Policy Frameworks and Contexts I: issues and links to poverty, natural resources and desertification

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This briefing paper attempts to summarise some of the key aspects and conceptual debates surrounding 'policy analysis' which are of direct relevance to the DFID 'Policies, poverty and natural resource use, southern Africa' (PANRUSA) project. After situating policy analysis within the global/local nexus, the paper considers policy frames and discourses i.e. the critical importance of how policy is presented and articulated. The notion of the development interface is introduced and issues of top-down versus bottom-up, community-based and participatory development are examined. Finally the chains of communication which determine policy implementation are discussed. Throughout the paper links are made to DFIDs 1997 White Paper on International Development.

1. Introduction: Global to Local Policy Contexts

Conventional literature on rural people and the environment often presents a deterministic view of the relationship between poverty and the environment: poverty leads to environmental degradation (Broad, 1994; Singh and Titi, 1995). Though this view was initially promoted by the World Commission on Environment and Development and soon gained wide popularity (WCED, 1987), more recently this poor-environment dyad has been seen as restrictive and evidence has shown that the converse is often true (Broad, 1994; e.g. Tiffen et al, 1994). Increasingly, attention is being given to the complexity and diversity of society-environment relationships (Twyman, 1997; Leach et al, 1997; Moore, 1996), and the ways in which local practices are shaped and influenced by, and in return feed back into, global policies and international agendas. A number of reasons lie behind this paradigm shift: there is improved understanding of the dynamics of dryland ecosystems and the inherent variability of the natural resource base (Scoones, 1996; Thomas and Middleton

1994; Behnke et al, 1993; Livingstone, 1991; Abel and Blaikie, 1989); there is understanding of the appropriateness of local and indigenous conservation practices to the management of the local environment (Ghmire and Pimbert, 1997; Lewis and Carter, 1993); and, there is a recognition of the heterogeneity of the rural population and the ambiguity of singular concepts such as 'household' and 'community' which are often inappropriate in local development contexts (Rocheleau et al, 1996; Townsend, 1995).

Overall this leads to a greater appreciation of indigenous practices and local natural resource management initiatives, and that actors (individuals, 'households', 'communities' and institutions) play an important role in flexible resource use and management practices in marginal/variable environments. At a global level, for example, the 1994 UN Convention to Combat Desertification clearly identifies the role of poverty in desertification and recognises the vital role of local populations (particularly women and youth) and NGOs in preventing and redressing desertification (land degradation) (United Nations, 1995). This illustrates the growing recognition that for global policies and international directives to be successful, local practices and contexts must be considered. One of the aims of the DFID White Paper on International Development is to support partner countries in their efforts to implement such strategies (1997: 43)

The catalyst for this shift in thinking within the global development community was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The Convention to Combat Desertification, stemming from UNCED, advocates participatory development through recognising the rights of local communities to manage their natural resources. It emphasises the need for participation from the inception of development initiatives and the possibility that 'it may also be necessary for the government to delegate more decision-making authority to the local grassroots level' (United Nations, 1995: fs6). This is a significant departure from top-down approaches to tackling environmental problems which have in the past centralised decision making and alienated people from their resource base. This approach reflects the wider paradigm shift and forms part of a re-evaluation by the global development community (aid agencies, governments, NGOs etc. from the North and South) of the ways in which people interact with their environment. At the centre of this re-evaluation is the concept of *participation* in the development process. However, it is a concept rarely defined by those advocating its use. This briefing paper specifically addresses the issue of participation in the development process and questions the motivations

underlying its use. It is argued that the language of participation can mask coercive efforts to promote specific activities, a practice which is increasingly evident around the world (e.g. see Twyman, 1998; Ghmire and Pimbert, 1997; Hitchcock, 1995; Mitchell, 1995). Therefore, caution should be taken when promoting wholly bottom-up or top-down approaches without adequate recognition of the local/global nexus of particular 'people in places' and the dynamics of the often varied environments.

In June 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development adopted Agenda 21, the global action plan for sustainable development. There emerged a consensus that success at a global level could only be achieved through success at the local level, given the now widespread recognition of the links between global processes and local practices. Local Agenda 21, though a small chapter in a huge document, generated a huge response because of its proactive role in the implementation of the global action plan at the local level. Recognising that local authorities play a significant role in local development, Local Agenda 21 takes the general principles of Agenda 21 and translates them into concrete plans and actions for specific communities (Mehta, 1996). Local Agenda 21 places emphasis on the pivotal role of local authorities in planning and implementing sustainable development policies, and implementing the directives of international conventions effectively at the local level. To date it has been mainly targeted at urban local authorities but there is scope for wider involvement from rural locations. However, little attention has been paid to the chains of communication within this development process i.e. to the ways in which policies are both presented and implemented at the local level, and the ways in which such policies are understood and acted upon in the local context. This briefing paper examines the notion of the *development interface* (Arce et al, 1994) of 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers', providing insight into the strategic ways in which actors deploy *development discourses*. This leads to an understanding of the ways in which organisational practices are developed within the implementation setting, thus shaping particular styles of intervention at the local, regional and international levels.

The remainder of this briefing paper is structured around the key themes highlighted in this introduction: policy frames and discourse; policy implementation and the development interface; top-down versus bottom-up approaches to development including discussion of the terms 'community' and 'participation'; and, the chains of communication involved in the policy implementation process.

2. Policy Frames and Discourses: Discourse Analysis and Policy Discourse

*A*cts provide the legislative structure to government. They parallel *policies* which outline government directives and approaches to particular issues such as rural development, conservation and livestock production. Policies may be implemented directly, as with Botswana's 1975 Tribal Grazing Lands Policy, through central ministries and district administrations and may even require the creation of specific posts such as that of District Officer of Lands, in 1975, for the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy. Policies may also be implemented indirectly through programmes which provide detailed proposals to tackle practically the aims and goals of the policy. Programmes vary in structure and purpose and may be administered from central or district level through councils, parasatals or sometimes jointly with NGOs.

The term *policy*, according to Gasper and Apthorpe (1996), has often been seen as synonymous with 'policy statement', 'policy release' or 'policy initiative'. This use of the term policy implies a position that claims to be exemplary in some way and is usually presented in language chosen to attract and persuade: there is usually an element of 'nonrefutability' about its statements. This received sense of policy, as conception, say Gasper and Apthorpe (1996), stands in naive contrast with execution, or what Clay and Schaffer (1984) call 'policy practice'. Policy speeches often refer to things which ought to be done, and which at the same time can and will be done, if that policy is 'in place'. Crucial in all 'policy talk' is framing, specifically what and who is actually included, and what and who is ignored and excluded. The DFID White Paper on International Development states that 'we need to know what will work and what will not work' (1997: 40) for development intervention to be successful. This applies to both policy and practice, as well as at a range of different scales. In the context of the PANRUSA project, policy impacts in different physical dryland environments will be assessed and spatial dimensions of natural resource availability will be determined. This will allow comparison of the policy impacts in different countries to be drawn, as well as analysis of the 'best' and most 'appropriate' household, community and local institutional natural resource strategies to be identified.

The language of policy often makes repeated use of terms such as 'target group', 'community' or 'stakeholders'. Alternatively it might label people as 'rural poor', 'peasant' or 'landless' which are at once overdeterminate and under-descriptive, thus both stereotyping and homogenising both individuals and groups. Such words seek to persuade through 'polar

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words' (Arnold 1937:167, quoted in Gasper and Apthorpe, 1996:7), and therefore figures of speech and stylistic devices are also influential in the policy process. For example, the DFID White Paper on International Development makes repeated use of the term 'rural poor' without any real definition of who these people are. On the other hand, South Africa's Rural Development Framework specifically outlines who and where the 'rural people' are located (Republic of South Africa, 1997). In contrast again, Botswana's policy documents all refer to 'poorer rural dwellers', and the 'human population' in some of the environmental documentation. Overall, few attempt to identify the 'poor people' and use such terms as 'including women and children' indiscriminately (for example, the CCD as illustrated in the introduction).

Gasper and Apthorpe (1996) point out the influence of narratives in policy formulation. A problem is encountered (the crisis), it is solved by the hero (the project or policy) who faces and overcomes a series of constraints. These issues have alternatively been discussed elsewhere as 'received wisdoms', 'development orthodoxies' or 'blueprints' for development crises (Leach and Mearns 1996; Roe 1991, 1994, 1995). All policy writing (texts and sub texts) is open to various interpretations, some of them conflicting. Even where writing aims to reduce the scope for interpretation as far as possible, validating one interpretation as compared with another is still not verifiable (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 9). Furthermore, such linguistic ambiguities often deliberately allow wide ranging interpretations of policy statements, using their obscurity to work to the advantage of the 'policy implementer' in situations where their intentions are by preference implicit or coercive.

Discourse according to Corbridge (1992) is a paradigm, an intellectual framework for alternative schools, approaches etc. Linguistics view discourse analysis as the study of semantic, stylistic and syntactic aspects of language as well as the need to take account of sentence sequences and structure. It is sometimes viewed as synonymous with conversation, debate and exchange, paying less attention to words and style, and more to roles, locations and social structuring of debate and the intellectual exchange in policy making. White (1994: 507) referring specifically to policy issues states that, 'there is a plurality of values and arguments available for thinking about any specific policy issue. Analysis, therefore, has to be part of a process on which these several points of view are taken into account or directly included in the analysis'. Others view discourse differently. Moore (1995: 30) states that discourse is 'practice and theory', material activity which transforms nature and society and

the modes of thought that inform this action: in earlier days the word might have been 'praxis'. Crush (1995: xiii) similarly views discourse as 'an interwoven set of languages and practices....a modernist regime of knowledge and disciplinary power'. He goes on to say that this approach is 'particularly attuned to the language of development itself, pushing towards an analysis focused on the texts of development without abandoning the power-laden local and international context out of which they arise and to which they speak'. This latter way of looking at discourse has been adopted in much of the recent work on development discourse (e.g. Escobar, 1995ab; Sachs, 1992, Watts, 1993). However, Gasper and Apthorpe (1996) warn of the danger of losing the distinction between discourses and practices and caution that discourse analysis is 'fashionable' and 'many of use now claim to do it' (1996:4).

Within the PANRUSA project, the recent work on development discourse has been particularly influential. It is recognised that there is a need to identify the different sets of policy language used across the regions and sectors of government, specifically, within the context of the power-laden local and global nexus of development agendas. The PANRUSA project involves several aspects of policy critical to understanding the requirements for effective, equitable and sustainable participatory management of natural resources in dryland areas. These include: policy document analysis/discourse analysis for Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, as well as for international agreements and directives; assessments of policies 'in the field' from the perspectives of both local/global 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers'; analysis of policy institutions (the various actors working within the differentiated state) and in particular the chains of communication which link these diverse levels.

3. Policy Implementation: the development interface

By examining *development interfaces* it is possible to provide insight into the strategic ways in which actors deploy *development discourses*. This leads to an understanding of the ways in which organisational practices are developed within the implementation setting, thus shaping particular styles of intervention at the local and institutional level. Combining this with Schaffer's (1984) room for manoeuvre approach, Arce *et al* (1994: 155) consider, 'both lead to the view that the analysis of state intervention needs to focus on the actual content of administrative practices, on the capacity of the various actors to internalise the technical and political factors embodied in a policy process and the various negotiations

and interactions among the different categories of actors'. Twyman (1998) suggests we look at 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers', not in an attempt to polarise the subjects and objects of development, but to recognise the (dialectical) chains of communication (and power) in the policy process. Applied to the Kalahari context for example, research has shown how different local actors internalise the processes of change embodied in government policies, and how the various negotiations and interactions of actors (both 'policy implementers' and 'policy receivers') reveal complex strategies of natural resource use, practice and decision-making in varied environments (Twyman, 1997,1998).

The new South African government in particular faces an immense challenge in turning round the inequalities of the development legacy it has inherited. New policies have emerged advocating participatory, people-driven development which is environmentally sustainable, equitable and yet which promotes economic growth in both urban and rural areas (Mather, 1996). However, the new discourse of development which the present government is promoting requires both institutional change as well as capacity building for the different actors involved. Such actors include ministries, departments, councils and the sub-groups and individuals within these institutions. Extension workers, researchers, farmers, traders, landless people and other such 'overdeterminate and homogenising' labels are also included. The extent to which such a transformation is taking place is unclear and despite efforts to keep policy people-driven (e.g. CONNEPP), in many cases this has yet to be put into practice outside the documentation process (Blumenfeld, 1997, Quinlan, 1993), and there are suggestions of institutional inertia and scepticism of the policy reform procedure (Mather, 1996).

4. Top-down versus Bottom-up Approaches to Development

There is now widespread recognition of the benefits of bottom-up as opposed to top-down approaches to development (United Nations 1995; IIED 1994). Although the rhetoric of such approaches is beginning to appear in policy documents it is unclear whether this is 'fashion' or whether is really signifies a shift in approach of the way donors, governments, and NGOs operate at all levels. Top-down approaches to development, and in particular natural resource issues, have assumed that aggregate benefits to a nation will 'trickle down' to all sectors of society. With conservation, such ideas have fostered the idea

of preservation of resources and protectionist views of conservation and management. These have usually manifested themselves in 'protected areas', 'national parks' and promote the idea of *excluding* people in order to protect the environment. However, these ideas of protectionism and preservation have been based on outmoded ideas of the ways in which environmental processes operate in these often marginal and variable environments. Assumptions that people automatically have negative effects on the environment have been at the core of such approaches, and as such, have contributed to the alienation of local people from the land and its resources. Even the DFID White Paper on International Development finds it difficult to move away from the poor-environment dyad: 'poor people are often the main direct casualties of environmental degradation and mismanagement...poor people... have no alternative but to over-exploit soils and forests' (1997: 14).

Recent developments in both physical and social sciences have however opposed many of these orthodox narratives. Within rangeland ecology for example, it has been shown that received notions of carrying capacity, climax vegetation and steady state grasslands are based on inappropriate models of vegetation dynamics. Instead these rangelands are viewed as a dynamic and variable system which may hold at any one time various states of 'climax vegetation' depending on the local climatic and soil condition, and land uses. This idea of rangelands in disequilibrium, as variable and patchy resource bases also recognises the important role of human action in maintaining certain rangeland environments. An East African example of unchallenged narratives perpetuating inappropriate policies, is the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania. Here exclusion of cattle herds from some areas of the region have altered the range and caused increases in bushy species. Contrary to received wisdoms, the cattle were actually *preventing* these woody species 'encroaching' rather than overgrazing the range and *causing* the classic notion of bush encroachment (McCabe et al 1992).

Bottom-up approaches, also known as community-based, grassroots, participatory and local approaches, promote development from the local level, involving local people themselves in development initiatives, decision-making and sometimes policy formulation. Such approaches have been sensitive to the needs of local people, as well as the variable and unpredictable nature of specific environments. In the Northern Cape Province, for example, the Agricultural Research Council are working with small groups of farmers to improve farming and rangelands practices in order to prevent or redress degradation in this fragile

environment. Such initiatives are people-driven and locally specific, moulding to different social and environmental contexts (van Rooyen, 1998).

There is considerable confusion and variation in the use of terms such as 'participation' and 'community' within development discourses. The different typologies outlined in Box 1 illustrate the *diverse ranges* that participation in projects can take. Participation may be by 'passive participation' where people are told what is happening and are not permitted to actively engage in decision making and project responsibilities. Alternatively, 'interactive participation' illustrates a true joint analysis by people and external institutions leading to more appropriate development interventions. The critical issue here is that projects deemed 'participatory' may essentially retain a top-down approach and may not effectively address the needs of the local populations. The bandwagon of participation that has led to such a diverse range of 'participatory projects' needs careful evaluation as huge funds are being pushed in the direction of these projects by donor aid agencies. These interventions have the potential to radically alter natural resource use and practices critical to local people's livelihood strategies.

White (1996: 7) takes the critical examination of participation a stage further and suggests that it is viewed politically: 'what began as a political issue is translated into a technical problem which the development enterprise can accommodate with barely a falter in its stride. Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control'. This makes a key point, that within this new era of bottom-up and grassroots avenues of development, the development industry have at times uncritically taken on board these new initiatives and often manipulated them to their own means. Thus participation is frequently functional and coercive rather than empowering and people-driven, as originally intended and generally still promoted. Exclusionary macro level policies have been replaced by initiatives which are inclusionary and participatory, however, this shift is proving to give the dominant governments and donor agencies more power and control over local people's lives than ever before. For White (1996), the use of power to dominate through exclusion has simply been replaced by its use to dominate through inclusion, incorporation and coercion.

White (1996) therefore highlights the significance of the dynamics of participation and emphasises the power relations within the participatory process. Research in Botswana has shown that newly promoted participatory community projects have aimed to be inclusive rather than exclusive. However the power relations manifested in such situations reveal the

dominant ways in which the local government offices assert their power through 'participatory' projects which essentially bestow 'new' natural resource rights upon a resident rural population.   However, this has created a situation whereby people are reluctant to question or refute government help for fear of losing any benefits they may accrue, yet are powerless to actually change the way in which that help is directed (and thus perhaps be more appropriate/relevant to their own needs).

Box 1.   A Typology of Participation

Typology	Components of each type
Passive participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by an administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information shared belongs only to external professionals
Participation in information giving	People participate by giving answers to questions posed by extractive researchers and project managers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research or project design are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.
Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external agents listen to views. These external agents define problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making and professional are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
Participation for material incentives	People participate by proving resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives. Much *in situ* research falls into this category: rural people provide land but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. This is commonly called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
Functional participation	People participate by forming groups to meet pre-determined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally-initiated social organisation. Such involvement does not tend to occur at the early stages of project cycles or planning, rather, only after major discussions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external structures, but may become independent in time.
Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local groups or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methods that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, so that people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
Self-mobilisation/ active participation	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

Source: IIED, 1994

Leach *et al* (1997) rightly flag the notion of 'community' as problematic. The concept of community is generally viewed as the consensus on which community-based sustainable

development is predicated (Barret and Arcese, 1995; Fellizar, 1994; Ramberg, 1993). However communities are complex, dynamic and diffuse and therefore require reformulation to take full account of the dynamics of social agency if this unit of analysis is to be useful in development initiatives (Mosse, 1994). As Mosse (1994) questions, whose needs are really represented by a consensus within the community? Further, with the proliferation of community projects, local people themselves are beginning to question projects which require large *input from* individuals yet little *output to* them.

Uphoff (1992) specifically asks where local institutions are most likely to be effective and sustainable managers of natural resources, and this is ultimately the key question. His conclusions suggest that where natural resources are 'unpredictable' (i.e. highly diverse and variable, as in the Kalahari) and resource users lack group identity and structure (e.g. 'communities' within the Kalahari are diverse, diffuse and highly changeable) then 'such conditions make it difficult for local institutions to control access and regulate resource use' (1992:9). This is an important idea as it questions the 'collective agency' (collective capability and knowledge) of a community to manage an institutional or organisational framework for the management of their natural resources. Questioning these institutional or organisational frameworks as the mediating structures for resource management does not mean that 'communities' cannot manage their own resources. Rather this argument suggests that this is not the only viable medium in which they should attempt management. Communal management in this context has to be conducted through an organisation such as a committee. But can this committee really represent *all* aspects of the community and can it really address all people's individual and collective needs? Again these issues are stressed by Mosse (1994) who remains wary of the 'community' approach:

> The community is called upon to judge the outsiders' intentions, take the risk of co-operation, provide collective knowledge, and articulate collective needs and priorities, in the knowledge that whatever is said will, in one way or another, have implications for the future of the community. These are, perhaps, critical moments at which far more is at stake in controlling the flow of information. (1994: 509)

Mosse (1994) goes on to suggest that such institutions are perhaps not the most appropriate mediums through which decision-making should take place.

If certain sections of communities and society are continually and increasingly marginalised through these participatory and related programmes, this will perpetuate the

disparity in wealth and well-being between rich and poor, the secure and the vulnerable, and jeopardise the sustainability of natural resources that these programmes are trying to promote. The accumulating evidence of the ineffectiveness of community-based approaches mandates a shift in thinking (Cernea, 1993; Nickum, 1994). Uphoff's (1992) key question, mentioned above, asks what local institutions are most likely to be effective and sustainable managers of natural resources. Lawry (1994) argues that devolution of rights (bottom-up) and withdrawal of the 'over-bearing state' (top-down) will not alone result in sustainable resource management. There needs to be a more committed approach to achieving an 'appropriate distribution' of rights (1994: 383), quite different from Fellizar's universalising assumptions that achieving 'equitable distribution' of rights is concomitant with 'empowerment' and 'sustainable development' (1994: 202). Lawry (1994) goes on to say that social and economic changes have reduced the incentives for rural populations to abide by common property management plans, given their increasingly diverse and heterogeneous interests in local resources. It is these very plans and programmes, with their simplifying assumptions, that often fail to capture the complexity of resource use strategies (Rocheleau *et al*, 1995).

Uphoff suggests 'use-management' as the solution to resource management in 'unpredictable' regions:

> Management by individuals who use the resource within certain cultural and social norms that are not enforced by any formal authority...this involves institutions (based on shared values and expectations) (1992: 9).

Here Uphoff (1992) distinguishes between an institution and an organisation. The former is seen as a complex of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving some socially valued purpose and an organisation is viewed as a structure of recognised and accepted roles. Drawing in the institutional dimensions of resource management brings this idea of direct relevance to the PANRUSA project. Assumptions are being made that communities are likely to be the most effective agents for resource management and devolution to this level is supposedly taking place in many countries around the world (**egs**). What is significant is that 'community-based' projects are being viewed by governments and donor agencies as the panacea to good governance and rural development policy: formula-written frameworks for the devolution of resource management. Given the diversity of individuals, 'households', groups, livelihoods and 'communities' it is unlikely that such blanket approaches to resource management will be successful, even if presented in the guise of participatory and

empowering language. The challenge for the PANRUSA project is to be able to distinguish between such 'participatory' projects in an attempt to identify which policies and practices are sensitive to the links between poverty, natural resources and desertification and which do promote sustainable livelihoods within such varied environments. According to the DFID White Paper on International Development, lasting eradication of poverty requires environmentally sustainable solutions. Consistent policies and better management are viewed as the keys to success (1997: 4), but what form of consistency, and what constitutes 'better management' are questions yet to be answered.
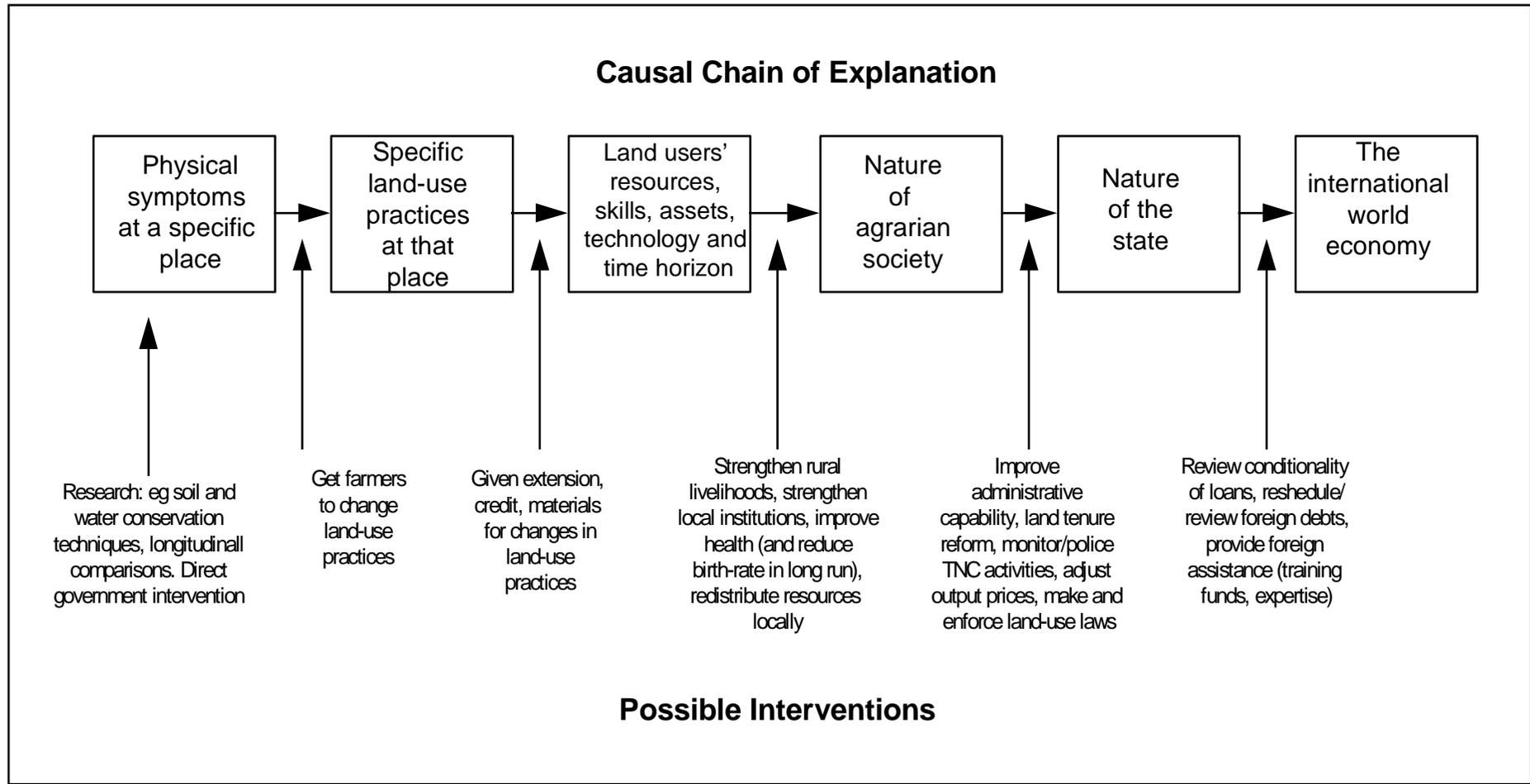
5. Chains of Communication

Acritical element of the PANRUSA project is concerned with the chains of communication within the policy process. The actual chains of communication between policy makers, NGOs, community organisations, households and individuals are critical in affecting place-to-place outcomes of policies, and affecting actual implementation as well as resource practices employed at community, household and individual level. The links within the chain, and the factors that define the nature of the links at different stages (Sithole, 1995), are important variables to understand, whether natural resource management is principally guided by top-down or bottom-up factors.

The phrase chain of communication is derived from Blaikie's work linking explanation and policy through causal chains of *explanation* (1989: 31). Box 2 illustrates the links between explanation and policy intervention. The diagram clearly shows Blaikie's attempt to link a series of wider frames of reference, moving away from attempts at a 'place-based' explanation of physical symptoms towards examining first a local, then national and finally an international political economy-based explanation. Blaikie (1989:31) goes on to say that 'the point...is that every explanation and policy which follows from its logic has itself an ideological interpretation'. Given the above discussion it would follow that such explanations are the essence of the policy discourses which are being deployed.

The extension of Blaikie's (1989) idea into the examination of the chains of *communication* in the policy process is not just concerned with decision-making hierarchy and extension services to the 'community'. It is principally concerned with the ways in which different people within the policy arena deploy development and policy discourses. Multiple frames and references for policy and language are used in different contexts by different actors in all forms of policy formulation, decision-making and implementation.

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Box 2 Causal Chain of explanation and possible intervention

Causal Chain of Explanation

Physical symptoms at a specific place	Specific land-use practices at that place	Land users' resources, skills, assets, technology and time horizon	Nature of agrarian society	Nature of the state	The international world economy

| Research: eg soil and water conservation techniques, longitudinall comparisons. Direct government intervention | Get farmers to change land-use practices | Given extension, credit, materials for changes in land-use practices | Strengthen rural livelihoods, strengthen local institutions, improve health (and reduce birth-rate in long run), redistribute resources locally | Improve administrative capability, land tenure reform, monitor/police TNC activities, adjust output prices, make and enforce land-use laws | Review conditionality of loans, reschedule/ review foreign debts, provide foreign assistance (training funds, expertise) |

Possible Interventions

after Blaikie (1989:32)

The chains (links and blockages) within the study areas of the project will be explored with the ultimate aim of identifying good and poor practices that may exist. Such chains may be governed by environmental or political discourses operating at a range of scales, emphasising the need to recognise the global/local nexus.

Previous studies have identified that policy implementation may be uneven, ineffective or mis-aligned due to the pathways through which implementation is attempted. For example, investigations in Botswana have shown that a single policy (TGLP) has gained significant notoriety in terms of its predicted negative societal and environmental impacts (e.g. Hitchcock, 1978; Cook, 1985), and has been subject to marked spatial variability in implementation and impacts. In one area the aims of the policy have been subverted and new natural resource management frameworks have been manipulated by local populations (Thomas and Sporton, 1997). Communities and households continue to practice adaptive traditional activities within the frameworks of policies that elsewhere delimit activities more rigorously. This illustrates the pertinence of this issue to the PANRUSA project and to the DFID White Paper on International Development.

6. Summary

This paper has illustrated some of the key conceptual debates surrounding policy and policy analysis which are of relevance to the PANRUSA project. Current thinking emphasises the exigent need to retain a global/local perspective and to investigate the different development and policy discourses that various different actors deploy. The frames and discourses that are critical to how policy is presented and articulated are critically linked to the chains of communications that determine the actual impacts and interactions that occur. Examination of this development interface reveals the dialectical nature of the chains of communication and power in the policy process, and leads to a greater understanding of the strategic ways in which policy discourses (top-down or bottom-up) are subverted and manipulated by local populations, NGOs, governments and international agencies.

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