

How changes generate impacts

Towards attitudinal, behavioral and mental changes in the footsteps of research partnerships (ENDA / IFAD / NIGER)

Part 1

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Abstract

The paper sets out in a few words the main outcomes of a four-year research action carried out in Niger within the framework of an IFAD-funded rural development project. The research aimed at better understanding which transformations occurred at personal and organizational levels in the wake of radical methodological changes, that is, when strictly applying the principle of village centrality. The evolving trajectory of an experimental micro-program has been followed up since April 1998. The indirect research psychological methodology brings out several significant shifts at personal level. So self-identity dynamics and inner dialogic processes seem to lead to profound mental restructuring, just as carrying out research with farmers leads to thinking quite differently. The new approach at the village project interface leads to significant and interconnected changes in three organizational areas, the way staff relate to stakeholders, the way they plan, make decisions and share tasks, the way they think and learn in team. Some basic mechanisms are highlighted through a tentative schematic explanation. In particular, the conclusion paves the way to a new perspective on how synergy between two cultural groups could operate in order to produce relevant impacts in terms of changes.

Key words: activity, personal and organizational change, impact assessment, inner dialogue, partnership, professional genre, research methodology, reflexivity and self-reflexivity.

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1. Introductory remarks

This paper written in view of the workshop to be held in Cairo in January 2003 addresses the theme of "Impact Assessment" in a rather lateral way as we did not strictly follow the terms of reference. Not for the pleasure of doing otherwise. Simply, we have looked at the reality of partnerships from an unconventional angle. Consequently, the light will be principally cast on South / South rather than North / South partnerships. For the gap appears probably deeper in South / South relationships than between North and South. In reality, North and South researchers are members of the same group: as a general rule, they share lots of beliefs, they practice the same rituals, they follow more or less the same protocols, they are convinced by the same validity criteria, and so on. It is no surprise as more often than not they have been taught by the same academics in the same universities. The gap looks much dizzier when we consider different social and professional categories, for example farmers and researchers or developers at large who are thoroughly different. They hold distinct visions of the world, they don't even live in the same world, socially and economically speaking. They do not share any common views either on how things happen, or on why they happen that way. This is the reason why we have chosen to highlight this portion of the landscape. We contend that the phenomena and mechanisms at work at this level operate in other areas of partnership in a very similar way. In other words, much that we can learn from a fine-grained analysis of partnerships between developers and poor farmers in a remote rural area is likely to be extremely useful to better understand the partnerships between South and North researchers, and consequently also between North researchers. The demarcation line is not so much geographical as cultural.

For convenience sake, we will scrutinize change only on the side of developers, project people and their organizational niche². Appendix 1 gives an overall picture of the current situation³. Partnerships are really various and multidimensional. In order to make the paper as readable as possible, we will also leave out the full theoretical background which in this particular frame of work is rather complex since our research has been carried out on the border of several disciplines (work psychology, rural and organizational sociology and development studies). For similar reasons, we have chosen to restrict bibliographical references to a bare minimum.

So this paper must be understood as a tentative trial to introduce a complementary dimension to tackle the global problematic of research partnerships. It mainly refers to the activities carried out in the framework of ENDA InterMondes (Belgium) and strongly supported by IFAD (Rome)⁴. Before describing what has occurred in Aguié, we must underline that, in this paper, the emphasis has been placed on what most probably occurred in the "black box" of the change dynamic. This is why the reader could be astonished by the way we have addressed the issue which is rather unconventional in the field of development studies.

2- Partnership as seen and lived by – thus from the point of view of – the project team.

3- This study is currently carried out by the author in close collaboration with the CT/PIIP team in Aguié (see De Leener *et al.*, 2003).

4- IFAD's support was not only financial as is usual for a development bank but also social and political. This is where I must warmly thank Mr Shantanu Mathur and Mr Alessandro Meschinelli, both PT Division members, for their ongoing backup. From the very beginning, in particular, Mr Meschinelli has facilitated the whole process, so much that without his fully committed support, I could not have drafted this paper. Mr Alessandro Meschinelli was also a remarkable intellectual partner, particularly thanks to his very effective way of raising the right question at the right time. As far as partnership is concerned, the relationship between IFAD and my own NGO is a good example of how two completely different worlds can communicate and learn together from their interactions.

2. The issue in a word

For thirty or forty years, considerable means have been devoted to research and development, globally leading to unsatisfactory situations. The time for basic change has come at last. In actual fact, progressive changes have occurred in several areas, vision, goals, means and recently also in methods so that participation has become a necessary condition for any improvement in the field of development.

Research for development did not escape this rising trend. Over the last decade, the concern for genuine participatory research, that is to say, true collaborative relationships among partners sharing various visions of the world – farmers, developers, academics, but also researchers pertaining to various spheres, for example North and South – has intensified. This concern is basically related to the impacts of research and development efforts at large which are not as effective as expected. How can such different partners be involved in common research processes and enabled to pursue common objectives and produce mutually significant profitable impacts? This is one of the many still unsolved questions.

Nowadays very few deny the need for a genuine participatory approach. But, in practice, it appears that participation is not all that simple, at least in the field of agricultural and technological research or extension. Participation demands both deep attitudinal and behavioral changes. From all sides, not only on the side of professional researchers. So it is not a matter of acquiring a new rhetoric about one's work, new words, new concepts, new ways to communicate. The challenge is how to *effectively* work in a participatory way which means, in fact, changing one's own working methods. Changing the research activity means at the same time transforming its very nature, thus basically the profession of researcher. Why? Simply because *carrying out research on* and *carrying out research with* may eventually prove to be two completely different matters referring to different goals, techniques, activities and practices. In fact shifting from one stance to another is a professional challenge as such. The question of how to meet such a challenge is still open, despite lots of tentative solutions and endeavors.

For no less than two decades, we, and others too, have tried to solve the question. This is partly what we would like to share in a few words starting from a real life situation, an IFAD investment project in Niger.

3. Context of research and action

In order to make clearer what we are going to share with the reader, we will simply depict the current situation and its evolution for the four last years., Three periods can be identified (see appendices 1 and 2 for more factual data).

3.1. VIPAF⁵ period (1998-2000)

December 1997 probably marks the very beginning of the change process. ENDA GRAF Sahel, a branch of the international NGO ENDA TM⁶, was invited to participate in an international workshop

5- VIPAF: Valorisation des Initiatives Paysannes en Agroforesterie, VIPAF was the name given to the micro-program initiated by ENDA in partnership with ICRAF and with the support of IFAD.

6- GRAF: Groupe de Recherche Action Formation, ENDA TM: Development and Environment in Africa and the Third World, headquarters in Dakar (Senegal). ENDA TM is a highly decentralized web-shaped NGO consisting of a large number of independent branches scattered all over the world, all principally aiming at

on participatory agroforestry organized by ICRAF / SALWA⁷ in Dakar. This gave us the opportunity to establish the initial working relationship with IFAD and some representatives of an IFAD investment project, PDRAA⁸, in the Maradi Region of southern Niger. In April 1998, we went to Aguié with an ICRAF and IFAD representative and some NARS researchers⁹ with a view to launching a real bottom-up participatory research approach. A little later on, concrete activities began in three villages with three national researchers specialized in agroforestry and two developers, members of the PDRAA's Technical Division. From the very beginning, ENDA introduced a basic principle which proved to be extremely disruptive at a later stage, i.e. absolute village centrality: in a word, everything must stem from a village analysis and derive from a community-based decision-making process. In fact, the whole research activity has been planned, organized and implemented by a village structure. Such a situation was completely new to all the stakeholders, even to the villagers themselves. They were used to adopting external proposals more or less cunningly, rather assessing how to discretely swindle as many resources or means of action as possible for other purposes. Now, they diagnosed, formulated solutions, organized themselves accordingly and carried out activities on their own with the support of non-village actors. One of the first consequence of this shift could be seen in the planning: although it was an agroforestry research program, the village action plans embraced environmental activities and natural resource management at large. For them, agroforestry was first and foremost a social matter, more precisely the issue of how the village community could manage its own agrarian forestry capital so as to strengthen local ownership. Secondly, they agreed to launch a more conventional agroforestry trial to test several practices for the pruning of spontaneous young trees in cereal fields in addition to a trial on *Hyphaene thebaica* seed treatment. The project organisers were definitively convinced that something had changed when the three VIPAF villages continued the program by investing their own means even after fund suspension¹⁰. Another sign of this shift was highlighted when the project staff found out that the social organization conceived and experimented by the three VIPAF villages spontaneously spread to many neighboring villages¹¹.

3.2. PAIIP period (2000-2002)

After PDRAA's evaluation at the end of 2000, VIPAF definitely became a sort of success story, so much so that IFAD proposed to extend the implementation of the PDRAA project and provided means to broaden the VIPAF experience to three other villages. This is how the PAIIP¹² was born. This time, the stress was both on local innovations and indigenous initiatives. The VIPAF approach was

fighting poverty, in particular cultural/symbolic and political poverty. In practice, ENDA TM combats poverty through neutralizing *impoverishment mechanisms*, starting from the point of view that the riches of the Third World People are threatened (sometimes by programs supposedly aiming at alleviating poverty).

7- ICRAF (Nairobi): International Center for Research in Agroforestry, one of the CGIAR world centers. SALWA is the West African network of NARS involved in research activities under the umbrella of ICRAF.

8- PDRAA: Projet de Développement Rural de l'Arrondissement de Aguié

9- NARS: National Agriculture Research System

10-For reasons we cannot explain here, the PDRAA was not funded for a further year.. All the development activities stopped in the hundreds of villages usually backed by the project but oddly enough not in the three VIPAF Villages. Although they were not visited any more, the villagers kept on carrying out planned activities on their own, they kept on improving the organizational setting in order to better circumvent social obstacles. The project team interpreted this astonishing situation as evidence that something completely new if not strange was happening: it became obvious that in those VIPAF villages, contrary to everywhere else in the district, the research program turned out to be first and foremost the village program, that is, villagers used the project as a tool for their own objectives and dynamics. It is so true that even the data of the purely agroforestry trials were collected and interpreted by farmers themselves (counting and weighing).

11-In the Aguié district, more than fifty villages have spontaneously and autonomously adopted the idea of a village environment safeguarding committee without any project intervention. From one village to another, social arrangements, structures, local rules may differ but organizational principles, objectives and mobilization are very similar. All these initiatives are self-funded.

12-PAIIP: Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives et Innovations Paysannes

systematized and enhanced. More partners were involved, the PDRAA project staff of course, but also a regional agronomic research station¹³, three governmental technical and extension district bodies (Environment, Agriculture and Livestock Breeding) and the Faculty of Agronomy (University of Niamey)¹⁴. All these partners intervened as resource institutions in order to help villagers implement their own plan of action identified and negotiated beforehand¹⁵. Each village identified between fifteen and twenty-five activities within a wide range of domains (livestock breeding, agriculture, village infrastructure, income generating craft activities, environment, cereal banks, and the like). All these activities were conducted as experiments, not only the agronomic trials but also the other initiatives, be they socially, economically or technically oriented. So village action plans were at the same time research and action programs. All the activities were followed up by a village monitoring committee whose task was, among other things, to formulate, follow up and validate criteria, bring together data and outcomes and interpret them in the light of village preoccupations, all this in close relationship with the village assembly, the ultimate interlocutor. On the project side, the whole process was also explicitly implemented as a methodological trial since the PAIIP approach had become in the meantime one of the major references for formulating a new 8-year IFAD investment project in the same Aguié area. The other partners were de facto involved in an experimental process: the researchers and the academics were forced to adapt and eventually innovate in order to carry out researches and teaching activities. For the first time, they were actually confronted with villagers who were genuinely demanding, enterprising and, at the same time, innovative partners. The feature and content of the research program, its rationale, its goal derived directly from specifically self-organized villages: researchers or academics are not demanders any longer, they are suppliers facing strongly motivated requests. The same can be stressed for the extension agents: they are no longer running an extension program negotiated with the project about supposedly reasonable issues, they are now required to give advice in areas accurately defined by villagers.

3.3. CT/PIIP phase (2002-2003)

PAIIP wound up at the same time as PDRAA of which it was a sub-program. In fact, it has been extended in the form of a transition micro-project, CT/PIIP,¹⁶ while waiting for the PPILDA¹⁷, the new IFAD funded project to be started late 2003. Some major changes deserves to be highlighted. Whereas the PAIIP team was made of four agents, two of them being also responsible for other PDRAA programs, now the CT/PIIP comprises six members, three former members of the PAIIP staff plus three newly qualified agronomists chosen from among the best students previously involved in the agricultural research program run in collaboration with the Faculty of Agronomy in 2001¹⁸. The number of villages has increased almost naturally as more and more frequently the next-door villages participate in the activities run by the PAIIP villages. So far, about twenty villages are more or less de facto directly implied in the CT/PIIP program¹⁹. The same institutional partners keep on collaborating (the Maradi research station, district extension services, University of Niamey). A three-year

13-Nine researchers of the research station of Maradi which is a regional branch of the NARS (INRAN: Institut National de Recherche Agronomique au Niger).

14-For various reasons, ICRAF was no longer a partner in the PAIIP process. As a matter of fact, no other CGIAR center was involved.

15-For more details on the PAIIP period, see De Leener (2001 a and b, 2002a).

16-CT/PIIP: Cellule Technique de Promotion de l'Initiative et de l'Innovation Paysanne.

17-PPILDA: Projet de Promotion de l'Initiative Locale de Développement à Aguié.

18-From the very beginning of the PAIIP, nine students and three academics were involved in research on innovations initiated by farmers. The research was gradually run *with* and then *by* the farmers. So the students involved were very well informed on the PAIIP approach and, at the same time, trained in genuinely carrying out collaborative research with farmers.

19-Officially, the activities are run in the same six villages as there are almost no means to work at a larger scale. But, in practice, a growing number of neighboring villages take part in agricultural trials and/or other development activities and set up similar organizational structures.

collaboration program between a Belgian university and the University of Niamey will be implemented soon in order to back up both the future PPILDA team and to innovate, by introducing methods for training future developers²⁰. In addition to the village action plan, the CT/PIIP also initiates collaborative research activities in order to better understand how to alleviate rural vulnerability and how to better strengthen inter-village collaborative dynamics.

The CT/PIIP activities are still ongoing and funded through a small IFAD grant up to the end of June 2003. The CT/PIIP is run as a light program by a highly decentralized team who is entrusted, among other tasks, with the role of documenting the whole PAIP experience and experimenting new organizational arrangements suitable for the field approach. One of the main outcomes of the PAIP phase shows that the participatory approach to villagers will involve subsequent changes in the project management practices as if the pattern of action *in the village* echoed within the organizational pattern in force *in the office*. In other words, the operational model resulting from the PAIP was effective at the price of organizational arrangements.

4. A closer look at the change processes: where impacts come from

In this section we set out the change processes as they have occurred within the project niche since 1998, both at personal and organizational levels. Then, we show how they are closely intertwined, so much so that they seem to be two facets of the same phenomenon. In reality, as one can figure out, the landscape of change in Aguié is much more complex as it embraces not only the project sphere but also the dynamics of change in the villages, in the District services and, of course, also in the University up to the Ministry and even within the context of IFAD²¹. Here we want to concentrate on the project sphere as a paradigm of how change can be generated and spread within a particularly classical institutional environment²². Then we'll try to propose some mechanisms likely to explain how such changes can occur and develop impacts. But, first of all, it may be useful to say a word on the way we have worked to produce these phenomena.

4.1. A word on the research methodological background

The data and results presented in this paper have been produced in the framework of an IFAD small technical grant whose beneficiary was the international NGO ENDA TM²³. In practice, it was implemented by ENDA InterMondes, the Belgian Branch specialized in linking scientific and vernacular knowledge and skills, notably through networking. The value of data strongly depends on the way they have been generated. This is why we are very keen on the methodological issue: operational or technological innovations also strongly rely on innovative approaches. While we do not intend to explain in great detail how we have carried out our research, nonetheless we want to outline how we proceeded, practically speaking. First, from the very beginning, the research has been led *with* and *by* the people concerned. It was not a research *on*, but actually *with*. Our intervention was an active component of the change landscape since we have played a significant role as facilitator of an

20-This program aims at launching a true two-sided North-South partnership ultimately based on and thus crafted by real-life village demands. One of the expected outputs of this inter-university program is to improve the courses and curricula designed to train the future researchers and developers by directly linking students and teachers with an innovating rural development project.

21-The new IFAD investment project (PPILDA) is the outcome of an innovative formulation process. It has been drafted in an unusually flexible way leaving lots of possibilities for further wise adaptations. It leaves ample room for village people to manage programs themselves.

22-As a matter of fact, the PDRAA project is the heir of a pure technocratic bloodline. The project was mainly designed by anonymous foreigner experts for a rural population at best considered as beneficiaries of programs that would solve their alleged problems.

23-IFAD Small TAG ENDA n°543 2001-2002.

ongoing self-reflexive process. In a word, our research activity was transformation-producing. In helping the VIPAF, PAIP and CT/PIIP teams self-analyze and document its change trajectory and, in the same way, transform its hands-on experience into an object of permanent research closely linked with real-life actions on reality, we have boosted the *elaboration process* both at personal but also at institutional level²⁴. In practice, this work has taken several forms: backed up self- or crossed-observation of field activities at village level, in-team workshop on specific issues (Bonnet 2001 et 2002, De Leener 2002a and b, De Leener *et al.* 2002, Guéro *et al.* 2000, Guéro 2001, Hassane 2002, Kanta 2002, Sow 1999), informal exchanges in and out of the office²⁵.

So the first harvest of data directly comes from this collective self-analysis and documentation process. Another set of information has been generated through more conventional approaches carried out in parallel. We have interviewed almost all the project team, several times, the field officers but also the management, on issues more or less related to the life of the team, the evolution of professional practices, the rationale of work, the organizational change within and out of the office, and so on. We have also recorded many interviews with partners, farmers, District extension heads and field officers, researchers, former project officers and so on. Hundreds of hours of recorded and decrypted interviews, about 1500 pages of transcribed interviews are now available as analytical raw material. This forms a wealth of information likely to strengthen the factual and analytical background of our research. A third set of data directly derives from a highly sophisticated methodological arrangement using video recordings to consolidate self-analysis of real life working situations. In fact, it was a supported self-analysis technique since videos were deciphered by the project officers themselves through self-managed exchanges with an external facilitator. All in all, five CT/PIIP officers were deeply involved in activity self-analysis (for further information, see my second workshop paper De Leener, 2003b). Another more conventional source of data has been found in the library of the project. Lots of internal reports and administrative archives have been accumulated since November 1992 providing us with a valuable side-view on the administrative metabolism of the PDRAA²⁶.

As a general rule, all these devices pursue the same objective which can be summed up in one expression: *transformational self reflexivity*. They help workers see themselves from unexpected and innovative angles, they help them "relive" professional experiences in order to make a new lived experience. Not any experience, but those likely to trigger developmental processes (Clot 2001, Vygotsky 1997), both at personal and organizational levels. "Reliving" one's professional experiences is a powerful transformation means for several reasons impossible to be described here.

24-More precisely, we have accompanied the subtle intra personal process which generates explicit (overt, outer) learning from implicit (covert, inner) development, or simply put, we have helped the team elaborate words – thus thoughts – to explain what they were used to doing without being able to say so out loud.

25- As a matter of fact, we have spent hours discussing and reflecting on about almost everything and anything in *dyades* or small groups. It was almost inevitable as Aguié is a remote place, a sort of large village without any facilities, just a road plus some shops plus adobe houses. Our room was located in the project base, next to the office. We were used to eating informally with some project officers. In a word, we were a sort of de facto observer participant in the pure anthropological style as we were at the same time insider and outsider. For a psychologist, such closeness was of immense value in order to see what was not visible and to hear what was not said.

26-The PDRAA team and particularly the PAIP and CT/PIIP teams have written a lot, especially in the last three years. More than 500 reports (internal and external evaluation reports, progress reports, plans of action, technical notes, filed activity reports, consultant reports, administrative reports) are registered in the library project file.

4.2. Personal changes²⁷

A lot could be said in this area for such a subject seems to be boundless. Here the scope will be rather narrow as we will only concentrate on two features, self-representations and inner dialogue.

4.2.1. From *personae* to *persons*

The most striking change arises in the image of themselves that PAIIP and CT/PIIP staff to want to impress on others. Here we may actually talk about an identity²⁸ shift if not exactly an identity disruption. Let's recall the radical methodological change imposed by the principle of village centrality. Officers were actually forced to genuinely link up with farmers in so far as they wanted to be consistent with their own goals. In fact, such a change has been imposed only by themselves. For several years, they formed this section of the project team but they were overtly uncomfortable at work, for many moral, professional and administrative reasons. Their lack of satisfaction engendered a strong state of need (Engeström, 1987), a sort of unconscious desire for a disruptive difference, the kind of rupture likely to provide them with more meaningful activities. The village centrality principle and the new facilitation method brought by ENDA gave the officers the opportunity to really do otherwise what they were used to doing *for* the villagers. In this particular case, doing otherwise meant *doing with* the farmers and even, more basically, *forcing themselves to be different* and making them cope for themselves. It was not a matter of saying or doing something else, but of being someone else when doing one's work. That is the point. *Doing with* implicitly supposes *being otherwise with* villagers, more precisely *feeling* being otherwise, which entails a completely different behavior. If you are as you have always been, nothing changes: you just say something new, but nothing else moves forward. In a word, when doing or working *for*, one may *objectify* people one works for, in extreme cases they can be reduced to technical categories such as recipients or beneficiaries identified by particular predefined attributes. The people one works for remain in the outer sphere as objects targeted by one's activity. When working *with*, one has to *personify*, to relate subjectively to the others, that is, as a person, neither as a role bearer nor a *persona*. People are not just 'any people' as defined by a normative prescription, or at least not as easily, they become people in a particular situation, people one has to deal with for that particular purpose. So they do not remain out of oneself because one has to actually relate to them in order to be able to actually work with them. At least, one needs to know who and how they are, what they want one to do, why, what for and the like. This kind of information is indispensable when one has to collaborate but, at the same time, makes the others unique: this is precisely what makes them different from the norm. When working with, one cannot instrumentalize the others, on the contrary, we must manage not to be instrumentalized by them. All that business deeply changes the nature of the interaction and the very way staff feel about themselves.

This first radical change can be put in a few words: before the project officers were *personae* among other *personae* in the sense that they actually felt *as personae*, today with the new approach they have the strong feeling of becoming *persons* among other persons. In the village, they now actually feel as if they were persons, not *personae* any longer. What does all this mean? Simply that they no longer feel they are this anonymous project officer – any officer from any rural development project – but a committed person entrusted with a particular task and above all a person. In other words, the role bearer is not a *persona* any longer, he/she is not the circumstantial face of a particular social category anymore, but a real life person ascribed with a particular role, that is, first and foremost a person. The field officer is not the representative of a professional category who has fallen by chance into a rural project, but the representative of *that* team of *that* project carrying out *that* activity with *these* farmers.

27-For further information, see De Leener 2002c (pp. 71-86) et 2003c (chapters 4 and 5).

28-In this paper, we address the identity issue in professional environment in rather simplified terms. For more insight, see for example Kaddouri 1996, 1997 or Wenger 1998.

In practice, the story does not end with this self-identity change, the way to see oneself among the others, it brings about another simultaneous transformation: the feeling *to be seen* otherwise by the others, not only the farmers but even colleagues at the office and others at large²⁹. This inner change is echoed by a change in the eyes of others, more exactly by the way you believe the others are looking at you. This change inevitably implies a third identity shift: the way the "other" is considered. As a matter of fact, we have noted another dramatic change at this level. Farmers are not seen anymore as individuals, representative of a category of people, those living in village, those striving for survival or those likely to adopt such allegedly miraculous technology, a kind of reductionist representation, but members of a particular village community, *that* village of *that* area. It is another major shift in the sense that farmers are now perceived under two complementary lights, as persons in their own right and, at the same time, as members of a particular larger community which subtly becomes an interlocutor as such³⁰. This sort of stereoscopic perspective on the others cannot fail to modify the true nature of encounters with farmers: it radically transforms the way to relate to the farmers and, at the same time, transforms the very meaning of the encounter itself, independently of its declared purpose.

These three-faceted identity shifts³¹ bring about at least one practical outcome: the social space of reference itself has changed. Project officers no longer work with isolated farmers nor with ghost village organizations³² but with identified farmers, representatives of their community. The operational status of the community itself has also changed: it is no longer a recipient structure for externally-driven programs but exactly the reverse, it is now the center from which the work program will flow from now. This leads us to schematize this first change as follows:

New approach ⇔ New identity ⇔ New social space

Of course, in practice, these identity shifts bring about many visible attitudinal and behavioral changes, for example the way to communicate with farmers, the way to take part in public meetings at village level and so on. The relational symmetry is one of the many relevant and desirable consequences of a genuine collaborative scheme: each party feels strongly it is as important as the others, which means that each party feels as meaningful and purposeful as their opposite number.

4.2.2. *Enriching one's inner polyphony*

Another subtle change can be detected in the way project officers talk to themselves. The structure of inner dialogue slightly evolves towards a new inner audience. Inner dialogue is not a detail as the major part of conscious mental work is totally structured around it. In other words, talking to oneself means thinking and vice versa thinking means elaborating private conversations intended for oneself. Not for oneself only and that is the key point. When talking to oneself one spontaneously uses words and speech uttered by others. Let's simply say that the others talk within oneself. Their voices and all the meanings attached to their voices resound within oneself. At the same time, one talks to oneself and, through oneself, to others. Thinking actually means discussing with others silently within oneself.

29-Here we cannot describe in detail the identity interplay between one's identity at village level and one's identity at project level. This is another part of the picture to be probed in a more purposeful analytical framework. It should be kept in mind that identity is a complex phenomenon that cannot be addressed without considering the social sphere (Dubar 1998, Michael 1996).

30-In more Bakhtinian terms, we would have said that a new super addressee has come into existence (Holquist, 1994).

31-The identity change process is more complex than has been suggested in this short section, but a fine-grained analysis would lead us beyond the purpose of this summary paper. For more insightful explorations, see De Leener *et al.*, 2002, pp. 71-86. For further theoretical input, have a look at De Leener 2000 (pp. 21-27).

32-The famous AV (formal village credit organizations) which apparently stopped existing when project officers left the village.

Writing a paper is merely initiating a conversation with a targeted audience defined as the reference addressee. One never talks to nobody, even when completely mad, one is always in company when thinking, even in the case of a highly abstract subject as any abstraction is always more or less closely related to a particular lived circumstance. Each one of us is mentally populated by many voices in addition to one's own.

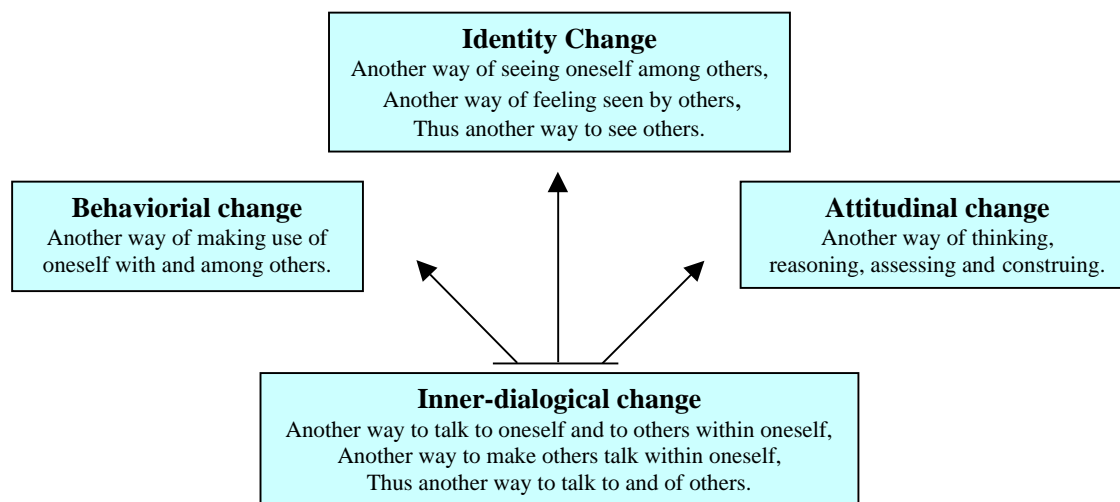
From the point of view of project officers, one of the major change at personal level can be precisely defined as the entry of farmers' voices in their inner polyphony (Bakhtin 1984), exactly as a new instrument is introduced in an orchestra. Now, when thinking, project staff internally discusses with farmers they work with. The farmers' voices reverberate within their thought and vice versa. It turns out that working with the farmers now also means making farmers' voices enter one's mind. That is how *working with* farmers comes to mean *thinking with*, and therefore through farmers. Incidentally, here we discover a rather practical and probably highly significant way to indirectly assess the depth of an impact at personal level: have the farmers become people one discusses internally with? About what? To what extent?³³

Inner dialogues with farmers is not only a matter of remembering that farmers are important interlocutors when project staff reflect on their work or professional activities, it is also a matter of how the farmers' thought or vision of the world comes into close contact with them. As widely acknowledged, words penetrate one's mind under the disguise of a signification but also – and at the same time – as a unique singular meaning. In addition to signifying, words also and even principally convey meaning. A word is a world. His/her word is his/her *own* world. So, when a farmer's word enters one's mind, it is at the same time a whole rationale that goes in as a Trojan horse. This is why ultimately *genuinely* working with farmers may transform us so deeply: officers begin to *think with the words* of farmers and they end up by being "inhabited" by farmers' opinions and points of view. Here, everything lies in the word "genuinely". How can we know how genuine the collaboration is? Just consider how far farmers' words penetrate one's mindset, which place they occupy in one's inner debate, to which extent one makes use of his/her words to build what eventually becomes one's own arguments.

Through these two entry points, self-identity and inner dialogues³⁴, we see to some extent what is at issue when stressing radical change at personal level. Three areas of change can consequently be emphasized: the way the project officers *relate to* other people, the way they do what they have to *do* and the way they *think* their activity and profession in general. It appears that no behavioral nor attitudinal change can be triggered off independently of any self-identity change, as if these two areas were linked: behavioral change needs identity change and vice versa. Furthermore we know that identity change implies transformations of inner dialogic activities: talking to oneself and to the other people within oneself in a different manner. Again both phenomena go forward hand in hand. In the end, we face an interwoven landscape of personal change that may be roughly sketched as follows:

33- There is no point in raising the question bluntly as the only methods likely to unveil part of such a process must be indirect, i.e. tackling the issue by explicitly addressing another subject matter. In this field, the golden rule is now well-known: people never talk about what they do and they actually never do what they talk about, be they mental activities or anything else. In practice, interviews or any other kind of direct approaches are hopeless. In Aguié we were regularly confronted with this methodological obstacle. We've found out in the self-analysis through the real-life professional activity a fruitful indirect way to trace out inner dialogues or break down thinking processes. Resource questions like "*Who do you talk to when you think? To what do you talk when you think?*" may prove to be useful when discussing details of recorded real-life professional tasks or gestures, that is by talking about something else. Along with Vygotsky (1999), we contend that introspection and any other kind of direct way to grasp inner life is illusory as it does not give direct access to the mind. Unfortunately we do not have room enough in this short paper to explore the argument.

34-Which are actually interconnected as several authors have evidenced (de Peuter 1997, Harré *et al.*, 1994).



De Leener Philippe, 2003

Now we point out how these dynamics at work at personal level are closely intertwined with organizational processes.

4.3. Organizational changes³⁵

From a purely organizational point of view, PDRAA was gently purring since late 1992 as, from that time onwards, nothing had changed basically, either structurally or functionally. Let's briefly recall the process that followed. The change dynamic began on a very limited scale and involved only three villages between 1998 up to 2000 (VIPAF period). At that time, VIPAF was really a marginal element of the PDRAA project, a sort of bud on the bark. In fact, it was a sort of micro-project temporarily hosted by a District investment project. Two PDRAA staff were involved in VIPAF, the head of the technical Division (part time) and a field officer (full time). From 2000 to mid-2002 (PAIIP period), this experimental program was included within the larger project as a fully-fledged component and progressively became more and more important. Three then four³⁶ staff committed themselves, notably the head of the monitoring unit in addition to the two former VIPAF staff. Due to its success, the PAIIP experience strongly inspired the formulation of the new IFAD investment project to be launched in late 2003. From July 2002, the CT/PIIP has officially managed the transition period in applying on a larger scale the PAIIP principle of work and management. The CT/PIIP comprises 5 technical staff and 5 administrative staff in addition to a coordinator³⁷. Appendix 4 schematizes this institutional evolution.

One of the major changes derives directly from the principle of village centrality: since 1998, the downward planning system – project plans what and why to do in the villages– has been replaced by an upward mechanism: village communities diagnose, chose priorities, then build their own plan of action which becomes the plan of work of the project team called to support its execution. This principle strictly applied from the beginning has changed a lot in the decision-making process: the very content of the work, timing and places are to a great extent established by the villages. In practical terms, the project management is strongly externally-determined. This system has

35-For further information, see De Leener 2002c (pp. 27-39) et 2003c (chapter 3 and 5).

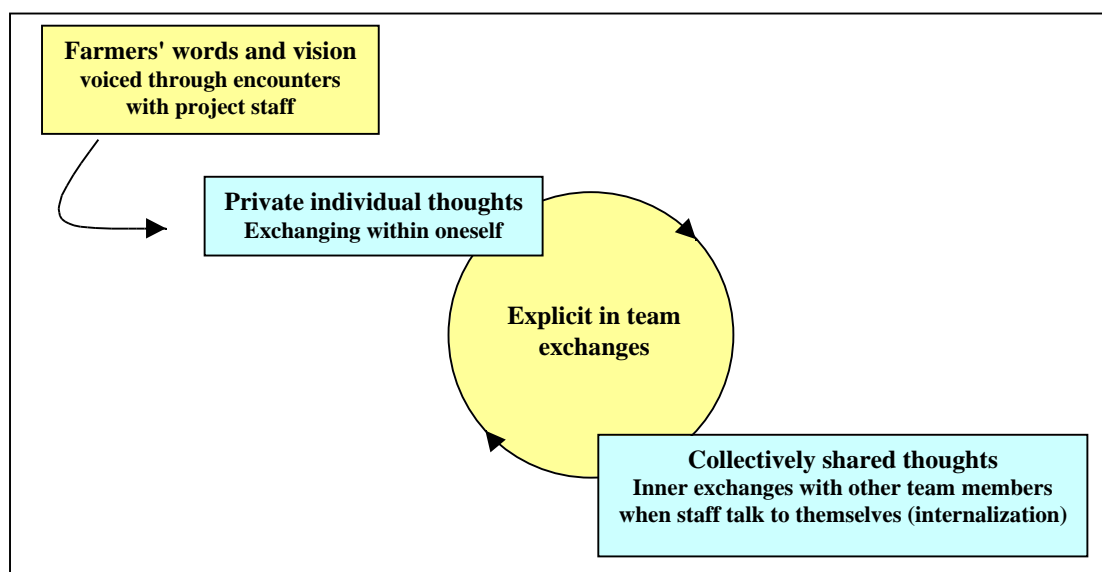
36-A woman sociologist has been engaged for 9 months in order to develop the gender dimension.

37-The CT/PIIP technical team consists of the whole PAIIP team plus three recent graduates chosen among the best students involved in agricultural research activities at village level in 2001. The administrative staff has been chosen from the former PDRAA team.

progressively undermined the pyramidal chain of decision. Within the framework of PDRAA, the decision chain was direct and rather simple: the head made decision according to the mandatory prescriptions of the project³⁸, then the field officers executed them. Within the framework of VIPAF and later PAIIP, the picture turned out to be completely different: the work plan is negotiated with farmers, notably all through the community diagnosis phase, then internally reprocessed in order to match both project means and farmers' initiatives. The practical project organization is shaped according to the structure of the village plan of action. In a genuine participatory context such as PAIIP, a project is a tool at the service of village initiatives, thus it must meet the farmers' demands. Criteria and references for conducting the action change dramatically. VIPAF, PAIIP or CT/PIIP intervention is strongly demand-driven, which contrasts very much with PDRAA whose intervention was principally supply-led.

At a subsequent stage, this shift has also exerted a strong influence on the way staff work together in teams. To be able to do what they have to do with farmers, project officers have to debate among themselves too. So, debate and discussions, initiated at village level to clearly comprehend why, what and how to do, are internally prolonged through inner dialogues (private thought), then arise again and bounce back within team exchanges (collective thought). Here we better understand why and how farmers' voices have to enter the inner dialogic system of the staff members: to see what and how to do in order to satisfy farmers, project officers must listen to, hear and grasp the full meaning of what their village partners really want. Not only the words but also the implicit rationale attached to the words. That is the way private individual thoughts gradually emerge and come to generate collective ones. Figure 2 tentatively schematizes the process.

Figure 2
How farmers' words end up being part of the project world



De Leener Philippe, 2003

Farmers' words, thus ideas and visions, imbue the exchanges at village level. Then, part of them pursue their trajectory in the minds of project officers as transient memories. They are revived when officers think about their work later on, that is, when they talk to themselves, let's say privately, and when they talk to farmers within themselves. So doing, they make farmers' words reverberate in their

38-Project staff have typically implemented the logical framework as "Bible" injunctions.

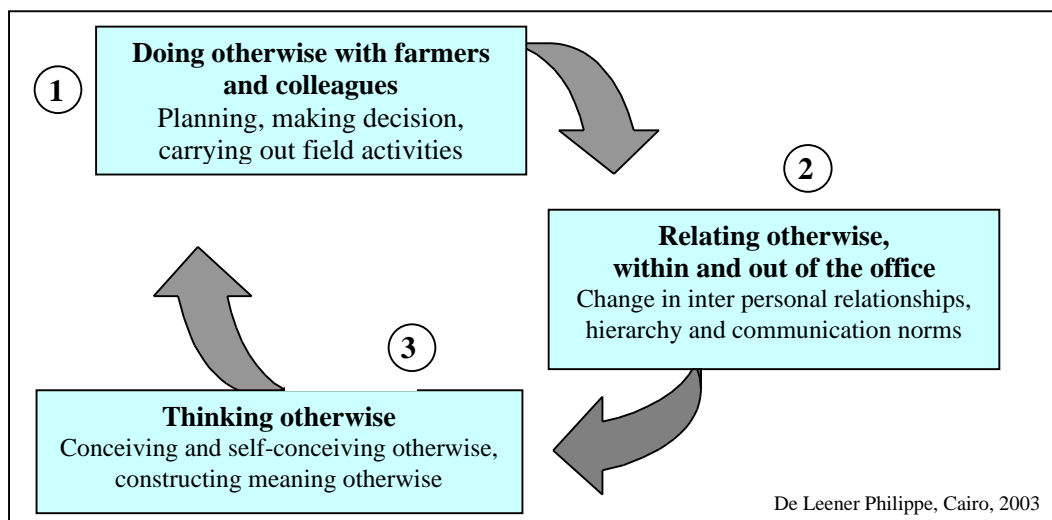
mind. These private thoughts end up by being voiced and shared in team, becoming a subject matter of in-team debates, for example when time comes to build a concrete work program and to establish a common vision of what and how to proceed and with whom. These shared thoughts, thus reprocessed in team through discussions, then become part of the collective thought, that is, what the team members talk to themselves when doing what they have to. This is how the organizational way of thinking is slowly reshaped. This is what has actually happened in Aguié.

Here we see how the horizontal style of communication and management carried out with farmers as a direct application of the village centrality principle has implicitly rebounded at the office. In fact, the staff involved in VIPAF and PAIIP has quickly adopted at the office for in-house purposes the same symmetrical communication, the similar low hierarchical profile as applied at village. In the beginning, this new way to organize and manage was restricted to the VIPAF or PAIIP cell, but progressively reached the other project spheres so as to become the new reference code of the current CT/PIIP. Now, quasi self-management is one of the most striking organizational features. The very conductor is the scheme of work with farmers, that is to say, the activity and its internal rationale.

In a recent study carried out with and by the CT/PIIP team, we have shown that the whole project organizational dynamics have radically changed while the structure has remained rather similar (see De Leener *et al.*, 2003). In Aguié, just like elsewhere, it also appears that structural and institutional changes are not so determining as usually stressed: changing organizational shape does not make any definite difference. Functional parameters, such as the decision-making process, conception of hierarchy, inter-personal relationships, task management and ways to share responsibilities, learning processes, team and capacity building have proved to be much more significant.

Organizational changes in Aguié may be sketched in a few words (figure 3). First, ways of planning, executing, making decisions and evaluating changes, that is, the manner of doing what has to be done in team and with the villagers. Consequently, the way of relating to others is affected as already noted (less hierarchy, more self-commitment, direct and two-way communication and so on).

Figure 3
Tentative schematization of the change spiraling



These two changes trigger a third transformation, the way staff reflect when working both in team and at village. Doing otherwise in team and with farmers will result in relating otherwise to others, be they farmers or colleagues and this eventually ends up in thinking otherwise in team. The extent to which

such a process is sequential is still an open question. At first glance, it seems somewhat unrealistic to separate these three overlapping processes.

4.4. Tentative explanatory framework³⁹

Changes have been deep and radical. We contend that they are not merely outcomes of favorable circumstances. Some mechanisms can be identified, thus giving us the opportunity to display a more general view of what most probably happens when introducing new methods that structurally transform the relationships between stakeholders⁴⁰. Before dealing with the essence of the subject, we will first underline some basic assumptions. A close link exists between methodological changes at field level and organizational transformations. In addition, a strong connection between the depth of change within the project and the scope (scale, relevance) of the impacts of activities carried out at village level can be observed. This link is so strong that, in our view, it would be illusory for a project to target changes at village level, no matter how complex, without boosting organizational changes at project level at the same time. So it appears that change in one place is a precondition for bringing about change elsewhere⁴¹. In other words, change is a mutual two-pronged phenomenon: one never changes alone but in sympathy with – or against – some other instance of reference. It is no mystery since social changes are not predetermined or codified but are true reactive processes. As suggested above, this principle turns out to be reinforced in Aguié as this is precisely what can be observed daily. But characterizing manifold changes, pointing out their inter-relatedness in both social spaces still leaves us without any explanation. So hereunder we try to roughly provide some insights in order to make understandable the change process underway in Aguié. Let's immediately add that this is just part of the picture as we do not aspire here to deliver a full definitive explanatory panel. We rather want to stress three intertwined mechanisms so that we can see more clearly why change was fashioned in this way: fusional identification with the approaches, *inter-generic coherence* and *intrageneric consistency*.

4.4.1. Fusional methodological identification

As a matter of fact, VIPAF or PAIP staff have strongly identified with the approach. In the very beginning, it was introduced by ENDA GRAF Sahel, but soon the two PDRAA officers involved developed a deep ownership of the method and its rationale, and so strongly that it has actually become theirs. At both levels: the approach has become their own (first level of identification: "*Yes, this is my way to do*") so much that they also came to merge with their approach (second level of identification: "*This approach has become part of myself*"). The way they *do* has become the way they *are*. The reasons why such a thorough identification has occurred differ from one officer to another, but the background is similar: a strong state of need fed by a strong lack of satisfaction (Engeström, 1987⁴²).

4.4.2. Inter-generic coherence

To fully comprehend what is at issue in this change process, we have to say a word about the concept of *professional genre* (Clot, 1999). Simply put, the concept refers to this set of unspoken rules and norms that govern one's professional activity in a particular environment, for example at village or office. A genre is composed of all those implicit rules that almost unconsciously urge us to do *correctly* what nobody ever told us to do before, or the way to precisely proceed. Although such rules are unwritten, everybody involved in the activity knows and applies them. Genre precisely draws the

39-For in-depth insightful explanations, see De Leener *et al.*, 2003 (chapter 3, especially pp. 16-21).

40-In fact, any method necessarily introduces a particular intercourse among the actors concerned since, like any technology, method endows the activity with an implicit social structure. Elsewhere, we did not hesitate to argue that this implicit structure functions as a sort of social genetic code (De Leener, 2002d, pp. 23-29).

41-For further information see De Leener Philippe *et al.*, 2003, chapters 3 and 5

42-See in particular chapters 3 and 4.

demarcation between a professional and a layperson. The concept of genre has been theorized long ago by the Russian linguist Bakhtin (1978). It appears useful to grasp what organizational change may have occurred in the wake of a particular methodological change.

In a word, in Aguié, the genre structure has been completely turned upside down by introducing the village centrality principle. So much so that it was impossible for the staff to act as before: rules of the genre previously in force have been tacitly ruled out. In practice, this means that it was necessary to replace the disarmed genre by another one. So is the reality in any professional environment dominated by two apparently inescapable rules: first no work out of any genre, second only one genre at work at the same time in the same work space. The coexistence of two or more genres in the same work environment necessarily leads to dysfunctions, disturbances and even conflicts⁴³.

What has happened generically speaking in Aguié? The outmoded genre in force at village level has been replaced by a new one, partly imported by the ENDA consultant, partly (re)invented by the two VIPAF officers. This new genre has progressively invaded the whole set of field activities. So came the time when two genres were active in the same work environment, one at village and another one at office. Inevitably the two genres collided head on within the thought of both VIPAF officers: from their point of view, it became impossible to act, behave and think at the same time in two separate sets of rules, one at village and another one at office. At that time, there were only two ways out of this dilemma: either leaving the new approach at village (back to the former stage, that is, detaching oneself from the new approach, "disidentifying" at once with oneself and with the way to do one's job⁴⁴), either transforming the working rules of the game at office, at least within the VIPAF sphere (jumping into the future and the novelty). The latter actually happened in the last months of the VIPAF period: the practices of planning, making decisions, debating, sharing tasks, allocating means and so on have changed according to the spirit and the norms of the new approach applied at village level. Inter generic coherence has been re-established: the genre at work *inside* (office, among staff) matched the genre in force *outside* (at village, with farmers), at least in the VIPAF organizational cell which, at that time, was disconnected from the PDRAA sphere as was the PAIP later on.

4.4.3. Intra generic consistency

The inner change did not stop there. A third mechanism ends up by padlocking the change process. The inter generic coherence which concerns one's own world has its inner counterpart. The pressure for internal consistency inevitably exerts its influence to put the finishing touches on the reshaped genre. This pressure towards more internal coherence can be felt in the same three areas as already mentioned in figure 3: the way to relate to others, the way to execute what has to be done as well as the way to think. The way to operate must be consistent with the way we relate to others and with the way to think at the same time. These three features reinforce each other and actually force staff to be coherent⁴⁵.

As it has now become obvious, the radical change process which has been highlighted has not occurred by chance. The fusional identification with the approach has triggered de facto several organizational and personal mechanisms that have progressively impressed themselves deeply on the whole team, that is the pressure for coherence, both outside (village) and inside (office), externally (in team) and internally (individually), that is, both inter and intra generic coherence. The structure but

43- This is where generic conflicts lead to organizational conflicts, but this is another story (De Leener and Sow, 1995).

44- A choice which directly leads to head-on contradictions and harmful double binds since it implies that being oneself means denying oneself (De Leener Philippe 2002e, Bateson 1977).

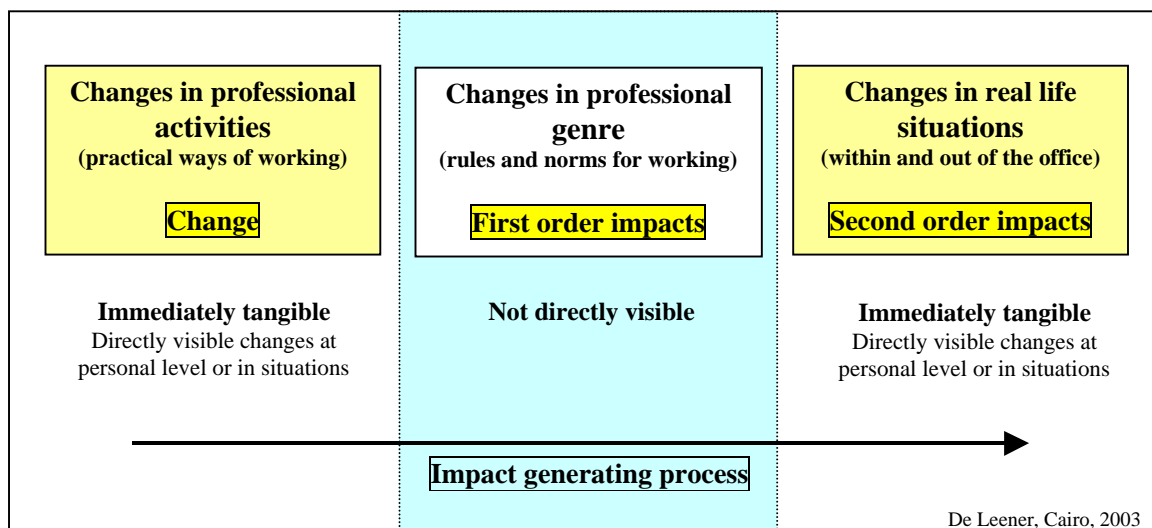
45- Pressure for inner coherence is not a new fact as has already been scrutinized thoroughly in the 1950s by Festinger (1957). Nowadays, the theme of internal coherence erupts in the field of neurobiology, notably in connection with consciousness (von der Malsburgh, 2002).

also the very essence of professional activity has been deeply transformed. Appendix 5 schematizes this basic chain of necessary inter-reactions. Again, the strictly sequential shape is questionable and deserves further researches.

5. How are impacts generated? How do partnerships actually generate impacts?

Why so many stuffy details about change at personal or organizational levels while we are mainly concerned here with scaling up and producing impacts at large? Simply because impacts⁴⁶ like seeds need nursery. We contend that without a fine-grained scrutiny of change mechanisms we can only in the best cases describe what happens but fail to really comprehend what is at stake. As far as impacts by change are concerned, we need to disassemble change mechanisms. So basically, what has occurred in Aguié has to be understood as a radical change process affecting the whole set of implicit rules and norms guiding – framing, structuring but also ascribing meaning to – the professional activities. Impacts must be appreciated through this lens. In other words, we contend that impact generating is a matter of professional genre "unbuilding-rebuilding" process, what could be called professional development or *generic development*. Strictly speaking, as far as profession is concerned, changing means inscribing a rupture within the genre in force, the *normal* way of doing what has to be done. In more developmental terms, we could argue along the same lines that changing means triggering off a conflict within the genre of reference⁴⁷. The impact – the change *from* the change – is the issue of such a generic conflict from which lots of second order impacts are derived, precisely what can be practically traced out (figure 4).

Figure 4: From changes to impacts



46-In other to be clear, we have to specify that, in our mind, impact is first and foremost to be defined as the *change of change*, more exactly as the change directly resulting from another more basic change. For example, I throw a stone in a window, I break the glass. The basic immediate change is a window without glass and lots of small pieces of glass scattered all around. The impact of this incident is all that changes afterwards because the window has been smashed. So to trace impacts one needs to be on the trajectory of what occurs afterwards (For further insight on the concept of impact, see De Leener 2002f).

47-Conflict in the sense of a clash between several contradictory – mutually exclusive – rules or norms. It is first and foremost an internal conflict, that is, lived internally by workers. Of course, such an internal conflict may arise in the details of everyday professional life, that is, externally, for example through interpersonal problematic relationships. However, here, we are mostly concerned by the private face of the genre, let's say the inner side of the phenomenon.

Precisely what impacts? In order to better tackle this matter, let's come back again to Aguié and see what has happened. But first let's outline the situation: a basic methodological change (genuinely working with farmers) fosters both village-based organizational and technological initiatives and innovations (impacts outside of the office), then triggers off deep organizational change at project level in the form of new ways of planning, executing and assessing activities (in-house impacts).

5.1. How transforming professional genre makes partnerships generate impacts

This question is at the crux of our concern as we do not aim at just describing the phenomena. From our collaborative researches with the CT/PIIP team in Aguié a clear-cut picture seems to emerge. Again, here we only intend to sketch the process without any further details. We just want to suggest how change at staff and professional level spurts out at village level. In other words, we say that changes and impacts are "circulated", thus engraved in village everyday life situations through genre. That is how partnerships generate significant impacts.

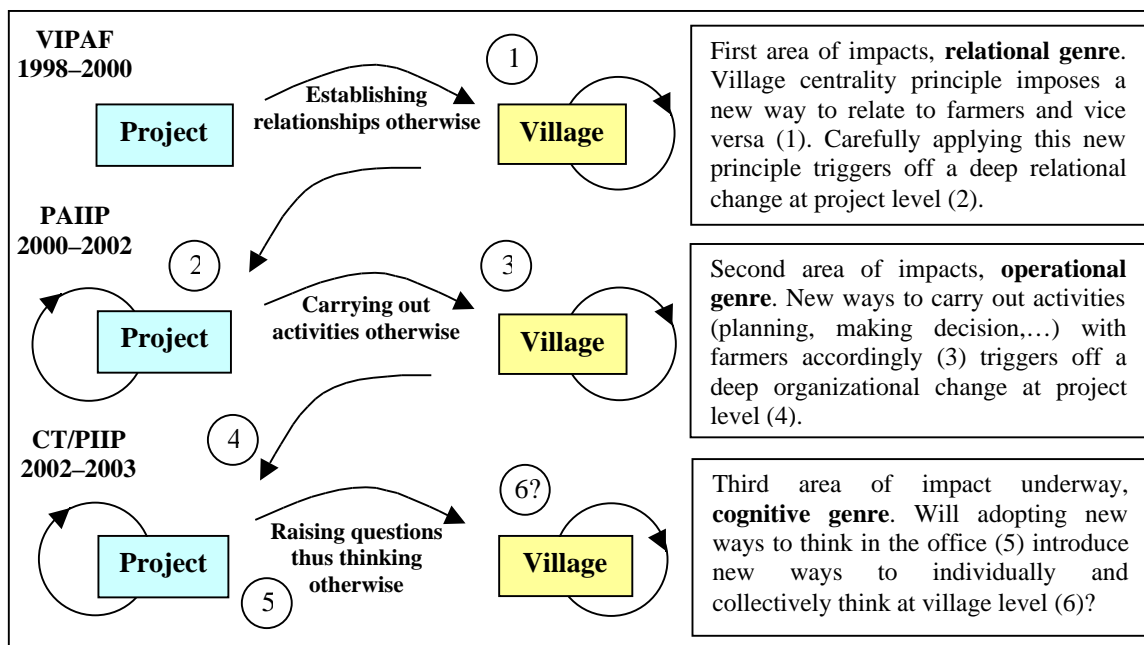
In 1998, at the very beginning of the process, a first breakthrough took place at relational level. Village centrality imposed a new way to relate to farmers and, consequently, a farmers' new way to relate to project staff. This is the first area of impact: *relational genre* – how *normally* one has to relate to others – has changed as suggested in section 3 (transparency, directness, sincerity, no subterranean blackmail anymore). This major change at village level has rebounded on the project sphere, bringing about a similar change at project level in the field of inter-personal relationships (frankness, open-mindedness, free exchange, at least among VIPAF staff). A bit later on, another tangible change occurred in villages in the way collaborative activities were carried out concretely. This clears up a second area of impacts more related to the *operational genre* – how *normally* things must be done in a participatory way – as has been shown in section 4. The new participatory style practiced by project staff is implemented by villagers among themselves, leading afterwards to significant transformations at village level in the same areas of change (debating, planning, decision-making, executing work programs, optimising local innovations or initiatives and so on). Again, these in-field drastic changes have been reverberated within the project sphere in the form of new ways of organizing and thinking about one's work in the office: a participatory manner of working in team typical of PAIIP staff took place progressively just as within village communities. At village as well as at office, ways of carrying out activities have completely changed – and kept on changing – for two years.

The process is not complete yet as a new change is about to happen in the office. Last November, when analyzing real-life village activities and in team working sessions on videos, CT/PIIP team noted that something new was budding in the way people were reflecting both at office and village, precisely in the way of raising and formulating questions when collaborating. In comparing video-recorded village working sessions, it became clear that new kinds of questions and a new manner of elaborating them were being forged. Until recently, the majority of questions raised with villagers was more or less limited to questions about what to do or how to do in practice. Now, progressively, new types of questions emerge through exchanges: why to do? what for? why to do that in this particular way? what to bring about in by doing that this way? Slightly but significantly, questions are not restricted anymore to the action sphere (what is being done, what has been done, what is to be done) but turn out to be also directed towards people as persons (how am I affected? what does it change for me to do that this way? why do I do that this way?). Questions of this kind implicitly introduced a strong self-reflexive dynamic in the very heart of collaborative work, which is radically new. It is too early to predict what will be the fate of this rising process. But something is clear according to what has been observed so far in the partnerships in Aguié: when something changes at staff level, sooner or later, something changes at village level as if change was echoed in the village sphere⁴⁸.

48-And probably inversely, although we are not in a position to prove it definitively. The question is not so innocent since basically the orientation of the change process is concerned. In other words, is the project staff

In other words, if project officers change the way they raise questions, notably when closely collaborating with villagers, that is, the way they think, most probably farmers will also change the way they think, not only with project staff but also among themselves, as has been observed in relational and operational areas. Is this the third area of impact now in the field of the cognitive or *mental genre*? This is how a change at project level exerts an impact at village level afterwards through genuine partnership (figure 6).

Figure 6
Tentative schematization of the impact generating process both at village and office level



De Leener, Cairo, 2003

5.2. Working *with* is really doing another job

What does all this mean in terms of impact of partnerships? Practically, it implies that if we want to actually generate impacts through partnerships, we have to address the issue first from a purely professional side as it mainly concerns the way to do one's job. Remember that partnership basically means *working with*. Now we know that it really means *working otherwise*, that is, *doing another job*. If it does not work this way, partnership does not change anything, at best it wraps up the same patterns of work in new elegant words. Through the case of Aguié, we have shown how *working with* means *transforming one's job into another job* at the same time as transforming oneself. In a word, partnership entails a true professional revolution. This is what is really at stake whatever the kind or the level of partnership, South-South, South-North, North-North oriented. Neglecting the basic *professional* complexity of any partnership building perspective, denying its very developmental nature⁴⁹, however uncomfortable, necessarily leads to disappointing outcomes since it clearly appears

still the leader of the impact-generating process?

49- We should have addressed change from a more developmental point of view (development understood here in the true psychological meaning of the word, along with Valsiner (2000) or Vygotsky (1981 et 1999) and the Russian school of activity psychology (see also Leontiev 1972 and 1975 or Cole *et al.*, 1997). In the end, we decided to tackle the developmental issue later in a more appropriate framework, as the Cairo audience is not particularly well informed about this discipline.

that it is not only a matter of improving one's communicational style or facilitation skill (White 1999), even if this is surely not useless.

6. Some practical lessons

From a more practical point of view, some lessons among others can be drawn about impacts and partnerships.

First, the most fruitful way to carry out the research on impacts is probably to do it with staff called upon to generate impacts from partnership. So analysis turns out to be transformational. Making team members scrutinize the details of their own professional activity, the "actually how" but also the "why how", that is, why this particular way to do, through a self-reflexive arrangement which actually helps re-experience already lived on-site experiences, paves the way for in-depth transformations as pressure for change comes from staff themselves as an outcome of their own research on their own activity, not through management injunctions. Professional self-analysis directly linked with real-life professional situations and activities proves to be a relevant alternative to training or any kind of smoothed top-down driven change process.

Second, change is a global multi-sided process which combines at one and the same time personal, institutional and organizational dimensions, both within and out of one's working niche. Changes at one place strongly depends on change in other areas. Moreover, the interconnectedness of change processes, that is, inside and outside, determines the depth and relevance of change. In other words, when boosting change at field level, one has to foster at the same time an in-house change. The weakness of such a connection often explains why so many generous endeavors to promote methodological transformations do not last: they are not echoed by organizational changes. In practice, promoting genuinely collaborative partnerships means triggering change processes at these two levels: methodological (in the field), organizational (in the institution).

Third, at workplace, personal – behavioral, attitudinal and mental – and organizational changes are facets of the very same phenomenon. Their apparent disconnectedness is mainly a matter of point of view while they interact. Activity – what one does when at work – and professional genre – tacit rules of the game when one has to do, i.e. interweave them closely. Doing otherwise obliges you to get organized otherwise, which means changing operational landmarks and norms, that is, the professional genre and, at the same time, leads to being – feeling, behaving and thinking – otherwise. This signifies practically speaking that building true partnerships also means simultaneously "unbuilding and rebuilding" both professional organization and identities at work. Failing to clearly grasp this link may bring about thorough disturbances as professionals both at personal and operational levels.

Fourth, it appears that attitudinal or behavioral changes at work are not so much the outcome of a deliberate decision but rather the output of changes within the professional activity: in changing one's way of doing, one is forced to find solutions to constraints or discrepancies which are inscribed within the heart of the activity. This is what leads to behavioral and attitudinal changes. So, the picture is not the type of "*I really want to change my way*", but rather "*in order to do my job otherwise, I have to change my way*". Changing one's way to do consequently forces the player to become –feel, behave, think– otherwise. This is the reason we have placed so much emphasis on self-analysis of professional real-life activity (what staff actually do) rather than on the normative discourse (what they should do). This fourth lesson generates lots of practical implications, for example in helping reconsider the type and even the usefulness of training in light of better partnerships. As a matter of fact, *working with* is definitely not a matter of learning from someone else but from what one actually does when willing or pretending to *work with*, more precisely from structured self-reflexive loops on one's own activity.

That is probably the shortest way to narrow the gap between what one actually does and what one actually wants to do in real-life collaborative circumstances.

Fifth, in an organization, change does not occur simply like that. From the case of Aguié, it appears that change needs to be experimented – thus experienced – at small scale in a cell of the organization. In practice, it has been triggered within a peripheral program (VIPAF) before penetrating into the organizational niche in the form of a sub-program (PAIIP). Progressively, it embraced the whole organization (CT/PIIP). But such a process is possible if and only if the change dynamic is supported – protected – by the management or some kind of powerful authority, whether internal or external. This clearly means that the change process resulting from professional activity self-analysis must be strongly mandate-driven. In Aguié, this mandate was not given by the management, not immediately, not directly, but rather by the funding agency, that is, from outside. The management was dependent on IFAD, which is probably why, in this case, an external influence was operative⁵⁰.

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Appendix 2

(Adapted from De Leener, 2001a)

Situations and processes underway in Aguié in a few words in 2001 and 2002

First flash: The situation at large

Six (6) villages playing a central role at micro-regional level plus about twenty neighbor villages more or less directly touched by the farmers themselves.

Two cultural groups, Fulani and Haussa.

About 8000 villagers directly concerned by the PAIIP intervention since February 2001, plus most probably 15.000 others living in the next door villages.

450 mm of rainfall per year on average.

Mainly sandy soils (dunes).

Densely populated area (around 80 persons per square Km).

Main crops: millet, sorghum, cowpea, groundnuts, *Cyperus esculentum*.

Extensive livestock breeding, both sedentary and transhumant.

Parkland (*Pilostigma sp.*, *Combretum sp.*, *Faidherbia sp.*).

Main Stakeholders involved in the PAIIP or CT/PIIP program:

- Several committees and structures in the six villages, various local associations whose some women groups,
- One Integrated Rural Development Project (PDRAA) funded by IFAD since 1992 (up to June 2002),
- Three District extension services deeply involved (Agriculture, Livestock, Environment).
- Two research institutions: INRAN (NARS) and Niamey University, but also recently a Northern university (UCL, Belgium),
- An international NGO involved in the very first step (ENDA GRAF Sahel and its Belgian branch ENDA InterMondes).

Second flash: Processes

Three main stages from 1998 until 2002:

- i) **VIPAF**: a first experience with 3 villages in 1998 and 1999 in cooperation with ICRAF (mainly around agroforestry trials),
- ii) **PAIIP**: a second stage involving 3 additional villages since March 2001 (the program has been run without any external support in 2000 by the 3 pioneer villages) up to June 2002,
- iii) **CT/PIIP**: a third stage entrusted with methodologically preparing the ground for a new IFAD investment project. This stage is operated within a close partnership with the university of Niamey (Faculty of Agronomy and its independent branch, the CRESA, which manages a post graduate course institute.

Community-guided self-diagnosis mainly based on local assets, innovations and initiatives.

Global plan of action to make the best of local human, economic, natural resources. Setting up of local organizations around the plan of action.

10 to 25 activities per villages, agricultural and non agricultural, some more research-oriented, some others more direct action-driven.

About 150 villagers directly entrusted within several village committees by their community.

About 100 farmers (about 25% of women) directly in charge of carrying out trials in the name of their community (in the framework of different sorts of experiments).

In 2001, one farmer field forum, three in 2002 managed by the village with the help of the Maradi regional branch of INRAN.

Several back up missions since April 1998 (some operated by ENDA GRAF Sahel, some carried out by international and national consultants, all with a strong support of the IFAD's PT division).

Third flash: Means

Generally low financial stakes and intensive personal involvement. Overall external support granted through a mix of loans and subsidies by IFAD through a small technical grant. Since July 2002, CT/PIIP is financially supported through a new one year 100.000 USD small technical grant.

In 2001 until March 2002, three project officers, one full time, two part time (2 days a week). Since March 2002, 6 full time project officers.

In 2001 and 2002, between 3 to 6 millions FCFA per village (4000 to 8000 USD). All the activities are co-financed (ratio of self-financing: 17% to 25%). Since June 2002, the budget allocated for directly financing village activities has been drastically reduced but, at the same time, the level of self-financing has significantly increased.

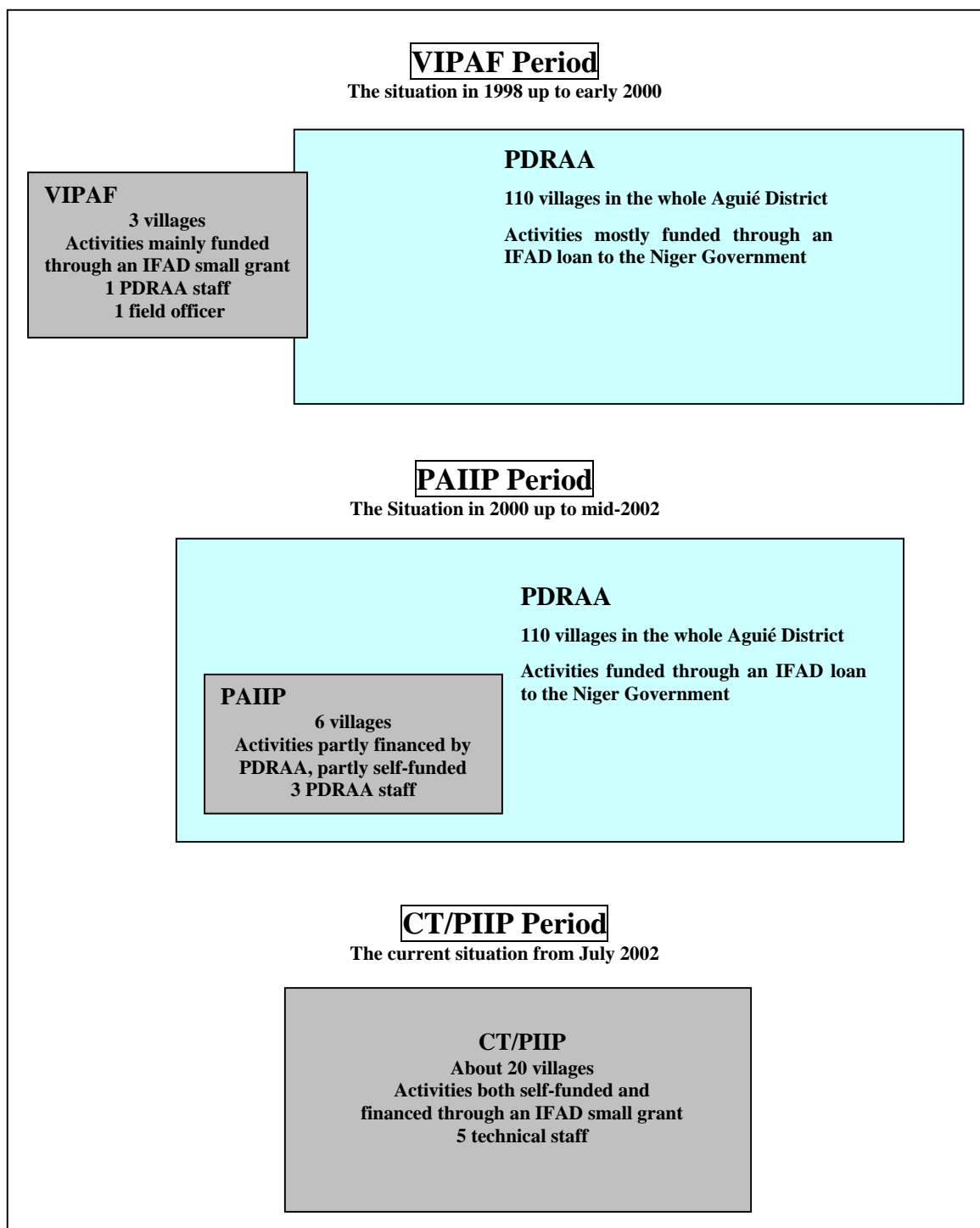
9 NARS researchers involved in 2001 (about 40 days of intervention between March and September), in addition to 9 students and 3 academics (University of Niamey). In 2002, 4 NARS researchers, also three academics and three students.

In 2001, three (3) District extension officers intervene once a week on average (mainly to help farmers monitor and manage their trials). In 2002, four (4) District extension officers.

Appendix 3
Overview of the activities carried out in the six PAIP villages in 2001
(Adapted from De Leener, 2001a)

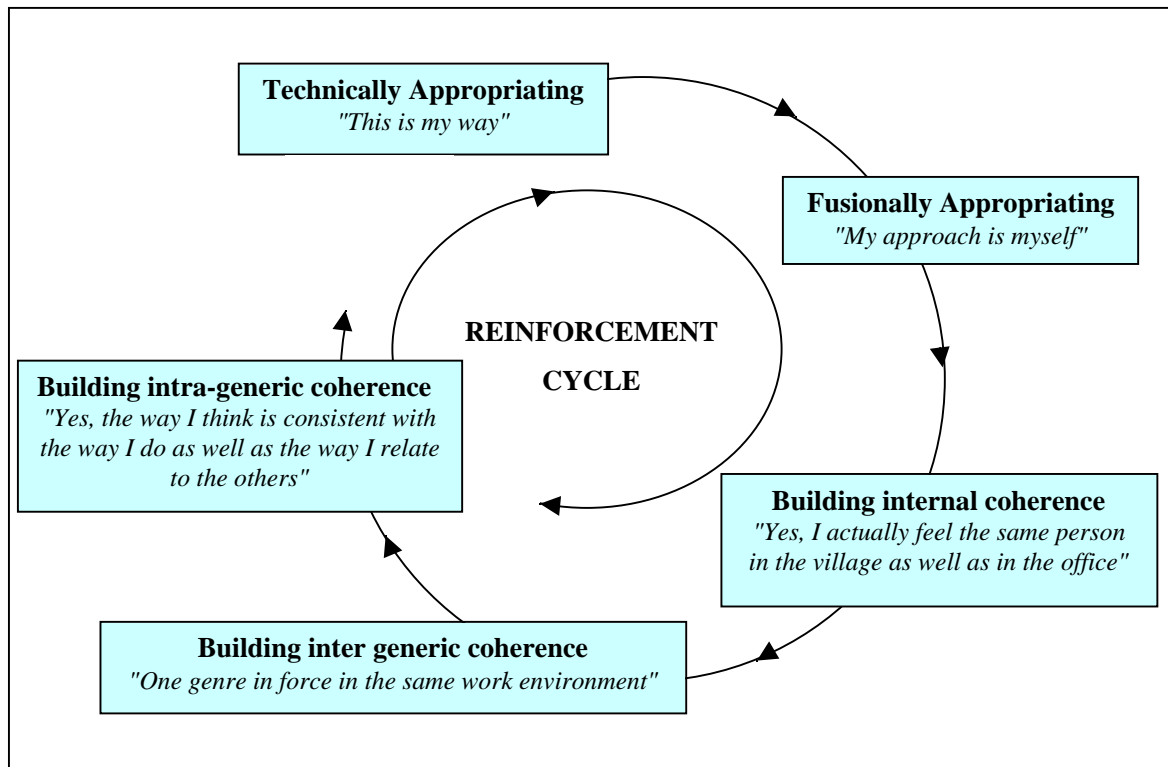
<u>Villages</u> —>	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
<i>Activities</i>						
Treatment of cereal straw with salt	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mixture seeds + fertilizers					x	x
Tests of various ways to bring nitrogen fertilizers (urea 15.15.15)						x
Cereal banks		x	x		x	x
Test of <i>Hyphaene sp</i> sowing	x	x		x	x	x
Bank account for the local parent association						x
Building and managing a new market place						x
Fodder and cereal banks			x		x	
Fada Ni'ima Operation						x
Literacy		x			x	
Women groups / credit and savings						x
Trials with several sorghum varieties (performance comparison)			x	x		x
Natural resources management and tree plantations			x	x	x	
Improved mulching				x	x	
Community organizational setting around a village borehole	x				x	x
Goat manure (trials)					x	
Organization for multiplying improved seeds (cowpea, millet;...)		x	x	x	x	x
Cassava cuttings			x		x	
Delineating ways for better livestock circulation		x			x	
Fodder treatment			x		x	
How to utilize <i>Sida cordifolia</i> to feed animals?	x		x	x	x	
Test of cowpea varieties			x			
Women micro economic activities (dying, sowing,...)				x		x
Test to eradicate <i>Striga sp.</i> with traditional means (<i>Sesamum sp</i> ashes)			x			
Eradication of <i>Sida cordifolia</i> in the pasturelands		x				
Production of soap from several local resources				x		
Training in animal disease management	x	x	x			
Farmer Filed Fora (improved local cowpea)			x			
Protection of cowpea with tobacco/hot chilly/petroleum/neem...		x	x			
Livestock breeder associations			x			
Collective women fields			x			
Local shops and micro-credit devices managed by women groups	x					
Building of a meeting room	x					
Help women better organize themselves	x					
Trials on pest management with the fresh leaves of local trees	x					
Animal husbandry and hygiene	x					
Tree pruning (exchanges visits and tests)	x					
Organizational development (exchanges visits and actions)		x				
Micro-credit and savings managed by women	x					
Testing several management practices of local vegetables	x					
Improved goat, sheep and cow husbandry (exchanges visits and tests)	x					
Household hygiene measures			x			
Health house at village level		x	x			
Improved groundnut oil extraction (women groups)						x
Help youth association develop economic activities					x	
Traders organization, self-help and mutual supports			x		x	
Training masons and testing new local woodless building technologies	x	x	x			

Appendix 4 Evolution of the institutional niche



As suggested by the figure, the program progressively phagocytes the PDRAA. At the beginning, VIPAF is almost out of the PDRAA sphere, then under the form of PAIIP the program becomes part of the project which is finally substituted by CT/PIIP.

Appendix 5
Chain of transformational mechanisms at work in Aguié
(VIPAF, PAIIP and CT/PIIP)



Adapted from De leener Philippe *et al.*, Aguié, 2003

Appendix 1
Overview on the partnership landscape related to the Aguié program

