Media Supported Communication in Agricultural Extension and Participatory Rural Development in Northern Thailand

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Boxes

Abbreviations and Thai Expressions Used in the Text:

CONTO	Centre for the Coordination of Non-government Tribal Development Organization
GOs	Governmental Organizations
HADF	Hill Area Development Foundation
IMPECT	Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association
NDF	Northern Development Foundation
NFN	Northern Farmers Network
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
ProCon-Net	Project for the Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers and Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand
TRRM	Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement
TWF	Thai Worldview Foundation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
Ban	Village
Tambon	Sub-District
Wat	Temple

Abstract

The inhabitants of Northern Thailand, Thais as well as the members of the different ethnic groups, the so-called *hill tribes*, face a variety of very complex problems that range from natural resources conflicts via human rights issues to health problems. All in all, those issues constitute the initial point of departure for every extension, development and research activity, regardless of whether carried out by governmental, non-governmental organizations and/or other agencies.

In order to analyze the current extension situation in Northern Thailand, field research was carried out in collaboration with different governmental and non-governmental organizations. Insights were gained into major areas of operation as well as currently used extension methods and media (especially picture supported communication tools) that are used in extension and rural development work, particularly when the target group is illiterate. Three organizations were observed in more detail and will serve as case studies.

The paper presents *Methods and Media Used by Different Organizations* as well as major *Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work*. Furthermore, the *Application of Criteria for Different Methods and Media* will provide the basis for the discussion of major potentials and limitations of currently used media in comparison to the *Flannelgraph method*, which was chosen as a major methodological tool of reference.

In summary, it appears that the extension situation in Northern Thailand is too heterogeneous to identify the one "right" extension approach. The use of media and the choice of extension methods depend on specific financial, logistic, methodological and cultural criteria as well as further issues, such as infrastructure, target group and the costs of the respective tool. In order to increase the potential and decrease the limitations of the currently used methods, the organizations have to concentrate on a better use of the already existing means as well as the improvement of those factors that are not fully used at the moment.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, Flannelgraph method, Media use, Northern Thailand

Media Supported Communication in Agricultural Extension and Participatory Rural Development in Northern Thailand[1]

Isabel Fischer

1 Introduction

MCCASKILL (1997: 26) summarizes well the clash between mordernizing an economy and maintainig indigenous culture: "In their rush to modernize their economies, the countries of Southeast Asia – Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam – have to make choices as to the path to development they will pursue. […] Each of the countries, in its own way, has adopted the modernization theory of development, with the goal of evolving from a rural agrarian society to an urban industrialized one. […] In an effort to integrate local communities into the national mainstream, governments institute policies such as national educational systems, local government structures tied to centralized authority, agrarian reforms, opportunities for geographic mobility to urban areas, and development programs. A plethora of local development projects has been initiated by western agencies, from large bilateral regional programs to small-scale NGO community development projects. […] These projects are designed and carried out by outsiders to the community who claim expertise in development. […] Traditional indigenous culture differs significantly from the values, norms, and practices that prevail in development and modernization. […Therefore, it] is often seen as an impediment to the development process, and local community residents are rarely given any meaningful decision-making role. In short, there is little room for traditional indigenous culture as the penetration of capitalism extends even into the remotest communities as part of the global society".

In developing countries, population pressure in combination with numerous other constraints, among them lack of research, extension and education often leads to ecological and economical problems in agriculture. Issue oriented agricultural extension could help farmers to solve problems by themselves and thus, support sustainable development. In order to better adapt the already existing agricultural extension system to the needs of the small-scale agrarian society, the objective of this research was to evaluate the optimal use of pictorial material in programs of agricultural extension and participatory rural development. Especially the fact that there is a high percentage of illiterate farmers among the rural society was taken into consideration. For that reason, the *Flannelgraph method* was chosen to approach the research methodologically.

1.1 Problem Statement

The inhabitants of Northern Thailand[2], Thais as well as the members of other ethnic groups, face a lot of different and very complex problems. The different kinds of problems, which are ranging from natural resources conflicts via human rights issues to health problems, are the initial starting point for every extension, development and research activity that is carried out there. Understanding how the different organizations deal with those issues and how they combine or ignore the different kinds of problems in their work was one crucial objective of this research.

Due to isolation and frequent migration from region to region, the exact number of indigenous people who live in Thailand is not known exactly. Research reports estimate the population of the so called major Thai *hill tribes* to be 790,369, constituting 1.3 % of the total national population, and including the following seven major groups: Karen (402,095), Hmong (126,147), Lahu (78,842), Akha (48,468), Mien (47,305), Htin (32,755) and Lisu (31,536). These ethnic groups reside mostly in the mountainous areas of the north, and along the border with Myanmar (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Distribution of Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand
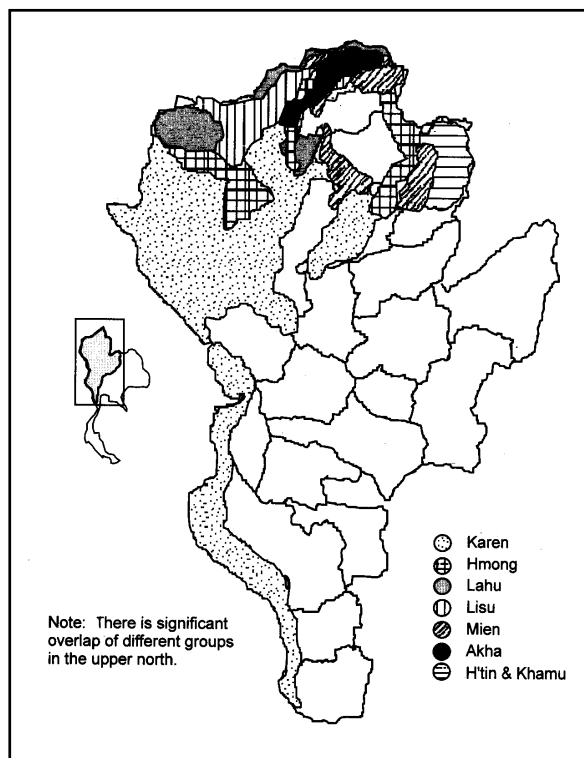
Source: KAMPE (1997: 22)

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[2] As there is no standardized definition of Northern Thailand; the one which is currently preferred by the Royal Thai Government was chosen: All in all, the Northern part consists of 17 provinces, 8 in the "Upper North" and 9 in the "Lower North". Historically, the area of the "Upper North", with the provinces of Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Nan, Lamphun, Lampang and Phrae correspond to the old autonomous Northern principalities (cf. WALKER, 1992: 2).

Beside the problems that highland people have to face at the moment, one should not forget that there are also difficulties in the relationship between the so-called highlanders and lowlanders. These conflicts arise due to different perceptions of prevailing problems and of development. In order to solve those kinds of problems, a considerable number of organizations try to close the gap between the highlanders and lowlanders by public relations work.

This research focuses on the identification of different development organizations in Northern Thailand, whose major field of interest is focusing on the above cited major problems. The variety of problems as well as the variety of organizations made it necessary to circumscribe the topic and to limit my research to the following objectives.

1.2 Objectives and Structure of the Study

The objectives of this research were as follows:

⇨ to analyze the extension situation in Northern Thailand, focusing on the work of different non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governmental organizations (GOs) and other institutions; their main objectives, main activities, and target groups,

⇨ to identify the use of media (especially picture supported media) within the organizations' communication in development, extension and research in different settings, with different objectives, for different target groups,

⇨ to provide a comparison of the used methods with the theoretical potential of the *Flannelgraph method*, as a method of reference, and

⇨ to identify possible approaches for increasing the potential of the used methods.

In order to collect the required data, the use of media and picture supported communication in agricultural extension and participatory rural development has been empirically researched for almost five months in Northern Thailand. A summary of main principles, methods and examples of the field research will be introduced and discussed in the following chapters.

Besides the introduction, this discussion paper comprises the following main parts:

⇨ Chapter 2 describes the research methodology as well as issues such as *intercultural communication*, *extension* and the *Flannelgraph method*.

⇨ In Chapter 3, the media use in different settings and with different objectives is presented. This is based on three selected case studies. Thereafter, the results are compared with the information that has been gathered during interviews with various resource persons from different organizations.

⇨ Finally, conclusions and recommendations are drawn and discussed in Chapter 4.

2   Research Methodology

The research was embedded within the so-called UPLANDS PROGRAM[3] and this chapter will provide a brief overview of the methodology as well as a selection of those issues that are relevant for the later evaluation of the presented case studies[4].

2.1   Interviews and Field Observation

In addition to various talks with key informants of the different development organizations, open interviews were conducted. These were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire. It turned out that general information about the organizations could be gathered quite quickly because almost every organization has its own leaflet for public information. Further information could be collected using a checklist that was adapted from the "*Checklist for using media*" (ALBRECHT et al.,1990: F12; see Annex 1).

Beside the interviews, different organizations were accompanied during their field trips. This field observation provided data from different locations as well as different target groups for the analysis of media supported develoment work. Out of those organizations that were selected for a very detailed observation, three will serve as case studies in Chapter 3 of this paper.

2.2   Intercultural Communication

According to ALBRECHT et al. (1989: 76) "the most general context in which we can understand and explain human behaviour is the sharing of a culture. The common characteristics of a shared culture can only be appreciated in retrospect after confrontation with a different culture. Normally, the characteristics of our own culture are so taken for granted that we are neither able to question them nor recognize them as something special."

Aspects of *intercultural communication* play a significant role in the field research as well as in the daily work of extension agents and representatives of various groups of organizations. Therefore, a few basic ideas will be listed, especially those that influenced the field research. In research, as well as in development work, the problem of having to rely on a foreign language can be solved quite easily by the help of a translator. But even under close to ideal conditions, complex communication processes such as in development work can pose difficulties for both, sender and recipient. Especially in an inter-cultural environment, possible

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[3] The term UPLANDS PROGRAM refers to the Thai-Vietnamese-German Collaborative Research Program of the University of Hohenheim with Universities in Thailand and Vietnam. The research focus on "Sustainable Land Use and Rural Development in Mountainous Regions of Southeast Asia". The Program's aims are to contribute to a better management of natural resources, to the improvement of rural livelihoods and to the development of methods for modeling the dynamic interactions between ecosystems, ethnic diversity and heterogeneous institutional contexts.
[4] More detailed information concerning basic models of *perception and communication*, *pictorial communication* as well as *participation and PRA* can be found in FISCHER (2002)

obstacles have to be taken into consideration. One important aspect in this situation, which can determine the ease or burden of fruitful communication, is the foreign culture and its similarities or differences to that of the researcher or the extension agent.

GOODENOUGH (1966: 258) defines culture as "the shared products of human learning". He further differentiates this product into four distinct factors in which people organize their experience:

1. Their perceptions and concepts.
2. A system of cause and effect relationship, that is, the propositions and beliefs by which people explain events and design tactics for accomplishing their purpose.
3. Their values or sentiment system.
4. Their operational procedures for dealing with people as well as for dealing with material things.

Differences that occur in one or more of these categories distinguish a culture. Whereas the language is not necessarily determining a culture according to this point of view, it is still beneficial and highly recommendable for any outsider to be able to communicate in the local language. Although differences in perception can not be excluded, the effort of learning a language may already provide a first idea about the prevailing concepts of this language.

Other aspects that are often mentioned in the interrelation of culture and intercultural communication are mental characteristics of a culture, which were empirically analyzed by HOFSTEDE (1993). HOFSTEDE (chose 50 countries to examine international differences in work-related values and as a result, the following dimensions of differences were found:

- power distance,
- individualism versus collectivism,
- uncertainty avoidance, and
- masculinity versus femininity.

As the above mentioned traits as well as the occurring differences are often taken as a guideline in intercultural communication, one has to be particularly careful not to fall into stereotypes.

All in all, it is important to remember that there are culturally determined differences in the interaction, for instance in power distance, which may hinder some individuals to express their view. Even if they finally do, there might be different perspectives and ways of expressing them, which have to be carefully taken into account. Examples concerning this issue can be found in Chapter 3 below.

2.3   Extension and Extension Methods

ALBRECHT et al. (1989: 33-124) was among the first to give a comprehensive definition of extension work: "It is the process whereby the extension worker tries to motivate his extension partner and to give him the capability with the help of encouragement and ideas to act to solve his acute problems. […] The relationship between the extension worker and the

extension partner that is necessary to achieve this should be reciprocal, the extension worker being committed to the welfare of his opposite number. In this relationship, the freedom of decision making and the personal responsibility of the partner must be preserved in full, because he alone must ultimately bear the responsibility for the consequences of his actions."

In addition to the above definition a framework model of extension is offered in Figure 2. This model of organized extension work can be described as a general illustration of the interaction between extension service and target groups. It explains how the behavior of individuals, both the extension worker and the extension partner, is rooted in and considerably influenced by the wider social context. According to that statement, behavior is embedded in:

- a complex of personal relations,
- a social structure in the case of the target groups and additionally in an organizational structure in the case of the extension worker,
- a cultural milieu, and
- a cultural and social system.

Figure 2: Framework Model of Extension
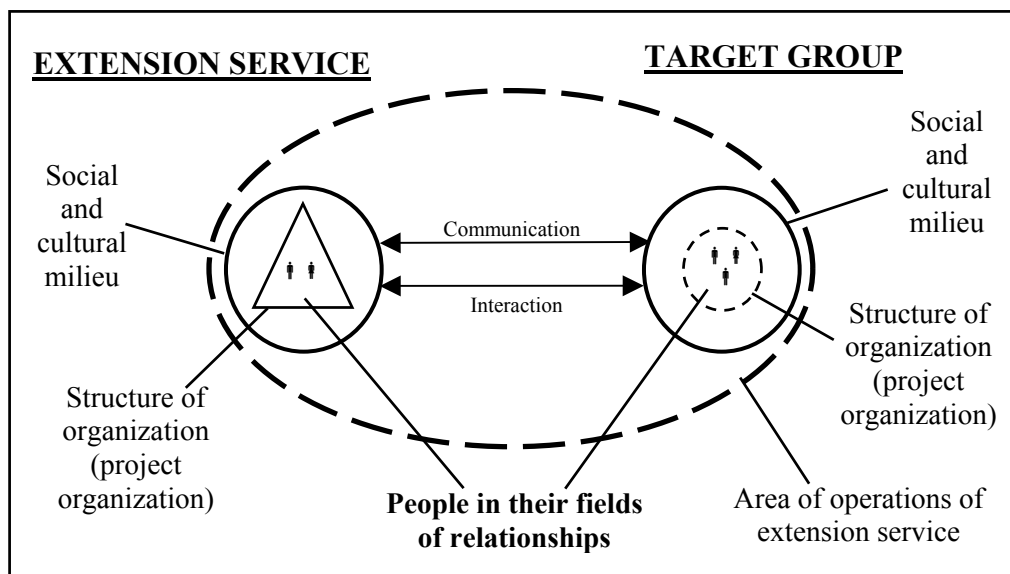
Source: adapted after ALBRECHT et al. (1989: 58)

The extension situation in Northern Thailand is very complex as outlined above. Therefore, one has to consider the above mentioned social context and the different behavior patterns of the extension workers and the target groups, respectively. As pointed out earlier, cultural and social values as well as social structures within the various ethnic groups differ significantly. This fact requires the need of culturally adapted extension approaches. In order to reach their objectives, the organizations have to decide which kind of extension methods they choose for their work.

In general, extension methods comprise the techniques of communication that motivate and enable target groups to find ways of solving their problems. Depending on the particular

method, communication can be on a mutual basis (e.g. a conversation or a group discussion) or one-way directed (e.g. information through brochures). It is crucial for the success of each extension session that the methods are adapted to local circumstances, because the use of any communication technique depends on the number of people addressed, the problems to be solved and the capacity of the extension service. In summary, we can categorize the methods as follows:

1. Individual extension
2. Group extension
3. Mass extension

The three detailed examples concerning the most widely used category, namely group extension, will be presented in the case studies in Chapter 3.

2.4 Flannelgraph Method

"Flannelgraph is a set of distinctly cut and brightly colored pictures backed with cheap flannel which can stick easily to such fluff background as blanket, flannel, and also beaverboard or rough hardboard. [… It is] most useful in the teaching of specific topics to groups of 20 to 30 people [… and it] has the advantage of being transportable, durable, artistic, and captivating, as well as being an incentive to the class to participate in the work which is being done. […] It is inexpensive and easy to prepare. However, it is only effective if the user is conversant with it, active and able to show initiative in adapting it to local needs; and it is essential, in order to avoid boredom to the class, not to use the same picture over and over again." (Unknown author, cited in HOFFMANN, 2000: 106)

Although the name of the method, *Flannelgraph*, focuses on an unimportant detail, namely the material used to make the pictures stick to a board, the important function of the method is adhesion. Normally, the adhesion of picture elements is only brief, because it is essential that the pictures can be taken off again easily and placed elsewhere on the board. This leads to the basic aspect, namely that the pictures have to remain flexible and mobile. In summary, *Flannelgraph* can be defined as a method used by a facilitator for pedagogical purposes, in direct contact with his audience, involving the positioning and regrouping, as required, of individually drawn picture elements on a board. It combines the potentials of pictorial media with the advantages of the spoken word as well as it helps to overcome limits of space and time, just as in film, but with less effort[5].

Like every other method, *Flannelgraph* bears some limitations. In this case, it is the quality of the facilitator, who is responsible if the full potential of the method can be used, or if it will be lost. According to HOFFMANN (2000: 302) "Here, as elsewhere, no one is born a master. But a trainer who does not have complete mastery of what he is supposed to teach and who is

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[5] A complete summary of the "Criteria for Selecting Media for Training and Extension, Applied to the Flannelgraph Method" is presented in Annex 2.

unable to transfer it into comparable situations is the wrong person in the wrong place." As there are only few courses for training trainers in the sphere of communication and extension, this limitation is widly spread throughout the world.

3   Results: Media Use in Northern Thailand

Chapter 3 introduces the different types of organizations, their use of media supported communication in different settings, with different objectives for different target groups, as well as the results of the conducted research. The research issues can be divided into:

1. **Analysis of the extension situation in Northern Thailand** through visits of different NGOs, GOs, universities and other development organizations. The focus was on the collection of general information about the organizations, i.e. their activities, their main objectives and their target groups.

2. **Identification of media use** (especially picture supported methods) within the organizations' communication in extension and research in different settings, with different objectives for different target groups. Theoretical (e.g. literature review and interviews) as well as practical knowledge transfer (e.g. workshops and field trips) were carried out.

3.1   Organizations involved in Development

Whereas the first development efforts concerning the hill tribes were initiated by Thailand's government, namely the Ministry of Interior, in 1956, with the establishment of the Committee for the Welfare of Remote Populations, the first NGO, the Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM) was founded in 1969. Since these early activities, the development process of the region surrounding the area of the so-called Golden Triangle, where the countries of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos meet and which is still famous for the growing and trafficking of opium and heroin, were significantly influenced by innumerable national as well as international projects. Early on, drug-replacement programs were initiated in many hill tribe villages. Later, the main emphasis was put on natural resource management, as it turned out that more and more environmental damages were caused by high-input farming, which was brought in to the members of the different hill tribes before, as a substitute for opium growing.

Since countless organizations are involved in development, extension work and research in Northern Thailand, the information and data available is overwhelming. Therefore, this discussion paper will focus only on three educative case studies. Information about different types of organizations will be briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

Today, there are more than 100 NGOs that are working in Northern Thailand. Their activities, objectives and target groups vary, although most of them are dealing with the main problems

of the hill tribes, such as legal issues concerning citizenship and land rights, heath problems including HIV/AIDS and drugs, as well as ecological and economical aspects.

Beside the many NGOs that were visited during the field research, government representatives were also interviewed. The Office of Agriculture / Division of Planning can be mentioned as one example where general information was collected about the structure of the governmental extension system as well as the mainly used methods. Furthermore, discussions with the Head of Station of the Highland Agricultural Extension Office, which is under the Office of Agricultural Extension, increased the knowledge about media use in different hill tribe villages as well as the collaboration with other organizations.

3.2 Case Studies

This section deals with the identification of media use, especially picture supported methods, in different settings with different objectives for different target groups. The following organizations are representative for different approaches in participatory extension and development work[6]:

- ➢ *Northern Development Foundation (NDF)*
- ➢ *Project for the Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers and Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand* (*ProCon-Net*)
- ➢ *Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF)*

The presentation of each of the three case studies follows the same structure. First, each organization will be briefly introduced, including main objectives, focus-issues, target groups, area of operation and collaboration with other organizations. Second, their use of different kinds of media is described. The media vary according to location and target group. A critical analysis and comparative evaluation, including the potentials and limitations of each extension method will be discussed in Section 3.3.

3.2.1 Northern Development Foundation

The *Northern Development Foundation (NDF)*, was selected from the *Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations 1997*[7] (KORKEATKACHORN & KIATIPRAJAK, 1997). Further information about *NFD* could be gathered during different interviews.

NDF was established in 1994 and has four sub-organizations:

1. People's Organization

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[6] The reasoning behind choosing the following three NGOs to serve as case studies is twofold: On the one hand, the people in charge of these organizations offered the unique experience to accompany them (several times) during their extension work. This gave the researcher the chance to participate in true-"life" situations, in different target group villages. On the other hand, they are ideal in the sense that they combine different extension approaches, in different villages and with different target groups.

[7] Few developing countries provide a formal directory of development organizations. Thailand is an exception in this sense. Therefore, it was possible to use the directory to acquire a first overview about different organizations, which are working in Northern Thailand, including their objectives, activities and target groups.

2. ISDEP (Institution of Sustainable Development Education Program)
3. Fund Raising Program
4. Information and Campaign

Prior to 1994, *NDF* supported different NGOs that were working in separate villages. Eversince, *NDF* is directly working in villages that are linked to the *Northern Farmers Network (NFN)*. The NGO has 14 staff members, 13 are Thais and one is *Lua* (another ethnic minority).

The organization's activities can be summarized as follows:

- organization of training for NGOs and the public,
- study and compilation of information, and
- production of media.

The main objectives of the *NDF* are:

- to support and strengthen community organization,
- to create education programs for NGO-workers and village leaders,
- to encourage middleclass people in the cities to involve and participate in community organization and NGO activities, and
- to organize campaigns to introduce sustainable development policies to government agencies.

NDF's areas of operation are villages in northern Thailand and the target group are highland people, mainly members of the Karen ethnic group (60%). *NDF* operates on two different levels: the community and the policy level. Therefore *NDF* is collaborating with different organizations, such as the *Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association* (*IMPACT), Centre for the Coordination of Non-government Tribal Development Organization (CONTO), NFN, Hill Tribes Network* and the *Community Forest Network.*

NDF produces information material for the general public, NGO-workers and *NFN*. In their extension work in the villages, *NDF*-staff uses different PRA-tools such as rankings, village history or cropping calendars. They also work on gender relations in the villages.

Beside the interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to accompany *NDF's* field staff to Ban Orn, one of the organization's target villages. Before the fieldtrip, a preparatory meeting of NDF's staff could be joined as well as the assessment meeting afterwards. The participation during the whole extension process offered the researcher the opportunity to identify the methods and media used as extension aids by the staff.

In general, the whole process was carried out according to the previously developed schedule, after it was presented to the village headman and the other participants. The meeting was conducted in the village's temple and approximately 30 villagers of different age joined the process. Different methods and media were applied during the two-day meeting, including the use of village pictures, which were jointly prepared in collaboration with the villagers as a visualization tool. Another PRA-tool that was used was a problem ranking. For this, the participants were divided into different groups: male, female and elders. Staff members guided the groups and besides writing down the contributions of the villagers, they took care

that everybody joined the discussion and mentioned some problems. In the end, the problems were presented and discussed in the plenary. All in all, the whole extension process was carried out in both languages, Thai and Karen, and the village headman acted as a translator whenever necessary.

Beside the identification of the main problems in the village, the second big issue was related to the production systems that were used in the past as well as those that are used today. In order to help the villagers, another big picture was prepared with the help of several villagers. The picture showed different villages and paddy fields. Furthermore, those fields that were under shifting cultivation were highligthed in the picture. One of the women from the village was selected to present the picture to the whole group. After that, the group had the opportunity to discuss the facts. All in all, the results of the group discussions were summarized and collected on another Flipchart paper by the extension staff. These summaries were taken back to the head-quarter by the extension staff in order to prepare the next meetings.

As stated before, *NDF* mainly focuses on the Karen ethnic group in their extension work. Nevertheless, they also have experiences with other hill tribes. Therefore questions were asked about the staff's experiences with the members of the different ethnic groups. The results were similar to those of the other organizations and can be summarized as follows: In contrast to Karen and Lahu-groups, where women are allowed to state their own opinion and where women are not subject to so many taboos, it is more difficult to work with Hmong or Akha groups. Furthermore, Hmong are very busy, hard working people who are on their plots most of the time. Therefore, it is necessary to join them on the plot in order to get the opportunity to talk to them. In addition to that, one has to be careful to involve all the different clans into the work. A big advantage of the Hmong is that they have fewer language problems and therefore understand more easily what the extension staff tries to confer to them. Finally, different kinds of media and extension methods that are used by the extension staff of *NDF* are briefly summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1: Important Media and Methods of *NDF*

Target group	PRA	Extension Handbook	Flipchart/ Metaplan	Picture	Photo	Public Information[1]	Campaign	Natural Materials	Field/Study-trip	Political Demonstra-tions	Real products (e.g. trad., woven Karen shirt)
Woman	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔
Men	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔		
Elders	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔			
Networks						✔	✔			✔	

Source: FISCHER (2002: 112)
Note: 1) e.g. brochures, leaflets, booklets

3.2.2 Project for the Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers and Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand

The second organization that will be presented as a case study is the *Project for the Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers and Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (ProCon-Net). ProCon-Net* is the 7th project out of eleven projects of the *NorthNet Foundation*[8] and it was established in 1992. At the moment, ten Thai staff members are working for*ProCon-Net* and its mission is:

- to strengthen producers' and consumers' organizations and develop mutual support between the rural and urban communities,
- to develop alternative markets to achieve self reliance, and
- to disseminate and campaign on agriculture related policy.

The objectives that go with the above mentioned mission are:

1. to develop and strengthen the organization and network of producers-consumer alternative agriculture in upper Northern Thailand.
2. to develop the alternative marketing model and system in the upper Northern region in order to serve as an example to other areas and for it to be self-reliant.
3. to disseminate and campaign alternative agriculture, alternative marketing, farmers' rights, community rights and eliminate the use of hazardous pesticides and their entry banned into Thailand.

There are three different target groups that the *ProCon-Net* tries to reach with its work:

- Organic food producers
- Urban consumers
- Government officers

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[8] The *NorthNet Foundation* is a network of rural community development organizations, which are locally based in the five upper northern provinces of Thailand. NorthNet aims to strengthen development and support of villager's organizations and their capable potentials through mutual co-operation and joint activities such as training programs and link-ups of the community groups and different parties of the society. The three main programs under the NorthNet Foundation deal with the rural development program for:
1. Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management
2. Community Health Promotion concerning HIV/AIDS
3. Alterative Marketing and Community Fund Raising

At the moment, most of the participating farmers are Thai-uplands-farmers, but *ProCon-Net* has plans to involve more lowland farmers in the future. *ProCon-Net* also collaborates with other partners, namely farmers, rural as well as urban consumers, NGOs and GOs and international organizations.

In comparison to most of the other NGO projects, *ProCon-Net* is dealing with Thais, not with hill tribe people. This aspect offers the opportunity to draw a comparison between the use of different extension methods and different kinds of media applied in remote areas with hill tribe people and those methods applied to work with people who live very close to a big city and whose mother tongue is Thai.

In 1992, *ProCon-Net* started to promote alternative farming in two villages. In order to increase the success of the planned projects and to support the dynamics that can develop in group work, especially in such a complex issue as farming, where different people have different knowledge about the various topics, *ProCon-Net* tried to convince the farmers to collaborate in small groups instead of working individually.

Today, there are already 17 such groups that unite more than 200 households. Approximately 20% of the joining farms are considered so-called *model farms*, which means, that those farms are in such a condition that other (new) farmer groups, consumers and even government officials are invited to study them. Therefore, the farms are not only important production sites but also a kind of media, where the idea of organic farming can be seen, heard, smelled and even tasted.

The second big part beside the farms, where the food is produced, is the organic markets and shops, where everybody has the opportunity to buy the organically grown products. Fresh products as well as processed goods (e.g. soy sauce) are offered in a well organized network of shops and markets throughout the country.

In order to increase the number of participants on both sides, namely the side of consumers as well as producers, *ProCon-Net* is trying very hard to convince those target groups, as well as the government, that there is a real need for action. In collaboration with farmers who are already practicing organic farming or food processing, the financial help of the government, international organizations, NGOs and farmer groups as well as the specialized knowledge of experts from different universities, *ProCon-Net* was able to support different pilot projects for sustainable agriculture for small farmers.

Within its tasks to promote alternative farming and the consumption of organically grown products, the staff of *ProCon-Net* uses different kinds of methods and media, which will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs. Beside an information trip to an organic farm, which was organized for consumers, it was possible to accompany the preparation and foundation of a new farmers group.

A workshop about alternative agriculture was organized by *ProCon-Net*, after a preparatory meeting was conducted with interested farmers of Ban Nong Harn. During the preparatory meeting, the basic objectives and activities of *ProCon-Net* were introduced and the question was discussed, why organic farming and sustainable agriculture should be practiced. Information brochures were distributed and a Flipchart was used to visualize the work of the organization and to collect the farmers' contributions.

The first official meeting of the new alternative farming group took place in the temple of Ban Nong Harn and, after a brief introduction by the director of *ProCon-Net*, the steps of the foundation of a new group were presented to the joining villagers (see Box 1).

Box 1: Steps of the Foundation Process

1. Workshop on the idea of organic farming
2. Study trip to a model farm
3. Workshop on different techniques in organic farming
4. Grouping
   a. Gender
   b. Rules and Regulations
   c. Committee

Source: FISCHER (2002: 120)

In order to give all participants an equal start, the facilitator reviewed the topics that were discussed in the preparatory meeting. To do so, he used the previously elaborated Flipchart pages. After that, the schedule for the following workshop (see Box 2) was introduced to the group.

Box 2: Schedule of the Workshop

1. Development of agriculture in Ban Nong Harn; problems and changing (small groups + presentation)
2. Slideshow
3. Future plans for the village (farmer's objectives)
4. Sustainable agriculture:
   - Meaning / Objectives
   - Principles
   - Methods
5. Slideshow
6. Organization of Study trip

Source: FISCHER (2002: 120)

During the whole workshop, different PRA methods as well as different kinds of media were used to create an exchange between staff and participants and to keep the participants' attention and interest throughout the day. The elaboration of the village history was included as well as a "multimedia slide show". All collected information was written down on Flipchart paper, which was presented and discussed with all participants. At the end, the director of *ProCon-Net* summarized the results of the new group's first meeting and explained the next step, the study trip to a model farm, to the participants.

During the whole trip, the members of the new organic farmers group had the opportunity to gather information about the "IMBOON-Market" in Chiang Mai, an organic model farm as well as a small soybean-"factory". Especially on the fields of the organic farm, the participants had the opportunity to see how different plants are grown in an ecology friendly way. In addition, the owner of the farm explained everything to the interested farmers.

The third step in the process, a workshop on different techniques in organic farming was postponed due to the lack of a complete set of extension material as well as the limited time of the participants caused by everybody's preparations for the *Songkran* (Water Festival) at the beginning of April.

All in all, *ProCon-Net* produces information material such as brochures, posters and calendars (with seasonal plants such as fruits or vegetables, including recipes) for their consumers. In addition to that, they offer a radio program (every Friday for one hour), where farmers chat with consumers. Farmers/Farms are also used as "media": thus different media/tools, such as meetings, markets and fieldtrips to model farms (for new farmer groups as well as for scholars and students, consumers and government officials) are used in combination. Media that is used for Thai farmers usually include Flipchart and other kinds of "modern" media such as slides or video. Almost no pictures are used, because everybody speaks Thai and electricity is available in all villages. The research results are listed in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: Important Media and Methods of *ProCon-Net*

Target group		PRA	Extension Handbook	Flipchart/ Metaplan	Poster	Photo	Slide	Video	Radio	Public Information[1]	Campaign	Calendar	Field/Study-trip	Show Farm	IMBOON Market
	Producer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Consumer			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Government Officials				✓			✓		✓				✓	
	Networks							✓	✓	✓	✓				

Source: FISCHER (2002: 124)
Note: 1) e.g. brochures, leaflets, booklets

3.2.3 Hill Area Development Foundation

The *Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF)* was one of the few organizations that were visited in Chiang Rai. The fact that some organizations have their offices outside the city of Chiang Mai, further north in the country and therefore closer to the target groups' villages, raised the researcher's interest.

The following activities were mentioned in the *Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations 1997* for *HADF* (KORKEATKACHORN & KIATIPRAJAK, 1997: 177-178):

- Providing education, and promoting conservation and sustainable agriculture;
- Developing community organizations and networks; and
- Acting as an information center on communities in the hill areas

HADF was established in 1986 to assist hill tribes in dealing with problems ranging from the environmental management to social development. At the moment *HADF* has thirteen staff members of different ethnic affiliation. Beside eight people who are Thai, there are two Lisu, two Karen and one Lahu.

The main objectives of *HADF* are:
1. to promote and support an improved quality of life of the hill people.
2. to cooperate with various government agencies and other organizations for increased self-reliance of the hill communities.
3. to promote respect for the value of hill tribe cultures and to conserve and develop these cultures and traditions as appropriate.
4. to promote the concept of people and nature living in harmony and to support a program of environmental conservation activities.
5. to support committed individuals in their work with hill people.

In this context, the focus-issues are to strengthen village organizations in order to enable them to rely on themselves as well as to integrate village leaders (men and women) in the NGO networks. All in all, *HADF*'s activities can be categorized into the following topics:

- Gender and Development
- Prevention and Control of Drug Abuse

- AIDS Prevention and Awareness
- Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation
- Networking
- Sustainable Agriculture/Land Use Planning
- Community Education and Strengthening Community Organizations
- Environmental Conservation

Today, *HADF* is working in 40 villages close to the Thai-Myanmar border, including lowland villages that are connected to hill-tribe villages due to the use of the same natural resources. The main target groups are Akha, Lisu, Lahu and Mien. Beside the Chiang Mai University, *HADF* collaborates with 25 NGOs working on development issues in Chiang Rai. These 25 NGOs are divided into nine networks, which meet every three months to discuss the current issues in their project areas.

HADF's already existing extension material was to some extent already picture based. Some of the material was cartoon-like, some with many photos, but both contained a lot of written text. All in all, the extension staff was not satisfied with the success of the existing media and in the latest evaluation of the material, it became apparent that it was not suitable for extension workers and the hill tribe people in the villages. In particular the older members of the different ethnic groups, who are not able to read and/or understand Thai language, had problems with the material. Therefore, the organization decided, with the help and the funding of a foreign development organization, to develop new extension material, which should be more adapted to the needs of the target groups.

The description of this problem as well as the planned solution, in the form of developing picture based media for an illiterate target group, sounded very similar to the *Flannelgraph method*, which was choosen as a methodological reference tool in this research.

In order to gather more information about the development of the new piture-based extension material, *HADF*'s next field trip to Ban Pang Sa was joined. The target village consists of 77 families, who belong to the following three ethnic groups: Lisu, Lahu and Chinese. Although most of the people speak/understand four languages (Lisu, Lahu, Chinese and Thai), it was a big advantage that the extension expert's ethnicity was Lisu. Due to this fact, language problems as well as other difficulties, which are rooted in different traditions and beliefs, could be avoided since both parties shared a common cultural background.

The development of the new material, namely a poster about *"Wildlife in local belief"*, was initiated six month ago. Staff members and the illustrator went to the village several times to collect and discuss all necessary information. After several drafts were sketched and changed again, the current draft was presented to the villagers for further discussions. In the course of this meeting, the villagers had the chance to state their opinion about the general quality as well as all the details, e.g. size and appearance of the animals.

The intention behinde the *wildlife*-picture was to improve the communication between the different generations as well as the preservation of indigenous/local knowledge. In the long

run, the young people should better understand the beliefs and the traditions in order to develop more respect for their environment. Better protection of the nature and especially the forest are the main objectives. Participants of the meeting were elders from different clans as well as representatives of the women's and the youth group. The majority were Lisu, but there was also one Lahu girl that joined the meeting. All people were involved in the project.

The wildlife scene in the poster is without any written text, but there is some written text around the drawing, integrated in the frame of the picture. After a lot of discussions with the villagers, they agreed to use the Thai script for the text, because Lisu has no written language, and the use of the Roman script for Lisu has caused problems in the past[9].

When completed, the final version of the *wildlife*-picture will be sent to Bangkok for printing. Once the printed posters are back in Chiang Rai, *HADF* will distribute 1,000 of them to the *Non-Formal Education Centers* in the hill tribe villages of every district. In addition to the pictures, an introduction about the objective and the use of the posters will be given to the staff of each center.

Other activities that were previously carried out in this villages are:
- Village mapping (including forest and traditional places)
- Forest tours (from the elders for the youth, including herbs-knowledge)
- Study trips for the youth to a national Park in order to see real wildlife. The elders still know the animals from those days and therefore they can explain the animals to the youth (most of the younger people speak Thai).

Furthermore, a monthly local newsletter, *Rang Rin Newsletter*, is produced to provide information for young hill-tribe people that are living in urban areas. In their extension work, *HADF* integrates different PRA methods, such as village mapping, ranking, and group discussions in their activities in the villages. The different methods are adapted to the needs of the target groups.

Like the other organizations, *HADF*'s staff members were asked about their experiences in working with people of the different ethnic background. Once again, the outcome was quite similar. Whereas the collaboration with members of the Lisu and Lahu groups is quite easy, the staff describes the work with members of Hmong and Akha as more difficult. The reasons are, on the one hand, the many taboos that exists in the Akha tradition, as well as the strong patriarchal structures in Hmong society, on the other hand, the Lisu and Lahu are more open and have a more equal gender view. Finally, different kinds of media and extension methods that are used by the organization are listed in Table 3.

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[9] In 1992, staff of the UNESCO identified the problem behind using Roman script in extension media during the process of testing new developed media. As some of the villagers refused to collaborate with the media producers, the staff tried to find out what the problem was and how they could solve it. Finally, they were told that there were still a lot of villagers who practiced their traditional belief and that they were afraid that they would become Christians, if they read "Christian script", which they knew from some missionaries who were in the region before. In order to avoid this unintentional conversion to Christianity, they simply refused to read the text.

Table 3: Important Media and Methods of *HADF*

Target group		PRA	Extension Handbook	Flipchart/ Metaplan	Picture	Poster	Photo	Slide	Video	Newspaper	Public Information[1]	Campaign	Field/Study-trip
	Women	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔	✔		✔
	Men	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔	✔		✔
	Youth	✔	✔		✔	✔				✔			✔
	Elders	✔	✔		✔	✔				✔			
	Networks					✔					✔	✔	

Source: FISCHER (2002: 130)
Note: 1) e.g. brochures, leaflets, booklets

3.3   Critical Analysis and Comparative Evaluation

After the presentation of three selected case studies, the aim of this Section is as follows: On the one hand, the potentials and limitations of different kinds of media will be discussed. This allows to provide a comparison of the used methods with the theoretical potential of the *Flannelgraph method*. On the other hand, the identification of possible approaches for increasing the potential of the used methods will be presented. First of all, a table will be shown, where most of the currently used media is summarized. The next step will be the presentation of major *Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work*. After that, the discussion of potentials and limitations of currently used media in comparison to the *Flannelgraph method* will follow, and finally, possible approaches for increasing the potential of the used methods will be mentioned.

Beside the empirical results that were gathered during the field research period in Thailand[10], necessary theoretical background will be included in this Section. Further information concerning picture-supported communication, which can be found in HOFFMANN (2000: 288-304) will be integrated and compared with own research results.

As previously mentioned, one can basically distinguish between three different extension methods: individual, group and mass extension. In general, most of the organizations that are working in the field of rural development focus on group extension because it is less costly to train a group than an invidual and the probability of success is higher in training/monitoring a limited group instead of masses. This expectation was also proved to be well founded for the

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[10] Due to the limited research time in Thailand, it was not possible to analyze the use of extension aids from both perspectives, the extension experts' and the target groups' side. Therefore, this research only focuses on the point of view of the respective extension experts and their experiences with the use of different kinds of media, in different locations, for different target groups.

situation in Northern Thailand, nevertheless, a few exceptions could be identified during the field research phase[11].

3.3.1 Currently Used Extension Methods and Picture Supported Media

The evaluation of methods and media that are included in group- as well as mass extension is the focus of this section. Since Table 4 below was developed according to own research results, any divergences to other, already existing lists are due to this fact. Furthermore, the huge amount of existing methods and materials was summarized.

According to HOFFMANN (2000), extension should enter the field of perception and raise interest among the target group. Therefore it should be understandable, experienced as relevant, adapted to existing value conceptions as well as illustrate ways to reach previously set goals. Furthermore, it is the task of the extension staff that all parties affected and involved in the process participate actively. This can only be achieved by selecting and designing appropriate communication tools.

One example that can be mentioned in this context are the criteria for selecting the *Flannelgraph method* (see Annex 2), which have illustrated the great potential of this medium to make entire projects or programs participatory.

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[11] Cf. FISCHER, (2002): Although group extension dominates, a few examples could be found for individual (e.g. Royal Project's Fruit Tree Specialist) or mass extension (e.g. TWF).

Table 4: Methods and Media Used by Different Organizations

		Organizations												
		NWDF	IMPECT	GOs	NNCO	Royal Project	Universities	TRF	NGO-CORD	CONTO	NDF	Pro-Con-Net	HADF	TWF
Methods and Media	PRA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Extension Handbooks	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓	✓
	Flipchart/Metaplan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	"Flipover"-calendar			✓	✓	✓	✓							
	Picture	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
	Poster	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Photo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓
	Slide			✓		✓	✓					✓		✓
	Video			✓		✓	✓					✓		✓
	TV			✓										✓
	Radio		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
	Newspaper		✓	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓
	Public Information[1]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Campaign	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Calendar		✓	✓								✓		
	Natural Materials		✓					✓				✓	✓	
	Trad. Songs and Tales		✓					✓					✓	✓
	Field/Study-trip	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
	Show Farm											✓		
	Markets/Shops					✓						✓		
	Exhibition		✓						✓	✓				
	Political Demonstrations	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: FISCHER (2002: 139)

3.3.2   Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work

As there are various extension methods and various kinds of media available for different target groups and different situations, it is impossible to find one quick and simple solution for the problem of selecting appropriate methods and media for communication in extension and development work. HOFFMANN (2000) states that the complex issue of media selection could be seen as a complex optimization problem, which only can be solved through deliberation, sufficient experience, adequate consultation and step-wise, joint testing. All in all, with the help of this optimization process one has to find answers to the following questions: *what, why, at whose place and with whom, when and where,* and finally, *with what and how.*

- "*What*" concerns the question of communication contents - the messages to be communicated.
- "*Why*" is the question that addresses the communication goals.

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- "*At whose place and with whom*" focuses on the target groups of the communication process as well as other persons and groups that are affected through it.
- "*When and where*" deals with the question of appropriate communication settings, as the infrastructural environment in which communication or media use takes place plays a role here.
- "*With what and how*" leads us to the question of media choice and communication setting design. It requires additional considerations of crucial preconditions to media selection, such as the financial, material and human resources available.

The second step will be the presentation of major *Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work*. Therefore, the above listed questions as well as both original lists by ALBRECHT et al. (1990: F12; see Annex 1) and HOFFMANN (2000: 116-117, see Annex 2), namely the "*Checklist for Using Media*" and the "*Criteria for Selecting Media for Training and Extension, Applied to the Flannelgraph Method*" were adapted to this research's requirements. The result of this conversion can be found in Table 5.

Table 5: Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work

Nr	Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work
1	Is the aim of the media use to provide information (I), to stimulate activity and mobilize the target group (A) or both (B)?
	Financial, logistic and organizational criteria
2	Are the costs for production and use as well as the maintenance of equipment high (H) or low (L)?
3	Can the media be produced flexible and independent of specific events (yes ✓/no -)?
4	Can the media material still be altered after production (yes ✓/no -)?
5	Can the media be reproduced simply and locally (yes ✓/no -)?
6	Are technical facilities available for media use at each location (yes ✓/no -)?
7	Is electricity needed (yes ✓/no -)?
8	Are there enough media stuff, equipment and materials available to reach all the members of the target group (yes ✓/no -)?
	Methodological, pedagogic and cultural criteria
9	Can statements or course contents be developed systematically (yes ✓/no -)?
10	Do extension staff (S) and target groups (T), or both (B) participate in designing the medium?
11	Has the material been specifically developed or appropriately adapted for the recipients (e.g. hill tribe, gender, labor division) and local conditions (yes ✓/no -)?
12	Is local knowledge included in the media (yes ✓/no - /depends **?**)?
13	Is the language locally adapted (e.g. hill tribe language, Figures of speech, proverbs, comparisons) (yes ✓/no - /depends **?**)?
14	Is the presentation comprehensible (e.g. structure, concepts, symbols) (yes ✓/no - /depends **?**)?
15	Are contributions and discussions stimulated within the target group e.g. by the principle of "ask, don´t tell" or is the presentation a monologue (yes ✓/no - /depends **?**)?

Source: FISCHER (2002: 141)

Previously to the discussion of the potentials and limitations of the used media, the initial list of used media was combined with the adopted list of criteria. The results of this summary are displayed in Table 6, which offers a detailed view of possible fields of usage for different kinds of media. The most important aspects will be discussed, one by one, in the further course of this Section. In addition, the media that were included in the extension work of

those organizations and that were presented in the case studies in Chapter 3.2 will be briefly discussed.

Table 6: Application of Criteria for Different Methods and Media

			Methods and Media Used by Different Organizations															
			PRA	Flipchart	"Flipover"-calendar	Picture	Poster	Photo	Slide	Video	Radio	Newspaper	Public Information[1]	Campaign	Natural Materials	Trad. Songs and Tales	Field/Study-trip	Exhibition
Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work	1	Aim of media use	A	A	B	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	A	B	B	I
	2	Costs	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	H	H	L	H	L	L	H	H
	3	Flexible production	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	4	Alteration after production	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓		
	5	Media reproduction	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	6	Technical facilities available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
	7	Electricity needed	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓
	8	Enough media available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
	9	Systematical development of contents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	10	Participation in designing	B	B	B	B	B	S	S	B	S	S	S	S	B	T	B	B
	11	Adaption to local conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	12	Local knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	13	Local language	?	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	-	-	-	✓	✓	?	?
	14	Comprehensive presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	15	Participatory presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?	?	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: FISCHER (2002: 142)
Note: 1) e.g. brochures, leaflets, booklets

The following issues are discussed on the basis of the earlier introduced basic concepts of communication and the theory behind it as well as further literature that has been cited throughout this paper.

1. Infrastructural Environment

In comparison to most of the other Asian countries, the infrastructural situation in Northern Thailand can be called, at least, satisfactory for the needs of extension workers or researchers. Beside streets that are accessible by car almost throughout the year, each bigger village has a temple, where group meetings can be carried out. In addition to personal contacts that exist between the village leaders and the staff members of the respective governmental offices in

the Tambon (Sub-District), public information centers and broadcasting towers can be found throughout the country, where the villagers have the opportunity to get current information. If no electricity is available in a village, there might be a project station or a government office nearby, where one could get some electricity. In case that electricity is available for the villagers one can find at least a few TVs that are highly frequented by other villagers in the evenings.

2. Target Groups

As already mentioned previously, the different target groups in Northern Thailand are very heterogeneous. They differ in ethnicity as well as in age and all of them are included in their own social and cultural surroundings. Although all the different hill-tribes have their own languages, the precondition for Thai-speaking extension and development workers has improved during the last years. As the government has built schools in every bigger village, and primary education is compulsory for children aged six to eleven, the younger generations nowadays grow up bi-lingual as the lessons are in Thai language[12].

Therefore language problems, which caused a lot of problems in previous years, or rather still cause a lot of problems for those staff members that have to work with the older generation, has decreased slightly, as more and more younger people are able to speak and read the Thai language. As mentioned in some of the examples presented here, the extension workers often ask younger people to translate e.g. information leaflets for their relatives or neighbors, who are not able to read Thai language. Nevertheless, one has to keep in mind other possible sources of misunderstanding, which occur due to different cultural backgrounds and thereby different perceptions of problems, needs and solutions.

3. Costs

Whereas the last two issues focused on preconditions in terms of infrastructure as well as human resources, this paragraph will concentrate on the financial means that are needed for media supported communication. Regardless of the final decision, which kind of media will be selected to visualize the communication process with the target group, there are certain cost components that have to be calculated. Beside the production costs, costs for equipment and materials, one has to mention those costs that are created by the dissemination process (personnel, transport, etc.). Furthermore, the costs could increase significantly, if there are any special requirements regarding storage or if experts are needed because the equipment is too complicated to operate by local staff. This criteria also leads to the next one: if the media materials can be reproduced at a local level (in local studios, by existing staff), it is more easy and less expensive for the project. Clearly, the final amount varies according to the complexity of the chosen media. Referring to the current situation in Northern Thailand,

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[12] According to the Ministry of Education, about 90% of the school aged children receive education. Unfortunately, there are still about 9-10% or 600,000 children that belong to the disadvantaged group inaccessible to education opportunity (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2001).

where most of the big money-intensive development projects have left the scene during the last few years, all different types of organizations, GOs as well as NGOs, and other institutions are now forced to finance their media supported tools independently and, therefore, must look more and more for low-cost solutions.

4. Further Issues

Two more issues need to be pointed out regarding the potentials and limitations of different kinds of methods and media. On the one hand, the answer to the first two questions that were raised within the theory of HOFFMANN (2000: 293), which compared the "complex issue of media selection" with a "complex optimization problem" should be taken into consideration. The terms *"what"* as well as *"why"* are dealing with the content and the aim of media supported communication. One has to decide if the selected media is suitable to serve the objectives of the media input, either to stimulate activity by mobilizing and motivating the participants or simply to inform the target group e.g. about current pests etc.

In both cases, the qualification of the person that uses the communication aids is crucial for the success of the respective media. This statement finally leads to the last crucial issue: the extension specialist, trainer, facilitator or whatever else the person that conducts the meeting with the target group might be called. As already mentioned before, the key principle "Ask, don't tell" should be integrated into the event, as this is the only possibility to stimulate maximal participation and thus, in the long run, sustainable development. Furthermore it is fundamental that the use of different extension methods and media is only a tool that should help the trainer, e.g. through visualizing a group discussion, but it can never replace personal extension or development work that is carried out by the responsible experts.

Therefore, the last part of this Section will deal with the identification of possible approaches for increasing the potential of the used methods. In general, one can state that the successful use of each method as well as the different kinds of media could be increased significantly by reducing the limitations. Unfortunately, the reduction of limitations in practice is either very difficult or even impossible. Therefore, we have to concentrate on a better use of the already existing potentials as well as the improvement of those factors that are not fully used at the moment.

A very good example for an approach where all of the above mentioned factors have been considered and finally translated into practice is the use of the *Flannelgraph method*[13], mostly applied in rural development programs in Africa. The content, the aim and the material of this picture supported communication method are completely adapted to the local situation, the needs of the target group as well as those of the facilitator. In contrast to the relatively uniform situation that is mentioned in connection with the use of the *Flannelgraph* approach, e.g. poor rural areas with no electricity in combination with an illiterate target group, the

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[13] Whereas very detailed information concerning Flannelgraph method can be found in HOFFMANN (2000), a brief summary of this method is provided in Section 2.4 of this paper.

initial position is completely different in Northern Thailand. As portrayed throughout this paper, the situation is very complex, there are several different target groups as well as a multitude of organizations and all of them are using more or less different kinds of media in order to improve the success of their work. This is due to fact that it is simply impossible to work out the "one and only" approach that would fit best all situations and all participants. Nevertheless, a few examples of media used in agricultural extension and rural development, which were already presented in detail in the case studies in Section 3.2 will be evaluated before the most important findings of are summarized and final conclusions are drawn in Chapter 4.

3.3.3 Evaluation of Media Use in the Case Studies

Tables 1, 2 and 3, which are presented at the end of each case study above, list methods and media that are currently used by the respective organizations. Table 6 provides an overview that combines media with certain criteria, which should be taken into consideration when analyzing the suitability of media use. As the evaluation of those approaches, which were carried out by *NDF*, *Pro-Con-Net* and *HADF*, is based on the above mentioned information, it will focus on the suitability according to those criteria that were identified in addition to those of Table 5, namely *infrastructure*, *target group*, *costs* and *further issues*.

3.3.3.1 Northern Development Foundation (*NDF*)

Infrastructure. Ban Orn, the area of operation of NDF could be reached by car without any problems. The meeting took place in the temple of the village, which provided enough space for all participants, but no electricity.

Target Group. The villagers of Ban Orn are all members of the Karen ethnic group. Although most of them are illiterate, they speak both languages, Karen and Thai. Therefore, the meeting could be conducted in Thai, with the help of the village headmen, who acted as a translator whenever necessary.

Costs. As described in the case study, *NDF*-staff is mainly working with PRA-methods that are included in the meetings. Therefore, the only picture supported communication tools that were used are big village pictures, which are drawn on big pieces of Flipchart paper by village members. For the *ice-brakers* between the sessions, local material and other things that are available in each household are collected from the villagers before the event. In summary, the costs for the applied media tools are very low.

Further Issues. In general, the aspect of the suitability of the media in terms of the content and the aim of used communication tools are addressed, as well as the quality of the facilitator. The staff members acted according to the principle of "ask, don't tell" all the time, and the used village pictures were a very good tool to visualize for example the development of the village in the last years as well as to show where the different production sites are.

Through the formation of different groups, the staff received the opinions of all different target groups, men, women and elders.

3.3.3.2 Project for the Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers and Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (*ProCon-Net*)

Infrastructure. As all of *ProCon-Net*'s activities are carried out in the area of Chiang Mai, the question about infrastructural preconditions is basically void. The field trips to the mentioned model farms that were offered for both, consumers as well as the new farmer group led to different farms, which could be easily reached by car. As already mentioned, the workshop for the new farmers took place in the temple of Ban Nong Harn, which provided enough space for all participants as well as electricity to use modern media tools, e.g. the slide projector.

Target Group. The three different target groups that are included in the work of *ProCon-Net* are producers, consumers and government officials. Since all of them are Thai, there are basically no language or communication problems that might occur due to a different cultural background of the participants.

Costs. *ProCon-Net* includes most of the available methods and media in their work that are commonly used in group extension. Therefore, the above mentioned costs for production, maintenance and use of the media have to be carried by the organization. At least, due to the homogenous background of the target groups, the same media can be used several times.

Further Issues. In contrast to the workshop Ban Nong Harn, the different field trips had the character of a lecture, where the participants should experience how organic farming is practiced, therefore the farmers explained a lot by themselves, in order to mention all the important points. Nevertheless, the participants were encouraged to ask questions. During the workshop, the staff member, again, tried to act according to the principle of "ask don't tell", mainly to motivate and encourage the farmers to actively join the foundation process of the new farmers group. For this reason, the "multimedia"-slide show that was also included in the workshop, was given inbetween the group work parts, where the farmers had to work out different issues by themselves. In summary, the different kinds of media were adapted to the content as well as the aims of the project and can be therefore classified as suitable.

3.3.3.3 Hill Area Development Foundation (*HADF*)

Infrastructure. Just as in the other case studies, the target village of *HADF*, Ban Pang Sa could be reached by car without any problems. In contrast to the other two meetings, this one was carried out in front of the village headman's house, which is also equipped with the village's broadcasting tower.

Target Group. The target groups of this project are Lisu and Lahu and, therefore, it was a big advantage that the joining extension expert's ethnicity is Lisu. Usually, *HADF*'s extension staff also have to rely on the villager's knowledge of Thai as well as the help of those villagers that will act as translators.

Costs. *HADF* is producing the Wildlife-picture in collaboration with another organization that provided the funding for this project. Whereas the information collection at the village level was neither labor nor production-cost intensive, the whole production process involves a local graphic artist, as well as the final printing process, which have to be paid. Usually, *HADF* mainly works with PRA-methods as well as study trips. As no high-tech equipment is used in the development work, the costs are at a normal level.

Another point that should be mentionned in connection with additional costs that occur for most of the organizations, are the "compensation"-costs that are either simply paid to the villagers in cash, or, as in this case, in the form of commodities, e.g. blankets. The reasons why organizations started to compensate the villagers for the time that they spend for the respective event vary from organization to organization. Whereas some just want to guarantee a high number of participants, others are working in areas that are "crowded" with researchers, extension- and development organizations. Therefore, the villagers have to receive something for these time consuming activities of the various different organizations.

Further Issues. In summary, the decision to develop pictorial material like the Wildlife-picture emerged out of the problems that were identified by those staff members who had to work with other, less adapted material. Therefore, the aim as well as the extension content are both reached by the new material. The fact that the extension experts from *HADF* collaborated with the villagers from the beginning and went to the villages several times, in order to ensure that the picture really met the idea of the villagers, gives an indication of the participatory approach that was used for this project.

4   Conclusion and Recommendations

The description of the extension situation in Northern Thailand, which was presented in detail with the help of three case studies in Section 3.2, already showed the very complex character of this field. Due to the fact that various extension methods and different kinds of media are available for different target groups and different situations, it is simply impossible to find quick and simple solutions for the problem of selecting appropriate methods and media for communication in extension and development work. Although a critical analysis and comparative evaluation of currently used methods and media was carried out in Section 3.3, still no standardized answer can be given to questions like "what is the right extension method for certain target groups?" or even "what kind of picture supported media would be the most suitable tool for Northern Thailand?".

In contrast to such an easy solution, a list of several criteria was shown as well as further issues were addressed, which should be carefully taken into consideration, before selecting one's "favorite" media to support the communication process with the respective target group. For example, the infrastructure was mentioned as well as different aspects concerning the participants and the costs of media production and maintenance. Furthermore, the *Flannelgraph method* was introduced as a major methodological tool of reference and an example of a well adapted extension approach for remote rural regions with higher rates of illiterate people.

In the course of discussing the suitability of different approaches that are accompanied with the use of various kinds of media - in comparison to the *Flannelgraph method* - it finally turned out that although most organizations already try to adapt the media to the local conditions and needs of the target groups, there are still some potentials that are not completely used. The work with "modern" methods, e.g. PRA, as well as the use of "modern" tools such as slides or video bear the risk that the facilitator or the extension staff rely too much on the automatically participatory effect of the media use. As a consequence, although the situation might have been analyzed in great detail, together with the target groups, the results could nevertheless fail to reach the promised success. This might happen if not enough emphasis is put on the implementations of innovations or necessary activities that were identified during the extension or research process. As shown in the case studies, most of the organizations already focus on motivating the target groups to work hard to improve their current living situation. For example, field trips are organized to show farmers or consumers the promoted activities in on-farm trials and offers them the opportunity to exchange experiences with the visited farmers. In addition, the visits are video-taped, a media, which can be integrated in later meetings (if other preconditions such as the availability of electricity and the suitability of the contents are guaranteed), when due to different reasons, a field trip might not be possible.

Apart from the issues already discussed, it is important to remember that the surrounding environment and, in the end, the behavior of the different target groups has changed rapidly throughout the last decades. The members of the hill-tribes were not only influenced by, e.g. national and international drug replacement programs, but also by the increasing presence of the so-called "farangs"[14], who conquered even the remotest areas, either as extension or development worker, or simply as tourist. As the development process that still takes place in the whole country basically affects all members of society, the methods as well as the media that are used in extension work, training or public information, should also be adapted to the current situation.

One example where such a change took place is the case of the *Wildlife-picture* that was produced in collaboration with *HADF*. Whereas the material was judged as appropriate by

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[14] A synonym that is used in Thai language to describe the "typical" white tourist/foreigner.

villagers and extension staff by the time the proposal for funding was made, some of the villagers consider the media out of date, today. Instead of the painted picture, those villagers now prefer the production of colorful postcards as well as Lisu tale books that could be sold to tourists in the cities, like many of those Thai tale books. Many examples could be given for the efforts of different organizations that are trying to adapt their work to the changed conditions. Once again, this adaptation process is as heterogeneous as it could be. Whereas some organizations focus on the use of hightech mass media in group extension as well as in providing information to the general public, others prefer traditional media such as tales or songs as their experiences showed that new methods were not as successful as previously thought[15].

In order to increases the potential of the currently used methods, the organizations should identify weak points and improve those issues that bear the highest risk to limit the promised success of the respective approach. Unfortunately, the reduction of limitations in practice is either very difficult or even impossible. Therefore, the organizations have to concentrate on a better use of the already existing potentials as well as the improvement of those factors that are not fully used at the moment.

Finally, one can state that the previously presented analysis and evaluation as well as the conclusions that were drawn could be taken as a starting point for further research, which should focus on the target group's perspective of the media use. This would allow to gather very interesting data, e.g. about the suitability of the used extension methods and media according to the target group's point of view. A comparison of both results could finally lead to an adaptation of current approaches, in which the objectives and necessities as well as the cultural peculiarities, e.g. in perception and communication, of both parties, the sender, as well as the receiver of extension, development or research activities would be taken into account.

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[15] Detailed information and examples concerning the media use of different organization can be found in FISCHER (2002).

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Annex 1: Checklist for Using Media (ALBRECHT, H., et al.1990, F12)

Group 1. Aims
- Has the content been delineated and how does it relate to the aims of the whole project?
- Should the attention of people in the target group be drawn to any particular facts?
- Is the object of the media input to mobilize and motivate?
- Are the media being used as a means of stimulating activity on the part of the target group?
- Is the aim to show processes and events over time?
- Is the intention to give concrete help to solve problems?
- Do certain innovations require technical or social back-up?
- Do the objectives of the media input seem operationally feasible, and will we be able to check that they have been achieved?

Group 2. General conditions for the use of media
- Are the conditions satisfactory in terms of organization, time finance and personnel?
- Are there enough media stuff, equipment and materials available to reach the members of the target group?
- Do all the people in the target group radios or access to radios?
- Is special building work necessary before information media can be used (rooms, seats, etc.)?
- Can the planned media be easily transported to other locations?
- What is the quality of the repair and servicing facilities?
- Are there any special requirements regarding storage (dust, heat, humidity, etc.)?
- Are there any special requirements regarding the production of media aids (experts and foreign teams necessary, or can they be produced without outside help)?
- Is electricity necessary?
- How complicated is equipment to operate? Are experts needed?
- Are already available media facilities being fully utilized?
- Who decides on the use of media (who controls access to media)?
- How much and what kind of pre-testing is necessary?
- Is the media service connected organizationally or through its personnel with the target group?
- Can the target group influence the content and the input of media?
- What is the level of training and qualifications of the staff using media?

Group 3. Rationalisation effects created by the use of media
- Can media be reproduced (how often)?
- How long and how safely can the material be stored (under what conditions)?
- Are the materials always available (for which individuals, under what conditions)?
- Is repetition possible (for the same target group, at the same place)?
- What are the costs of equipment and materials (total and per head of the target group)?
- What are the costs of producing films, slides, broadcasts, etc. (total and per head of the target group)?
- What costs are created by the dissemination process (personnel, transport, etc.)?
- How big is the target group?

- Do the members of the target group really have enough in common to be reached by a single means of communication?
- Are the people in the target group already in touch with each other (through cooperatives, self-help groups, village communities, etc.)?
- Are there already multipliers who can be approached to spread the message among the target group?
- Are existing multipliers being supplied with supplementary information (individuals or institutions, e.g. branches of cooperatives, hospitals, etc.)?
- Have tests shown that the planned media are useful and effective? Have the right methods and messages been chosen for communication, i.e. does the target group talk about them?
- In summary: are the media really more cost-effective, and is the learning effect greater than the use of manpower alone?

Group 4. Adaptation to the target group and to problems
- What are the criteria for determining the content?
- What methods have been used to test the material in the target group (with what results)?
- How is the media input evaluated (the methodology and the contend; what are the criteria of success or failure)?
- Have the best methods of communication been chosen, bearing in mind the target group and their problems (give reasons)?
- Are moving pictures necessary?
- Is it necessary to use colours?
- How faithfully is reality reproduced?
- Is the target group able to form opinions about the messages?
- Are their opinions noted and taken into account when the media are used again?
- Has the material been specifically developed or appropriately adapted for the recipients and local conditions?
- Is the training of the media stuff relevant to the problems and the situation?
- Is the content concrete or abstract?
- Do the solutions shown to the target group really correspond to their scope for action, given their material, psychological, social and political constrains?
- How and where is the information about the know-how, the practical skills and the motivation of the target groups stored (who is it available to)?
- How do communicators and members of the target group work together (place, individuals, topics)?
- How is an information unit produced? What is the production process in detail?

Group 5. Adaptation to various situations
- Does the use of media depend on the seasons (technically or in terms of the content)?
- Can the information be easily adapted to new situations?
- How are language barriers overcome (several dialects in a small area)?
- Can the media be adjusted and adapted (after the first time they are used in the field)?
- What transport is required?
- Can the media materials be reproduced at a local level (in local studios, by existing staff, etc.)?

Annex 2: Criteria for Selecting Media for Training and Extension in Rural Africa, Applied to the Flannelgraph Method

Financial, logistic and organizational criteria	
Costs for production and use and any maintenance of equipment	Very low
Foreign exchange needs	Low, possibly paper, paint, glue
Maximum number of participants per presentation or event	Up to 30 desirable, up to 100 possible
Is electricity needed? Grid connection, voltage regulator, generator, battery?	No, but with generator and lighting the favourable evening time can be used
Is blackout necessary?	No
What are the requirements upon transport equipment and routes?	None, transport is possible by foot or by bicycle
Must wear and tear and frequent repairs be expected?	No, the pictures must be protected from rain
Can the media be reproduced simply and locally?	Yes, manual copies, photo-copying or silk-screen printing, hand-colouring
Can the entire field staff use the media?	Yes
Can the media be produced swiftly and independently of specific events?	Yes
Can the media material still be altered after production?	Yes
Does dependency upon foreign technology or services result?	No
Is the presence of staff trained in subject matter and the method necessary?	Yes
Can the material also be used by other local services?	Yes
Methodological, pedagogic and cultural criteria	
Can statements or course contents be developed systematically?	Yes
Can sequences of action and developments over time be presented?	Yes
Are picture elements mobile, or is the sequence and positioning fixed?	Mobile
Can distracting details in the display be avoided?	Yes
Does the use of the media have an educational and training effect upon field staff, to?	Yes, exceedingly
Are links built to oral culture and storytelling traditions?	Yes, this is essential
Are the persons and localities depicted locally adapted?	Yes
Is the language locally adapted? Local language, figures of speech, proverbs, comparisons?	Yes, this task is possibly left up to field staff
Can a series hero be established and retained?	Yes
Is the presentation comprehensible? Concepts, symbols, semantics?	Yes, questions can be raised, unknown symbols can be introduced successively
Can the field staff and target groups participate in designing the medium?	Yes, this is essential
Is the presentation a monologue? Can one ask it rather than say it? Are discussions stimulated within the target group?	Dialogue is essential, asking rather than saying is highly recommendable, this stimulates discussion.

Source: HOFFMANN, V., 2000, 116-117

34

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