

MASTER'S THESIS

Bridging knowledge divides

Strengthening research-policy linkages through the
Development Policy Review Network



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Acronyms & abbreviations

AMAD-OS	Ambassador in General Service of Development Cooperation for DGIS
AWT	Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy
BuZa	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CCS	Ceres Summer School
CERES	Research School for Resource Studies for Development
DC	Development Cooperation
DCO	Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research Department
DDE	Sustainable Economic Development Department
DEC	Effectiveness and Coherence Department
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation
DMW	Environment and Water Department
DPRN	Development Policy Review Network
DMH	Human Rights and Peacebuilding Department
IC	International Cooperation
IKM	(-Emergent) Issues in Information and Knowledge Management
LNV	Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMRP	Multi-annual Multidisciplinary Research Programmes
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWP	Netherlands Water Partnership
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
RAPID	Research and policy in Development
RAWOO	Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council
SFS	Structure follows Strategy
SNPT	Singing a New Policy Tune
UDB	Understanding Development Better
VROM	Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
WOTRO	Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research
WRR	Scientific Council for Government Policy

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Bridging knowledge divides

The Development Policy Review Network (DPRN) was set up in 2004 with the objective being to stimulate informed debate and knowledge exchange amongst various sectors (policy, science, practice and business)¹ within Dutch and Flemish Development Cooperation (DC).² The creation of the network stemmed from the wide-felt need to increase insight into how research-based knowledge could underpin and improve development policy and practice, and how a more policy-relevant research agenda could be effectuated. DPRN's work is facilitated by a subsidy from the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa), which is directed through the The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research / The Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (NWO/WOTRO).³

The gap between the different sectors in DC was perceived as highly critical at the time of DPRN's creation. One of the founders of DPRN, Prof. Dr Dietz, at that time scientific director of the CERES Research School for Resource Studies for Development in the Netherlands, felt it was time "to bridge gaps between the three worlds of development knowledge and its interlayers" (Dietz, 2003: 6). Communication between the various sectors had been poor, especially between policy and science. Illustrative and often referred to, is former Minister of DC Herfkens' statement in 2000, arguing that "she or her staff did not need any Dutch academic, because she could as well buy the necessary knowledge at the World Bank, and DGIS was not meant to butter the bread of Dutch academia" (Ibid.: 3).

In recent years, DGIS has changed its approach to fostering research-policy links, in particular after having issued a new policy memorandum for research and knowledge for DC in 2005. The policy emphasises that policymakers at the Ministry have to use knowledge more effectively in order to combat poverty and bring about sustainable development (DGIS, 2005). The current Minister for DC, Mr Koenders, sees knowledge and research as essential for the development of effective poverty reduction policies. One of his strategies, into which DPRN fits, aims specifically to increase knowledge circulation by establishing links between science, practice and policy, preferably in network settings (Koenders, 2008b).

Overall, the level of attention for evidence-based policy making and the need to embed research in society has increased (Molenaar et al., 2009). Knowledge networks have become popular solutions for reinforcing research-policy linkages. In response to this, an increasing number of studies have been dedicated to the subject, with their aim being to define what networks are, and what the best way is for them to operate. Despite some factors for success having been identified, it is still not very clear what enables them to act optimally as a bridge between research and policy (Court et al., 2005).

1.2 Involving policymakers

In order to bridge the gap between policy and research through knowledge networks, the active involvement of policymakers is required (Pant, 2009). Feedback, dialogue and collaboration between

¹ Based on the definition of the four sectors that DPRN nowadays distinguishes, 'policy' is in this paper regarded specifically as government policy, and 'policymakers' as the staff of ministries and embassies. Science stands for those academic and knowledge institutions and independent researchers carrying out scientific research. Practice stands for non-governmental organisations that are involved in the implementation of DC. Business refers to organisations in the corporate sector, and has been defined as a specific target group more explicitly in DPRN's second phase (2008-2010).

² DPRN's mission is as follows: "The Development Policy Review Network is committed to stimulating informed debate and discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies, in particular those related to Dutch policies and aid organisations. The DPRN promotes information exchange and dialogue between scientists, policymakers and development practitioners in the Netherlands and Belgium by creating opportunities for different kinds of development experts to meet and exchange ideas and information" (DPRN, 2007: 5).

³ The subsidy was granted by the Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research Department (DCO) until October 2009, after which the DPRN case was transferred to the newly formed Effectiveness and Coherence Department (DEC).

the different stakeholders is considered crucial in this regard (e.g. Court et al., 2005). During DPRN's first phase (2004-2007), it has proven difficult to realise this: compared to the other sectors, policymakers - thus defined as staff of ministries and embassies - were under-represented in DPRN activities.

In the first phase, DPRN organised 39 regional and 3 thematic meetings that were attended by more than 1,300 participants, of which less than 10% were policymakers (DPRN, 2008).⁴ It appeared difficult to involve policymakers in the meetings, even when these were held in The Hague or when the Ministry was contacted in advance (DPRN, 2007). Besides organising meetings, DPRN also developed a searchable database of development expertise in the Netherlands and Flanders (www.global-connections.nl) during the first phase, on the basis of which expertise inventories were drawn up. The low level of policymaker involvement was reflected in the entry data of the online database. Only 33 policymakers were included, which was less than 15% of the total number of entries at that time (Context IC, 2007).

The evaluation of the first phase showed that DPRN fulfilled a need. DPRN had increased cooperation among participants, was positioned well, and had been established at the right time. However, three main recommendations were made with a view to increasing its effectiveness. Firstly, it was suggested that the network would focus more than it did on increasing participants' involvement in terms of agenda setting, online exchange, and embedding the meetings in processes targeted at bringing the various groups together. Secondly, the network would benefit from a shift from a regional to a more thematic focus. Thirdly, more efforts should be made to involve sectors that, up to then, had participated insufficiently (i.e. policymakers, and people from the corporate sector) (Ibid.).

These three recommendations were taken on board, and included as specific objectives in DPRN's strategic plan for the second phase (2008-2010), whereby the main challenge identified was "to move beyond 'meeting each other' and set the stage for exploring common ground and opportunities for multi-sector agenda setting and cooperation" (DPRN, 2007: 9). In the new approach meetings are embedded in processes, that aim at bringing together the various sectors and identifying opportunities for cooperation for a certain period of time.⁵ Each year, five processes are selected through an open call for proposals. In addition, each year one process is instigated by the DPRN Task Force itself.⁶ The processes can take one or more years depending on the year in which they have started. The selected processes are organised by at least two parties that represent two different sectors, with the other sectors also being involved in the process. So far, DPRN has undertaken 11 processes in its second phase, with 39 organisations having been involved as organising parties, including the organisations to which the Task Force members are affiliated (see Appendix 1 for an overview).

In the new approach, DPRN makes a specific effort to involve policymakers in its activities. This is done through:

- Embedding the meetings in processes that also include online information exchange, policy analysis, and a synthesis of policy-relevant research activities and development interventions.
- Taking a thematic rather than regional approach.

⁴ The regional meetings were organised by selected academic institutes. The thematic meetings were organised by the DPRN Task Force.

⁵ Each process should involve the organisation of at least one meeting. Furthermore, the following activities should be included in the process: the preparation and prior dissemination of policy-oriented position papers, facilitating online information exchanges, preparing an inventory of expertise, providing overviews of relevant policy documents, processes, development interventions and ongoing research, and drawing up of a list of 'must-read' literature.

⁶ The DPRN Task Force is made up of various representatives from the four sectors in Dutch DC, who have chosen to participate voluntarily. The Task Force consists of 12 members, of which 5 belong to the scientific community (one of which is an observer for WOTRO), 5 are practitioners, 1 is from the corporate sector, and 1 is a policymaker (acting as an observer for BuZa/DGIS). The Task Force is responsible for the administrative organisation and internal control of the network, and is assisted by the DPRN Coordination Unit (1.2 fte), which is hosted by CERES member AMIDSt.

- Involving policymakers in the agenda setting of processes and approaching them at an early stage of the programming. They can either be one of the organising parties, or otherwise they should be actively involved in the process.
- Using relevant policy documents as input throughout the process.
- Being output-orientated, implying that reports (including the identification of opportunities for intersectoral cooperation), and a policy statement, policy brief, or policy reviews are made.
- Being outcome-orientated, meaning that a plan is drawn up for follow-up activities that is also relevant for policy.

This research aims to shed light on the broader context in which DPRN is operating by looking at the ways knowledge and intersectoral cooperation in the Dutch field of DC are perceived by various stakeholders, and in specific by policymakers. This study also investigates to what extent the approach chosen in the second phase has led to greater involvement of policymakers in DPRN activities, and in as how far the knowledge needs of policymakers are concurred with the knowledge that is channelled through DPRN. Through this, it is assessed how DPRN contributes to more effective research-policy linkages. The study is meant to be an internal reflection for the DPRN Task Force, and can be informative and helpful for organisations that are working towards intersectoral cooperation.

1.3 Research questions

Based on a recognition of the importance of intersectoral knowledge networks in the development context, the critical role DPRN can play in this regard, and the significance of policymakers' involvement in these kind of networks, the following research question is formulated:

How does DPRN contribute to more effective research-policy linkages in the field of Dutch Development Cooperation?

This question is divided into two sub-questions, each of which will be answered in a subsequent chapter:

1. Which view on research and knowledge is held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and how has this shaped research-policy linkages within the Dutch DC sector?

DPRN was set up at a time when there were few links between the various Dutch DC sectors. Answering this question allows for an examination, from a historical perspective, of how Dutch DC policy has regarded knowledge and intersectoral cooperation over the years, and how this shaped intersectoral relations. This will lead to an assessment of the context in which DPRN is operating and how the different sectors regard research-policy knowledge exchange.

2. How is the approach of DPRN regarded by participants of the network, and how are policymakers involved in it?

This question is answered by examining the process-approach DPRN has chosen for in the second phase, and by looking at the actual involvement of policymakers in DPRN processes so far. As already mentioned, DPRN decided to focus specifically on involving this group in the second phase, and an assessment is made of the extent to which this has been successful.

After having outlined the theoretical background and main definitions of this study in the next chapter, the following chapters 3 and 4 each answer one of the above sub-questions. Conclusions are drawn in chapter 5.

1.4 Research methodology

The main data gathered for this study are 29 semi-structured interviews held face-to-face (15), by telephone (13), and e-mail (1) (see Appendix 2 for a list of respondents). Two interviews involved 2 respondents, which counts for a total of 31 respondents. Invitations for the interviews were sent by email, and comprised a short introduction and questions. Fifteen of the face-to-face and telephone interviews were typed out and a report was sent to the respondents for verification.⁷ Eight of these typed interviews were commented on by the respondents, with them making minor adjustments to the texts.

Of the 29 interviews, 10 were held with policymakers, 8 were held with scientists, 8 were held with practitioners, 1 was held with people from the corporate sector, and 2 were held with people who do not fit into these categories ('other').

Six interviews with policymakers specifically addressed knowledge management at BuZa and the functioning of the organisation as regards knowledge development and intersectoral cooperation. These questions were also addressed in 5 interviews with respondents from other sectors. Where possible, a comparison was made with other ministries, in order to heighten the understanding of BuZa, and to view it in relation to the wider government administration.

As regards the respondents' affiliation to DPRN, 4 interviews were held with DPRN Task Force members. They have been involved in DPRN from the start, either in their current or former capacities. They were asked about the general functioning of DPRN and intersectoral cooperation in the field of Dutch DC. They were also asked about the DPRN processes, specifically the 'Structure follows strategy' (SFS) process which was organised by the Task Force itself.

A total of 16 interviews were held with respondents who have been involved in the organisation of the 10 processes facilitated by DPRN. At least one (co-)organiser of each DPRN process was interviewed. They were asked about the intersectoral cooperation within the processes and specifically about the involvement of policymakers. They were also asked about their perceptions on the functioning of DPRN.

Eight interviews were held with people who participated in the various DPRN processes. They were asked in particular whether the DPRN processes were relevant to them. Lastly, one interview was held with someone who did not participate in DPRN processes, but who is knowledgeable about intersectoral cooperation and the perception of policymakers on knowledge.

Data was also gathered through analysis of literature, policy documents and articles of policymakers. A number of reports of advisory councils (e.g. the WRR) were used to place the developments at BuZa in the wider Dutch context. Valuable literature was also found in articles written about a recent conference on knowledge in DC ('Knowledge on the move'). The DPRN process websites and reports were also useful sources of information.⁸ Various journalistic articles (e.g. *The Broker and Vice Versa*) were used to acquire a proper understanding of how research-policy cooperation as well as the BuZa policies on knowledge-related matters have been perceived in Dutch DC. For the theoretical component of the study, literature on knowledge networks and research-policy linkages in DC was accessed via various working programmes (such as ODI-RAPID and IKM Emergent) that are currently working on the subject.

To conclude, it must be said that the researcher benefited from the position she has held in the DPRN Coordination Unit from September 2008 onwards, which has meant that she has been closely involved in DPRN and the monitoring of the various processes that have been undertaken in the network.

⁷ Due to time constraints it was not possible to make a report of all the interviews.

⁸ Some reports, which have not yet been published online and which are still being finalised, could also be assessed because they were submitted to the DPRN Coordination Unit for approval.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitations of the study are due to the functioning of DPRN in its second phase. Firstly, even though DPRN intends involving Flemish DC experts in its activities, so far they have not participated to the extent they did in the first phase.⁹ Secondly, despite the fact that embassy personnel is also included in the definition of policymakers as a target group, so far only a few have participated. Therefore, this study concerns policymakers working in the Netherlands, and mainly those who work for BuZa, although attention is also paid to policymakers from other ministries that play a role in DPRN processes.

Thirdly, the study focuses on the 11 processes that are outlined in Appendix 1, which have all been initiated quite recently (from 2008 onwards).¹⁰ Therefore, the actual uptake of the results or impact on policy cannot yet be assessed. Furthermore, the 5 processes that were awarded in the second round have only just started in 2009. In addition, two of the processes from the first round are still ongoing. Consequently, this study focuses on the involvement and agenda-setting of policymakers in the activities organised so far.

A last consideration is the fact that the researcher works for DPRN and, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, this was beneficial for the data gathering. However, it could be argued that this affiliation meant that the researcher was unable to be sufficiently objective and may have tended to present work of DPRN in an over-favourable light. The researcher was aware of this and tried to be as objective as possible. Furthermore, the researcher's affiliation might allow for a possible social desirability bias on the part of the respondents. About half of the respondents organise a process for DPRN and this makes them dependent on DPRN for finances. It is therefore possible that they described the processes in an overly-positive light. To counteract this, the researcher gave respondents confidentiality and anonymity assurances. It should also be noted that this bias was not felt to be present in the many critical answers given during the interviews.

⁹ In order to curb this, DPRN's third call for proposals – which explicitly mentioned involvement of Flemish organisations as a selection criterion – was purposively distributed amongst 150 scientists in the www.researchportal.be database.

¹⁰ The study excludes the other two DPRN activities - setting up an online expert database (www.global-connections.nl) and an online library for digital documents from Dutch development organisations (www.search4dev.nl). The expert database has been under construction and has therefore not yet been updated. The online library is in a phase of expansion but does not yet contain publications from BuZa. It must be said that it would be useful to assess the extent to which policymakers make use of these initiatives.

Chapter 2 Theoretical background

This chapter discusses the theoretical background of this study, drawing primarily on the work of the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).¹¹ Section 2.1 discusses the concept of knowledge and its importance for development. Section 2.2 examines how knowledge can influence policy processes, and how networks act as intermediaries that bring multiple sources of knowledge together.

2.1 Knowledge for Development

The starting point for the discussion on knowledge is the definition used by RAPID researchers Perkins & Court (2005, as adopted from the Association for Information Management): “Information that has been evaluated and organised so that it can be used purposefully”. Knowledge is generally differentiated into explicit and implicit knowledge, and it is important to consider both (Ramalingam, 2005). Explicit knowledge can be easily articulated and accessed by putting it into a codified form (for example in manuals, documents and procedures). Implicit knowledge is, however, more unconscious and intuitive, and much harder to formalise (i.e. know-how based on experience).

The critical importance of knowledge in strengthening policy and practice is currently widely recognised in the development sector, especially since the publication of the World Bank report ‘Knowledge for development’ in 1998 (Hovland, 2003; Ramalingam, 2005; Ferguson & Cummings, 2008). Knowledge is seen as crucial for development, not only because it is increasingly shaping the global economic system (triggered by among other things, the growth of digitalisation), but also because of growing recognition of the complexity, multidimensionality and dynamic nature of development (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008).

Because of the complex nature of development, dealing with it requires a holistic understanding of knowledge, and incorporation of knowledge from a variety of sources other than merely academic science (Jones et al., 2009; Brown, 2007). In order to deal with the unpredictability and dynamics of development problems, it is also crucial to enhance feedback processes between various stakeholders in development interventions (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). This emphasis on interaction means that the knowledge divides between different groups of stakeholders needs to be tackled. Within the framework of this interaction it is furthermore important to acknowledge the power dimension, as stated by Pant (2009: 28): “Bridging knowledge divides in international development often involves power struggles, value incongruence, differential predisposition, and mistrust between scientific community members, policy people and practitioners. In order to maintain a power balance, achieve value convergence, enhance the level of trust and subsequently facilitate learning and innovation, boundary work is important.”¹²

2.2 Linking research knowledge and policy

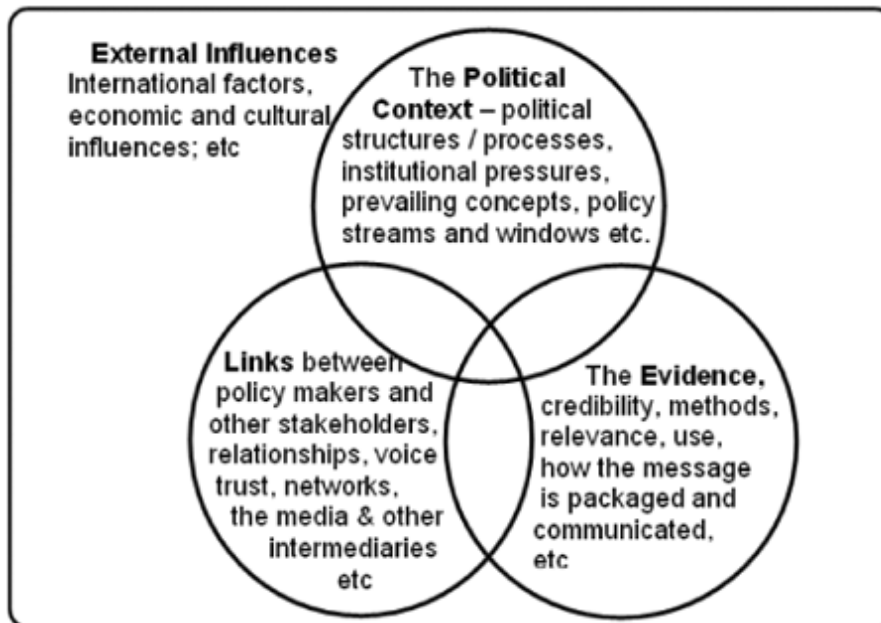
RAPID designed a conceptual framework (see the figure below) that describes the link between research and policy. Rather than regarding the research-policy link as a direct, or linear process with a clear divide between the two communities, RAPID advocates for a more dynamic and complex view that emphasises a two-way process between research and policy, shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge. It is stated that policymakers are also involved in the production of knowledge, even though they may have different notions compared to those of researchers, concerning what is regarded as useful knowledge. The focus is thus no longer on how to transport research from the research community to the policy sphere. Instead, the key question is: Why are

¹¹ Since 1999, the RAPID programme has been working to achieve a better understanding of the role of knowledge in policy and practice, and the skills and capacities needed for researchers and organisations to translate knowledge effectively into action. The general feeling is that knowledge could be used more effectively in policymaking processes.

¹² “Boundary work involves two or more groups that work to different standards and objectives, such as basic scientists versus practitioners” (Pant, 2009: 28, referring to Kristjanson et al., 2008).

some of the ideas that circulate in the research-policy arenas picked up and acted on, while others are ignored and disappear?

In this process of interaction, it is also crucial to acknowledge the role of power. In the words of Jones (2009: 5): “Knowledge will often reflect and sustain existing power structures, and is used in the policy process in processes of contest, negotiation, legitimisation and marginalisation”. In this regard it is useful to go beyond what Jones (Ibid.) calls the ‘Pluralism and opportunism paradigm’, in which the incorporation of knowledge in policy is generally assumed to be ‘good’. Instead, Jones argues that more recent work in what he calls the ‘Politics and legitimisation paradigm’, has emphasised that power is infused throughout the knowledge process, and therefore the use of knowledge in policy should not be seen as neutral.



The RAPID framework¹³

The RAPID programme uses relatively open definitions of research and policy. Research is regarded as: “any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge” (Court et al., 2005: 6).¹⁴ Research can therefore be drawn from a range of sources, including governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the more common sources of universities and think tanks. It is stated that research therefore includes “any systematic process of critical investigation and evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis and codification related to development policy and practice. It includes action research, i.e. self-reflection by practitioners towards the enhancement of direct practice” (Ibid).

Policy is defined as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors” (Anderson, 1975, referred to by Court et al., 2005: 7). This goes beyond documents or legislation by including activities on the ground. The authors suggest a focus on public policy because this affects the public most, and because this is visible to the public. Public policy can be made by governments as well as international organisations, bilateral organisations and NGOs.

In the RAPID framework, research uptake is seen as a function of the interaction of four domains: Political Context (politics and institutions), Evidence (approach and credibility of research), Links between researchers and policymakers (such as networks), and External influences (such as international policy agendas) (Ibid.).

¹³ First developed by Crewe & Young (2002).

¹⁴ This is based on OECD (1981) definition: “creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”.

The Political Context domain includes the people, institutions and processes involved in policymaking. It is seen as the most important domain in affecting the degree to which research has an impact on policy. Firstly, the extent to which policymakers demand new ideas from the researchers is dependent on the nature of political culture and the degree of openness. Secondly, how policymakers think is influenced by the prevailing narratives and discourses. Following Weiss (1977), the RAPID model assumes that research may exert a powerful indirect influence by introducing new terms and shaping the policy discourse. Thirdly, the degree of political contestation is an important factor. Significant debate on an issue makes it very difficult to progress. On the other hand, if demand is considerable, and provoked particularly by a crisis for which policymakers are seeking a solution, the chances of research being used are much greater. Overall, it is suggested that researchers need to understand the political process, identify key individuals, and look for regular policy opportunities and policy windows in order to make research influence policy and practice.

The Evidence domain relates to the type and quality of research and how it is communicated. Three dimensions are important in this regard. Firstly, working on research, which is relevant for policymakers and providing solutions to a problem makes it easier to engage with them. Secondly, research that is operationally useful, i.e. that suggests how a policymaker may do something differently in his or her work, has a greater chance of influencing policy. Thirdly, uptake is influenced by the credibility of the research approaches and methods, and of researchers themselves (i.e. whether they are recognised as experts). Underlying these dimensions is the need for good communication strategies, whereby researchers should be willing to listen to policymakers and engage them in the research process.

The Links domain relates to the bridging mechanisms that are intended to incorporate evidence into the policy process. Researchers are said to be more influential if they interact with policymakers, preferably in network settings. Links should be established between the two groups, which involve feedback, dialogue and collaboration. Networks are defined as: "Formal or informal structures that link actors (individuals or organisations) who share a common interest on a specific issue or a general set of values" (Perkin & Court, 2005: 2). Policy networks are a specific focus of this study and can be defined as "networks that are related to the policy process" (Ibid.). The relationships between the two groups depend on issues of trust, legitimacy, and participation. In this regard it is important to get to know the other actors and establish partnerships between them. It is considered helpful to work with key networkers and salesmen who can convince the sceptics, and also to use informal contacts. The Links domain also addresses the ways in which information can best be transferred between researchers and policymakers (i.e. face-to-face or through the media or campaigns).

Again it should be emphasised that establishing links between policymakers and researchers also involves a power dimension. Actors in a network usually protect or advance sets of interests and are involved in a process of interaction, negotiation and bargaining. As Jones (2009: 27) argues: "Social networks may also have a downside. Through the way they spread knowledge, existing social networks and social capital may often work to perpetuate existing power structures".

To finish, the External influences domain concerns processes such as international politics and donor funding. Firstly, because policy processes are becoming increasingly global, international agendas are increasingly affecting policy and the ways research is used. Secondly, donor policies with regard to how research is funded do also affect what sort of research is considered useful for policy.

In the RAPID framework, the different domains should be understood in relation to each other and should not be viewed in isolation. The framework presented above, whereby the three domains overlap, can be regarded as ideal. In some situations there will not be much overlap between the different domains, for example when there is little political will for change (no overlap between the political context and evidence domains), or when research takes place in ivory towers (then the evidence domain stands apart). Furthermore, the relative importance of each of the domains may be different in different situations, and may also change over time. Therefore, it is suggested that the framework can best be seen as a trio of floating spheres of variable size and degree of overlap (Court et al., 2005).

The RAPID definitions relating to research and policy are partly congruent with those of DPRN.

- Concerning, 'research', DPRN agrees with the definition of RAPID in that it can be produced by various actors, although, and this also stems from the origination of DPRN from CERES, it should preferably involve a scientific component. Through its focus on intersectoral cooperation, DPRN recognises the relevance of integrating multiple sources of knowledge (from the four identified sectors) and it therefore regards scientific research as only one of the many inputs, as argued for by Jones et al. (2009).
- DPRN focuses primarily on 'research-based knowledge' (DPRN, 2007). Following Jones et al. (2009: 7) research-based knowledge "can be scientific in nature, involving rigorous investigation to enhance the stock of knowledge about the world" and it "can also be policy oriented, using systematic methods to examine problems for formulating and implementing policy". Both are important for DPRN.
- Concerning 'policy', for DPRN this primarily means 'policy made by national and international governmental organisations', but can also refer to policy of development organisations.
- However, in this study, policy is used to refer specifically to the first category. And policymakers are therefore seen as those who are working for ministries.

Even though the definitions used by DPRN are somewhat narrower than those used by RAPID, the framework is still useful for the analysis of this study. Like RAPID, DPRN acknowledges the nonlinearity of policymaking processes. Moreover, the flow of knowledge into policy is not taken as a given, but is seen as an explicit effort on the part of various actors. The framework is also useful because it situates DPRN - as a policy network - in the Links domain, and from there the interrelatedness with other domains can be taken into account. The research-based knowledge that is channelled through DPRN, and the organisations that produce this, can be located in the Evidence domain. The policy on DC as put forward by BuZa, and the policymakers that are involved in the implementation of it, are situated in the Political context domain.

Chapter 3 DC policy and the knowledge of Dutch organisations

This chapter describes how the policy sector regards the knowledge of other sectors active in the field of DC. The focus is on knowledge that is generated by Dutch organisations, as these form the main target groups of DPRN. Relating this to the RAPID framework set in the previous chapter, this means that it is looked at how the Political context domain has been interacting with the other two domains (Evidence and Links). Section 3.1 describes the policy sector's view on knowledge and research from an historical perspective. This is important for the analysis of the current relationships between the various sectors in Dutch DC. Section 3.2 is a more detailed examination of the present research-policy relations within the Dutch knowledge field. This section is specified per sector, whereby most attention is given to the policymakers.

3.1 A changing perspective on knowledge and research

Research and knowledge have a long tradition in Dutch DC policy. The interpretation of this policy, particularly with respect to the various actors who are considered to play a role in the development of knowledge, has fundamentally changed over the years. This shift can be characterised as one from the production of demand-driven research and local ownership, to the use of embedded knowledge and partnerships.

3.1.1 From the production of demand-driven research and local ownership...

The first Dutch research policy memorandum on DC, entitled 'Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking' ('Research and Development Cooperation', DGIS, 1992) can be considered as starting point for our analysis. The introduction of this policy is often regarded as representing a paradigm shift for throwing overboard the hitherto dominant supply-driven approach and no longer considering Dutch researchers and institutions to 'dictate' the research agenda (Molenaar, 2009). Instead, the focus was laid on the demands and needs of developing countries. The Multi-annual Multidisciplinary Research Programmes (MMRPs), which were devised in order to strengthen the research capacity of developing countries, formed the embodiment of this new policy. The programmes were designed and implemented in developing countries and coordinated by the DGIS Research Bureau, which itself was largely shielded from the rest of the Ministry based on the idea that the programmes had to be protected from Dutch interests (Wiedenhof & Molenaar, 2006).

The research policy was commended for its pioneering approach by focussing on the demand and needs of developing countries, but also led to much criticism. The IOB (2007), which evaluated the research policy implemented in the period 1992-2005, indicated that the demand-driven approach had been applied dogmatically. According to them, this not only led to fragmented programmes which insufficiently built on previous experiences, but also to a so-called 'development paradox'. By discouraging interaction with Dutch and other Western researchers, developing countries were unable to benefit from this knowledge. Furthermore, as was also mentioned in the response of the Ministry to the evaluation report, the deliberate withholding of this knowledge did not do justice to the concept of ownership. In fact, the DGIS Research Bureau was in control and determined the meaning of ownership (DGIS/DCO, 2007b). The research policy was also rather paternalistic, as some policymakers mentioned, because it implicitly assumed that DGIS itself did not have anything to learn (Wiedenhof & Molenaar, 2006).

Even though the vast majority of research programmes that were undertaken before 1992 in which Dutch researchers and institutions played a major role, continued under the new research policy, the policy still led to a great deal of dissatisfaction among the Dutch research community (DGIS/DCO, 2007b). They feared being pushed aside and, in addition, the underlying assumption that they would only pursue their own interests, offended them (IOB, 2007).

In 2004, the Ministry decided to end the MMRPs. This was mainly because the approach had not evolved in line with other developments at the Ministry during the latter half of the 1990s, namely the introduction of decentralisation, the sector approach, and the emphasis on donor

harmonisation and national ownership in the form of Poverty Reduction Strategies (Molenaar, 2009). Furthermore, because the Research Bureau was largely working in isolation from the rest of the Ministry, a gap had emerged between research and policy. Lessons learned within the programmes were not shared within the wider Ministry, and the Research Bureau hardly played a role in its strategic development (Wiedenhof & Molenaar, 2006).

3.1.2 ...to the use of embedded knowledge and partnerships

In 2005, a new research strategy was set out in the policy memorandum 'Onderzoek in ontwikkeling' ('Research in Development')¹⁵. This policy emphasises that knowledge is of crucial importance for development, even more so than it had been in the early 1990s. Knowledge is broadly understood here, in the sense that the production of it is seen as not only belonging to researchers, but with other actors (such as policymakers, practitioners, the corporate sector, and end-users) also being involved.¹⁶ Based on the increased understanding that DC is an intrinsically complex challenge due to a general lack of consensus on values or facts – broad stakeholder involvement is considered to be necessary (Wiedenhof & Rijniers, 2008).¹⁷ Interaction between various actors, especially in networks, is therefore of great concern, assuming this can spur innovation (e.g. Koenders, 2008b). Moreover, it is argued that knowledge is of importance for development when it can be put to use and, as such, the focus is on the use, rather than the production, of knowledge (DGIS, 2005).

The memorandum states that merely focussing on demand orientation and local ownership are not a panacea. The existence of mutual interests and responsibilities in DC implies that the donor should also invest in knowledge, and this shifts the focus from ownership to partnership. Knowledge has to be an integral element of policy processes and, as such, policymakers must make more effective use of it. This also means that investments should be made in knowledge management strategies at the Ministry (Wiedenhof & Molenaar, 2006). Policymakers are expected to make greater use of research in policy development, and research agendas should be more influenced by questions arising from policy.¹⁸ For this reason, the decision was also taken to embed research more in the various Ministry programmes, with departments having to write 'knowledge and research strategies' ('Kennis- en onderzoeksstrategie', KOS). However, in the interviews people mentioned that by far not enough progress had been made in this respect.¹⁹

The new policy also brought Dutch research institutions back into view. However, their role was clearly stated to be based on added value (DGIS/DCO, 2007b). The reaction of the Dutch research community on the new policy was generally favourable (IOB, 2007). However, some also mentioned that the policy had been developed mostly without the involvement of Southern research organisations and so no real partnership had been established (Van Beurden, 2006). Furthermore, it was suggested that the Ministry would create a much more clearly structured 'knowledge architecture', and put more effort in involving the embassies in the knowledge processes (Dietz, 2006).

¹⁵ The policy came into being after explicit efforts by policymakers from the Research Unit in support of senior DGIS officials. This was frequently mentioned during the interviews. The ability to invoke change depends greatly on personal skills.

¹⁶ As such the disbanding of the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) - wherein merely researchers (both from the North and the South) were seated - in 2007 was seen as a logical step (Molenaar, 2009).

¹⁷ The increasingly complex nature of problems the government is faced with, has led the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2006) to advise the Dutch government to invest in a more open attitude to learning. Entering into relationships with external partners is considered crucial when addressing these complex (or what the WRR terms 'untamed') problems. The Council argues that policymakers should therefore act as networkers, connecting links between various experts and interest groups to gather the knowledge necessary to assess and decide on the ways to address problems.

¹⁸ The main programme entitled 'Research and Innovation' supports a number of strategic alliances (such as the IS academy), networks (such as DPRN) and intermediary organisations (such as WOTRO) that focus on this use of research and knowledge for policymaking.

¹⁹ The Environment and Water Department (DMW), which is also the only department with a knowledge officer, has made the most progress. It recently developed a revised and second version of their KOS for the period 2009-2011.

3.2 The Dutch field of DC

The decision of the Ministry to fund DPRN can be seen in the light of increasing attention for research and knowledge of Dutch organisations and knowledge sharing between different sectors. However, it seems that bridging knowledge divides is not that easy. Even though improvements have been made, it is still common for the different sectors to operate from their separate 'ivory towers', and there is still need to bridge apparent knowledge divides (e.g. Stremmelaar et al., 2009). This section looks at the different perspectives on knowledge and intersectoral cooperation in the field of Dutch DC. It is against this background that the intersectoral cooperation within DPRN shall be assessed in the next chapter.

3.2.1 Policymakers

Even though the Ministry's new research policy emphasises increased attention for the use of knowledge and research, and interaction with other stakeholders, most respondents argued that the Ministry itself is not a knowledge-intensive organisation. Most of the criticism is directed towards the Ministry's personnel policy, which is characterised by a rotating transfer system in which a large proportion of the staff change jobs within the Ministry every three to four years, and which tends to prioritise generalist rather than specialist knowledge. Consequently, employees with a DC-related function do not necessarily need or use the knowledge they develop in this field in their subsequent job positions at the Ministry.²⁰ Furthermore, it was argued that by hiring primarily generalists, the Ministry does not attract personnel that is principally interested in DC.

On the subject of the personnel policy, respondents unanimously agreed that the Ministry has taken things too far. Not enough attention is being paid to building up substantive knowledge. People from outside the Ministry therefore regard policymakers as being insufficiently informed and at times even uninterested in their fields of expertise. Furthermore, the frequent staff changes hinder trust building and longer-term relationships (e.g. Stremmelaar et al., 2009). Policymakers themselves also see the benefits of the system, in that they find it refreshing and believe that it may preclude rigidity. However, they also acknowledge that the unstructured nature of the system means that insufficient lessons are learned from the past. Both people from outside the Ministry and policymakers themselves argue that there should be a better balance of hiring generalists and specialists. This would also benefit the rotating transfer system. As one respondent argued, "Increased investment in specialist knowledge also means that there is more and better knowledge to spread throughout the organisation".²¹

Within the context of the jobs themselves, the development of knowledge is further inhibited because, as one respondent said, "at the Ministry there is a culture dominated by production first". High work pressure causes employees to focus first on meeting deadlines, leaving little time for reflection and learning.²² Furthermore, the reward system is not geared towards learning or investing in knowledge production, and there are few positions in which employees can concentrate purely on knowledge (e.g. Wiedenhof & Molenaar, 2006).²³

Even though the Ministry's personnel policy and reward system may not be directed towards learning and developing substantive knowledge, many of the policymakers stress they are indeed very interested in it. They argue that they are already doing a lot, often in their own time, and would like to do more. However, practical reasons, particularly time shortage, prevent them from doing this.

²⁰ However, as a policymaker argued, it is fair to say that, "we should not exaggerate this, as many employees who have been working on DC-related matters, are willing to continue in this field, if only because people have a natural tendency to apply for positions in which they can use previously gained knowledge".

²¹ The problems associated with the transfer system have also been highlighted by the Court of Audit (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2009).

²² An additional side effect is that the Ministry, especially in comparison with many other ministries, has a lot of money to spend. This creates situations whereby the emphasis in many jobs is on controlling spending rather than acquiring knowledge (e.g. Heres & Bieckmann, 2007).

²³ For example, there is only one knowledge officer ('kennisfunctionaris') in the thematic policy units, positioned at DMW.

They also argue that, for policymakers to invest in substantive knowledge, it should first and foremost be relevant to their work and they should be able to apply it.

The criticism of the administration's functioning is being addressed by the Ministry.²⁴ One respondent stated: "The Ministry is beginning to realise the importance of investing in knowledge. The idea that the Ministry is different from other ministries - in the sense that it is an especially political and coordinating body, in which content knowledge is not necessarily needed - is no longer dominant". The current Minister would be willing to put more emphasis on content knowledge and encourage a more critical attitude among policymakers (e.g. Bieckmann, 2009). In order to invest in knowledge, a number of people have been appointed to work on this. Most importantly for DC, is the new Ambassador in General Service of Development Cooperation (AMAD-OS) who is positioned at the Directorate General level.²⁵ The AMAD-OS, who was installed this year, is responsible for, among other things, DGIS' knowledge policy. He intends to work on a new reward system with built-in incentives for employees to invest more in knowledge and create a better balance between generalists and specialists.

The recent attention for investments in knowledge at the Ministry is generally welcomed although some respondents argue that it has been late in coming. It was also said that the changes were inspired more by external influences - such as the recommendations put forward by the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy (AWT, 2005) and the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2006), or the prominence that is given to The Netherlands as an innovation country - rather than being something that has emerged from within the Ministry itself.

Furthermore, respondents questioned whether the diplomatic culture of the Ministry would allow for a more knowledge intensive and critical attitude among policymakers. The Ministry's personnel, mainly trained as diplomats, would not naturally tend to criticise the policy they have to implement, nor be willing to easily disclose their information sources, something that does not go well together with exchanging more research-based knowledge. In addition, respondents strongly believed that policymakers adhered too closely to the political line of reasoning and were therefore insufficiently inclined to be critical of the policy they have to implement (e.g. Heres & Bieckmann, 2007).²⁶ It was argued that policymakers made insufficient use of knowledge that questions current policies. As a result they would adopt a rather defensive attitude. As a respondent mentioned: "At the Ministry there is a 'culture of avoidance', whereby critical knowledge is often put aside. Especially for diplomats who want to climb the career ladder, it can be dangerous to express dissenting views".

Concerning the exchange of knowledge between various ministries, there were also some serious comments. Since DC has increasingly been defined as part of the broader international cooperation (IC) agenda since the 1990s, BuZa currently cooperates with other ministries in the broader field of IC. Even though policy coherence²⁷ is strived for and a number of interdepartmental cooperation agreements and policy memoranda have been published, the fragmented organisational structure of IC policy is often believed to impede knowledge development in this field. Apparently, knowledge is not easily exchanged between the various ministries. Staff from the different ministries

²⁴ Even the Minister of DC mentioned: "I must admit that when I arrived at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Minister, I was quite shocked by the poor attention present for knowledge-infrastructure and advice on concrete development issues" (Koenders, 2008b: 4).

²⁵ Within DGIS there is also a scientific adviser. Furthermore, within the Ministry, there is also a scientific council advisor, who serves under the Secretary General.

²⁶ This issue is also raised by the WRR (2006). The Council therefore recommends to redefine the role of policymakers, stating that less emphasis should be placed on the dominant role of policymakers as 'process architects' and that there should be a greater orientation towards content knowledge. The policymaker should not only be seen and judged as 'subservient' to the Minister. Instead, policymakers should be appreciated for their content-related contributions and they should be seen as loyal but critical counterparts to the politicians.

²⁷ Policy coherence is an important aspect of Dutch DC policy and, given the existence of a (small) coherence department (which has now been integrated in the Quality and Effectiveness Department), it is often said that the Netherlands fulfils a leading role in this regard. However, there is still much work to do in this regard, something that is also admitted by the Minister of DC (Koenders, 2008b).

were said to meet each other indirectly through policy processes, but they would not be tended to approach each other straightforwardly to find new knowledge.

Besides the physical ministerial boundaries, sharing knowledge between ministries was thought to be hindered also by cultural differences and dissimilar kinds of knowledge. Some policymakers even refer to the presence of stereotypes. Staff from other ministries would regard the staff of DGIS/BuZa as somewhat elitist, in the sense they are not often that willing to ask others for knowledge in the field which they consider to be primarily theirs.²⁸ Besides that, policymakers from DGIS/BuZa would often be seen as invaluable in terms of substantive knowledge. A policymaker from DGIS also referred to this dissimilarity in kinds of knowledge but simultaneously advocated for more complementary relations by stating: "It might be true that we [as policymakers from BuZa] have less substantive knowledge but, on the other hand, we have diplomatic knowledge which is also important. We know our languages, we know the rules and procedures, and we are good negotiators. Indeed, this could be complementary".

The fact that policymakers from DGIS/BuZa are believed to possess less substantive knowledge is not necessarily due to the Ministry's staffing policy which is based on a preference for hiring generalists, a path that other ministries also seem to have followed. Firstly, other ministries are believed to better have institutionalised learning to a greater degree due to more standard procedures and controls. Secondly, a difference in accountability was regarded as a significant factor that influenced the way knowledge was treated by the different ministries. In contrast to staff from DGIS/BuZa, staff from other ministries are in more direct contact with their (mainly Dutch) target audience and consequently they can, and will be, held more directly accountable. They will therefore also be called to account more directly if their policies are based on inadequate knowledge. This is not the case as far as DGIS/BuZa is concerned, since the distance to the (primarily Southern) target audience is much greater, and they are not that oriented towards the Dutch society.²⁹ Furthermore, the Southern target audience itself is often disorganised and not empowered enough to present appropriate arguments. Wiedenhof & Rijniers (2008: 6) also state that this lack of downward accountability, in combination with a typical culture at the Ministry wherein upward accountability and control prevail over engagement, curiosity, and learning, leads to "relative insensitivity to changing circumstances and contexts".

Cooperation between various ministries is not only hindered by the fact that knowledge is not readily exchanged but also by a difference in financial assets. Almost all ODA money is spent by DGIS/BuZa, whilst other ministries - which, as already mentioned, often have very valuable substantive knowledge - are allowed to spend only a minor proportion of the same budget. This may cause for frustration amongst other ministries given that, in terms of policy coherence, a lot may be required from them by DGIS/BuZa but that, at the same time, hardly any commitments are made regarding the provision of funds. Of course DGIS/BuZa also has a reason for not transferring most of the money. Other ministries are often much more focused on defending Dutch interests, and DGIS/BuZa fears that this will play too great a role in how the budget is spent. For many DGIS/BuZa policymakers, the subordination of Dutch interests to those of the South is still a matter of principle.

Overall, it was argued that the Ministry is still often perceived as not being very open to sharing knowledge with others in general (e.g. DGIS/DCO, 2007a). This was agreed upon by a DGIS policymaker who stated: "The Ministry has a closed culture in which one thinks to know things better". In general, policymakers have little time and they have to be very selective as regards the knowledge they use. In this sense, it was argued that a lot of the knowledge produced by Dutch organisations was not considered to be very usable, especially because it does not provide enough clear solutions.

²⁸ The elitist and non-critical attitude was believed to be exacerbated because personnel from BuZa do not switch to other ministries very often. The Ministry employs new personnel mostly via an internal recruitment procedure. Furthermore, the top officials at the Ministry are excluded from the rotating interdepartmental transfer system of the Senior Civil Service (Algemene Bestuursdienst).

²⁹ In a recent DPRN debate about the future of Dutch DC, a tension was felt between the Dutch and the international dimension in terms of justification rhetoric. The following dilemma was posed "Will the Netherlands choose for support from the Dutch population or for a visible position in the international (political) architecture?" (DPRN, 2009: 7).

Knowledge from international organisations (like the World Bank, UNDP, or other bilateral donors) was thought to be of greater value to them. As one respondent mentioned: "Policymakers tend to look 'outside' rather than 'inside' the Netherlands. The knowledge of NGOs, the media, and science, is regarded mostly as background noise and something rather time-consuming."

3.2.2 The research community

It is clear that the Dutch DC research landscape is very varied and, as some also say, fragmented. Although the richness of this diversity is widely recognised, it is felt that there is a need to coordinate the various research projects more effectively.

First of all, it is apparent that many research organisations tend to know too little of what other organisations are doing, something which may lead to a duplication of research (Ros-Tonen & De Vries, 2008). There is a need for greater cooperation among research organisations in the Netherlands, as this will also sharpen the focus and increase the visibility of Dutch research (RAWOO, 2005).³⁰

Secondly, it was noted that the fragmentation of the Dutch research sector also hindered the application of knowledge in policy. The Netherlands does not have a centralised research institute specialised in DC research for policy as exists in other countries (e.g. ODI in the UK), and the Ministry does not encourage the pooling of knowledge within one institute. Instead, the Ministry emphasises networks or consortia³¹ in which various actors exchange knowledge. However, it was argued that the current situation in which a lot of organisations are separately in contact with the Ministry is not beneficial.³² As one respondent argued, "there are no natural knowledge lines". This not only means an extra management burden for the Ministry, but also causes for a poor overview of existing knowledge.³³

Many respondents felt that the Ministry had too little interest in Dutch research and that policymakers would not make much use of the available knowledge. In this sense, the Ministry should do more to include the Dutch research community. During the interviews, references were made to existing stereotypes. Researchers would see the Ministry mainly as a financier and policymakers as ignorant. In response, policymakers would regard researchers as persons only asking them for money and their work as not being useful to them. As one policymaker argued, "researchers only indicate in their conclusions that further research should be conducted". Another perceived disadvantage of research was that it was often not up-to-date and focussed on excessively specialist areas.

For policymakers it is important that research results are translated into operational solutions and are presented in a useful format. This is often not the case. As one respondent mentioned, "we don't read long reports, there is simply no time for that". The incentive structure for research funds in which publications in journals and academic excellence are the central goals, was also referred to as hampering the production of policy-relevant research. One solution could be to allow development relevance to be included as a criterion on which excellence is judged (Stremmelaar et al., 2009).³⁴

³⁰ CERES, the umbrella organisation for development-oriented research in the Netherlands, has been working on greater cooperation although some argue that a lot more still needs to be done.

³¹ Just recently (from October onwards), the Ministry has started working on a new initiative known as 'Kenniskringen' (Knowledge consortia), in which various experts and policymakers will be working together to define research questions on certain thematic policy areas.

³² It was estimated that WOTRO, the main intermediary organisation that supports scientific research on development issues, received less than 10 percent of the total amount of research funds available for DC-oriented research from the Ministry. This means that almost all funds are being granted by the various departments of the Ministry itself. In this regard it would be very difficult to get a clear view of the different knowledge funding flows.

³³ The overview made by DPRN (2005) of the Dutch knowledge community and the expertise on MDGs, indeed shows enormous fragmentation across the board.

³⁴ It is to be noted that the CERES system of valuation of research output, recognises both academic excellence as well as social relevance (CERES, 2007).

However, policymakers involved in knowledge management at BuZa/DGIS have also learned that “science needs free scope. Policymakers should provide it, and scientists should claim it. Terms of reference which are too strict defy the nature of scientific work” (Wiedenhof & Rijniers, 2006: 337). Overall, and this was also stated in the interviews, there is need to get to know each other better and to build up mutual tolerance.

3.2.3 Practitioners

Like the research community, the practitioners sector (restricted here to the DC-oriented NGOs in the Netherlands) is also known for its diversity. It is considered as a strength (Partos, 2008), however, it also faces the problem of fragmentation. A special concern that was raised in this respect was that the Dutch co-financing system was said to stimulate competition and waiting behaviour, which is not conducive to knowledge sharing (e.g. Ros-Tonen & De Vries, 2008). Plans to bundle knowledge in this sector, possibly in a knowledge centre, have been recently drawn up but have not yet been put into practice (Aangeenbrug, 2008).

Within the sector there is increasing recognition of the fact that knowledge and its management are important, and indeed, this is an area which many organisations have invested in (Lock et al., 2008, Heres, 2007). However, practitioners seem to be especially ambivalent towards these investments, because it is a time-consuming process of which the benefits cannot be easily defined in term of poverty alleviation (Stremmelaar, 2009). Moreover, as one respondent stated, “practitioners are more in a to-do mode and this leave little time for reflection”.

It must be pointed out that a lot of practitioners feel that their skills are undervalued by the other sectors. The knowledge policy of the Ministry is still felt to be based on a too narrow definition of knowledge and knowledge holders, in the sense that it still focuses primarily on scientific research. On the other hand, it was stated that many practitioners themselves would not be very willing to share their knowledge with policymakers because of distrust between them. The primary objection is that information on what went wrong in their projects, or where money was not spent successfully, might harm their position. In this sense the dependence on subsidies from the Ministry could be said to have an adverse effect. However, one respondent also stated that NGOs who do not receive money from the Ministry were not that open to sharing their knowledge with policymakers either.

While some NGOs have invested in knowledge programmes with research institutes (e.g. Hivos with the ISS, and Cordaid with CIDIN), the knowledge exchange with policymakers has not really got off the ground. Even though it must be said that some contacts with policymakers do exist, these are mostly the result of personal relations.³⁵

3.2.4 The corporate sector

The corporate sector at last, is a relative new player in the discussion on knowledge for DC policy. Even though it is increasingly recognised that the corporate sector can provide valuable knowledge for DC, structural knowledge relations between businesses and the other sectors involved in DC have not yet been formed too a great degree. The corporate sector’s wealth of knowledge as regards innovation, and the investments companies make in the private sector in developing countries, preferably under the Social Corporate Responsibility banner, offer opportunities for DC (Ros-Tonen & De Vries, 2008). In recent years, the Ministry has also tried to involve the sector more in DC, not only through regular programmes (such as ORIO), but also by working together with companies in networks. One example is the MDG business club, which came into being in 2008, in which multinationals and Small and Medium Enterprises share ideas on how investing in development countries can be made more attractive (Koenders, 2009).

Even though the Ministry aims to establish more enduring links with the corporate sector, there is a considerable gap that needs to be bridged. There is a need to include the corporate sector more in development, as reflected in the outcome of a recent DPRN process during which

³⁵ In this regard, it was argued that the Minister is usually in contact with some senior practitioners who inform him on a confidential basis.

participants from the corporate sector expressed the willingness to be involved in DC, and stated that more effort could be made on the part of the Ministry as regards involving them in their activities (DPRN, 2009). Even though some policymakers argued that a lot has already been done in this area, many of them are not directly engaged in knowledge relations with them, and the benefits of this are not that clear to them. Moreover, there is need to map the available knowledge of the corporate sector, as many policymakers are said not to be aware of this.

Chapter 4 The knowledge channelled through DPRN

After having described the view on knowledge as put forward by the Ministry and the policy-research cooperation in the Dutch field of DC, this chapter focuses on how this takes form in DPRN processes. With regard to the RAPID framework, this chapter looks at the functioning of DPRN in the Links domain, and the relation of the network to the other two domains (Political context and Evidence). Section 4.1 outlines the general perception of DPRN's operation in the second phase. Section 4.2 focuses on the process approach that DPRN has chosen for in its second phase. Section 4.3 examines the involvement of policymakers in the 11 DPRN processes so far. Lastly, Section 4.4 discusses some general remarks on research-policy cooperation within DPRN processes.

4.1 The relevance of DPRN

Generally, DPRN is thought of as relevant. Stakeholders argue that the strength of DPRN lies mainly in creating 'shared values' among the different sectors. In this sense, DPRN should not be seen as a knowledge-producing centre, but instead as an institution working towards bringing different sorts of knowledge together with the aim being to create synergy. Getting to know each other and working together during a certain period in an output and outcome oriented way (the process approach), is regarded as beneficial for bridging knowledge divides and for breaking down stereotypes which, as stated in Chapter 3, are still very much present in the field of Dutch DC.³⁶ This applies to both the Task Force and to the parties that organise the processes facilitated by DPRN. The fact that DPRN is considered relevant is also confirmed by the large number of proposals received for the first and second application round (30 and 24 respectively).

While, during the first phase, most of the meetings were organised primarily by research organisations, the second phase reveals a much more varied picture. Of the 39 organisations involved in the organisation of the 11 processes which have so far been carried out in DPRN's second phase (see Appendix 1), the majority (51%) are practitioners. They are represented by 20 organisations, of which 4 are involved in one or more processes. The research community is represented by 12 organisations (31%), of which 4 are involved in one or more processes. The corporate sector is represented by 4 organisations (10%). Policymakers are represented by 2 organisations (5%), of which 1 (BuZa/DGIS) is involved as a co-organiser in 3 processes. In addition, there is one organisation (Vice Versa) which can be categorised as 'other' and which is involved in 2 processes.

The coordination of the 10 facilitated processes is in the hands of 5 practitioner organisations, 4 research organisations, and 1 corporate organisation. The broadening scope with regard to the organising parties in the new approach was generally appreciated and the various sectors were said to now have more ownership in the processes. Although one respondent also mentioned that DPRN might still be geared too much towards the scientific knowledge community, and it therefore needed to include the knowledge of other sectors more, the large number of practitioners organisations involved in the processes shows a major improvement in this regard.

The meetings that have been organised in the second phase so far have attracted a large number of participants (a total of 928), of which 33% were practitioners, 30% were researchers, 18% were people from the corporate sector, and 15% were policymakers (see the figure below). Comparing these figures to those of DPRN's first phase shows somewhat similar percentages for practitioners and researchers and these can therefore still be regarded as being the main target groups. The involvement of the corporate sector, which was not yet included as a separate target group in DPRN's first phase, can be regarded as a success. Even though this category still includes many consultants, the involvement of bigger business companies has improved. The figure for

³⁶ The need for DPRN was also recently pointed out a workshop on knowledge divides in the Dutch DC sector. It was stated that "Existing spaces (DPRN, thematic platforms,) need to be fostered and their bridging function further strengthened." (Stremmelaar et al., 2009: 3)

policymakers has gone up slightly (from 10% to 15%) although, as in Phase I, it is still the category with the lowest level of participant involvement.

The participant ratings of the meetings provide an indication of the involvement of the different sectors, although it has to be said that meetings are just one of the activities carried out during DPRN's second phase. Through the process approach, in which DPRN (2007: 9) intends to move "beyond 'meeting each other' and set the stage for exploring common ground and opportunities for multi-sector agenda setting and cooperation", a whole other range of activities are also part of the processes.³⁷

Proces No. (corresponding to Appendix 1)	Meeting	Policy	%	Science	%	Practice	%	Corporate	%	Other	%	TOTAL
1	8 working groups	11	19	14	24	14	24	18	31	2	3	59
1	public meeting	31	28	22	20	40	36	15	13	4	4	112
2	3-day conference	10	10	38	40	38	40	5	5	5	5	96
3	Seminar I	3	5	14	23	29	47	15	24	1	2	62
3	Seminar II	4	8	11	22	14	29	17	35	3	6	49
3	Seminar III	4	7	14	23	20	33	21	35	1	2	60
4	Dinner meeting	6	12	23	47	12	24	8	16	0	0	49
5	Expert seminar	5	10	22	45	11	22	6	12	5	10	49
5	Public seminar	1	2	12	21	30	53	9	16	5	9	57
6	Stakeholder conference	5	7	17	23	37	49	15	20	1	1	75
7	Seminar	23	23	36	37	35	36	4	4	0	0	98
8	Mini-seminar	7	17	15	36	5	12	13	31	2	5	42
9	Expert meeting	13	39	7	21	7	21	4	12	2	6	33
9	2-day conference	15	27	13	24	13	24	12	22	2	4	55
11	Workshop CCS	0	0	24	75	4	13	2	6	2	6	32
	TOTAL (%)	138 (15)		282 (30)		309 (33)		164 (18)		35 (4)		928 (100)
	Total Phase I (%)	169 (10)		621 (37)		562 (34)		- (-)		149 (19)		1676 (100)

Participants in DPRN meetings³⁸

³⁷ Such as report and paper writing (some being based on interviews), drawing up inventories of related research and policy documents, organising research write shops and online discussion forums, writing policy briefs and summaries of research reports, and preparing documentary materials (see also Appendix 1).

³⁸ These statistics were gathered from various DPRN reports (e.g. progress, seminar and end reports). For three meetings - the CCS workshops of the gender mainstreaming and microfinance processes, and the research writeshop of the Value chains process - statistics were not yet gathered.

4.2 The process approach

As regards the new approach in which processes are selected through a call for proposals, it was stated that the tender process might be too weighty and may lead to competition. In this sense, the approach could possibly be exclusive, rather than inclusive which is what DPRN is aiming for. Of the 54 proposals that were submitted so far, 10 have been selected. Some respondents argued that a lot of effort was therefore not rewarded. In addition, DPRN could do more to include the organisations, whose proposals have been rejected. Currently, these organisations are informed about rejection by means of a letter containing a short explanation and no additional activities are undertaken to include them in other ways. This does not encourage them to become more involved in the network. However, it must be noted that the capacity of the Coordination Unit is probably too limited for this.

With regard to proposal assessment, DPRN selects the processes on the basis of what could potentially become mainstream debates. Many organisers appreciate the fact that DPRN has made it possible for attention to be given to a theme that, for a long time, they had wanted to place higher up the policy agenda. This also shows how DPRN can act as a catalyst. During the processes other stakeholders become involved, meaning that the organisers can also join other programmes. For some processes, this also results in other parties being willing to finance some of the activities.³⁹ For DPRN this implies that the boundaries regarding what can and cannot be considered as part of the DPRN process may at times become rather vague.

On the subject of the new approach it was also mentioned that the various processes present a rather fragmented picture. The themes of the processes vary greatly, and the processes function relatively interdependently of each other. There are hardly any linkages between processes, and this is not enough stimulated by the DPRN Task Force. While on a thematically basis this could prove difficult for some processes (given that, for example, the tax revenues process would not have much to do with the gender mainstreaming process), there are others which could be connected more (for example the processes regarding natural resources, such as biofuels, phosphorous, GM soy, and also the value chains and land pressures processes). Furthermore, bringing the organisers into contact with each other might help them to benefit from each other's practices and contacts, for example with regard to the ways in which they can involve policymakers. This would also allow them to contribute the knowledge from other processes into their discussions.

In addition, while the space given to the organisers by DPRN to carry out the processes was commended, it was also argued that the DPRN Task Force was insufficiently involved during the course of the processes. Not much feedback is provided on a process after it has been selected. Some even wondered whether DPRN does therefore not just serve as a grant panel. Although Task Force members receive the process reports, and some of them are present at the meetings, feedback is provided mostly by the secretariat staff who meet with the organisers around twice a year and who have regular contact with them by email. However, the feeling is that the DPRN processes could benefit more from the knowledge and contacts of the Task Force members especially because, as was also recognised in the evaluation of DPRN's first phase, "One of the main strengths of the Network is that the DPRN Task Force has the 'capacity to mobilise capacity'" (Context IC, 2007: vii).

This brings us to the functioning of the Task Force. The Task Force is made up of various influential players in the field of DC that are very well-informed and connected. They are commended for their investments in the network. While not all members of the Task Force have an equally pronounced role in the network, or attend the Task Force meetings on a regular basis, some are said to play an important role in the background, for example in the communication between the Task Force and their sector. Because membership is voluntary and members often have high workloads, DPRN might not be their first priority. However, the view was that DPRN should not be institutionalised in another organisational form: the strength would lie in it being a network, not a knowledge institute itself.

³⁹ In this regard it is to be noted that DPRN should not lose ownership of the process.

4.3 Policymakers' involvement

4.3.1 As co-organisers

Policymakers have been involved in all the 11 DPRN processes. In 3 processes (Structure follows Strategy (SFS), gender mainstreaming, and tax revenues), DGIS is officially involved as a co-organiser, and in 1 process (value chains) the ministry of LNV is involved as such. In the first three processes there is generally a large commitment on the side of the Ministry to work on the process, and there have been regular intermediate meetings to fine-tune the thoughts on the progress of the process.

In the SFS process, the DPRN Task Force member of DGIS was involved in the instigation of the process, and he gave input through an interview for the issue paper that was written during the first year of the process. In the second year, it was decided by the DPRN Task Force to 'go public' by organising meetings. During this stage a high official of DGIS (the AMAD-OS) was involved as one of the four working group leaders, which each held two working group discussions. Furthermore, the AMAD-OS led a sectoral debate (together with the DPRN Task Force member of DGIS), for the participating policymakers during the public meeting, and presented the outcomes of this debate for the larger public. During the meeting the AMAD-OS was also seated in the panel. The involvement of the AMAD-OS was highly appreciated throughout the process and it attributed to getting the interest of other policymakers.

The link with the Ministry through the DPRN Task Force member of DGIS was beneficial, in that he could fine-tune within the Ministry on how the process was perceived there. Also, direct contact between the Task Force and the Minister was kept during the process to inform him about the progress made. In the process, which generally discussed DC and IC, a considerable number of policymakers from various departments participated in the working group meetings (a total of 11, or 19%), and in the public meeting (a total of 31, or 28%), and in this sense it is shown that the theme was of interest to them. Even though it was appreciated that DPRN decided to discuss this particular theme, it was also felt that the depth in the discussion was lacking, mainly because such a broad discussion was organised in a short timeframe with many different participants. Among the participants in the meetings, there were 5 that came from other ministries (VROM, Defence, Finances, LNV). Some new contacts were established by these policymakers, but it participation was mostly regarded so as to get an insight in the general discussions in the field of DC.

In the gender mainstreaming process, DGIS – through the Emancipation unit of the Human Rights and Peacebuilding Department (DMH)⁴⁰ - was involved from the start, and they commented on the proposal. A policymaker from the department is seated in the process steering committee, which consists of members of the four organising parties. This is considered to work very well, as the organising parties all feel they have significant ownership in the process. Through regular meetings, it is discussed how to move on with the process, and so the Ministry is involved in every step. For the five papers that were written, which specifically answer policy-related issues, 8 policymakers from various departments of the Ministry have been interviewed. In the 2 meetings that have been organised so far, there were a small number of number of policymakers present (a total of 5, or 10% in the expert meeting, and 1, or 2%, in the public meeting), all from the DMH department. It was a deliberate choice of the organisers not to involve policymakers from other departments at this stage, as the discussion would still primarily be of interest to gender specialists. In the next phase of the process, other policymakers will also be involved when the process is going to focus on certain themes (such as microcredit and value chains⁴¹) and will do a case study of a developing country. In this sense the timeframe of this three year process allows for a well-developed plan to discuss the issue of gender mainstreaming thoroughly.

In the tax revenues process, DGIS staff of the Effectiveness and Coherence Department (DEC) was involved in initial proposal writing, and have shared their thoughts on the topics of the three

⁴⁰ Before October 2009 the Emancipation unit was part of the Department of Social and Institutional Development (DSI).

⁴¹ Here it can be beneficial to link the gender mainstreaming process to the other DPRN processes on microcredit and value chains.

papers that are being written. The issue of tax revenues is of specific importance to the involved policymakers and they expect to get new scientifically based insights during the process. During the writing stage and the other activity of making an inventory of existing work on the theme, there was not a lot of contact with the policymakers involved. The DEC policymakers would have appreciated to have been better informed about the findings and the progress made throughout this period. With the organisation of the forthcoming seminar in sight, contacts have been re-established and the seminar will be geared towards specific policy-oriented questions. While the seminar will attract mostly experts on the topic of taxes, which implies that not many other policymakers of DGIS can be expected to be involved, the organisers intend to involve the Ministry of Finance in the seminar, and possibly a number of foreign policymakers. As for the relations between the Ministry of Finance and DGIS/BuZa concerning this topic, the process is seen as a valuable opportunity to strengthen and deepen already existing contacts.

In the value chains process, the International Affairs department of the Ministry of LNV is involved as a co-organiser. Furthermore, the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) of DGIS has also been involved from the start.⁴² Even though LNV acts as a co-organiser, most intensive contacts are held with the policymakers from DGIS/DDE. Policymakers from both ministries have commended on the proposal for the process. During the dinner meeting that was organised in the starting phase of the process, there were 6 policymakers participating (12%), 4 from DGIS/DDE, 1 from LNV, and 1 from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The dinner meeting was positively reviewed and the discussion was found interesting. After the meeting there was no more communication between the organisers and the policymakers about the process, and as for the policymakers involved it would have been good to keep them updated on the progress made. However, it is to be noted that the process has hitherto been particularly scientifically oriented, by working towards the organisation of a research write shop which was held in September 2009⁴³. Prior to this event, a number of policymakers have been interviewed on their opinions about the subject of value chains. In the latter phase of the process, policymakers are to play a larger role mainly by being involved in bilateral dialogues, and participating in a public meeting which will be organised during the closing phase of the process. As such, it was deliberately chosen to involve policymakers more actively during the latter stage of the process, so that the researchers could first work on their papers and carefully formulate their thoughts.

4.3.2 As agenda-setters

In 4 processes (Understanding Development Better (UDB), Singing a new policy tune (SNPT), microfinance, and land pressures), DGIS has been highly involved in the agenda-setting of the process, and was partly consulted for the initial proposal writing. Establishing regular contacts with policymakers throughout the process, and monitoring this by DPRN, in order to agree with the involved policymakers on the path that is chosen for, seems to be a point of concern here.

In the UDB process, DGIS was involved from the start. Prior to the 3-day conference, 2 of the 15 position papers were written by DGIS officials. During the conference, each of them also led a workshop about the topic that was addressed in the paper. Furthermore, a DGIS official (the current AMAD-OS) was seated in a panel at the closing day of the conference. A total of 10, or 10%, policymakers participated, 9 from various departments of DGIS (including one policymaker from an embassy), and 1 from a foreign ministry. This relatively low proportion can probably be attributed to the large time-investment and the lack of direct operational use of the process outcomes. After the conference not much communication about the process was established, and so it was more like an event on its own. Even though it was appreciated that the theme of the process was in-depth and the discussion was geared towards a deeper understanding of DC and development in general, it did not attract a lot of interest among a wider DGIS public.

⁴² Here was some confusion on the side of the organisers as it was not clear whether DGIS itself could act as a co-organiser (and applicant in the proposal).

⁴³ There were 26 researchers participating in the write shop.

The SNPT process, which is actually a follow-up on the UDB process and continues on the outcomes of the SFS process, has high interest of DGIS, as it wants to formulate a policy theory. Soon after writing the proposal, DGIS (the AMAD-OS) was consulted as to how they would wish to be involved in the process. Contacts with many of the involved policymakers could be established because they had been participating in the UDB and SFS processes. Two meetings have so far been organised in which a significant number of policymakers from various departments participated. In the focus group meeting 13 policymakers were present (39%), and during the 2-day public kick-off meeting 15 were present (27%), although most did not participate the full two days. So far 2 policymakers from other ministries have participated (Defence, LNV), and 1 from a foreign ministry. During the focus groups the themes of the current DC policy were discussed, and policymakers of DGIS presented current policies on these themes during the public meeting. The outcomes of meetings so far were received with mixed feelings. For policymakers the benefits of the process were not yet very clear, and the process itself is not structured enough.

In the microfinance process, DGIS/DDE has been involved in the preparation of the seminars. The organisers had interviewed a senior official from the department during a stakeholder consultation round. This official also played an active role during the seminars, through presenting the policy of the Ministry and participating in panel discussions. However, reflecting on the process, it turned out that the theme of this process was not something that the Ministry found very relevant. It was said that there would be other themes that were more urgent for the Ministry to discuss. Even though this comment was made, the Ministry was thus still involved actively. A small number of policymakers have been participating in each of the 3 seminars 3 to 4 (5-8%), mostly from DGIS/DDE and some from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Concerning the latter, though the seminar was found interesting, no new contacts were established and participating in the seminars primarily meant to receive an update on microfinance discussions in the field of DC. For this process specifically, the organisers requested DPRN to organise a sort of reflecting meeting with policymakers so as to re-establish contacts and make the outcomes more known.⁴⁴

The land pressure process has consulted DGIS/DDE during the proposal writing, and the topic was found to be of interest to the Ministry. A policymaker from the department participated in the seminar, and the AMAD-OS held an opening speech. While these were the only two Dutch policymakers that participated, the seminar also involved 21 foreign policymakers from both developed and developing countries, bringing the total of policymakers involved at 23 (23%). The high involvement of international participants stems mainly from the fact that the International Land Coalition (ILC), with a large international network, is involved as a co-organiser of the process. The seminar was aligned with a working group of policymakers and international policy advisors the day after the seminar, and with a more academic seminar the day before. On the side of the DDE, the seminar was found relevant and the large number of international participants made it specifically valuable. Furthermore it must be said that during the start of the process and after the seminar not much communication between them and the organisers had taken place, and an update would be appreciated.

4.3.3 As participants

There is 1 process (biofuels), in which policymakers from various ministries has been involved so far mainly by providing input during the process as participants. In the biofuels process, the organising parties have individual contacts with policymakers, most importantly through the fact that one of them, Mekon Ecology, is hired by DGIS to coordinate the biomass project and the interdepartmental consultation on this subject. Furthermore, members are frequently asked for advice by several ministries (DGIS, LNV and VROM) about the topic, and they have presented their preliminary findings in several meetings organised by these ministries. Within the process, policymakers of these ministries (2 from DGIS, 2 from VROM, 1 from LNV, and 2 from the Ministry of Economic Affairs) will be interviewed for the position paper that is being written about the underlying assumptions that

⁴⁴ It must be commended on that this process reached many participants from the corporate sector (24-35%).

these ministries have in regard to their policy on biofuels. They will also be asked to participate in the public meeting that is going to be organised. Furthermore, two successful workshops have been organised during the CERES Summer School. However, no policymakers participated there, something which was attributed to the fact that it was primarily scientifically focused.

The biofuel process has gotten a clearer focus during the ongoing activities. Whereas it was first planned to primarily gather research based knowledge on biofuels and communicate this to policymakers, the process now starts from the other side by examining the underlying assumptions of policies and combining this with the available knowledge. This is expected to be more beneficial for uptake.

4.3.4 As indirect actors

Lastly, there are 2 processes (the GM soy debate and phosphorous depletion) in which DGIS has not played an active role (yet), for various reasons.

In the GM soy debate, the participation of DGIS was quite problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the policymakers refused to take a seat in the steering committee because they believed that the agenda of the process would be dominated too much by Northern interests. They argued that Southern partners were not sufficiently involved in the process – despite the fact that three members of the steering committee were from Brazil and Argentina, the research was carried out with two partners from the same countries, and there were 8 persons from developing countries participating in the stakeholder conference. Secondly, the policymakers felt that this process would bypass the stakeholder platform of the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS), which is co-facilitated by the Ministry. The organisers however argued that the GM soy process was merely meant to seek a scientific basis for the discussion of GM soy, so that the discussion in the RTRS could be more clarified and strengthened – a standpoint shared by the stakeholders involved in both the RTRS and the DPRN process.

Even though DGIS was not that enthusiastic about the process, two other ministries (VROM and LNV) were.⁴⁵ VROM even decided to finance the scientific research which was carried out for the process. In regard to the contacts with policymakers at VROM and LNV, it is interesting to note that these were for a great part established by a lobbyist for the Trade Policy and Biotechnology Product Board MVO, who was also a member of the Steering Committee. During the stakeholder conference 5 policymakers were present (7% of the total), 3 from LNV, 1 from VROM and 1 from DGIS.

Finally, the phosphorous depletion process has not yet involved DGIS policymakers directly although they have recently come into contact with them through the interdepartmental consultation group on scarcity and transition. In the beginning of the process, it was still very unclear how to approach policymakers, especially because the topic as such was not yet high on the agenda of the different ministries. However, luckily the Technology Assessment Steering Group, that independently consults the Ministry of LNV, got interested in the research that was carried out for the process, and so contacts could be established with policymakers from this ministry. Furthermore, a policymaker of LNV is also seated in the Nutrient Flow Task Group (NFTG), on behalf of which the organisers carry out the process. Through this person, the organisers were able to present their findings during the a workshop at the World Water Week in Stockholm, which was co-organised by LNV. Furthermore, though this person contact was also established with a policymaker from VROM, where the issue is also picked up. As for now, one meeting has been organised in which 7 policymakers participated (17% of the total participants), 4 from LNV, 1 from VROM, 1 from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and 1 from a foreign ministry. The organisers still aim to organise a European mini-seminar in which policymakers from different national and international ministries are involved.

⁴⁵ Especially because these ministries have to propose sustainability criteria for admission of GM crops to the EU, to the European Parliament by December 2009.

4.4 The thematic focus

The previous section showed that many policymakers have been involved in DPRN activities. Overall, many of the initiatives undertaken in the various processes can therefore be said to be relevant for them. It was frequently mentioned that indeed policymakers were in search of more evidence based knowledge on certain themes. Many of the involved policymakers, especially those who act as (co-) organisers, recognise the added value of the DPRN processes. As one of them mentioned, "There are enough seminars where we meet each other, but DPRN offers the opportunity to work with each other in depth". They state that they need scientific underpinning of their work, but at the same time they stress that it has to be useful in practice.

Policymakers also argued that the fragmentation of the DPRN processes was not beneficial with regard to their time investments. It was therefore suggested that the processes be more aligned to enable more combinations of discussions. As regards the reports of some processes, they also argued that more concrete policy advices could be given. This would make the processes operationally more useful. In order to communicate the process outcomes more directly with policymakers, some organisers also explicitly requested that DPRN organise a separate integrative meeting with policymakers at the end of the processes.

The organisers also noted that the alignment between the various stakeholders during the process was a very time-intensive process, that must not be thought of too lightly. In this sense there are still a lot of knowledge divides to be bridged. Many of the organisers said they had invested extra (non-budgeted) hours for this. As regards the budget, they also felt that it was not sufficient to involve Southern partners in the process, something they believed to be essential in the field of DC.

A last comment can be made about the difference between the 3 general (UDB, SFS, SNPT) and the other, thematically more specialised, processes. As regards the latter, it is logical to conclude that most relationships are established with the thematic policy departments that are working on the subject matter. In this regard it is therefore not realistic to expect policymakers to make up 25% of the meeting participants. The quality of the established research-policy linkages is more important than the quantity of participating policymakers, and in most of the processes the organising parties succeed well in involving the key policymakers on the specific thematic subjects.

The processes that are focussed on more general themes related to DC and IC are another case in point. In these processes, convincing policymakers of the relevance involves extra effort, mostly because many see this as not being directly useful to their daily work. This is reinforced by the fact that BuZa is not rewarding the involvement in these kind of discussions as opportunities for learning or for making the public more known with their policies. Therefore, a lot of the policymakers present at these discussions are the ones that are already most interested in knowledge processes. DPRN is fortunate to have the AMAD-OS – supported by the Minister based on his desire to modernise the DC agenda - involved in the processes, as he also promotes DPRN processes amongst other policymakers at the Ministry.

Policymakers argue that the more general thematic processes are potentially very useful as they discuss future directions of DC policy and reflect in a broad way on current policy. However, some of the comments on these processes were fairly negative, including those by other respondents, as regards the time frame, structure and participants involved.

As regards the time-frame and structure, it was argued that quite a lot of time is needed to discuss DC/IC and that this period should include a number of subsequent meetings to work things out in a structured way. The UDB process was a 3-day conference, which itself was not seen as very structured, although the efforts made to place the theme on the agenda were commended. However, after the conference there was not a lot of follow-up, except for the organisers' proposal relating to the SNPT process.

Whereas the SFS took quite a lot of time to reflect carefully on the process set up during the first year, the scope of the theme was considered to be very broad for the 4 x 2 working group meetings and one public meeting that were organised within a few months. The working group

meetings also suffered from some lack of continuity in the discussions due to the fact that not all the participants were able to participate in both meetings⁴⁶

The problem with the SNPT process was that not enough thought was given to how the process would evolve, even though regular contacts with the AMAD-OS have been held with a view to agreeing on the content and set up of the process. The process was intended to encompass both small expert group discussions and public meetings, but the two components were not properly coordinated. The public meetings started off without the small expert groups having been established, or the exact discussion themes having been defined.

What is especially problematic is the fact that many relevant processes are now being organised at the same time, without any coordination, and with a lack of leadership at the level of the Minister or the Ministry, something that has become most visible in the SNPT process. A particular hindering factor of great importance in this respect is the time it is taking for the publication of the forthcoming WRR report on the Modernisation of the Dutch DC sector.

Next to the timing and structure of the processes, respondents also felt that there was a problem with the selection of participants. While the UDB conference still involved quite a small number of policymakers and a lot of the 'usual suspects' as regards the development experts, the SFS and the SNPT processes have attracted a larger and more varied group of participants.⁴⁷ Here both DGIS and DPRN face a dilemma based on the need for in-depth discussions for which DC experts are required, and the need for DC to broaden its scope and involve new actors such as the corporate sector and other ministries. The latter is necessary not only to articulate DC policy more to the public, but also to work towards a broader IC agenda in which more stakeholders are involved. However, it was felt that attracting a large number of non-usual DC participants contributed to the superficiality of the discussions, whereas the new actors felt that they were excluded for not being familiar with conventional OS jargon.

⁴⁶ It must also be said that some people experienced the process as somewhat exclusive because the DPRN Task Force and working groups chairmen decided on the selection of participants to be invited.

⁴⁷ It was furthermore felt that the final paper of the SFS process highlighted selected views rather than reflecting the variety of opinions expressed during the process.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

This concluding chapter answers the research question: How does DPRN contribute to more effective research-policy linkages in the field of Dutch Development Cooperation? Section 5.1 relates the empirical data in the two foregoing chapters to the theoretical framework posed in Chapter 2. Section 5.2 outlines two main recommendations for DPRN.

5.1 Research-policy linkages in the Dutch field of DC

Chapter 3 showed that the focus of Dutch DC research policy has shifted from the production of demand-driven research and local ownership in the 1990s, to the use of embedded knowledge and partnerships in the new policy of 2005. The new policy was put forward mostly because the Ministry became aware that a growing gap between research and policy had developed and because, through this, the organisation itself was insufficiently fed with new knowledge. Furthermore, the new research policy recognises that not only traditional scientific research, but multiple sources of knowledge and interaction with various stakeholders are useful for DC, also because of the increasingly complex challenges the Ministry is facing.

In this sense, the Ministry follows the larger international trends in the DC sector, where knowledge has gained importance since the report of the World Bank into the matter. A further External influence from within the Netherlands was said to result from the trend – signalled by various advisory councils – towards greater attention for knowledge and learning at the government level.

While the Dutch research organisations largely disappeared from government view during the 1990s, the new policy recognises their importance again. This is, for example, reflected in the Ministry's decision to fund DPRN and related initiatives like the IS-Academies and The Broker. However, there are still significant knowledge divides and stereotypes within the Dutch DC field. In this sense the three domains of the RAPID framework can still be said to be largely separate.

As for the Political context domain, the Ministry is not characterised as a knowledge-intensive organisation, although it is hoped that progress will be made soon, for instance through the installation of the AMAD-OS. Generally, there are not many incentives for policymakers to engage in knowledge activities. This has been attributed mainly to the rotating personnel system that favours generalist knowledge and hinders the structured spread of knowledge throughout the organisation. Furthermore, the diplomatic culture and the so-called avoidance culture, in which critical remarks are not greatly appreciated, hamper engagement in knowledge activities. Generally the Ministry is regarded as quite closed to other actors – including other ministries – concerning knowledge exchange.

As for the Evidence domain, knowledge generated by both research and practitioner organisations is considered to be quite fragmented, with no permanent knowledge flows in place between the Ministry and these organisations. In order to enhance the impact of knowledge on policy, more can be done to make research results operationally useful and to improve communication with the Ministry. The practitioners regretted the fact that policymakers regarded their knowledge as insufficiently relevant, while policymakers argued that practitioners could do more to involve them in their discussions. In this regard, the power dimension also plays a role since practitioners may be hesitant about disclosing information about failing projects for fear of losing Ministry subsidies. In addition, competition among practitioners organisations would contribute to a poor knowledge exchange in this sector. Lastly, the corporate sector is increasingly recognised as a valuable actor in the DC field, although a lot more still has to be done to include them.

DPRN as a network in the Links domain, is considered a relevant institution for bridging knowledge divides. By broadening the scope in the second phase, the various sectors have more ownership in the processes. Many organisers appreciate the fact that DPRN has made it possible for attention to be paid to a theme that, for a long time, they wanted to have placed higher up the policy agenda. It is interesting to see that DPRN functions as a catalyst for some of the processes, whereby

other stakeholders become involved, creating situations in which the organisers can also join other initiatives.

A significant number of participants are involved in the processes. Although practitioners and researchers are still the main target groups, considerable progress has been made as regards to involving the other two sectors. Policymakers are involved in all the 11 DPRN processes and they generally collaborate quite well. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that, besides DGIS, other ministries are also becoming involved. In fact, in some processes, other ministries are even the major policymakers' target groups. In this regard, DPRN processes offer opportunities for interdepartmental cooperation and policy coherence processes, especially because policymakers from the different ministries do not readily contact each other.

When all this is translated to the RAPID framework, DPRN attributes a growing importance to the links domain, which brings the political context and evidence domains closer together.

5.2 Recommendations

Following the foregoing discussion, two main recommendations can be formulated to improve DPRN's performance with regard to strengthening research-policy linkages.

1. Linking

The various DPRN processes reveal a rather fragmented picture. The themes of the processes vary greatly and the processes function relatively interdependently of each other. There is a greater need to link the various processes so that the organisers can benefit from each other's knowledge and contacts.⁴⁸ For policymakers it would be beneficial to align processes more with other ongoing processes in which they are involved, such as interdepartmental consultation rounds. In addition, to make the network more inclusive, organisations whose proposals have been rejected during the tender process but which in themselves were qualitatively acceptable could be incentivised to be involved more, for example by actively linking them through other processes.⁴⁹ As far as DPRN is concerned, increased linking of the various processes would make the network stronger and more visible and recognisable.

2. Steering and involving

The DPRN Task Force could be more involved in the various DPRN processes. Currently not a lot of feedback is provided on a process once it has been selected. Feedback is provided mostly by the secretariat staff who meet with the organisers about twice a year and who have regular contact with them by email. The feeling is that the DPRN processes could benefit more from the Task Force members' knowledge and contacts. The Task Force or the secretariat could also do more to monitor the processes during their implementation, for example by checking whether the policymakers involved support the process plans or by checking to what extent they feel that the process is useful to them. With regard to communicating the outcomes of the processes with policymakers, it could also be beneficial to organise specific meeting for this purpose.

⁴⁸ In this sense the other two online activities of DPRN should also be mentioned. Organisers could make better use of the Global Connections database and the Search4dev repository, both for entering and searching for information.

⁴⁹ In a few cases organisations have indeed been linked to other organisations working on the same theme. Organisations whose proposals were rejected in the last round, but in themselves were regarded as being promising, were invited specifically to re-submit their proposal in the last round, after dealing with the comments of the DPRN Task Force.

Appendix 1 Overview of DPRN processes in Phase II

The overview shows the processes that are instigated (No. 1) and facilitated (No. 2-11) by DPRN.⁵⁰ As regards the latter, the processes No. 2-6 were awarded by DPRN following the first call for proposals, and started in 2008. Processes No. 7-11 were awarded following the second call for proposals, and started in 2009. The third and last call for proposals in DPRN's second phase has just been published and DPRN is expected to award five new processes to start in 2010.

1. Structure follows strategy: The organisation of Dutch development and international cooperation

Duration:

2 years (Jan 2008- Dec 2009)

Objective:

To discuss new strategies and structures for the future of Dutch international and development cooperation (IC/DC) in order to identify alternatives to the fragmented nature of Dutch IC/DC. To investigate how DC can be embedded in the international context and align it with the IC agenda, establish what the roles of multilateral, bilateral, and civilateral organisations should be, and how the knowledge and corporate sector can help increase the effectiveness of Dutch IC/DC.

Output:

- Issue paper
- 8 working group meetings
- Synthesis report listing the propositions put forward by the working groups
- Discussions about 4 sectoral visions
- Public meeting + report
- Programme report signifying the main points of discussion in the process.

Organising agencies (The DPRN Task Force):⁵¹

	Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) (chairing)
	Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO)
	IKV Pax Christi Netherlands
	Netherlands Development Organisation SNV
	European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)
	AMIDSt, University of Amsterdam
	African Studies Centre (ASC)
	Centre for International Development Studies (CIDIN)
	Research School for 'Resource Studies for Development (CERES)
	NWO/WOTRO (observing)
	Euroconsult/BMB Mott MacDonald
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (observing)

2. Learning to understand development better

Duration:

1 year (June 2008 – May 2009)

Objective:

To discuss the complexity of development processes and ensure that the issue of development theories and models are put back onto the Dutch debate agenda. To raise awareness of the fact

⁵⁰ For more information about the processes see: <http://www.dprn.nl/dprn-phase-ii-2008-2010>

⁵¹ The colours represent the different sectors. Blue= practice, orange = science/research, green = business, pink = policy, white = other.

that effective development assistance is not genuinely possible without an understanding of the development processes.

Output:

- 15 position papers
- Three-day conference
- Online discussion forum
- Summaries of policies, relevant books and research findings.

Organising agencies:

	MDF Training & Consultancy (coordination)
	Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
	Vice Versa

3. Stimulating business development: another side of microfinance?

Duration:

1 year (June 2008 – May 2009)

Objective:

To investigate the link between microfinance and business development in developing countries, and to assess specifically whether microfinance institutions can play a role in improving the access of entrepreneurs to non-financial services. This included an assessment of microfinance in the Netherlands.

Output:

- Three seminars
- Paper written in preparation for the second seminar.
- Workshop at the Ceres Summer School 2009
- Online discussion forum
- Online library

Organising agencies:

	Triodos Facet (coordination)
	Inholland University of applied sciences

4. Value chain governance and endogenous growth: how can NGOs, firms and government achieve social inclusion and poverty reduction?

Duration:

2 years (June 2008 – May 2010)

Objective:

To assess the degree of inclusion of governance mechanisms within value chain configurations, by systematically comparing, discussing and integrating diverse analytical and intervention frameworks. By doing this the aim was to improve the development and poverty reduction outcome of policy measures and development interventions in value chain governance.

Output:

- Dinner meeting + report
- Online discussion forum
- Online library
- Inventory of the research on value chains by researchers in the Netherlands
- Workshop at the Ceres Summer School 2009
- Researcher's write workshop
- Bilateral policy dialogues between researchers and various development partners
- Synthesis paper with an overview of policy measures
- Closing conference

Organising agencies:

	Institute of Social Studies (ISS) (coordination)
	Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR)
	Woord en Daad
	ICCO-Kerk in Actie
	Hivos
	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), Department of International Affairs
	Concept Fruit bv

5. Gender mainstreaming trajectory

Duration:

3 years (June 2008 –December 2010)

Objective:

To rethink and work towards transforming the current understanding and practice of gender mainstreaming in order to improve policy and practice towards gender equality.

Output:

- Online discussion forum
- 5 position papers
- Publication of the 5 papers in an academic journal
- Expert meeting
- Public seminar
- Workshop at the Ceres Summer School 2009
- Policy Brief, resulting from the findings of the position papers
- Meetings which involvement partner organisations and Southern experts.
- Closing conference

Organising agencies:

	Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN), Radboud University (coordination)
	Hivos
	Oxfam Novib
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and Peacebuilding Department (DMV)

6. GM Soy Debate: Creating Common Sense on Genetically Modified Soy

Duration:

1 year (June 2008 –May 2009)

Objective:

To initiate a constructive, informed and science-based debate on the benefits and drawbacks of GM-soy in Latin America from an environmental and rural development perspective.

Output:

- Online discussion forum
- Online library
- Teleconference meetings with the steering committee members
- Stakeholder conference
- Scientific research report (by PRI, sponsored by Ministry of VROM)
- Popular report which includes a summary of the findings of the research report (also translated into Spanish and Portuguese)

Organising agencies:

	Solidaridad (coordination)
	AidEnvironment
	Plant Research International, Wageningen University

7. Food insecurity and commercial pressures on land: risks and opportunities

Duration:

1 year (February 2009 – January 2010)

Objective:

To provide an evidence base for influencing policy processes on rural land by assessing community-private sector partnership practices. The aim is to enable more secure and equitable access to land for the vulnerable poor who face increased commercial demand for their land.

Output:

- One-day seminar + report
- Online library
- Online discussion forum
- Paper
- Policy brief

Organising agencies:

	Centre for Development Studies (CDS), University of Groningen (coordination)
	International Land Coalition (ILC)
	Oxfam Novib

8. Phosphorus depletion: the invisible crisis

Duration:

1 year (February 2009 – January 2010)

Objective:

To increase global awareness of the depletion of phosphorus, an irreplaceable and indispensable nutrient for plant growth. To investigate possible mitigation options for avoiding major socioeconomic distortions resulting from food insecurity.

Output:

- Presentations at various international and national meetings
- Scientific research report/urgency paper (executed by PRI, sponsored by the Technology Assessment Steering Committee)
- Contribution to policy paper (of the Technology Assessment Steering Committee)
- Article in The Broker
- The initiation of a Nutrient Bureau + vision document
- One-day mini-seminar
- Two case studies
- European mini-conference
- Preparations for a documentary

Organising agencies:

	Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) (coordination)
	WASTE
	Plant Research International (PRI), Wageningen University

9. Singing a new policy tune

Duration:

1 year (May 2009 – June 2010)

Objective:

To improve the quality of policy-making in international development cooperation in the Netherlands by revitalising the ways in which policy theories are formulated.

Output:

- Focus group meetings + reports

- Two-day public opening conference + report
- 4 public thematic meetings + reports
- Several working group expert meetings + reports
- Position papers
- Online discussion forum
- Closing conference
- Synthesis report

Organising agencies:

MDF Training & Consultancy (coordination)
Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
Vice Versa

10. Supporting developing countries' ability to raise tax revenues

Duration:

1 year (February 2009 – January 2010)

Objective:

To enhance the exchange of information and cooperation among relevant actors whose aim is to support developing countries' ability to raise tax revenues, and to formulate recommendations on how to address any hindrances. To embed the outcomes in existing initiatives and networks.

Output:

- Inventory of existing work on taxation and development of different organisations
- Online library
- One-day expert meeting
- 3 position papers
- Policy brief

Organising agencies:

Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) (coordination)
Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN), Radboud University
Oxfam Novib
Tax Justice NL
Oikos
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Effectiveness and Quality Department (DEK)

11. Fuelling knowledge on the social and ecological impacts of biofuel production

Duration:

1 year (February 2009 – January 2010)

Objective:

To generate intersectoral debate and interdisciplinary analysis of the social and ecological effects of biofuel production and expansion with a view to enabling informed decision-making designed to minimise the negative effects.

Output:

- Initiation of a knowledge platform on biofuels
- Two workshops at the Ceres Summer School 2009
- Presentations at workshop of the Ministry of VROM
- Position paper
- Online discussion forum
- Online library
- One-day public meeting
- Policy brief

- Application for the Global Sustainable Biomass Fund

Organising agencies:

	Both ENDS Foundation (coordination)
	IUCN Netherlands Committee
	ETC International
	Cordaid
	AMIDSt, University of Amsterdam
	Alterra, Wageningen University
	Institute of Environmental Sciences (CML), University of Leiden
	Law and Governance Group, Wageningen University
	Mekon Ecology

Appendix 2 List of interviewed persons

1. Ton Dietz (17-08-2009): Professor in Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam, member of the DPRN Task Force.
2. Rob Visser (25-08-09): Former chief scientist at DGIS/DCO, former observing member of the DPRN Task Force.
3. Jan Donner (26-08-09): President of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Chairman of the DPRN Task Force
4. Alberic Pater & Joep Vonk (27-08-2009): Consultants sustainable entrepreneurship at Triodos Facet, coordinators of the DPRN process on microfinance.
5. Sven Sielhorst (01-09-2009): Consultant at AidEnvironment, coordinator of the DPRN process on GM soy for Solidaridad.
6. Jeroen Rijniers (10-09-09): Policymaker at DGIS/DCO.
7. Henk Molenaar (16-09-09): Director of NWO-WOTRO, observing member of the DPRN Task Force, former policymaker at of DGIS/DCO.
8. Klaas Molenaar (23-09-09): Lector at Inholland University of applied sciences, co-organiser of the DPRN process on microfinance.
9. Harry Heemskerk (21-09-09): Head of KIT Information & Library Services, working on the DPRN initiative Search4Dev.
10. Mirco Goudriaan (21-09-09): Policymaker at DGIS/DEC, co-organiser of the DPRN process on tax revenues.
11. Anouka van Eerdewijk (22-09-09): Researcher at CIDIN, coordinator of the DPRN process on gender mainstreaming.
12. Hossein Azadi (22-09-09): Researcher at the CDS-University of Groningen, coordinator of the DPRN process on land pressures.
13. Hans van der Veen (23-09-09): Policymaker at DGIS/DDE, involved in the DPRN microfinance process.
14. Evelijne Bruning (24-09-09): Independent journalist and editor-in-chief of Vice Versa, co-organiser of the DPRN processes UDB & SNPT.
15. Josine Stremmelaar (28-09-09): Coordinator of the Hivos knowledge programme, co-organiser of the DPRN process on gender mainstreaming.
16. Frans Bieckmann (29-09-09): Independent journalist and researcher, editor-in-chief of The Broker.
17. Paul Wolvekamp (29-09-09): Deputy Director Both Ends, coordinator of the DPRN process on biofuels.
18. Maaïke Kokke (29-09-09): Researcher at SOMO, coordinator of the DPRN process on tax revenues.
19. Pricilla van der Vegte (30-09-09): Policymaker at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, involved in the DPRN process on microfinance.
20. Robert Dijksterhuis & Ella de Voogd (30-09-09): Head/policymaker at DGIS/DMH, co-organiser of the DPRN process on gender mainstreaming.
21. Theo van de Sande (06-10-09): Policymaker at DGIS/EC/DMW.
22. Annet Jonk (06-10-09): Policymaker at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, involved in the DPRN process on microfinance.
23. Wijnand van IJssel (07-10-09): Policymaker Strategy and Knowledge at DGIS/DMW.
24. Maarten Brouwer (07-10-09): Ambassador for Development Cooperation DGIS.
25. Sarah Cummings (13-10-09): Consultant at Context International Cooperation, researcher on Knowledge Management, co-Chief Editor of the Knowledge Management for Development Journal.
26. Peter Ho (19-10-09): Professor in International Development Studies at the CDS-University of Groningen, coordinator of the DPRN process on land pressures.

27. Ger Pannekoek (20-10-09): Project Officer NWP, coordinator of the DPRN process on phosphorous depletion.
28. Louke Koopmans (29-10-09): Programme assistant at MDF Training & Consultancy, involved in the organisation of the DPRN process SNPT.
29. Sietze Vellema (05-11-09): Researcher in Technology Management and Policy in the Institute for Agro-Technical Research, Wageningen University and Research, co-organiser of the DPRN process on value chains.

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