liaison Service
AGNC - Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission	FONP - Forestry Policy and Institutions Service CC 3.4, SC 3.4
AGNP - Nutrition Programmes Service CC 3.5, SC 3.2	**FOP - Forest Products and Economics Division**
AGNS - Food Quality and Standards Service	FOPE - Forest Economics Service
AGP - Plant Production and Protection Division	FOPP - Forest Products Service
AGPC - Crop and Grassland Service	**FOR - Forest Resources Division**
AGPP - Plant Protection Service	FORC - Forest Conservation Service
AGPS - Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service	FORM - Forest Resources Development Service
AGS - Agricultural Support Systems Division	
AGSF - Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Service CC 3.3, CC 2.12, SC 3.3	
AGST - Agricultural and Food Engineering Technologies Service	

Fisheries and Aquaculture	Natural Resources Management and Environment
FIDI - Fishery Information, Data and Statistics Unit	NRDC - Secretariat, Comm. on Genetic Res.for Food and Ag
FIDP - Programme Coordination Unit	NRDP - Programme Coordination Unit
FIE - Fisheries and Aquaculture Economics and Policy Division	NRDS - Secretariat of the Sci. Council to the CGIAR
FIEL - International Institutions and Liaison Service	**NRC – Env., Climate Change and Bioenergy Division**
FIEP - Development Planning Service	NRCC - Mountain Resources Management
FIES - Fishery and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service	NRCR - Rural Dev.Service
FII - Fish Products and Industry Division	NRCB - Climate Change and Bioenergy Unit
FIIT - Fishing Technology Service	NRCE – Env.Assess. and Management Unit
FIIU - Fish Utilization and Marketing Service	**NRL - Land and Water Division**
FIM - Fisheries and Aquaculture Management Division	NRLA - Land Tenure, Management and Institution Unit CC 3.1
FIMA - Aquaculture Management and Conservation Service	NRLW - Water Dev. and Mgt.Unit
FIMF - Fisheries Management and Conservation Service	**NRR - Research and Extension Division**
FIP - Fishery Policy and Planning Division	NRRR - Research and Extension Unit CC 2.12
FIPL - International Institutions and Liaison Service	
FIPP - Development Planning Service CC 3.4	
FIR - Fishery Resources Division	
FIRI - Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service	
FIRM - Marine Resources Service	

410

APPENDIX 5 – Continued (3): FAO Departments

Economic and Social Development	Technical Cooperation
ESDG - Global Perspectives Studies Unit CC 3.2	TCDP - Programme Coordination Unit
ESDP – Prog. Coord. Unit	TCDS - Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit
ESA - Agricultural Dev. Economics Division	**TCA - Policy Assistance and Resources Mobilization Division**
ESAC - Comparative Agricultural Development Service	TCAP - Field Programme Development Service
ESAE - Agricultural Sector in Economic Development Service	TCAR - Policy Coordination Service
ESAF - Food Security and Agricultural Projects Analysis Service	TCAS - Agricultural Policy Support Service
ESAG - Global Perspectives Studies Unit	**TCE - Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division**
EST - Trade and Markets Division	TCEO - Emergency Operation Service
ESTG - Global Information and Early Warning System Service	TCER - Rehabilitation and Humanitarian Policies Unit
ESTM - Commodity Market, Policy Analysis and Projections Service	TCES - Special Emergency Programmes Service
ESTT - Trade Policy Service	**TCI - Investment Centre Division**
ESS - Statistics Division	TCIE - Europe, Near East, North Africa and Central Asia Service
ESSA - Socio-Economic Statistics and Analysis Service	TCIL - Latin America and Caribbean Service CC 3.5, SC 3.5
ESSB - Basic Food and Agriculture Statistics Service	TCIP - Asia and Pacific Service
ESSG - Global Statistics Service	TCIS - Southern and Eastern Africa Service
ESSS - Country Statistics Service	TCIW - West and Central Africa Service
EST - Trade and Markets Division	**TCO - Field Operations Division**
ESTG - Global Information and Early Warning System Service	TCOM - Field Programme Monitoring and Coord. S.
ESTM - Commodity Markets, Policy Ana. and Projections Service	TCOS - SPFS Management and Coordination Service CC 3.2
ESTT - Trade Policy Service	TCOT – Tech. Coop. Programme Service
ESW - Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division CC 1.1, CC 2.12, CC 3.1, CC RRF, SC 2.12, SC 1.1	

APPENDIX 5 – Continued (4): FAO Departments

Knowledge and Communication	Human, Financial and Physical Resources
KCDP - Programme Coordination Unit	AFDC - (FAO) Credit Union
KCDA - International Alliance Against Hunger Secretariat	AFDM - Medical Unit
KCC - Conference, Council and Protocol Affairs Division	AFDP - Programme Coordination Unit
KCCM - Meeting Programming and Documentation Service	AFDS - Shared Service Centre
KCCO - Conference, Council and Government Relations Branch	AFDU - Security Service
KCCP - Protocol Branch	**AFF - Finance Division**
KCE - Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building Division	AFFC - Central Accounting Service
KCEF - WAICENT Outreach and Capacity Building Branch	AFFR - Financial Operations and Systems Service
KCEL - David Lublin Memorial Library	AFFT - Treasury Operations Branch
KCEW - WAICENT Knowledge Exchange Facilitation Branch	**AFH - Human Resources Management Division**
KCI - Communication Division	AFHL - Legal Matters
KCII - Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch	AFHO - Human Resources Development Service
KCIM - Media Relations Branch	AFHP - Human Resources Policy, Planning and UN Common Systems Branch
KCIR - Public Relations and Promotions Branch	AFHS - Social Security Branch
KCT - Information Technology Division	**AFS - Administrative Services Division**
KCTP - IS/ICT Projects and Governance Service	AFSI - Infrastructure and Facilities Management Service
KCTU - IS/ICT Support Service	AFSP - Procurement Service
	AFSCM - FAO Commissary

APPENDIX 6: Millennium Development Goals.

Millenium Development Goals (Adopted at the UN Millenium Summit in 2000; to be reached by 2015)

1- "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1: Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
Target 2: Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

2- Achieve universal primary education

Target 3: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

3- Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

4- Reduce child mortality

Target 5: Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five

5- Improve maternal health

Target 6: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

6- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
Target 8: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

7- Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
Target 10: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
Target 11: Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020

8- Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12: Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally
Target 13: Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
Target 14: Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
Target 15: Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
Target 16: In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
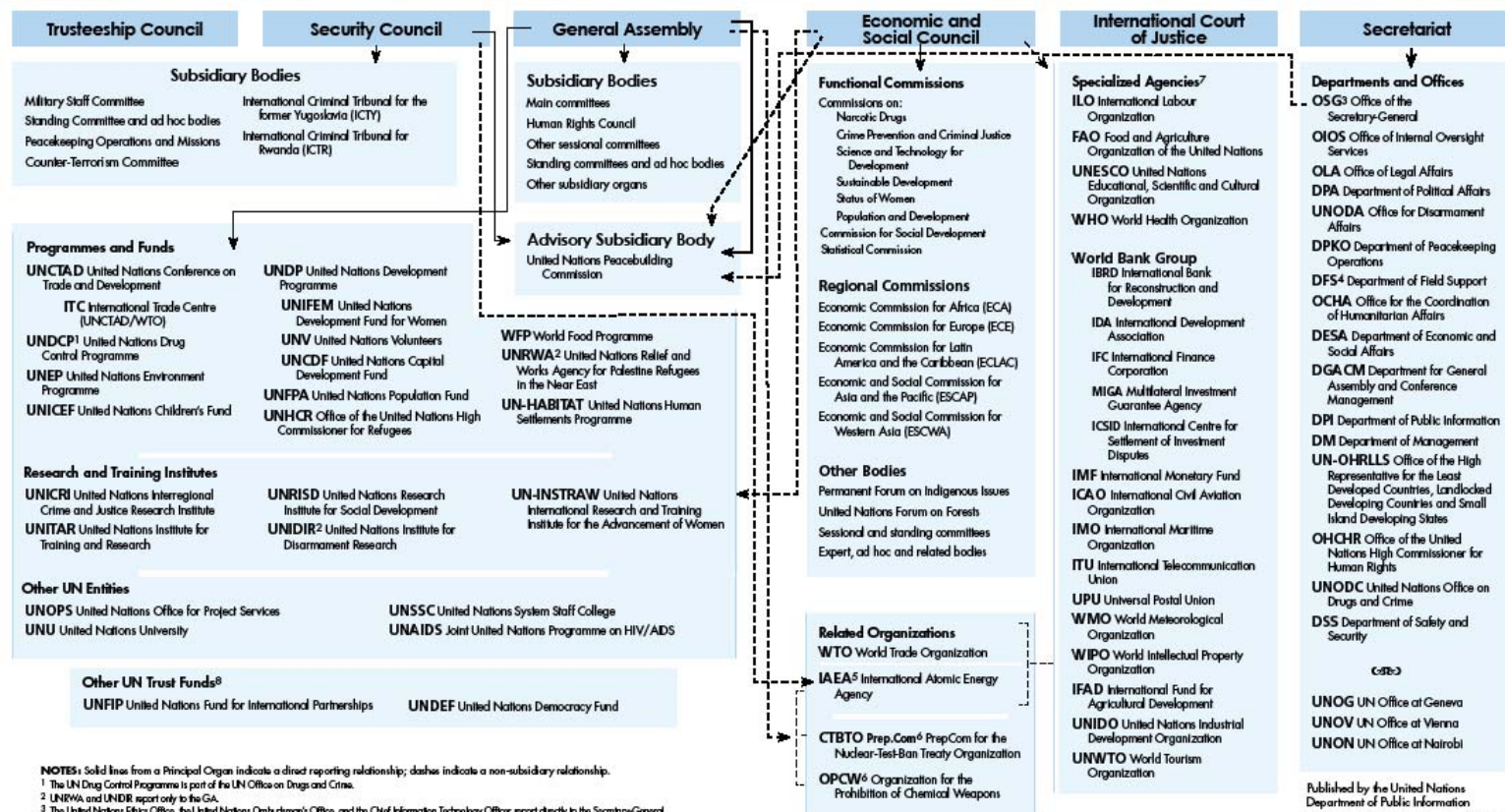Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies" (FAO Website 2007).

APPENDIX 7: Architecture of the Organisations of the United Nations

The United Nations System

Principal Organs

| Trusteeship Council | Security Council | General Assembly | Economic and Social Council | International Court of Justice | Secretariat |

Subsidiary Bodies

Military Staff Committee
Standing Committee and ad hoc bodies
Peacekeeping Operations and Missions
Counter-Terrorism Committee

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Subsidiary Bodies

Main committees
Human Rights Council
Other sessional committees
Standing committees and ad hoc bodies
Other subsidiary organs

Functional Commissions

Commissions on:
Narcotic Drugs
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Science and Technology for Development
Sustainable Development
Status of Women
Population and Development
Commission for Social Development
Statistical Commission

Specialized Agencies[7]

ILO International Labour Organization
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO World Health Organization

Departments and Offices

OSG[3] Office of the Secretary-General
OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA Office of Legal Affairs
DPA Department of Political Affairs
UNODA Office for Disarmament Affairs
DPKO Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DFS[4] Department of Field Support
OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DGACM Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DPI Department of Public Information
DM Department of Management
UN-OHRLLS Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
DSS Department of Safety and Security

Programmes and Funds

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
ITC International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO)
UNDCP[1] United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNV United Nations Volunteers
UNCDF United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WFP World Food Programme
UNRWA[2] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN-HABITAT United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Advisory Subsidiary Body

United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

Regional Commissions

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Other Bodies

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations Forum on Forests
Sessional and standing committees
Expert, ad hoc and related bodies

World Bank Group

IBRD International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA International Development Association
IFC International Finance Corporation
MIGA Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
ICSID International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

IMF International Monetary Fund
ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization
IMO International Maritime Organization
ITU International Telecommunication Union
UPU Universal Postal Union
WMO World Meteorological Organization
WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization
IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development
UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNWTO World Tourism Organization

Research and Training Institutes

UNICRI United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNITAR United Nations Institute for Training and Research

UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNIDIR[2] United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

UN-INSTRAW United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Other UN Entities

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services
UNU United Nations University

UNSSC United Nations System Staff College
UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Related Organizations

WTO World Trade Organization
IAEA[5] International Atomic Energy Agency
CTBTO Prep.Com[6] PrepCom for the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
OPCW[6] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Other UN Trust Funds[8]

UNFIP United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNDEF United Nations Democracy Fund

UNOG UN Office at Geneva
UNOV UN Office at Vienna
UNON UN Office at Nairobi

NOTES: Solid lines from a Principal Organ indicate a direct reporting relationship; dashes indicate a non-subsidiary relationship.
[1] The UN Drug Control Programme is part of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
[2] UNRWA and UNIDIR report only to the GA.
[3] The United Nations Ethics Office, the United Nations Ombudsman's Office, and the Chief Information Technology Officer report directly to the Secretary-General.
[4] In an exceptional arrangement, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support reports directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.
[5] IAEA reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly (GA).
[6] The CTBTO Prep.Com and OPCW report to the GA.
[7] Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of the ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level.
[8] UNFIP is an autonomous trust fund operating under the leadership of the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General. UNDEF's advisory board recommends funding proposals for approval by the Secretary-General.

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414

APPENDIX 8: FAO's Special Committees

FAO's Committees with respective tasks, number of members, and frequency of meetings.

Committees	Meetings	Members	Tasks
Programme Committee	Twice a year	11	"To review : the current activities of the Organization; the summary and draft Programme of Work and Budget of the Organization for the ensuing biennium, particularly with respect to: - content and balance of the programme; - the extent of coordination of work between the different technical divisions of the Organization and between the Organization and other international organizations; - the priorities to be given to existing activities, extension of such activities and to new activities; (iii) the programme aspects of the United Nations development Programme with which the Organization is concerned. […] To advise the Council on the long-term programme objectives of the Organization; […] To report to the Council or tender advice to the Director-General, as appropriate, on matters considered by the Committee."
Finance Committee	Twice a year	11	"The Finance Committee shall assist the Council in exercising control over the financial administration of the Organization and shall have, in particular, the following functions: to review the financial implications of the Director-General's budgetary proposals […]; […] to consider, and make recommendations to the Council on the establishment of reserve funds; […] to keep under review the scale of contributions and to submit recommendations to the Council regarding any modification of such scale; to examine, on behalf of the Council, the audited accounts of the Organization, […] to review, in consultation with the Director-General, reports on the current financial position of the Organization submitted by the Director-General, and to report to the Council on these matters; etc."
Committee on Constitutional and Legal matters	Twice a year	7	"…assists the Council in carrying out its duties by addressing specific constitutional and legal items associated with the development and implementation of the Organization's programme activities."
Committee on Commodity Problems	One session each biennium	97	"The responsibility of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) is to keep commodity problems of an international character affecting production, trade, distribution, consumption and related economic matters under review." This includes: "keep under review commodity problems of an international character affecting production, trade, distribution, consumption and related economic matters; prepare a factual and interpretative survey of the world commodity situation, which may be made available directly to Member Nations; report and submit suggestions to the Council on policy issues arising out of its deliberations. The reports of the

Committees	Meetings	Members	Tasks
			Committee and its subsidiary bodies shall be made available to Member Nations for their information."
Committee on Fisheries	Normally one session during each biennium.	141	The responsibility of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) is to review the fisheries work programmes and their implementation, to conduct periodic general reviews of international fishery problems and to examine possible solutions for them. This includes, among other things,: "review the programmes of work of the Organization in the field of fisheries and their implementation; conduct periodic general reviews of fishery problems of an international character and ppraise such problems and their possible solutions with a view to concerted action by nations, by FAO and by other intergovernmental bodies; and report to the Council or tender advice to the Director-General, as appropriate, on matters considered by the Committee.
Committee on Forestry	Normally one session during each biennium.	108	The Committee on Forestry (COFO) conducts periodic reviews of international forestry problems and proposes concerted action to be undertaken by Member Nations to FAO. It also reviews the current forestry work programmes of the Organization and their implementation, and advises the Director-General on future forestry work programmes. This includes, among other things, conduct periodic reviews of forestry problems of an international character and appraise such problems with a view to concerted action which could be undertaken by Member Nations and the Organization in order to resolve such problems; review the programmes of work of the Organization in the field of forestry and their implementation; and advise the Director-General on the future programmes of work of the Organization in the field of forestry and on their implementation;
Committee on Agriculture	Normally one session during each biennium.	132	The Committee on Agriculture (COAG) conducts reviews and appraisals of agricultural and nutritional problems to propose concerted action by Member Nations; reviews the agriculture and food and nutrition work programmes, with emphasis on the integration of all social, technical, economic, institutional and structural aspects in promoting agricultural and rural development. This includes, among other things, conduct periodic reviews and appraisals of agricultural and nutrition problems, with a view to concerted action by Member Nations; advise the Council on the overall programme of work relating to agriculture, food and nutrition, with emphasis on the integration of all aspects related to agricultural and rural development; and review, with similar emphasis, the biennial programmes of work and their implementation.
Committee on World Food	Two sessions during each	136	The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) serves as a forum in the United Nations System for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security, including food production and physical and economic access to

Committees	Meetings	Members	Tasks
Security	biennium		food. This includes, among other things: examine major problems and issues affecting the world food situation and the steps being proposed or taken to resolve them by Governments and relevant international organizations, bearing in mind the need for the adoption of an integrated approach towards their solution; examine the implications for world food security of other relevant factors, including the situation relating to the supply and demand of basic foodstuffs and food aid requirements and trends, the state of stocks in exporting and importing countries and issues relating to physical and economic access to food and other food security related aspects of poverty eradication; and recommend such action as may be appropriate to promote the goal of world food security.

Source: FAO Website 2007 and FAO 2000

<u>APPENDIX 9: Brief description of the Special Programme for Food Security</u>

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The Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS)

"The SPFS assists countries, particularly but not exclusively Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs), to improve food security within poor households through National Food Security Programmes (NFSPs) and Regional Programmes for Food Security (RFSPs). All Programmes are developed by the governments that participate. FAO's role is limited to:

- facilitating their formulation and implementation;
- acting as a catalyst for strengthened political commitment;
- identifying synergies with donors and other partners;
- drawing on FAO's broad technical expertise and experience.

As a result, FAO raises awareness among donors and other key decision-makers on issues related to agriculture, food and nutrition. These have tended to be eclipsed in discussions concerning poverty despite the central role agriculture plays as the economic and social backbone of most poor countries and the fact that over 70% of the world's poor live in rural areas".

"Within FAO, the **SPFS Monitoring and Coordination Service for the Special Programme for Food Security (TCOS)** coordinates, monitors and reports on all aspects of the SPFS, including formulation and implementation, the preparation and dissemination of technical documents and guidelines, and servicing the various committees that oversee the SPFS. TCOS calls on the services of other FAO divisions and departments as well as regional and subregional offices to contribute, in line with their normal functions, to programme formulation and implementation."

"Once a country enters the programme, a **technical support team** is established, bringing together representatives from the various units who can best contribute to a particular programme. The team follows all SPFS activities in the country concerned, from the identification and formulation process to implementation and completion of activities."

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Source: FAO website 2007

APPENDIX 10: A Few Words on Food (In)Security

The reason why this chapter starts with a section on food security[118] rather than jumping directly into FAO's history is to provide the reader with a general picture of the complexity of the issues, and with an idea of where FAO stands within that picture. FAO, as will be discussed below, is an organisation of global governance devoid of decisional power, but with the capacity to provide informed advice to its member-states. Although food security is not the core topic of this thesis, the overall theme of food security remains the driving force behind my research and its organizational object of study. It thus provides a background landscape against which this section should be read.

FAO's current definition of 'food security' came out of the World Food Summit of 1996:

> "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO website 2007).

Definitions of food security, however, are many. "At the last count, there were close to two hundred different definitions of the term" (Smith et al 1993, in Maxwell 1996:155). This impressive quantity of definitions reflects "the nature of the food problem as it is experienced by poor people themselves" (Maxwell 1996:155-156). However, this diversity equally reflects the complexity of achieving worldwide food security, which depends at once on favourable government policies; on trade and economic agreements; on appropriate and sufficient agricultural production; on controlled fertility rates; on family and individual's purchasing power; on the availability of local resources; on demography[119], etc. The great diversity of causes underlying food insecurity partly explains the complexity and compartmentalisation of FAO, discussed at length below.

Two broad characteristics of food security are widely recognised: a) the food (in)security problem is international in scope (Shipton 1990)[120], and b) the most

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[118] This section on food security does not take into account the recent food crisis that occurred in 2008 and continuing in 2009. The crisis happened at the moment of writing, and therefore has not been analysed in this research.

[119] I do not discuss here natural disasters, an important factor influencing food security. The reason for this omission is that natural disasters are dealt with on a one-to-one basis as they come up, and are generally considered as humanitarian crises because of their unpredictable and un-preventable character. Although natural disasters clearly may have long term effects on food production and affect food security in the long run, I have chosen to focus on the socially constructed aspects of food insecurity.

[120] Back in the the 1970s and 1980s, however, food security was deemed a national concern. Consider, for example, Valdés and Siamwalla's (1981) definition of food security: "Food security may be defined as the ability of food-deficit countries, or regions within those countries, to meet target consumption levels on a year-to-year basis" (1981:1).

obvious underlying cause of food insecurity is poverty (Collomb 1999; Moore 1990; Shipton 1990). These two characteristics have emerged from studies on famine (Moore 1990; Sen 1999; Shipton 1990), from where there also appeared a flowering terminology. 'Famine', 'hunger', 'starvation', 'undernutrition', 'undernourishment' and 'food insecurity' among others, are terms that refer to often related but different problems for the international community and for scholars as well. Sen (1981:40) for example, considers both famine and starvation as a shortage of food stemming less from scarcity than from inadequate distribution of food, with the particularity of famine "causing widespread death". Drèze and Sen (1989:14) also distinguish undernutrition ("shortage of food intake") and undernourishment ("unsatisfactory state of being").

Whatever terms one uses, the result is the same for the victims: people suffer from insufficient caloric and vitamin intake or starve to death. However, how a problem related to food insecurity will be determined and named bears important consequences for the type of relief that will be provided – or not – by the international community. Some authors have shown that the liminal area between a food insecure and a food secure family, household or individual depends greatly on the type of data and indicators used to evaluate food insecurity (Clay *et al* 1999; Sharma 1992).

There are two reasons for the interest of the international community in famine to begin with. The first reason concerns an economic argument: a food secure population can more adequately participate in economic development and growth. "[…] improvements in food security, especially in food energy consumption, open the way for faster economic growth and poverty reduction" (FAO 2004b:7; see also the Panel on the World Food Supply 1967). The second reason was that the threat of population growth facing an insufficient agricultural production and of malnutrition also raised concerns about global food security (Collomb 1999).

These preoccupations are not new and pre-date even the creation of FAO, as governments from the developed part of the world have been concerned by possible food shortages. For example, the White House commanded a study (completed in 1967) on the world food problem to its Science Advisory Committee. The resulting report of the Panel on the World Food Supply (1967:11) acknowledged the severity of the world food problem, and observed that:

> "The world's increasingly serious nutritional problem arises from the uneven distribution of the food supply among countries, within countries, and among families with different levels of income. Global statistical surveys, based upon total food produced per person, suggest that there is no world-wide shortage of food in terms of quantity (calories) or quality (protein) at the moment. But in the developing countries, where two-thirds of the world's population live, there is overwhelming clinical evidence of undernutrition (too few calories) and malnutrition

(particularly, lack of protein) among the people. Clearly, millions of individuals are not receiving the amounts of food suggested by average figures".

The Panel saw family planning as the most reliable solution to food insecurity, and recognised that trying to remedy malnutrition would be more efficient if consistent with local food preferences. This document should serve to remind the current development industry, governments, and researchers that some important issues raised at the beginning of the 1960s remain unsolved to this day.

Since the 1960s, however, food security has been studied under every possible angle (economic, social, political, nutrition etc.). According to Maxwell (1996:156) there were three significant paradigm shifts in the concept of food security: "(a) from the global and the national to the household and the individual, (b) from a food first perspective to a livelihood perspective, and (c) from objective indicators to subjective perceptions". To him, the accumulation of these shifts over time contributed to the recognition of the complexity of the world food problem.

Although the complexity of achieving global food security is widely recognised (Collomb 1999; Lappé *et al* 1998; Maxwell 1996; McMillan 1991; Sachs 2005; Sen 1981, 1999; Valdés and Siamwalla 1981; Young 1997; Ziegler 2002, 2005), it is almost impossible to come up with an exhaustive inventory of influencing factors. Nonetheless, recognising this complexity is essential to solving problems of food insecurity (McMillan 1991). Among the most important and inter-related factors affecting food security are poverty, food trade and prices, agricultural productivity, population growth, and demography.

Poverty regulates the individual's access to food (Collomb 1999:32), as poverty is generally relative to food prices (Valdés and Siamwalla 1981). At the macro-economic level, "the capital market mechanism must involve assets that possess a high degree of liquidity, as their conversion to food must be effected relatively quickly" (*ibid*:5). At the individual level, food prices directly influence people's capacity to buy food. Yet adequate food prices depend on macro-economic changes such as market regulations, importations and exportations, and national policies (Collomb 1999:94; see also Cochrane 1969). This forced marriage between poverty alleviation and favourable economic policies thus remains highly political and complicated to pursue. In the words of Collomb (1999:38):

> "Two political objectives hardly reconcilable are thus pursued. The first one strives at once for poverty reduction, for the improvement of the poor's access to food, and, consequently, for an increase in demand for agricultural products. The second objective aims at fixing attractive prices to support the agricultural production of the great countries exporting grains, which lead them to freeze the amount of land in culture and minimise the increase of agricultural land per capita" (free translation).

Of all the discussions on the relationships between poverty and access to food, the most powerful and constructive approach remains Sen's entitlement approach (Drèze and Sen 1989; Sen 1981;1999). "The entitlement approach to starvation and famines concentrates on the ability of people to command food through the legal means available in the society, including the use of production possibilities, trade opportunities, entitlements vis-à-vis the state, and other methods of acquiring food" (Sen 1981:45). "Entitlement" thus refers to the ensemble of a person's belonging and resources, "an ownership bundle" (Drèze and Sen 1989:23). Ownership, in the end, allows people to access food, as "people suffer from hunger when they cannot establish their entitlement over an adequate amount of food" (Sen 1999:162).

Poverty, however, is not only an economic state. Poverty may also vary according to the social and political context in which individuals evolve (Collomb 1999:33). Marginality and conflict, for example, have impacted people's access to food throughout history, especially in cases where starvation itself was used as a weapon (Cohen and Pinstrup-Andersen 1998). Poverty also depends on the relative absence or weakness of social infrastructures such as education and health care systems, which also play an important role in preventing food insecurity (Collomb 1999:4). For example, education and literacy empower people to find employment, while a reliable public health care system enables people to put their money into food, which may help prevent diseases, instead of into expensive medical treatments which may devastate their already meagre capital. It should be obvious that food security makes for healthier people, able to participate in their economic and social development, and able to produce food, among other things. After all, in spite of modern agricultural techniques – the widespread use of machinery and of chemicals – food production remains the "result of human agency" (Sen 1999:208).

Food production itself is certainly important in ensuring food availability, yet food production depends on a series of factors, including among others:

- Access to natural resources – land, water, forest, fishing areas, etc. – is key for the food security of families. Access to resources, however, may depend on social as well as economic factors, for example the relations between family members, between families of a given community, the cost of land, and the financial and human capacity of families to exploit the land or the natural resources at their disposal.

- Trade – importation and exportation –, also has an impact on food availability and on food prices, and importantly on the type of food produced. Imports may impair local agricultural productivity, if not the local economy, in cases where imported foods cost less than local products (Drèze and Sen 1989:87). On the other hand, exports may force farmers to grow inedible crops (cotton, rubber, or corn intended for biofuels, for example) which can be of no help in case of food shortages. However,

these crops may allow farmers to earn an income with which they can then buy food for their families.

- Improvement of agricultural techniques generally leads to an increase in food production. In the recent past, fertilizers have played a central role in increasing the productivity of crops. The Green Revolution (Ruttan 2002) was a good example of successful use of combined technologies including fertilizers and quality seeds. However, to this date, experts remain unsure of the impact of the use of massive chemical fertilizers on human health and on the long-term quality of the soil.

- The more recent progress in biotechnologies – genetically modified seeds – has also resulted in increased food production, yet has raised concerns regarding their secondary impacts and long term effects. These biotechnologies may cause losses in the genetic pool of species, and the extent of the risks of increased use of biotechnologies on the environment and human health remains to be fully determined (Collomb 1999:106).

The sheer availability and diversity of food, however, does not mean that people consume sufficient and healthy food as their access to food, in the end, depends on their purchasing power (Connelly and Chaiken 2000:19). "Unfortunately, increased food production and its availability in regional markets does not guarantee that food is being consumed by those who need it most" (McMillan 1991:6). According to Sen (1981:7) "some of the worst famines have taken place with no significant decline in food availability per head", or without significant increase in food prices, as was the case for the Ethiopian famine. Sen here refers to the great paradox of food (in)security: the current worldwide food agricultural production "can now feed additional billions of people, more than ever in the past, and prove wrong the Malthusian prediction" (Cernea and Kassam 2006:xix).

Sufficient food production also depends on population growth and demography. There is a distinction here: population growth is 'the head count', whereas demography takes into account the age pyramid of a given population. For example, children and elderly people tend to need less food, but young adults and pregnant women tend to need more. The difficulty in evaluating individual needs also depends on a series of other factors including food preferences, the availability of food, one's income, and the price of agricultural products, as well as on one's age, gender, height and weight, among others (Collomb 1999 :21). In terms of population increase, it is expected that 95% of the demographic increase will take place in developing countries, where 80% of the world already lives (*ibid*:2 and 89).

From this brief overview it should be clear that a complex set of root causes of food insecurity call for equally complex solutions. Over the years, a wide range of strategies have been put forth to work towards global food insecurity alleviation, as no blueprint applies (Panel on the World Food Supply 1967). Most solutions and strategies, however, also come with a series of associated issues. Shipton

(1990:353) has observed that "some of famine's [and food insecurity's] known remedies, in market involvement, state interventions, and exogenous safety crops, are ironically not so different from its known causes".

It should be mentioned, in passing, that food aid provided by developed countries has been the solution par excellence of the past fifty years in the case of severe food shortages and famines. Prolonged food aid has been widely critiqued, notably for preventing local development and economic growth (Hopkins 1992; Sen 1999); for causing dietary change (Manderson 1986); for not reaching the most vulnerable populations (Clay et al 1999; Moore 1990); or simply for not being a sustainable solution for specific local contexts (Reutlinger 1999). Furthermore, food aid is regulated by a very particular set of policies. Developed countries have for example been recognised as dumping their excess food crop production through food aid in order to prevent their own food prices from falling. In essence, food aid has been treated by governments apart from food security because food aid is deployed only in situations of severe food shortages, and usually once considerable damage has already occurred. Currently, the World Food Programme (WFP), another agency of the United Nations[121], is dealing with achieving food aid to those in need worldwide.

Sketched above in broad strokes is an image of the several causes at the basis of global food insecurity. But where does FAO fit in this picture in terms of bringing solutions for food insecure populations? As will be discussed below, FAO is an organisation of global governance, providing a forum for discussion by member-states, as well as a wealth of expertise and information on various themes related to agriculture, including forestry and fisheries. To better understand the role of FAO in the face of these crucial issues, it is important to travel back to the time of the foundation of the organisation and elaboration of its mandate.

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[121] The World Food Programme used to a branch f FAO.