Special session (English speakers)

Generic methods and tools for conducting Action-Research within an AIS perspective

Session 1

Expert: Bernard Triomphe, CIRAD-LIFT SA I

19 & 21 June 2023

Welcome to Session 1!

- Thanks for registering and connecting today
- The organizing team from LIFT SA1 core team
- *Please indicate your name and Project in the zoom participant list!*

Specific objectives

- Provide an overview of what A-R is about and the diversity of methods and tools that can be mobilized
- Equip participants with basic knowledge about key methods and tools for A-R
- Foster reflexivity about the methods and tools projects have been using & provide key take-away messages and attention points to be used within DeSIRA projects

Expected learning

- What is action research and how it relates to AIS
- How to design and implement Action-Research using a series of basic methods and tools
- How to implement A-R within a project or organizational context which may present challenges for effective A-R
- What roles researchers and non-researchers may play in an A-R process.

Topics for today (19 June)

14:00 Welcome

- **Who is here, objectives expectations, rules, agenda**

14:20 Useful concepts (Reminder)

- **Innovation, innovation process and systems**

Duration: 3 h (same on 21 June)

14:30 What is Action-research in a nutshell

- **Origins, Definitions, the A-R cycle, A-R vs. participatory research, roles of researchers & non-researchers**

15:00 Generic participatory methods and tools **Part I**

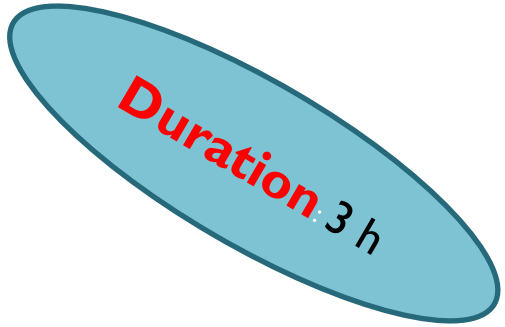
- **Designing and conductions semi-structured interviews & focus group discussions**
- **Facilitating an Action-Research process**
- **Exercise 1: developing SSI guidelines for identifying demand**

16: 20 Brief pause

- **Diagnosing a situation**
- **Organizing a participatory event**
- **Questions & answers** (time allowing)

Topics for 21 June

(to be adjusted based on how it went today)



Generic participatory methods and tools **Part 2**

- Engaging with multiple stakeholders
- Building and working with multistakeholder arenas
- Designing participatory experimentation / codesigning innovation
- ***Exercise 2: Organizing a co-design workshop 45 mn***

Brief pause

- Identifying & fostering local innovation
- Systematizing experiences

Making A-R work in your projects 20 mn

- Capacity building& MEL
- A-R and AIS perspective: how to make them work together?
- Are there rules and practices in your organization / in your projects that can constitute obstacles to implementing genuine, quality A-R

Synthesis and wrap-up 15 mn

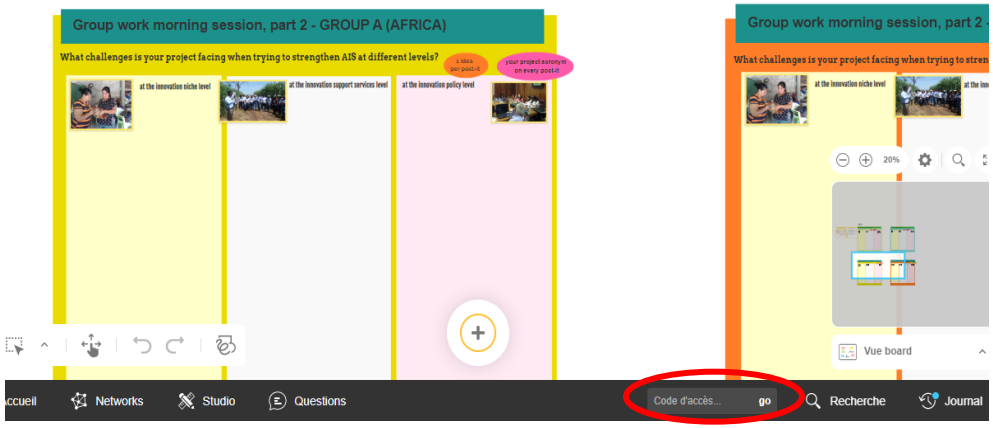
(Special session evaluation)

Using Klaxoon: the basics

Your active participation is key !

app.klaxoon.com
Access code : **CXJNNM5**

- ***Access*** Klaxoon with the **provided access code**



https://app.klaxoon.com/participate/board/CXJNNM5

- ***Navigate*** within Klaxoon spaces until you find what you want
- ***Contribute*** to the Klaxoon board by adding & modifying post-its
- ***Navigate*** between **Klaxoon and Zoom**

A few rules & suggestions to optimize your participation

- Be punctual please ...
- Questions during the presentation?
  - **Preferred option**: write a brief question in the **chat**,
  - truly need to ask your question orally? If so, ***raise your hand by clicking on the zoom icon-*** ➔

- Be prepared to *navigate back & forth between Zoom and Klaxoon board*

- **Participate actively during group work**

Your expectations for this course

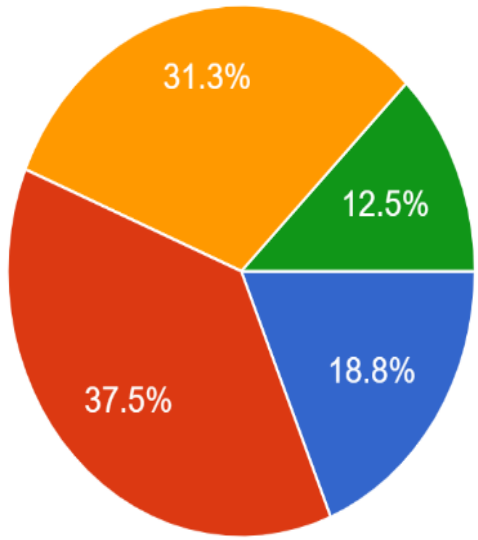
1. **Learning about M&T, mastering M&T, conducting A-R, inserting A-R in my project** *(19 responses out of 31)*
2. **Know and understand more about A-R in general** *(7 responses out of 31)*
3. **Exchanging among projects** *(3 responses out of 31)*

Source : Registration form survey

Your experience with action-research

9. How would you rate your experience with implementing action-research?

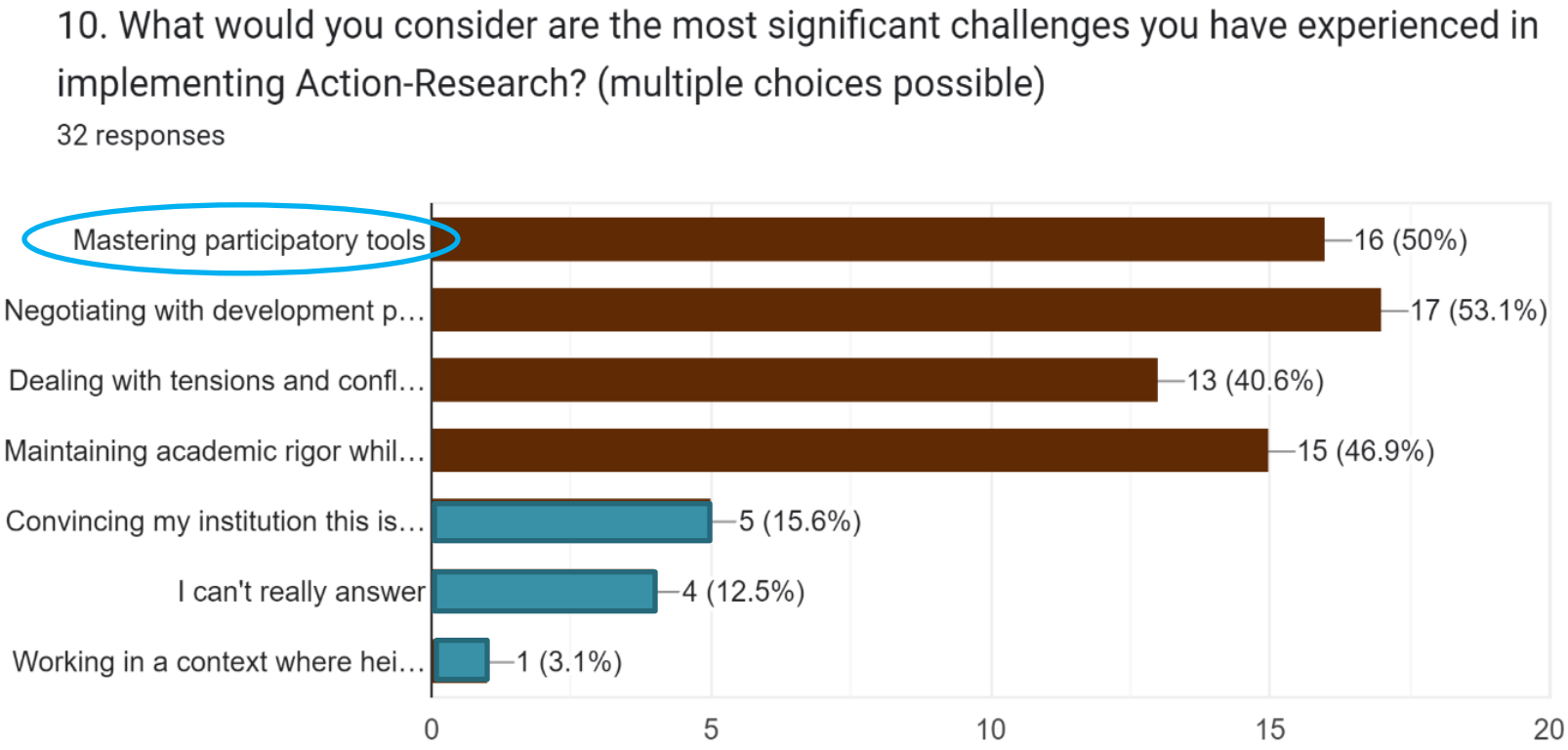
32 responses



- I am not even sure what Action-research is about to be honest
- I mostly know the concept / the theory, but I have never really applied it
- I have had some direct experience implementing some parts of it, but I don't consider I know quite enough to imple…
- I have significant experience and I feel fairly confident I can design and conduct an A-R process

Source : Registration form survey

Most significant challenges in A-R



Source : Registration form survey

Session I

Reminder:

Key concepts related to innovation, innovation processes & systems, actors & stakeholders of innovation, and fostering innovation

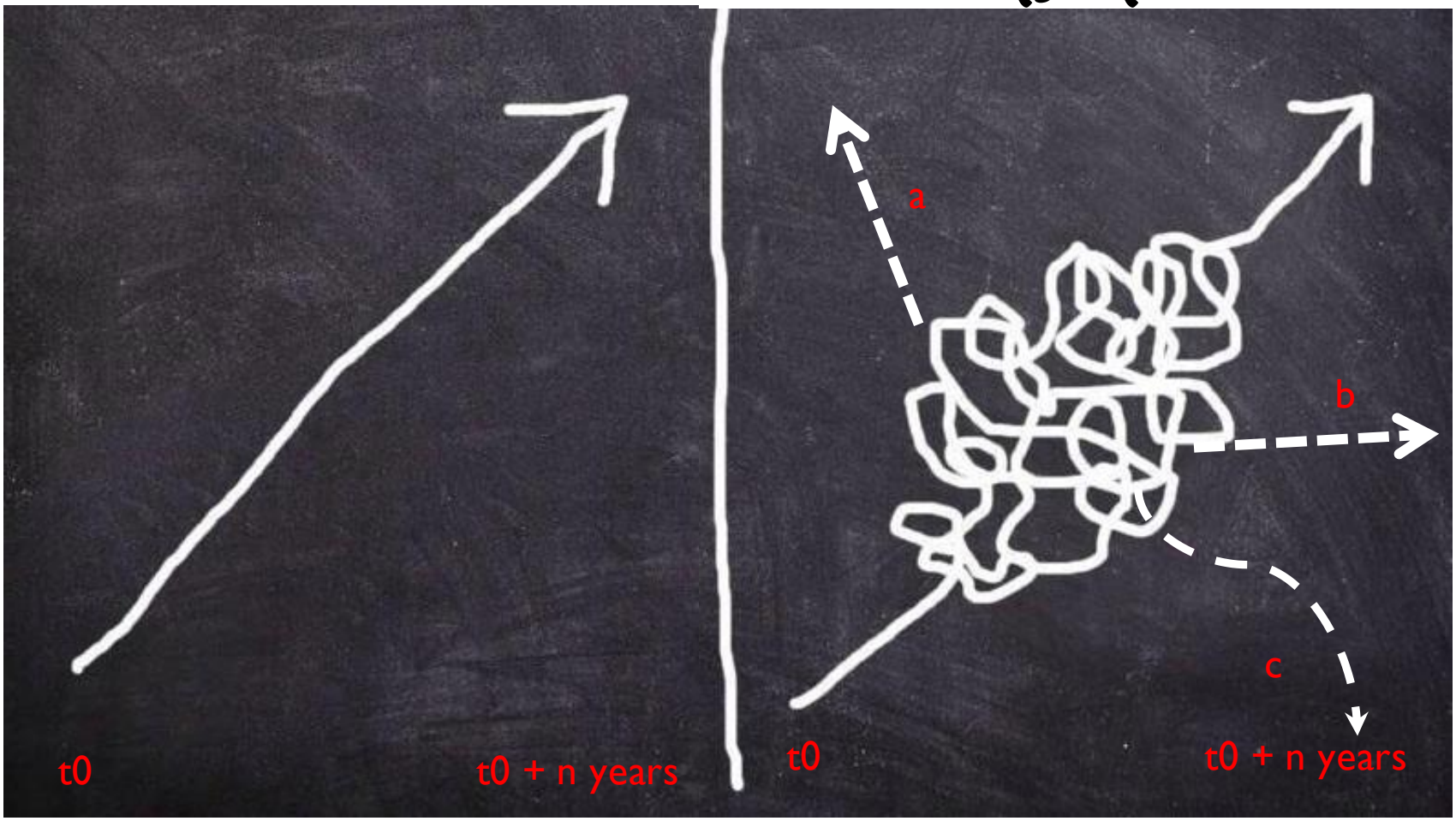
Innovation…

- *What many think it is*
  - A new technology, a new product, that allows its adopters to achieve (economic) benefits or advantages
- *What it is not...*
  - A simple "invention" that research (or a company) has developed and would like to transfer/sell to some beneficiary or potential customer
- *What it actually is...*
  - Any new way of doing things that brings economic, social or environmental benefits to users and society at large
  - May be technological, organizational or institutional in nature
  - Frequently, it consists of a mixture of these 3 dimensions.
  - It is both the result of a development process (e.g. the use of a new variety) and the development process itself with its various phases.
  - For there to be innovation, there must be users of it!

Innovation process

a. What many envision it will be

b. What it actually looks like …



One simple visualization of an Agricutural innovation system

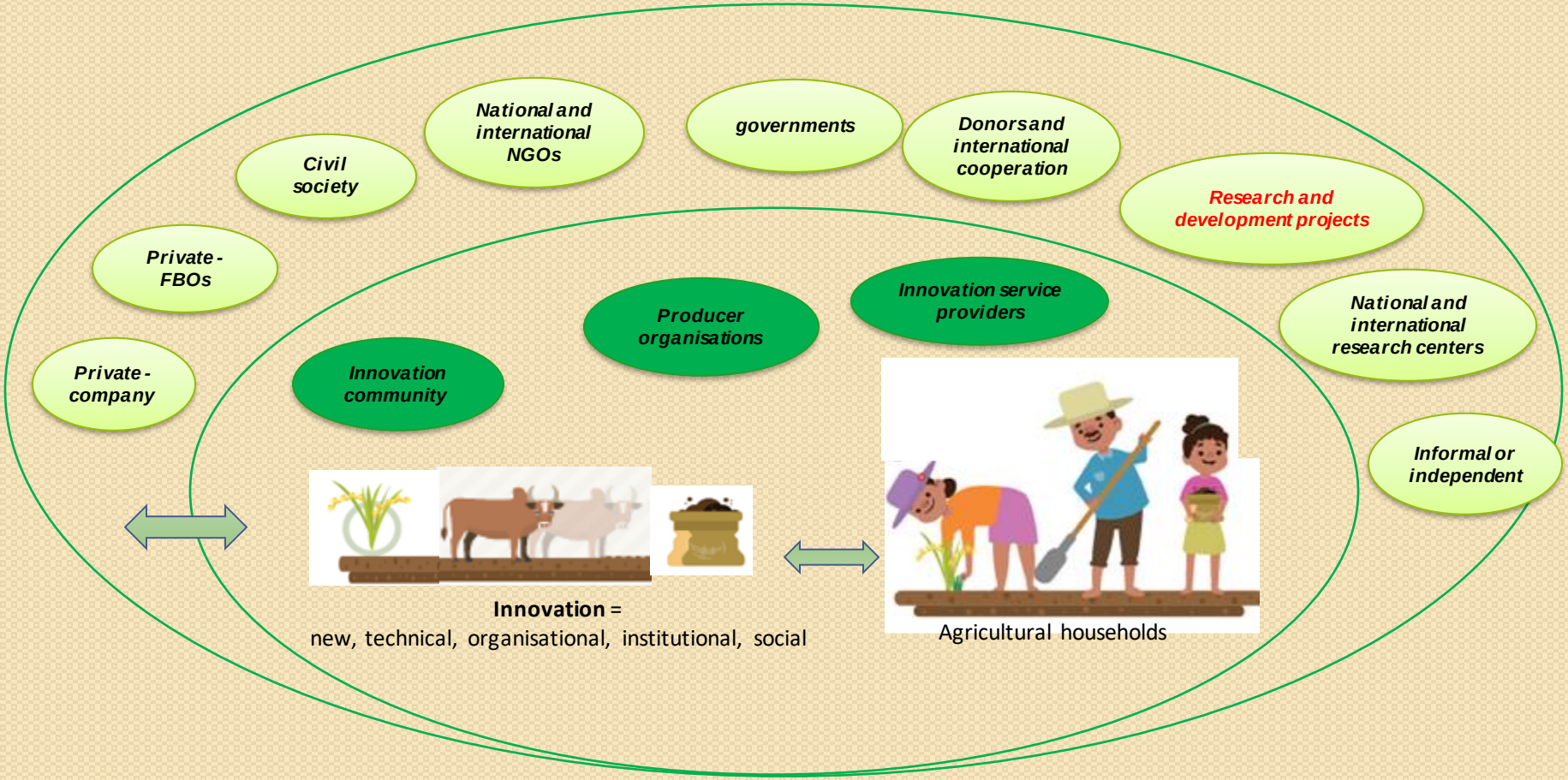
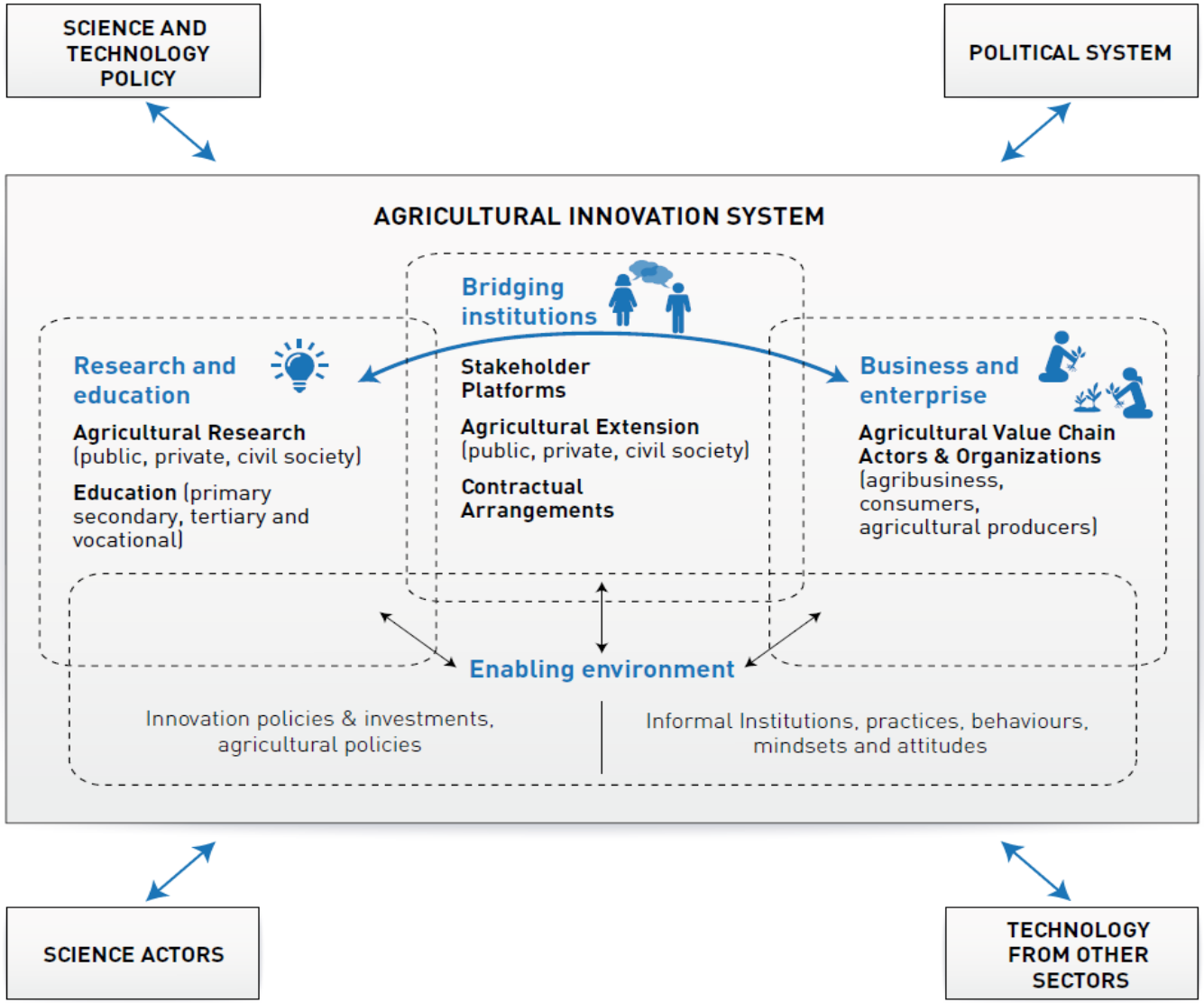


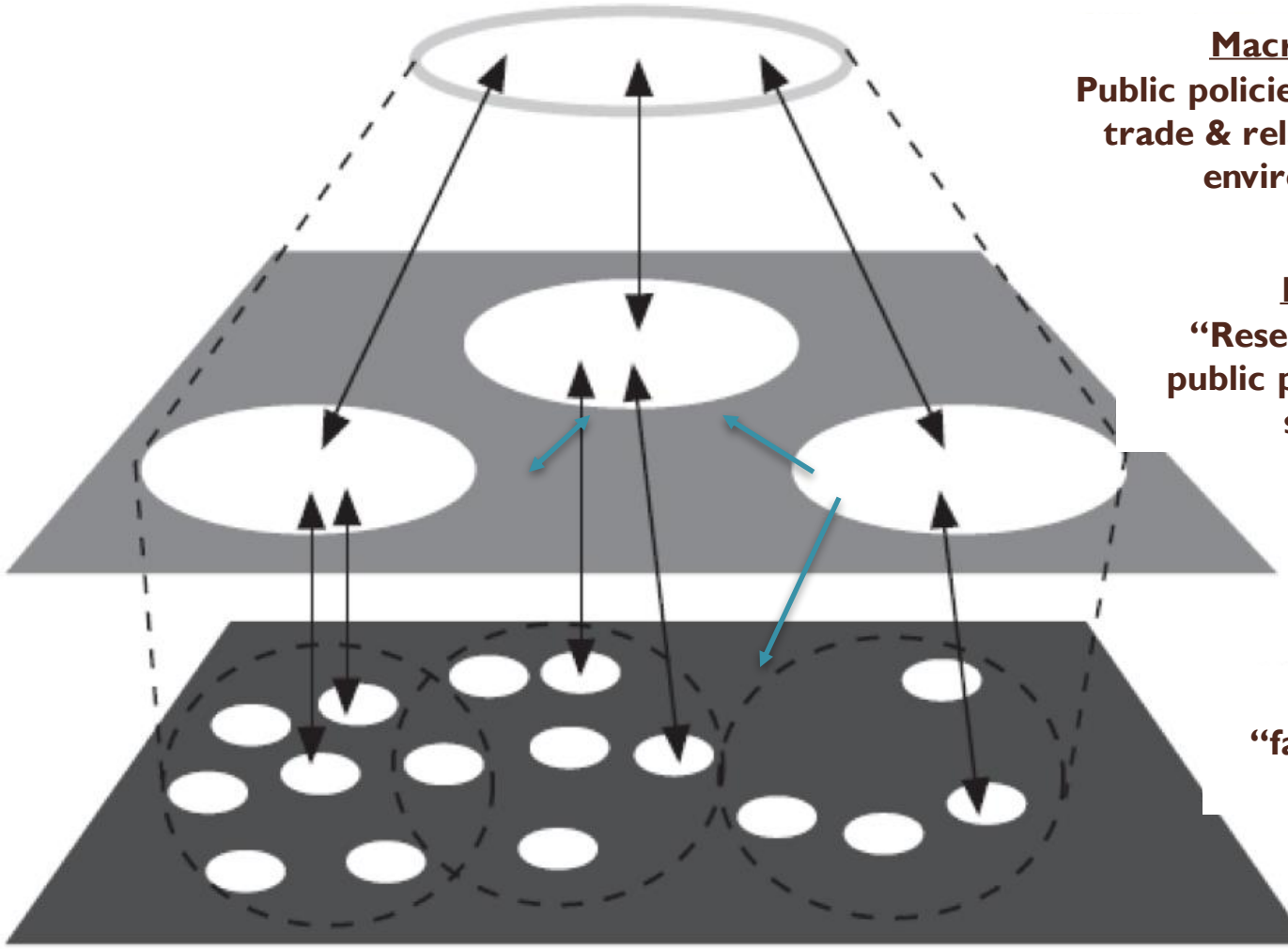
Illustration by Audouin S., base on a sketch by Antso A.

AIS: another way of visualizing it



Source: TAP, 2016

Multiples levels of interaction



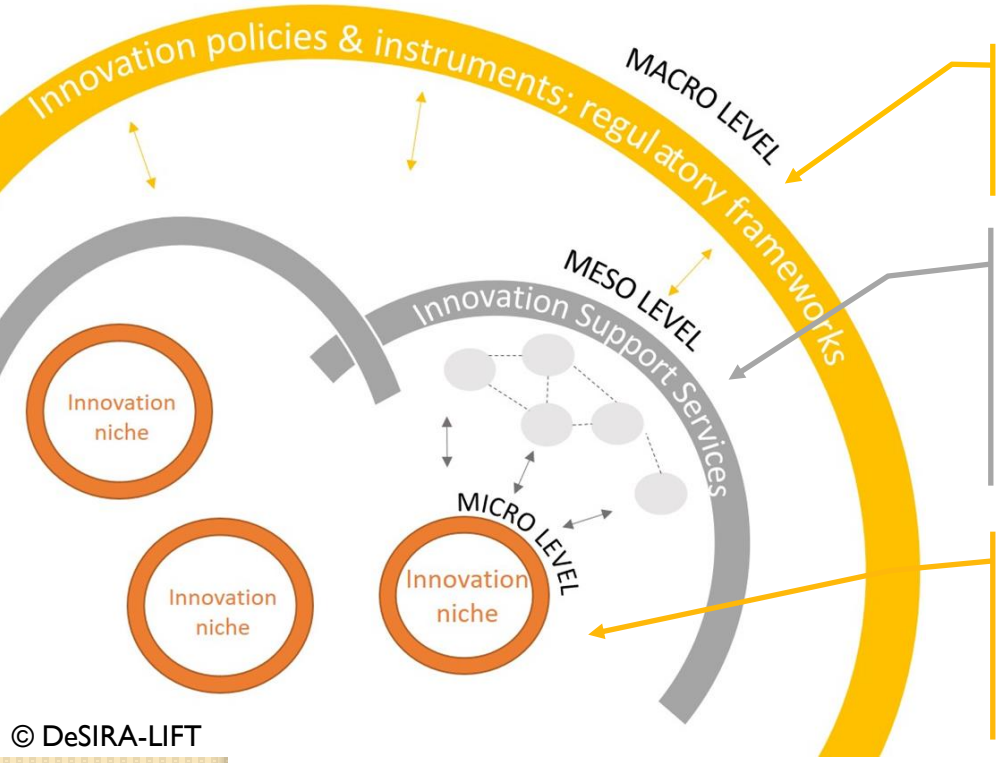
Macro level:
Public policies, international trade & relations, global environment

Meso level:
"Research, Education, public programs, Private sector, etc.

Micro level:
"farmers and local actors"

Strengthening (national) AIS : macro- meso and micro leve

- **Strengthening capacities of AIS actors** (including researchers)
  - to work interactively for the nurturing and uptake of **innovation niches** that have a transformative potential on agrifood systems
  - To create **enabling conditions** for innovators and for continuous improvement of these conditions
- **A triple pathway of changes :**



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« Macro level » : Institutions providing frames, resources, regulations and incentives that set the conditions influencing innovation at sub-national levels over the long-term.

« Meso level » : **support service providers**

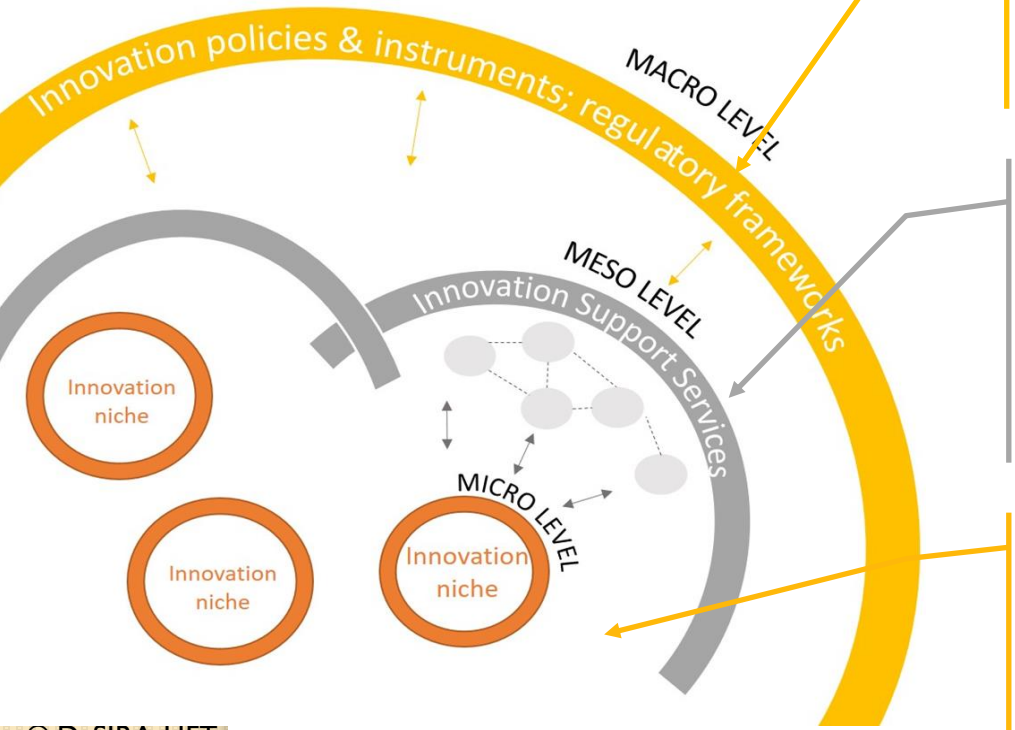
- Brokering, financial, technical managerial, knowledge services to innovation promotors
- Providers could be: incubators, NGOs, extension agencies, research organizations, public services, private firms - depending on countries and innovation domains

« Micro level » : innovation niche partnerships

Temporary communities of individuals, organizations and entrepreneurs working together for a certain time with a common goal, in order to design and develop an innovation project.

Strengthening (national) AIS in DeSIRA: A-R intervention

Types of A-R interventions



« Macro level » :

- Participatory assessment of national AIS, capacity assessments
- Evidence-based policy dialogues
- Facilitated science-policy interfaces
- Design of institutional innovations
- Policy experiments
- MEL toolboxes for continuous learning
- Trainings, seminars

« Meso level » :

- Mapping of ISS actors and making sense
- Participatory assessments of ISS, capacity assessments
- Facilitated multistakeholders mechanisms
- Learning-by-doing in incubators
- Service experiments
- MEL toolboxes for continuous learning
- Trainings, seminars

« Micro level » :

- Tracking, mapping of innovation niches
- Innovation platforms and facilities
- Capacity assessments
- Participatory development of innovations
- Trainings
- MEL toolboxes for continuous learning

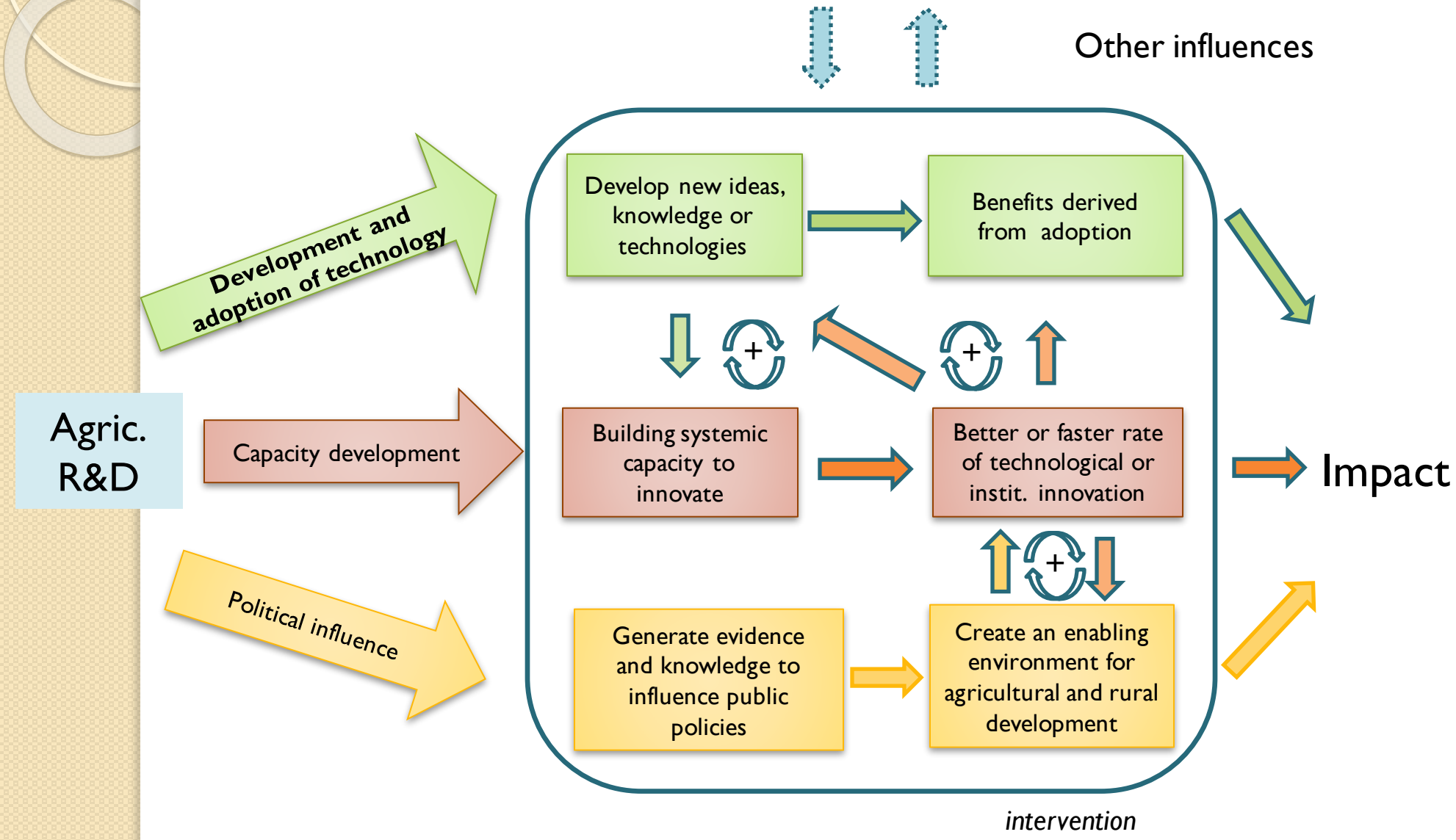
Actors & potential stakeholders of innovation

A great diversity of actors (individuals and organizations) can play a role in an Innovation process

- Individual innovative **farmers**, **farmers groups** and **organizations** or community associations
- Research, extension and education organizations & services (public or private, at various levels and scales)
- Local, national or international **non-governmental organization**s
- **Companies and other private sector actors** at various levels (local, national international)
- Multiple levels of governments (national, regional, municipal)
- National or international funders and donors
- Consumer organizations

NB:

How R&D contributes to development impact: 3 generic pathways



Source: Douthwaite, 2017

Two contrasting visions of innovation & its promotion

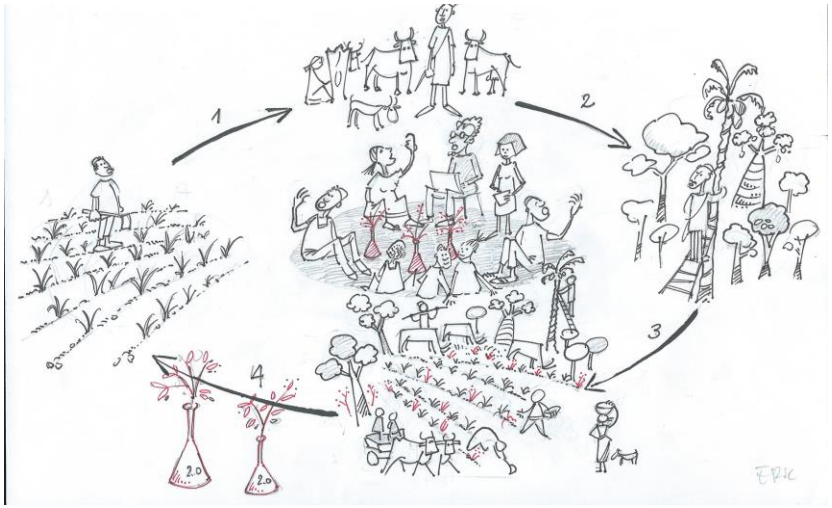
1. **Innovation is** *technological* **and** *descendant*

2. **Innovation is** *sociotechnical and co-constructed* **by actors within the framework of** *multi-stakeholder innovation processes and systems*

4 basic models to foster innovation (from a research viewpoint)

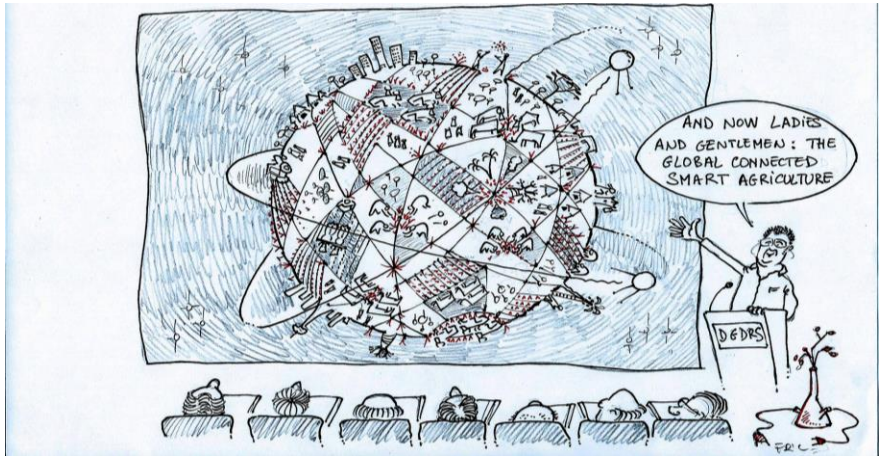
1. Transfer technologies

2. Co-design innovations



3. Accompany a complex Innovation

4. Contribute to fostering open innovation



Source: Faure et al., 2018

To develop innovations, broad & effective participation is key!

Achieving the effective participation of a number of actors is the key to success in developing Innovation. Participation can happen

- In initial diagnosis and planning
- To identify needs and environmental factors, raise awareness and mobilize actors
- In the co-design of innovations
- To combine knowledge, ideas, risks and resources
- To widely disseminate innovations
- To create an enabling environment (lobbying and political influence)
- To monitor and evaluate progress and results, and if necessary adjust the process

- Achieving participation consistently and throughout the process is typically not spontaneous and often requires effective **facilitation**
- Active participation implies putting at the centre the interrelated issues of **collective learning** and **capacity building**, as well as **empowerment** for the most vulnerable or socially marginalized actors (poor farmers, indigenous communities, women, youth, ...)

In brief

- While in conventional thinking, still very dominant, innovation tends to be seen almost exclusively in its technological dimension and as the result of a linear process controlled by R&D, in most cases, innovation is very diverse in nature and results from multiple interactions and contributions between a diversity of actors over time as aprt of an innovation process & trajectory. Such process can take various forms depending on the mode of intervention used (negotiated)
- ***Action-research is an approach which fits very well with the objective of fostering innovation and accompanying change***

Did you say Action Research?

Origins of action research

- Lewin 1940s:
  - post-Nazism: invent non-hierarchical organizations
- Used in different fields & forms over several decades, esp. health & education, but also business
  - Some use in agricultural sector over last 2 decades

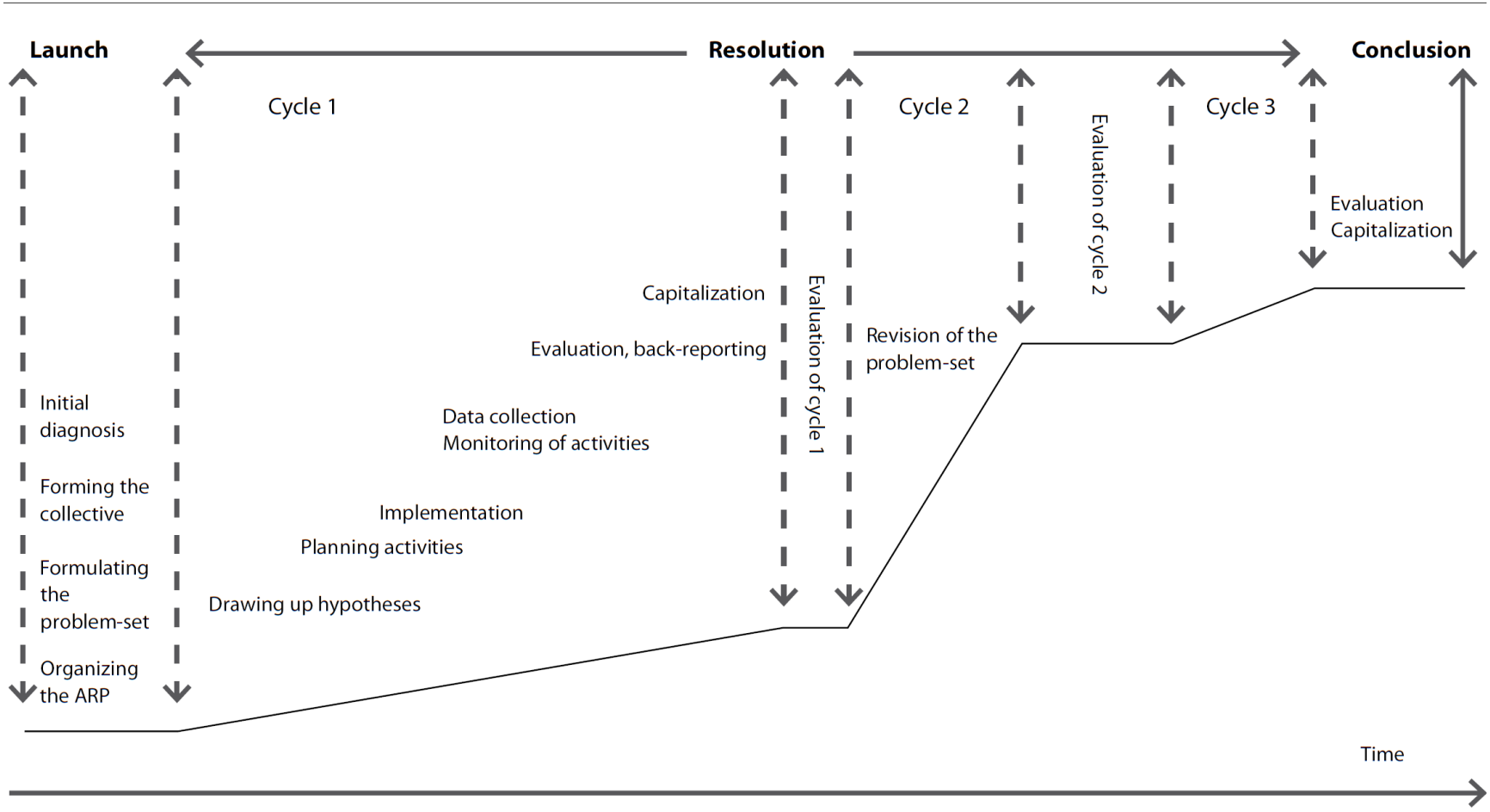
What constitutes Action-research?

1. Meeting between a research intention and a desire for change
2. Dual objective:
   - Solving the users' problem(s)
   - Producing new knowledge
3. Joint work between researchers and a diversity of users (with strong capacity-building component)
4. ***Negotiated ethical framework***

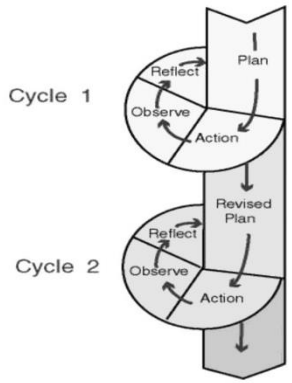
What is the added value of AR?

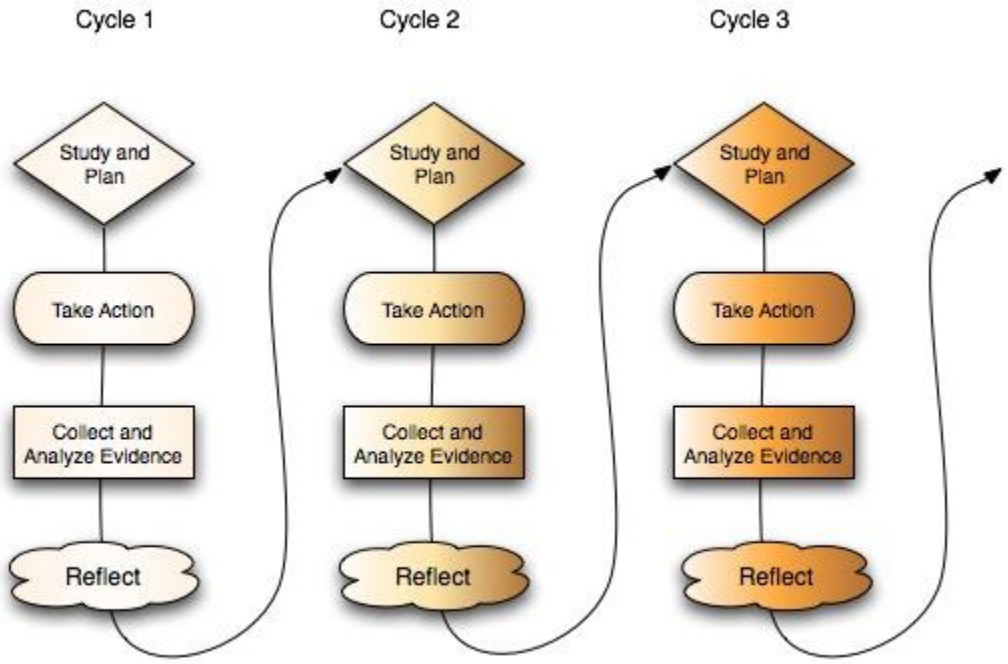
- Tackling complex situations and intervening effectively
- Experimenting with large social entities in everyday life
- Developing know-how while respecting the users and their freedom
- Taking into account the explicit and implicit aspects of institutions
- Building the capacity of individual and collective actors originating from the users themselves
- Allowing the users to come up with a suitable way of organizing themselves

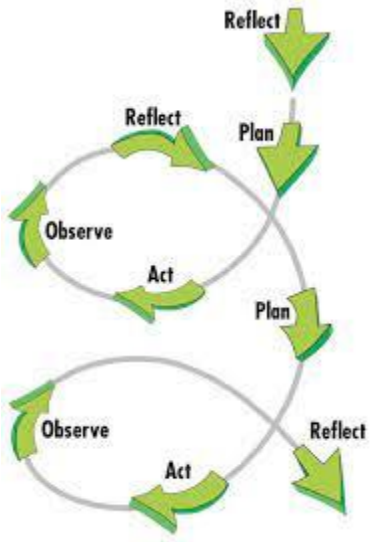
Main phases of an AR: linear view



Visualizing the action-research cycle







Initial (exploratory / inception) phase of an AR

- Analyzing the original demand
  - Is there a need for research? A desire for change?
- Who are the actors & individuals involved?
- Determining **shared values**
  - *Unlike for conventional research, discussing values explicitly is an integral part of the approach*

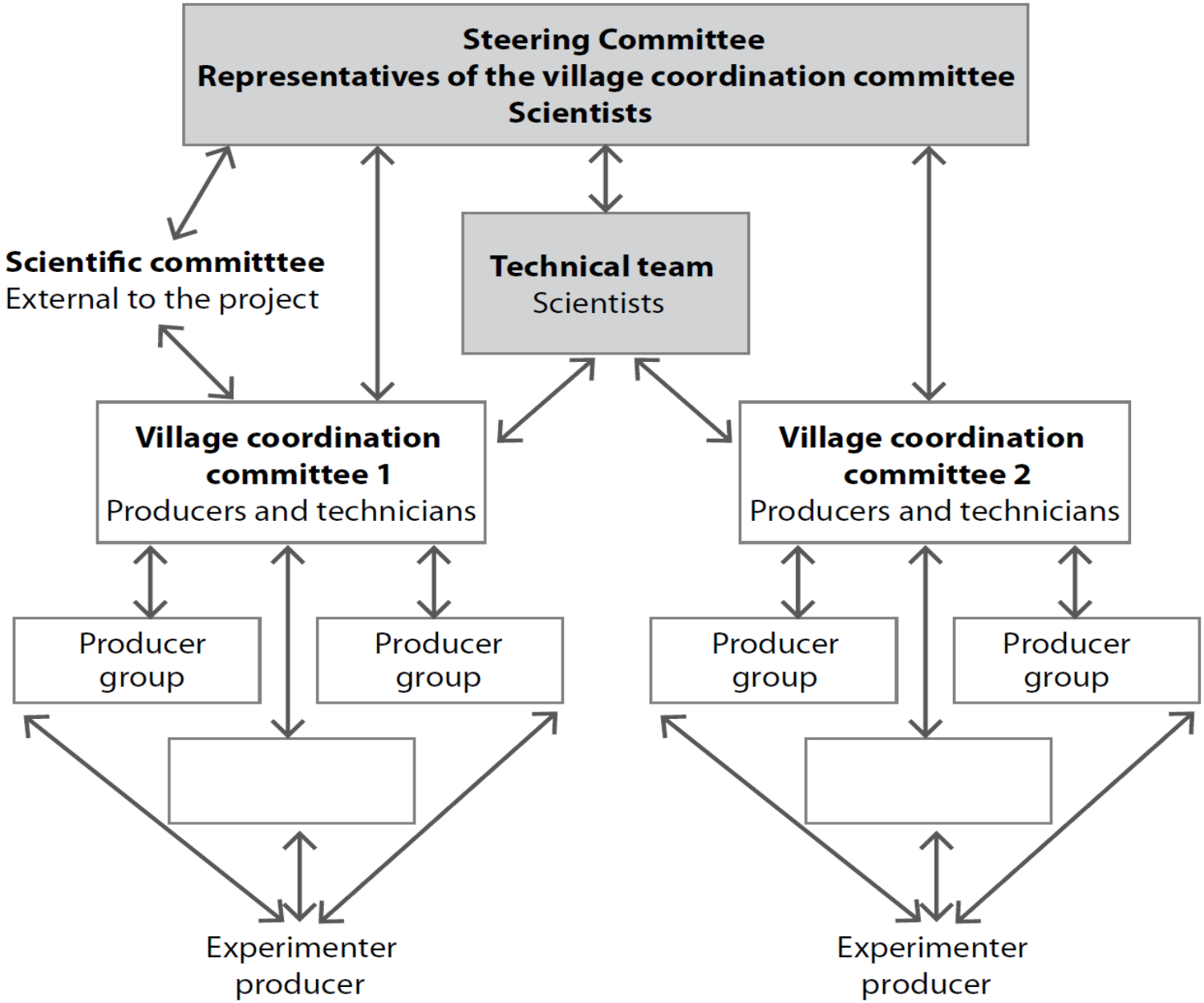
A good initial negotiation, key condition for the eventual success of an A-R

- Pre-identifying demand & actors: is there a need for research?
- Building common values & vision
- Establishing legitimacy, identifying roles
- Defining budget & timeline / calendar
- Negotiating the conditions of realization
- Formalizing mutual commitments

Build the "transitional" organization of the Action Research

- Set up the various committees or bodies allowing to steer and manage the AR
- Plan the meeting times
- Establish a calendar for the experimentation cycles

Governance of an AR project (Vall et al. 2014)



Implementation phase: issues to address

- How to make experts & users work together?
- How can the A-R process be managed over time?
- What are the initial roles of each participants & how do they evolve?
- How to choose the specific research themes, how to produce (new) knowledge?
- How to communicate about the Action-Research & with whom?

Implementation phase: 3 levels to consider to steer the AR over time

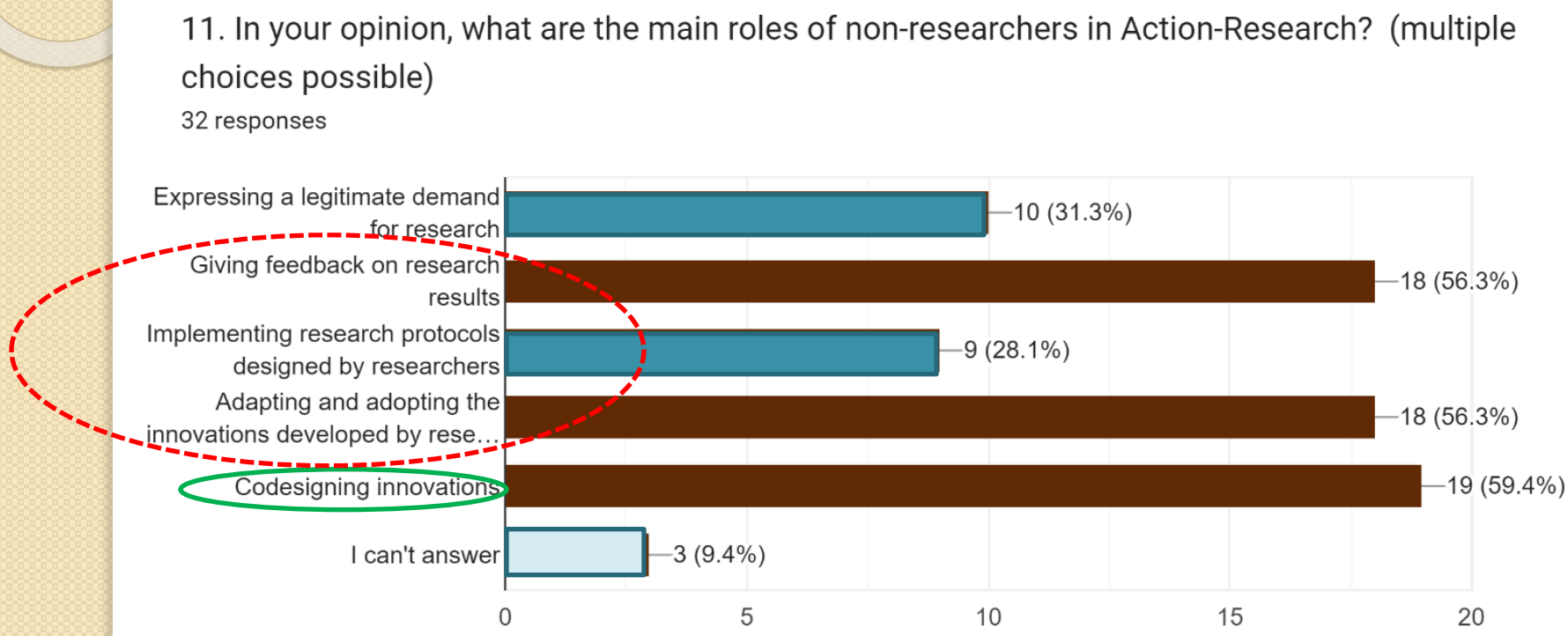
- Level 1: **experimentation** on sites
  - Definition and development of an AR cycle
- Level 2: **longitudinal study and regulation**
  - History / trajectory, comparing between cycles
  - Adapting and correcting actions
  - Evolution of roles
  - Developing hypotheses, formulating results
- Level 3: **Action research strategy**
  - Redefining the issues, of the strategy
  - Negotiating on values and power relationships
  - Developing and disseminating knowledge

Disengagement phase

- Disengagement *by break-up*
  - to be considered from the very beginning
  - Ensure damage limitation
  - Go through the arbitration committee

- Disengagement *at the end of the contract*
  - stop the AR when mutual learning is over
  - plan for the post-AR from the beginning!

Role of non-researchers: your responses



Source : Registration form survey

Degrees of collaboration according to the phases of a research project in 3 types of research

Step	Convent. Research	*Particip. research*	Action Research
Defining the problem (formulating the question)	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Choosing methods (topics, sites, sites, protocols etc)	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Monitor and collect data	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Analyze and formulate conclusions	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Restitute to partners	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Create a partnership	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**
Formalize mutual commitments	**0**	***0 to +++***	**+++**

A-R: challenges and & difficulties 1/2

- AR is not a method but an approach & a process whose application and success depend on the willingness of participants and their attitudes in practice
- Constantly evolving processes and relationships
- Requires (re)defining the roles and functions of each participant
- Often strong asymmetries between partners

A-R: challenges and & difficulties 2/2

- Synchronizing timeframes
  - Those of the donors (short project cycles) and the problems to be solved (often longer term)
  - Those of research (medium to LT) and action (need for quick fixes)
  - Agricultural cycles vs. learning cycles
  - Trust building vs. activity commitment
- High costs
  - In negotiation time and collective learnings
  - In resources to reach out to partners at all stages
  - Not always understood / taken into account by donors…

In summary:

- Action-research can / should be understood as a continuous conversation between diverse partners and emphasizes the importance of process
- Action research combines
  - research
  - with solving a demand / need / problem formulated by an actor (or a group of actors)
  - and providing the necessary support to enable change → 'Research in Development'
- AR is a (normative) process that
  - implies developing and using hybrid knowledge between researchers and actors
  - requires reflexivity among researchers for the multiple roles they play
  - requires acquiring « sufficient » and relevant capacities (in line with those roles)
  - Needs to be mindful of specific requirements for different steps → and mindful of the importance of the initial steps to its eventual success
  - is context-specific

Engaging in A-R does not pretend to exhaust or monopolize the whole research agenda nor to be the only approach to contributing to producing knowledge and supporting change

From concepts to methods and tools

After having seen key concepts related to Innovation and its promotion, and toa ction-research, we will now focus on a series of basic methods & tools that allow translating and implementing these concepts in practice.

Basic methods and tools for conducting research and fostering innovation & change in an Action-Research process

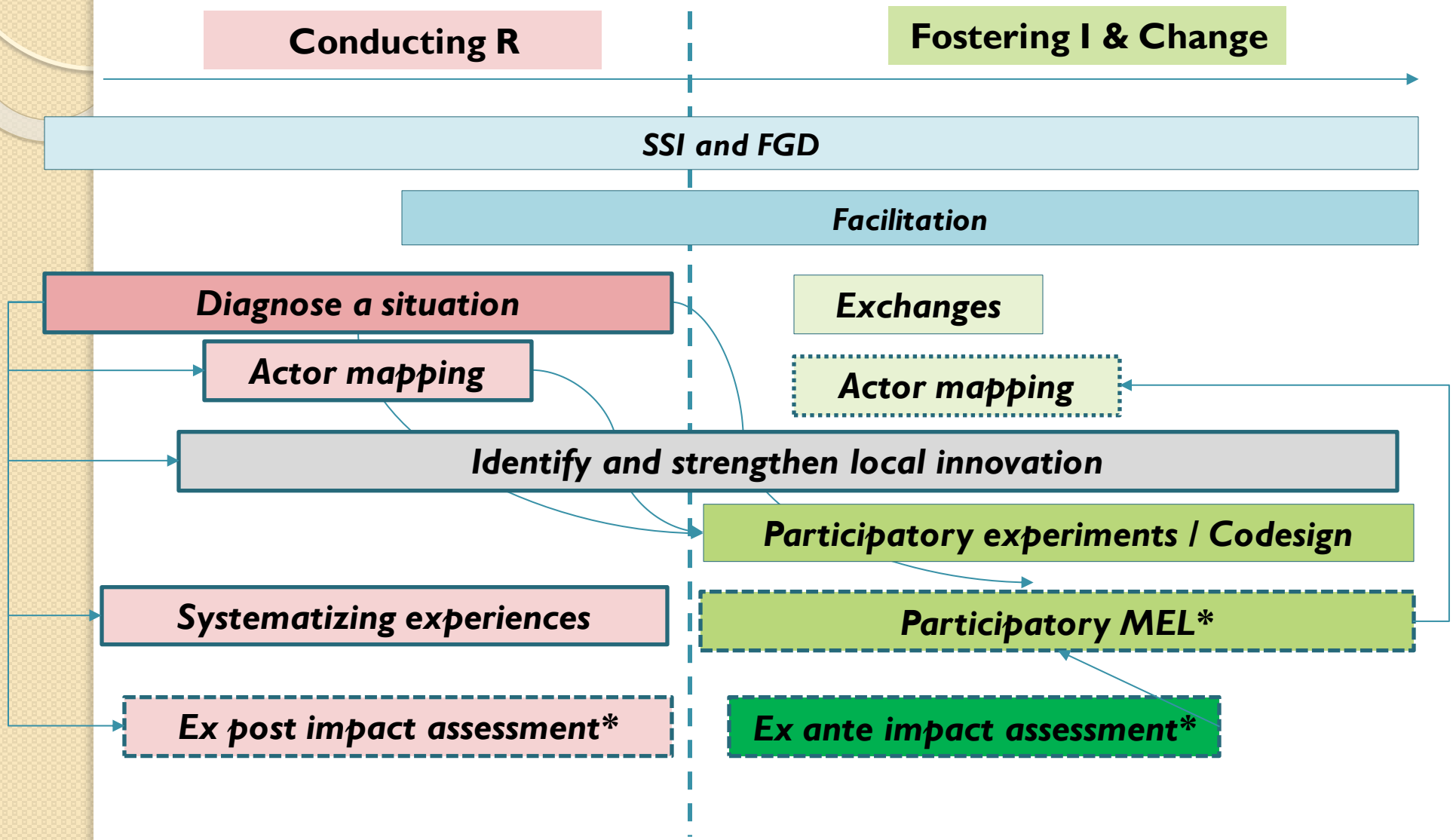
Introduction

- Remember…M&T needed both to carry out meaningful research and to foster Innovation & Change
- Some M&T fairly specific to A-R, others frequently used for any R&D intervention or participatory work
- No details given, rather, introduce why they can be useful, and provide recommendations / attention points.
- Key issues:
  - Goal = find M&T consistent with the objective pursued and the desired approach.
  - Acquiring the necessary skills to apply them through initial training and in practice is critical
  - Not everything is a matter of M&T: much has to do with (1) having or developing a shared vision and principles of how to work together and (2) maintaining an attitude consistent with that vision and principles.

Key methods & tools covered

- Semi-structured interviews (SSI) and focus group discussions (FGD)
- Process facilitation
- Diagnosing a situation prior to or within the context of an A-R intervention
- (Actor / stakeholder mapping)
- Engaging in multistakeholder arenas
- Codesign & participatory experimentation
- (Exchange visits & events)
- Identifying and strengthening local innovation

Relationships between Methods & Tools



* Not covered

Other topics not covered here, but very useful to know about and mobilize as part of action-research...

- Participatory planning
- Visioning, foresigthing & prospective
- Participatory modelling, serious games
- Analysis & improvement of access to markets / value chains
- Analysis of qualitative information and data
- Dealing with conflict and power relations
- Dealing with gender issues and inclusion
- Use of ICTs in A-R
- How to lobby and influence policy makers
- Scaling innovations
- Financing Innovation
- Effective communication in A-R
- Etc.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups

Reminder

- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are **two of the most useful & ubiquitous tools** throughout the planning and implementation of an Action-Research intervention.
- Unlike closed questionnaires & surveys, they **contribute to fostering an open dialogue** with and between actors, *either to understand a situation or to act on it*.
- Actually, there is ***nothing very specific about its application in the context of A-R***, apart obviously from the specific themes and questions being addressed

Plenary debate (3 mn):
Surveys vs. Semi-structured interviews: similarities & contrasts (5 mn)

Semi-structured interviews

Why use them?

- As a quick way to obtain and systematize qualitative or semi-qualitative information on a variety of possibly complex and qualitative or delicate topics, for which having the knowledge and/or perceptions of the actors is critical
- To be able to have **rigorous bases** to know how to interpret a situation, a result, a process, a difficulty, a challenge, *without relying only on your own criteria as an R&D professional*
- To initiate and facilitate dialogue between the A-R team and stakeholders
- To complement and enrich what has been obtained with other forms of research / dialogue

How to do it?

Some essential points:

- Identify the **right resource persons**, that is, those who will be able to give "good" answers on the topics of interest
- Develop **interview guides with few major topics**, and for each of them, come up with a couple of "well-formulated" **trigger questions** to start the conversation
- Do not hesitate to **rephrase the questions** several times during the interview, until they are well understood
- Be **flexible** during the interview, in the order used to deal with the topics of the guide or in the formulation
  - Adapt to how / when the respondent spontaneously addresses them, or how relevant discussion clues emerge, which may oblige you to jump to another topic
- Ensure that **the interview guide is specifically tailored to the respondent's profile and what you know about his/ her situation experience etc**:
  - Unlike questionnaires, it is not about replicating the same interview X number of times in the same way, but being able to take advantage of the peculiarities of the profile and experience of each respondent to address certain issues that only that person can address or answer

➔ This requires specific prior preparation for each interview.

How to do it?

- Much more to say about the how, really!
- An tool, but also an art that requires practice
- This session not the place to address the many aspects to take into account to conceive, implement and analyze quality semi-structured interviews.
- ***For the highly motivated:***
  - See distance course on qualitative methods developed by CIRAD and IAMM: http://entretiens.iamm.fr/course/view.php?id=6v
  -

Semi-structured interviews: attention points

- Making good interviews that achieve their purpose requires good practice to master this tool well and know how to use and adapt them in a variety of contexts and with a diversity of informant profiles
- It is important to be able to **record or take good notes** without hindering the dynamics of the conversation
- Although an interview guide is prepared very carefully, it is necessary to apply it with great flexibility and know **how to ask follow-up questions** when information or clues of interest arise, whether or not it is foreseen in the initial guide.
- It is necessary to devote sufficient attention from the beginning to **how it will be possible to analyze and systematize the qualitative information collected in interviews** in a rigorous manner
  - Good coding is key to allow grouping and comparison of answers
  - There is specialized software (I don't know about it)
- The interview can and should usually be **combined with other instruments** and tools for gathering information or dialogue (such as focus groups, workshops, questionnaires, experimentation, etc.).

Focus groups

- Why use them?
  - Gain time compared to individual surveys
  - Identify consensus or differentiated positions
  - Explore specific topics flexibly
- Note:
  - In some circumstances, FG may be combined with doing some interviews or surveys with individual participants, "to take advantage of the trip"
  -

How to do it?

- Identify and justify well the issue or topics that will be focused, and why the GF is a good way to proceed to address them
- Define precisely the type of participants to be invited, and find a suitable way to invite them (and not others)
- Prepare a topic guide with few trigger questions
- Define precisely the dynamics you intend to follow for each topic
  - Ensure good facilitation (avoid having several hats)
  - Ensure reliable note-taking
- Clarifying material conditions
  - Transportation of participants, place and date, characteristics of the room, food and / or coffee breaks, compensation, note taking, blackboards and other materials, etc.

Focus groups: attention points

- Achieve good group composition
  - Be precise in the profile of the participants you want to invite (e.g. farmers of a certain size and experience, gender, type of responsibilities, etc.), *especially if you go through an intermediary to invite them*
- As always: good facilitation is critical for quality results!!!!
- Ensure you mobilize pre-existing information on the chosen topic
- Do not underestimate the cost, time and effort for participants to attend a focus group: plan them frugally, do not exceed the agreed times

Facilitate an Action-Research process / an innovation or change process

Facilitate, what is it?

- An explicit effort and process to pilot in a neutral way (idea of "honest broker") a collective process and optimize the probability of achieving the proposed objectives
- Facilitation should occur continuously (ideally), but it is especially necessary during key moments of a collective Action-Research / innovation process

Why facilitate the action-Research process?

- Because without facilitation, groups of actors often enter into problematic situations: capture of agenda by the most powerful, conflicts, demotivation, deviation from objectives, procrastination, etc.
- Because it allows to optimize collective energies and resources
- Because Action-Research / innovation processes are complex, difficult to plan in advance and not mechanical at all

How to do it ?

- There are several styles and techniques of facilitation, no single recipe
- A critical initial stage is to nominate or hire a competent individual (or institution) to provide facilitation according to the objectives pursued.
- A key role of the facilitator is to carefully prepare and organize with the project leaders each key moment of the intervention or collaborative work, paying explicit attention to the process (while researchers and other resource persons focus on content) .
- In addition to requiring initial skills, much can be "learned by doing" if the facilitator is someone with little initial experience in this job.
-

Plenary debate (3 mn):
Can researchers facilitate their own events?

Facilitation: attention points

- Facilitating is not a simple title or label that is given to just anyone during an event to "moderate" the discussions and respect the established times: the key point is to achieve quality facilitation over time
- Avoid appointing multi-hat people as facilitators (who act as leaders, thematic resource persons and facilitators, for example), to minimize the confusion and conflicts of interest that this usually generates
- Be careful to avoid "facilitators – manipulators (they care mostly for their own agenda, or for a hidden agenda), or a facilitator under the exaggerated influence of one of the (powerful) actors.
  - If such situations are detected, they must be remedied as soon as possible.
- Avoid delegating to the facilitator activities and roles that are specific to the members of the Action-Research collective (risk of excessive dependence of the process on the facilitator)

Exercise 1:

Identifying demand by developing & testing semi-structured interview guidelines

Objective & task &

- ***Researchers*** *want to* ***identify*** *(or at least validate)* ***key problems faced by a farmer organization,*** *so that an action-research can be conducted to solve them / improve the situation.*
- *They will need to* ***prepare*** *for such interview,* ***conduct*** *it with representatives of the FO, and* ***debrief*** *it.*

The core exercise consists of a role game during which a team of researchers will interview a team of farmers

Time to split in researcher and farmer breakout groups!

- No more than 5-6 participants in each group

NB: *Projects with several participants please split into the 2 groups*

Conducting the interview (10 mn)

Merging in one room of farmers and researchers' groups

- **Task**: researchers conduct the interview they prepared before with the farmers
- **Role of 2 observers** (one from each group):
  Take note of how the interview process is going
  - Aspects on which to focus the observations…
    - Is the discussion progressing smoothly and are clear responses / agreements arrived at?
    - Does anything unexpected happens?
    - Are questions understood properly by the farmers?
    - Are the researchers actually listening to the farmers' responses and demands?
    - Do the farmers appear interested in engaging in future action-research?
    - Etc.

Debrief of the interview (10 mn)

- The merged group discusses and identifies what went well / what was more challenging and why. Focus especially on the following aspects:
  - Where researchers able to identify a "genuine, legitimate" demand?
  - Did farmers felt the researchers were offering "worthwhile" collaboration?
  - To what extent does the SSI seem to be a useful tool?

- The results of the debrief are organized on the Klaxoon board under the following 3 headings:
  - 2-3 synthetic observations on **any challenges** faced in **planning** or **holding** the interview)
  - 2-3 key **recommendations for doing better / for conducting good SSI**
  - 2-3 suggestions on **how to identify demand and whether to mobilize any other tools**, besides SSI, to this effect?

  https://app.klaxoon.com/participate/board/CXJNNM5

Step 2: Plenary (10-15 mn):

- At least 1 group shares its filled Klaxoon board (2 groups time allowing).
- Following sharing, time allowing, a brief round of comments allows to discuss specific issues

Time for a pause

we badly need it!

10 mn sharp please

Diagnosis of a situation & actor / stakeholder mapping

Introduction to diagnosis

- Decades-old method & practice
- Multiple denominations and peculiarities: not just one way of conducting a diagnosis.
- An essential tool and stage of any A-R intervention, requiring careful planning

Plenary debate:

What's special about a diagnosis conducted within an Action-Research / AIS perspective?

What is it? When to use it?

- What is it?
  - The more or less profound characterization of a situation in several dimensions, according to a specific objective of intervention / change
- When is it used?
  - Before the intervention, or at the beginning of it, in the course of an intervention, to update an initial diagnosis or understand an emerging problem

Without having an accurate, shared diagnosis, large mistakes can be expected in the design of an intervention, and during its implementation

How to do it?

1. **Rapid qualitative surveys**
   - Review of documentation and secondary data
   - Interviews with key actors, focus groups, multi-stakeholder workshops on a small sample of key sites (communities and territories)
   - Usually use of participatory methods
   - **Duration: a few weeks**
   - **Costs/effort: relatively low**

2. **Deeper and more analytical diagnostics**
   - Same as before but more sites, more interviews, more focus groups, observations, and quantitative "field" measurements (e.g., returns, costs, "statistical" questionnaires, etc.)
   - May include specialized studies to understand a given issue / topic / situation
   - **Duration: a few months**
   - **Costs/effort : variable but relatively high**

Potential topics for a "systemic" diagnosis 1/2

Our hypothesis (bias) is the following:

Purpose of the Action-Research intervention (and the initial diagnosis of it) is to innovate with family farmers with the intention to contribute to improving their quality of life / resilience

Under this hypothesis, it is desirable to be able to characterize during the diagnosis...

- *Farmers' production systems and practices, in their diversity and dynamics,*
- *Existing producer organizations (what they are, what they do, how strong they are, etc.), & other actors that interact with them.*
- *Diversity of local knowledge on X, Y, Z.*
- *Yields and production costs of major crops (or, as the case may be, livestock activities)*
- *Input and output markets, as well as value chains for major crops*
- *State of natural resources, as well as their conditions and rules of access / management*

Potential topics for a "systemic" diagnosis 2/2

- History of previous or on-going interventions in the area (who, when, about what, with what results) as well as the corresponding lessons
- Local dynamics of innovation (on what aspects, who innovates and how they innovate)
- Actors and networks (including stakeholder mapping),
- Technical and innovation capacity of key stakeholders
- State of the local innovation systems
- Objectives, needs, problems and desires of each actor (and if possible prioritized)as the relate to the overall Action-Research framework
- Diagrams problems-causes-consequences-solutions
- SWOT analysis (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats) by organization, at multi-stakeholder level, at territorial level, etc.

There is nothing mechanical in this list, it all depends on the objectives pursued, and what has already been done / is already known at the time of planning this diagnosis

Diagnosis: attention points

- **Quality of information or data**
  - Good mastery of diagnostic techniques is required to achieve quality / reliability
  - Combine *several points of view* for interpreting the results and do not limit yourself to the one of the (usually) external person conducting the diagnosis
- **Amount of information**
  - Ensure that it is not too much, and that most of the information collected is actually useful / has use, and not just "interesting"
- **Length / amount of time** required
  - Good, wide-reanging diagnosis takes time
  - But action may be needed fast to create trust and to uncover actual workings of the system of interest by trying to change it
- **Approach**:
  - Ensure that the diagnosis is participatory and not just observational
- In **dynamic situations** (rapid changes in the socio-economic or political environment, weather accidents, etc.), diagnosis may need to be updated the periodically.

Mapping of actors & networks

(covered in some details in S. Audoin's special session on *Innovation service providers*)

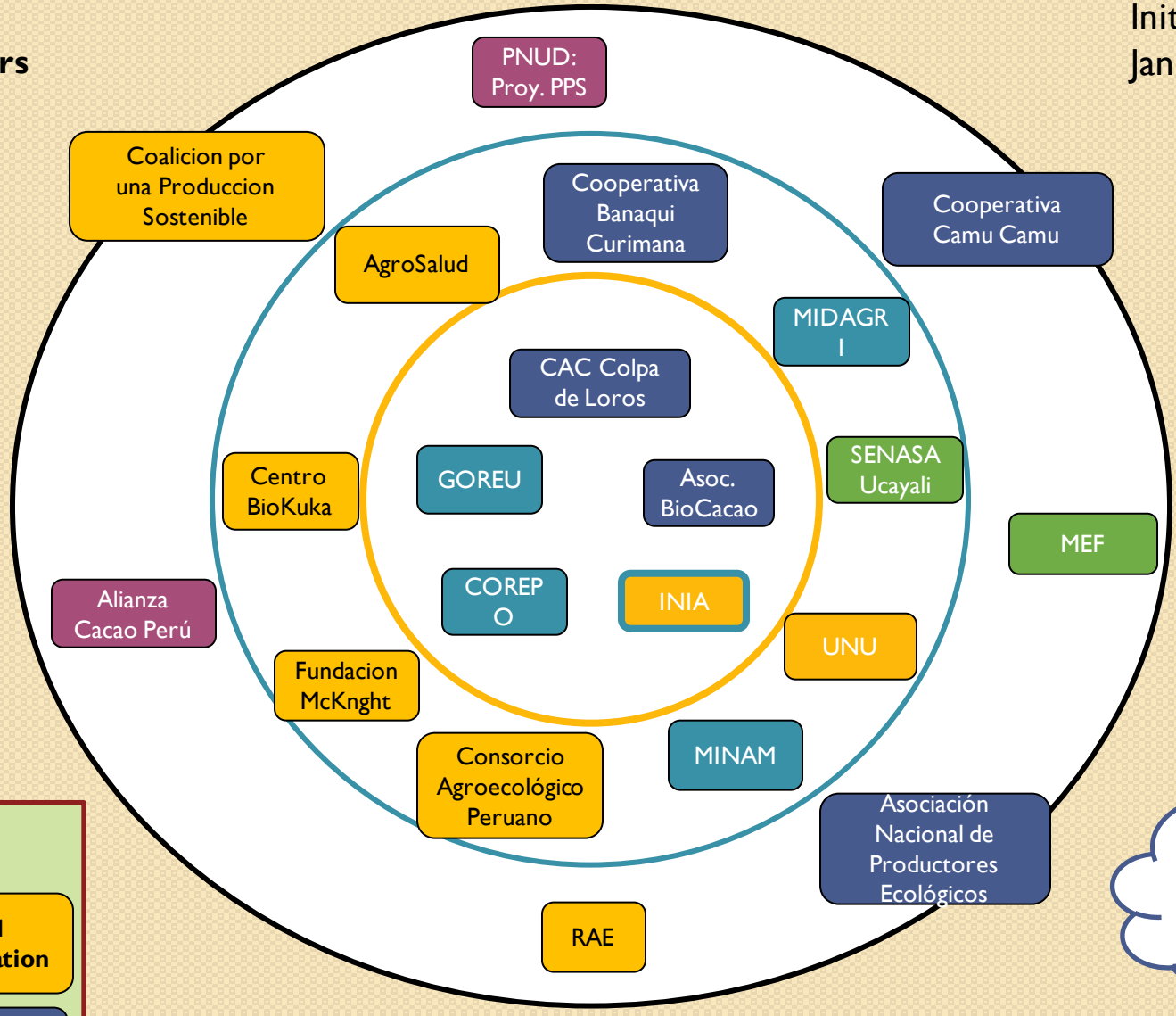
What is it? When to do it?

- **What is it?**
  - An analytical description and visual representation of the actors involved in a situation, a problem or a collective dynamic (e.g. an action-research intervention, the development of an innovation), and of the relationships between them ("networks")
- **When to do it?**
  - During initial diagnosis
  - When it is necessary to adjust the process or intervention to update the mapping and take into account new actors or relationships

Main partners

Shown interest

Potential Interest



LEGEND

Public institution | **Civil organization**

NAR | Producer organization

Intern. Coop.

Investors /Financial sector Consumers (?)

Source: Agroecology Initiative, Peru Team, January 2023

How to do it? 1/2

- Many methods available...
  - Some very qualitative and participatory.
    - Via multi-actor mapping workshop:s NETMAP (IFPRI) (see http://www.mspguide.org/tool/netmapping)
  - Others more quantitative (e.g. density measurements, centrality, etc.)and relying on sifnificant data collection
  - Using **software** to **produce diagrams** and **compare maps** between different places or at different times can be **handy**
    - (see for example iGraph: https://igraph.org/)
    - **Beware**: with each software come specific data requirements
    - Mapping with the computer and coming up with measurements is **easy and can look pretty**… What matters most is to be able to correctly interpret and use the map to plan / adjust the intervention
  - Which method to select depends on what you want to know and how much time and resources you have!
- Mapping can be done for different dates/times
  - At the present time (most common), 5 years ago, within 3 years
  - *The **comparison** between mappings made at different dates may provides a lot of relevant information*
    - *(for example, the strengthening or weakening of networks, who developed their relationship capacity, who left or entered, etc.).*

How to do it? 2/2

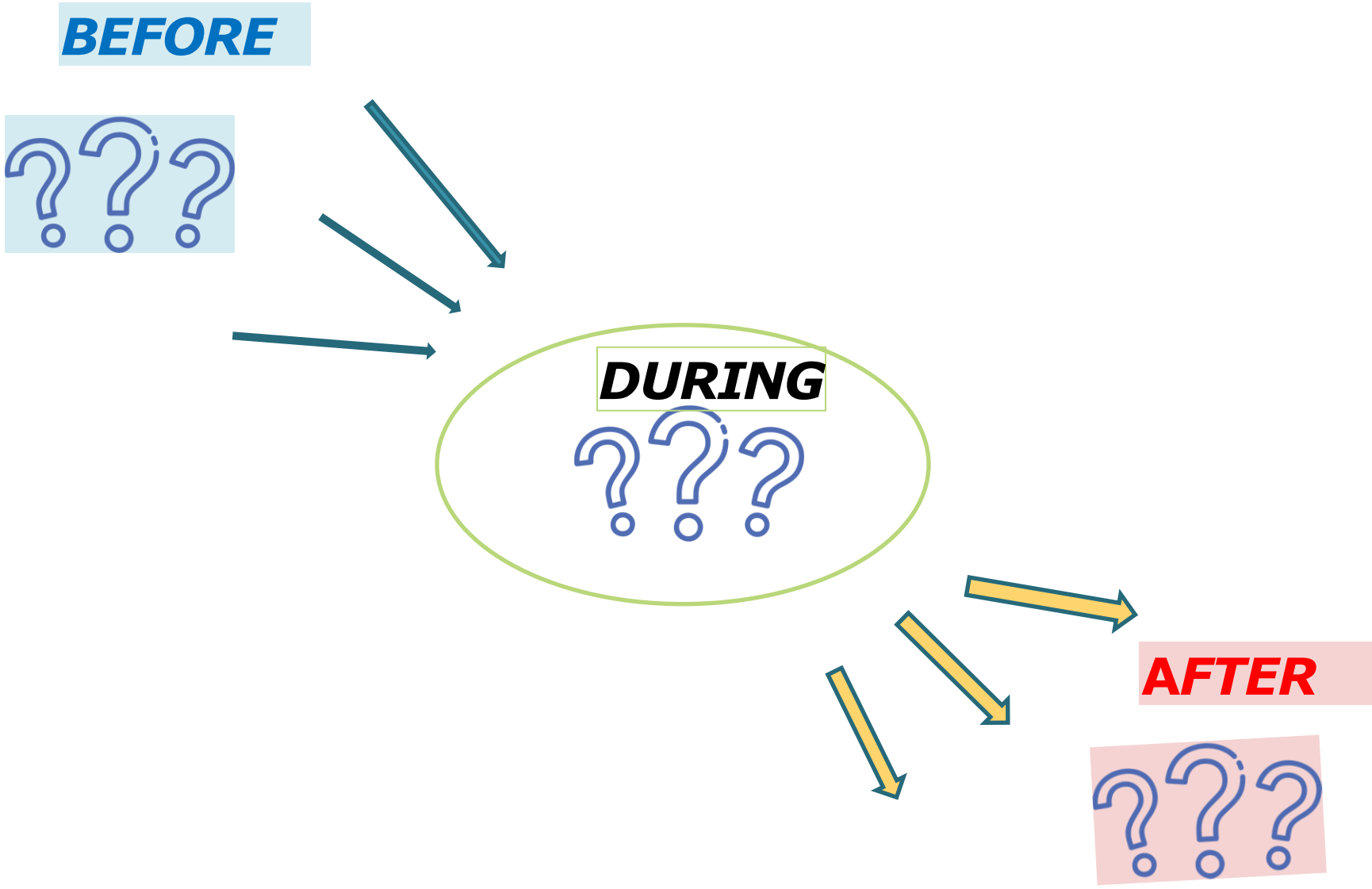
- Basic questions to be able to map (networks of) actors:
  - Who is present/involved/interested in the territory/situation/problem/solution? ("has a stake" or "is a stakeholder")
  - Main/marginal/affected actors and their roles
  - Who is for/against innovation / change? Who benefits or will be harmed? Who contributes what?
  - Who interacts with whom and for what purpose?
  - Who has more / less power or more / less influence over others/over the situation and its eventual transformation?

To serve its purpose, the **visual map** must be accompanied by **its explanation or interpretation** in written form, and with a **descriptive table** that provides information about each actor as well as about the relationships they entertain with each other.

Mapping: attention points

- Ensure **quality / reliability** of information
- Be clear about the appropriate level of detail (avoid extremes)
- Be aware of who says what... There may be multiple points of view about an actor or a relationship, not always consensual
- Need for collective validation of results
- Beyond mapping, we must be able to **use the map** to **take (good, collective) decisions** to structure & implement the Action-Research
  - For example: who to involve, with what role, etc.

Organizing a participatory event


BEFORE
???
DURING
???
AFTER
???

Before, during and after

Before

- Clarify place & role in the overall A-R process
- Nominate a team of facilitators & define roles
- Develop the purpose and objectives of the workshop & each session
- Identify the target audience and the context in which the session will take place
- Develop a detailed agenda
- Send invitations to the public + reminders
- Prepare materials and space

During

- Welcome and share the agenda, the team, objectives, rules of engagement, record the session / note-taking
- Facilitate participation, Manage time in a flexible manner
- Clear seguencing and clear structure for each session
- Develop and facilitate activities and group work with clear goals & instructions and debrief afterwards
- Provide clear synthesis after each main session / overall
- Inform about next steps & ask for feedback

After

- Prepare and send session and recording documents, evaluation form
- Conduct an evaluation with Action-Research team and identify lessons learned and their implications
- Prepare and share synthetic workshop report
- Inform concerned STJ about next steps and follow-up agreements reached

Organizing a multi-STH event

- Issues to look into
  - When?
  - Objectives?
  - Participants?
  - Facilitation?
  - Program?
  - Logistics?

We will do an exercise on Wednesday that will give an opportunity to practice about what preparing an actual workshop entails

Any time left for burning questions & comments?

End of Session I

DeSIRA LIFT

Thanks so much for your participation today!
See you on Wednesday 21

Special session (English speakers)

Generic methods and tools for conducting Action-Research within an AIS perspective

Session 2

Expert: Bernard Triomphe, CIRAD-LIFT SA I

19 & 21 June 2023

Welcome to Session 2!

- Thanks again for connecting today
- *Please indicate your name and project in the zoom participant list!*

- *What we did on Monday in short*

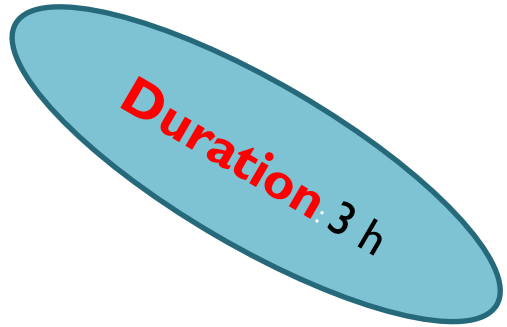
Topics for today 21 June

14:00 Welcome / Introduction

14:10 Generic participatory methods and tools **Part 2**

- Engaging with multiple stakeholders
- Building and working with multistakeholder arenas
- Designing participatory experimentation / codesigning innovation
- ***Exercise 2: Organizing a co-design workshop 45 mn***

16:00 Brief pause



- Identifying & fostering local innovation
- Systematizing experiences

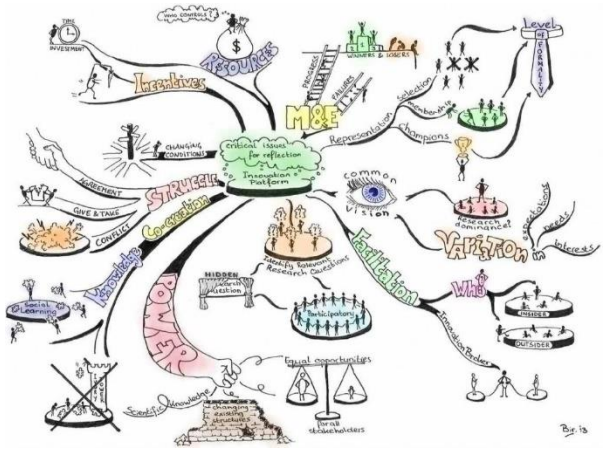
16:40 Making A-R work in your projects 20 mn

- Capacity building & MEL
- A-R and AIS perspective: how to make them work together?
- Are there rules and practices in your organization / in your projects that can constitute obstacles to implementing genuine, quality A-R

17:00 Synthesis and wrap-up 10 mn

(Special session evaluation)

Engaging with stakeholders, building multi-stakeholders' spaces: innovation platforms, living labs and other MSH set ups



Introduction

- Multiple stakeholders spaces or set-ups popular for a decade or more
- Often, donors ***require*** intervention proposals to include the creation or use of IPs / LLs etc.
- It is a concrete way to operationalize the concept of AIS and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration, using a participatory or Action-Research approach.
- Creating (or strengthening) an IP / LL and making it work properly is ***challenging***.

Let's see more in detail

Plenary brainstorming 1:

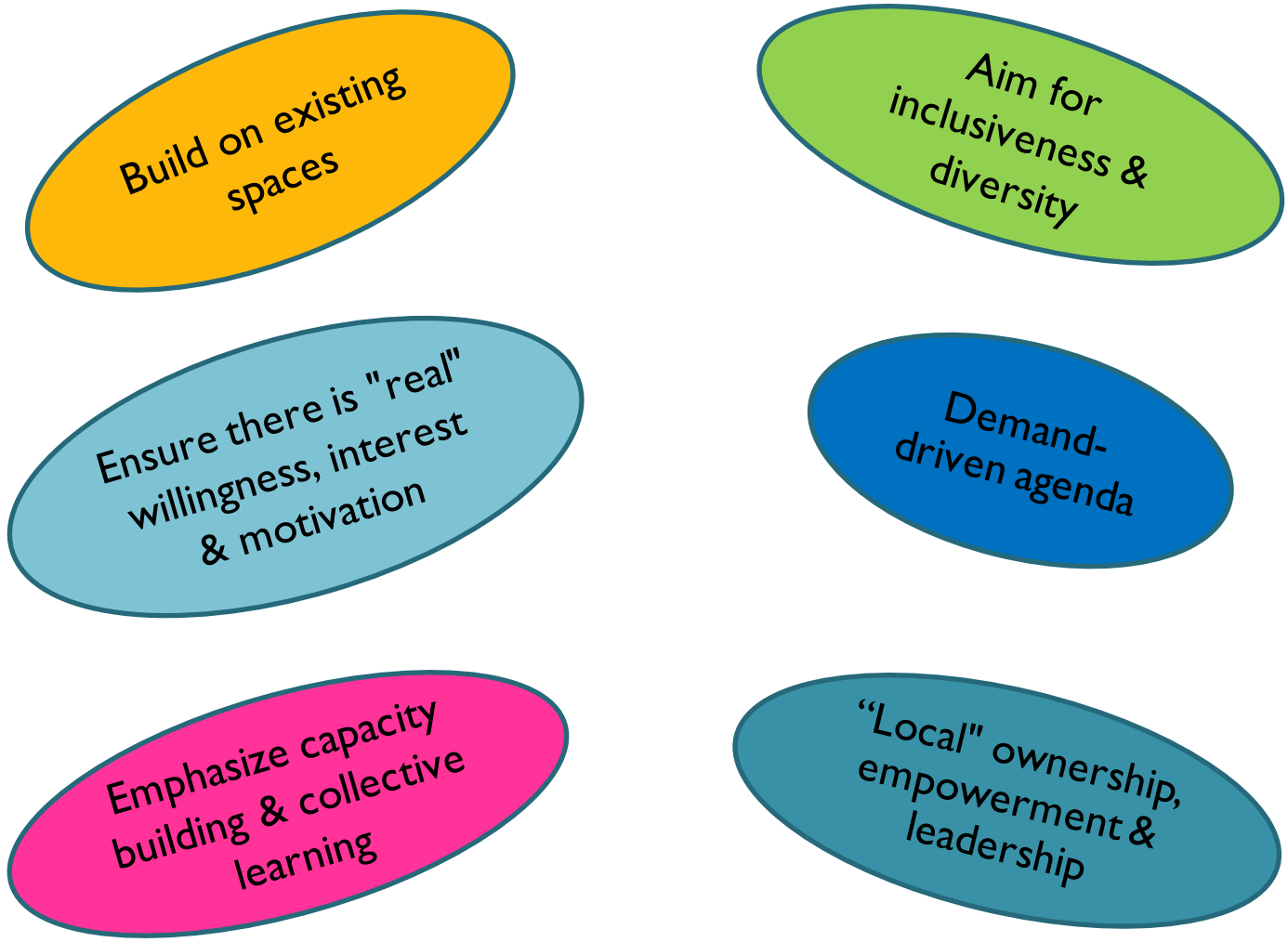
Any principles that may guide how a Research team may engage with stakeholders?

Plenary brainstorming 2:
Who should researchers consider engaging with and why?

The need for explicit modalities of engagement with stakeholders

- A critical decision: deciding who to work with
- Many researchers have little experience and tools to do this
- Initial choices shape process, results and impact down the road
- Know about the actor / stakeholder landscape, to go beyond "rounding up our old friends"

6 principles of engagement for establishing LLs (AE Initiative, 2022)



Innovation Platform: what is it?

«an artificial situation in which a set of relatively interdependent actors are identified and invited to meet and interact in a forum for problem or conflict resolution, negotiation, social learning and collective decision-making for concerted action» (Röling, 2002)

Living lab: what is it?

LLs are a mechanism for a **diverse set of actors** (e.g. farmers, researchers, traders, processors, consumers, policymakers, funders investors and other relevant R&D institutions) — who are part of food systems and landscapes at various scales (mostly *territorial*, but also regional or even national) — **to share their views, knowledge and resources, codesign and adapt innovations**

Plenary debate (3 mn) :
Objectives of a multiSTH space

Example 1: **Coffee territorial alliance in Jinotega, Nicaragua (2014-2020?)**

- **Purpose**: Sustainable intensification of coffee and related crop production via multi-stakeholder collaboration
- **Partners**: Research centers, NGOs, Producer cooperatives, Universities, private sector, (government)
- **Activities**: developing an integrated decision-making tool for coffee production, standard certification process for coffee producers, developing a basket of proposals to submit to external donors, training, online information system, various diagnoses.

Example 2: **Masagro Hubs across Mexico (2011 - today)**

- Purpose: to develop and promote conservation agriculture and the sustainability of agriculture
- Partners: National government (main donor), research centers, universities, Office of technical advisors, private sector (seeds, ag equipment, etc.), other funding agencies
- Activities: experimentation, demonstration plots, technical advice, exchanges and field days, training, lobbying

Example 3: **Agroecological Living labs, several countries, 2022 - ??**

- **Purpose**: Contribute to agroecological transition through technical and social innovation
- **Partners**: international and national research centers, producer cooperatives, universities, private sector, (local or regional government), extension,
- **Activities**: developing a shared vision and transition pathways, codesigning new agroecology practices, developing agroecology business models, achieving behavior change, policy lobbying and formulation, (assessment of AE performance),

IP & LLs can have a variety of objectives

- **Solve well-identified problems**
- **Adapt /disseminate /scale technologies**
- **Coordinate actions between key actors**
- **Improve quality of life**
- **etc.**

Plenary brainstorming

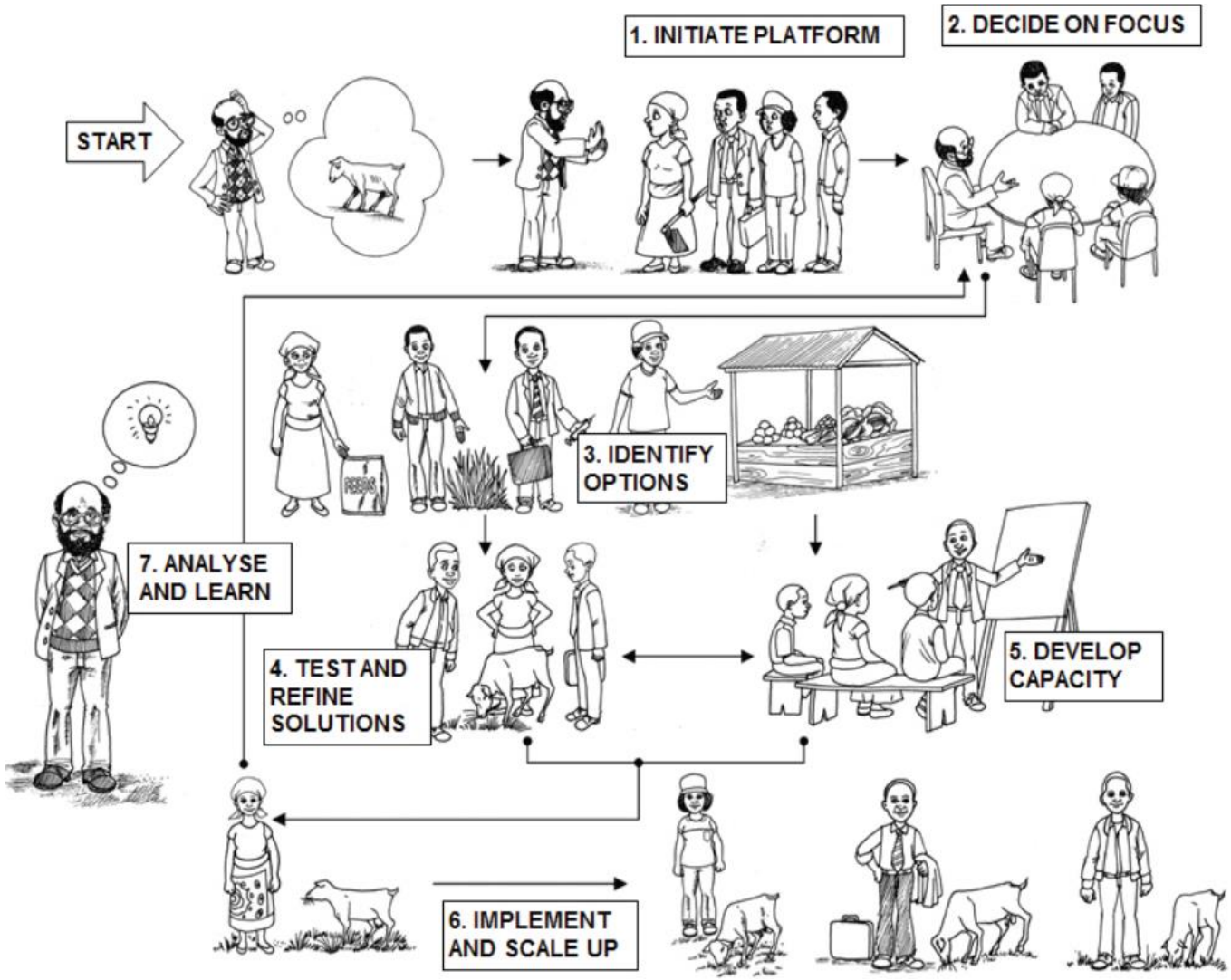
Is forming a new multistakeholder space always a good idea?

Is forming a new multistakeholder space always a good idea?

Relevant questions to ask:

- Is (lack of) coordination between actors a key problem?
- Is there sufficient goodwill & motivation among stakeholders to work together?
- Are there **existing** multi-stakeholder spaces that could serve the purpose?
- Could **other** multi-stakeholder approaches be used?
- Are there **adequate resources** to cover the initial operation of the MSH space (≈ 2 years)?
- Are there good prospects for the sustainability of the space without (DESIRA) project funding?

Typical phases that an MSH space has to go through when starting from scratch



Bewaree: ¡non-lineal sequence!

Establishing a multi-STH space 1/2

Key questions

- Which actors to invite/convene?
- At what scale(s) should this space operate?
- What should and can be the focus and objective?
- Where & how to start, finding the right entry points
- Who will lead the multi-STH space?
- Who will pay for what?
- What to formalize & when?

Monitoring, Evaluation and learning of the progress of a multiSTH space

- Often, a multiSH space does not progress or work as planned / hoped from the outset...

➔ Need for a good MEL system

- *see LIFT course on MEL*

Sustainability of a multiSTH space

- Do multiSTH spaces need to be sustainable?

- In order for an IP to be sustainable, consider:
  - Ensuring / renewing effective leadership & participation
  - Achieve & maintaining sufficient motivation and ownership by its members
  - flexibility over time: membership, objectives, activities, leadership, etc.
  - Continuity in funding

Some limitations of working in & with multiSTH spaces

- Not always an effective modality,
- Can be expensive to operate
- proper functioning over time requires effective facilitation
- Difficult to maintaining member motivation over time
- Many want short-term results and benefits, but are not ready to share costs, tasks...
- Not easy to disseminate and/or scale results
- Often difficult to institutionalize the process

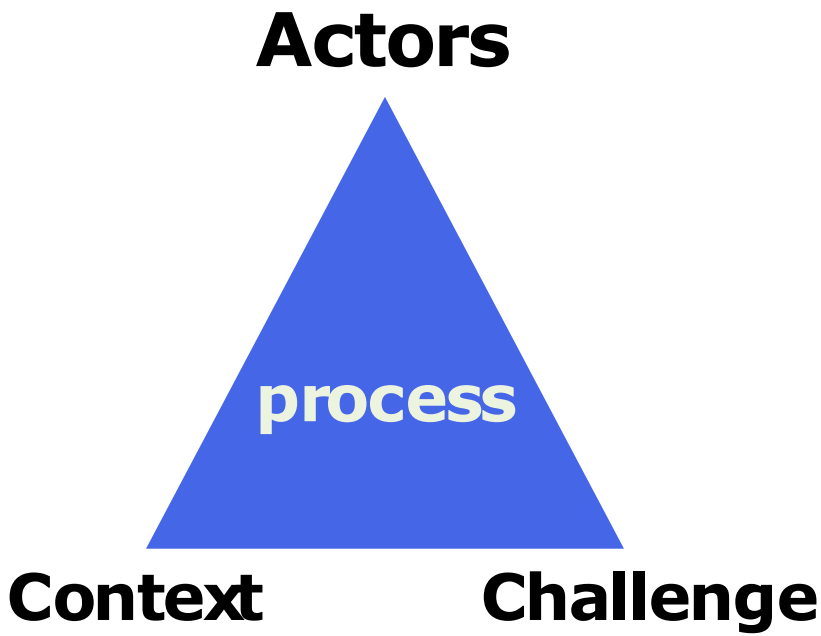
MultiSTH spaces: attention points

- Once more: ensuring effective facilitation
- Define well the (evolving) roles of each partner
- Know how to manage the power relations and asymmetries between members
- Obtain "sustainable" and "autonomous" financing
- Achieve effective communication internally and externally

Participatory experimentation

(as part of codesigning innovations)

Reminder: co-creation & co-design at the heart of action-research approach



Source: Lecomte, LIFT SAI Course

Plenary brainstorming

What is participatory experimentation all about

What is participatory experimentation about?

- A way of developing and/or evaluating solutions where the future users play an active role in some or all stages of the process, together with the researchers

Farmer-researcher dialogue around a technological innovation

Discussing the settings and operation of a no-till seeder to be used in a no-till experiment in the municipality of Unai (Brazil)

Credits: Bernard Triomphe

How to do it?

- Several ways of doing it!
- Essential issues to consider:
  - Discuss & agree on what to test or experience, and how to do it (**participatory planning**)
  - Agree on how and when progress and results will be monitored (**participatory implementation**)
  - Find suitable moments to bring together the various actors of the process during experimentation to observe, exchange and assess (**collective visits**)
  - Take into account the opinions and suggestions of users to adapt or discard options **(participatory evaluation**)

Fictitious example: experimenting with farmers in their own fields

1. Planning phase

- Clarify, negotiate and reach **agreements** with FOs, members of an IP, etc. and with individuals (experimenters)
  - *Objectives, experimental design, who does what,* the *MEL system, how to share costs and risks*
- Provide **training / capacity building**
  - on the technical **subject of the trial**
  - on the **codesign / experimentation process** itself

Fictitious example: experimenting with farmers in their own fields

- **2. Implementation phase**
  - Define and ensure that it is clear who does what
  - Provide technical assistance to the farmer if necessary
  - Organize follow-up and exchange visits
- **3. Analysis phase**
  - Define how it is done, by whom, based on what data, with what type of visualization, etc.
- **4. Feedback phase**
  - Organize **meetings or workshops**
  - Develop & diffuse products (reports, flyers, video, …)
  - Agree on a new cycle of experimentation

Participatory experimentation: attention points

- Participatory experimentation is costly (time, $$)
- It requires **skills and competencies**:
- Avoid proceeding **mechanically** (applying a recipes) rather, ***"reinvent" the process with your local partners***
- Participatory experimentation is **not the only way to proceed** to innovate and achieve change nor can it solve everything

Exercise 2:
Conceiving a workshop to codesign an innovation

Objective & task &

- ***Researchers are planning to hold a workshop whose objective is to codesign innovation with local stakeholders (farmers for example) responding to a clear need / demand on their part, as part of an on-going Action-Research project.***

The exercise consists of preparing a relevant agenda for this workshop

Split in breakout groups (2 or 3)

- No more than 5-6 participants in each group
- ***Each group*** focuses **around one innovation being dealt with within the framework of an actual DESIRA project** being represented in the group, and for *which organizing such a workshop makes sense.*
- ***The project's representative*** *in the group tells the group* ***what specific innovation(s)*** *the exercise should focus on.*
- *Participants from other projects contribute by thinking generically and systemically about the workshop design, based on their own experience.*

NB: Projects with several participants please split into the various groups

TOR (same for each group) - 30 mn

- Each group has to come up with **answers to the following questions**:
  - How does this workshop **fit in the Action-Research process and sequence?** *(very brief!)*
  - What are the specific proposed objectives of the workshop? *(list 3-4 key objectives max.)*
  - Who should be invited (types of stakeholders)?
  - Who will facilitate the workshop?
  - Propose the main substantial sessions (parts) of the workshop, and provide the following information for each such session:
    - Self-explanatory short title of the session
    - Specific objective of the session (in as few words as possible)
    - Inputs needed (such as presentations on W or Y), and who is in charge or preparing it (using the following categories: researchers, facilitator, local stakeholder, external resource person)
    - Basics of the dynamics to be followed in the session (e.g. plenary presentation, brainstorming, group work, use of specific tools such as cards, world café, ice breakers, etc.)

  NB: do not try to clarify the timing for the various sessions

Klaxoon board exercise 2

https://app.klaxoon.com/participate/board/CXJNNM5

Fill the following matrix *(as many lines as there are proposed sessions)*

- Self-explanatory short title of the session
- Specific objective of the session (in as few words as possible)
- Inputs needed (such as presentations on W or Y), and who is in charge or preparing it (using the following categories: researchers, facilitator, local stakeholder, external resource person)
- Basics of the dynamics to be followed in the session (e.g. plenary presentation, brainstorming, group work, use of specific tools such as cards, world café, ice breakers, etc.)

Step 2: Plenary (10-15 mn):

- One of the groups presents its results by sharing their Klaxoon board, and gets feedback from other groups (5 mn).
- Time allowing, at least **2 groups** will share their results
  - 2d group will highlight how different their proposals are from that pf the 1st group, rather than showing everything
- *If there is time left, round of quick comments about the usefulness of the exercise and any reflections related to organizing such events.*

Time for a pause

we badly need it!

10 mn sharp please

Local Innovation (LI): why you should identify & strengthen it through A-R

Introduction to Local Innovation

- There is a recurrent discourse on the obtaining active participation of local actors in R&D approaches & processes
- Often, R&D institutions take or keep the lead (the control) and **invite** local actors to participate.
- But in many places, out of reach of R&D interventions, or in parallel to R&D intervention, local actors actively engage in activities and initiatives to address their needs on their own .

Plenary brainstorming

What is local innovation?

What is Local Innovation?

(an operational definition)

- A set of formal and/or informal activities that farmers and other actors in a territory or region devise, carry out and/or direct, with or without external support, to improve their livelihoods and living conditions, through changes in their practices that allow them to improve their agricultural production or the management of their farms, process, market, organize better, among others.

Examples of local innovation

- Maize - mucuna system (Northern Honduras)
- Conservation tillage on hillsides (Guaymango, El Salvador)
- Diverse agroecological practices (CaC Program, Nicaragua)
- Improved germination of Podocarpus to facilitate reforestation with native species (Prolinnova, Ethiopia)
- Soybean processing and marketing of soy-based foods to poor consumers (Benin)
- Zai system for semi-desert areas (Burkina Faso and Niger)
- Fallows based on Acacia auriculiformis (Benin)
- Development of an Aloe value chain (Kenya)

Depending on the case, it is "pure" local innovation (maize - mucuna system case), or with variable interaction and collaboration with external actors, at least in a part of the innovation trajectory

The maize-mucuna system in Honduras
1. What is it about?

Don Chema Ayala, farmer-innovator & promoter

Mucuna fallow (rest) Mucuna

Mucuna reseeds itself at the end of the fallow period

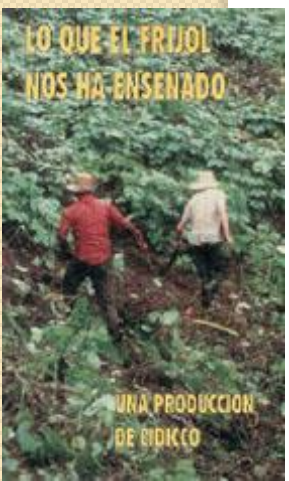
System developed 100% by farmers

Corn about to mature while the mucuna re-establishes itself

Corn on a mattress of recently cut mucuna which releases nitrogen

Honduras 2: from its local use to its international diffusion

- 1980s and early 90s, use of mucuna system became widespread among thousands of family farmers on the Atlantic coast through from farmer to farmer dissemination
- Farmers were able to double their yields, reduce their input use, control erosion and improve soil fertility.
- Starting in the 90s, many NGOs promoted the use of mucuna in Central America and even Africa, while research documented the system and explored ways to develop the use of mucuna as a source of fodder and human food.
- However, the low profitability of the system and technical problems (weed control in particular) led to a partial abandonment of the system from the mid-1990s.
- Today, the region has gone through a series of strong changes (development of palm and cocoa, cattle ranching, mass migration to the United States). UU; insecurity, etc.) and the system is clearly less used



← video (1996) in which the farmers themselves share their experiences

How common is it for LI to occur?

- In the history of agriculture, and even today in marginalized areas little served by formal R&D, LI has been the main engine of innovations such as cultivated plant varieties or new production practices, among others.
- Wherever the effort to document LI has been made, a great diversity of LIs and innovators has been found.
- Of course, not all farmers are innovators, nor do all innovations bring significant benefits or changes compared to business as usual.

Some characteristics of LI

- It responds to a series of criteria & principles such as:
  - Bottom-up conception,
  - Responds to felt user needs,
  - Relative simplicity and low cost, making it accessible / reproductible by the poorest,
  - Focused on valuing local resources and relying little on external inputs

NB: Participation & contributions of external people and knowledge in LI variees

Why should we care about LI?

- It may contribute to improving the living conditions of poor farmers, conserving NRs and achieving sustainable agricultural and rural development in general.

Some known limitations of LI

- little role & link with the private sector and consumers,
- lack of systematic design,
- Often developed and used in networks of limited extension and scale ("local")
- local innovators often have a blurred view of the potential market / audience they could reach,
- etc.

How to identify and document LI? 1/2

- Focused diagnosis, using semi-structured interviews, focus groups and direct observations
- Find the manner and a locally understandable vocabulary to identify locals innovators and innovation
  - Ask about the "crazy" ones
- Characterize LI: what, why, how, where, underlying knowledge, results, dissemination, challenges
- Take pictures or make videos
- Develop synthetic fact sheets

See LIFT CASSIS Special Session Salembie 03/2023

Can A-R contribute to strengthening and accompanying LI? 1/3

- **Strong need for** systematization & diagnosis
  - ***Purpose***: locate LI, describe and assess it in its multiple dimensions, make it visible to all, without falling into angelism ("peasants always know everything and do everything well")

Can A-R contribute to strengthening and accompanying LI? 2/3

- Improve/optimize local innovations, validate their performance & limits, broaden their spectrum,
- Accelerate the pace of LI, contribute to scaling it whenever possible
- Hybridize the knowledge and contributions of local actors and that of R&D,
- Improve the design & rigor of IL process, and disseminate its results
- Contribute to have public policies recognize and foster LI.

Can A-R contribute to strengthening and accompanying LI? 3/3

Strengthen the capacity of local actors (individuals, farmers organizations) to innovate!

- So they can develop & implement more and better innovations
- So they can communicate better about what they do and propose
- So that they can form and expand networks both between themselves and with external actors
- So they can better access information and funding (cf. LISF), have better negotiation and political lobbying skills

Also: strengthen the capacity of those who support farmers, and transform their attitude towards LI!

LI: attention / reflection points

- What types of innovations result from LI processes? Do they contribute to Sustainable Development?
- Who really innovates, who benefits from LI?
- At what scale to address LI, and how to scale LI?
- How to treat intellectual property related to LI use and scaling?

Sistematizing experiences

Introduction

- For many, **urgency** is to plan and implement new interventions with no time left for looking back
- Yet **knowing and learning from past or on-going experiences** is essential and should be **a priority**
- Many experiences from which to learn.
  - Many not systematized explicitly, or not even recognized as being valuable or simply forgotten (oldish, staff turnover etc.).
- Systematizing allows us to know and learn **where, how and why there were successes and advances** in some cases, or **challenges and difficulties** in others
  ➔ valuable lessons for improving our practices and avoiding mistakes

Overall approach

Plenary brainstorming

What is systematization about?

Systematize, document, capitalize...

- 3 almost interchangeable concepts that can be applied to what we propose here
- Common points between the 3 concepts
  - **Describe in some detail** what happened in a given experience/ case
  - Learn from it and draw lessons

A diversity of approaches

- More analytical and quantitative
- Usually focused on a particular aspect or dimension
- Focused on results (what innovation? What benefits?)
- Implemented by people outside the case (researchers, consultants,)
- slower (a few months)

- more **qualitative**
- very **holistic**/**systemic**
- Focused on the **process** (how did the Innovation happen?)
- implemented in a **participatory manner** with the relevant actors
- **faster** (a few weeks)

In red, main features of the method proposed in this module

Proposed method for systematizing exp.: Principles & key aspects 1/2

- It aims to ***learn and improve collaborative practices*** (research, action-Research, R&D) aimed at **fostering change / innovation**.
- Systematize ≠ evaluate, ≠ be accountable to an external donor, ≠ do an academic study
- Systematizing goes beyond producing a document or report
- Systematizing goes **beyond the frame of a given project**:
  - *it can cover a long **trajectory** of interventions / innovation involving a cluster of interrelated projects, or even what happened **utside the framework of any project***

Proposed method: principles & key aspects 2/2

- Form **a mixed team** involving both researchers and stakeholder representatives
- **Quick method** (3-4 months between planning and obtaining products), **participatory**, mostly **qualitative or semi-quantitative**
- Focus **on the process of intervention / innovation** throughout **its historical trajectory**
- Focus on the **diversity of perceptions** of the actors

Objectives of systematization

- Generic objective
  - Understand the intervention process / Innovation of one or several experiences to learn from it (s) and improve practices to promote Innovation
- You can also define **specific objectives** for each experience you want to systematize
  - *For example*: quantify the adoption or performance of a technology, understand a particularly interesting or problematic phase of an experience, understand the role of certain actors, plan future actions, etc.

Analytical framework 1/2

Derived from the AIS approach, obviously!

7 (+1 optional) major themes or dimensions to consider

1. What is the **innovation**(s), change, effect or approach that interests us?
2. What were the **problems or opportunities**, the **objectives** of the innovation / change and what did it intend to contribute / improve / address, what concretely does it consist of (different dimensions)?
3. In what **context** did it occur (socioeconomic, political, environment at the national, state or local level) and what interactions occurred between context and process of innovation / change?
4. Which **actors** took part or had influence, with what interactions between them and with what roles?

Analytical framework 2/2

Derived from the AIS approach, obviously!

5. What have been the **main stages and the key activities** conducted in each of them, in relationship to the targeted innovation / change?
6. What **results** (effects, "impacts") were obtained when using the innovation(s) or implementing the change? What **capacities** were strengthened in the process, by and of whom?
7. What **challenges and lessons** have been learned?
8. *(What perspectives and recommendations can be formulated to move forward / to replicate?)* (***optional***, only if researchers and case partners want to use the lessons to move forward)

Preliminary stage: identifying and selecting experiences

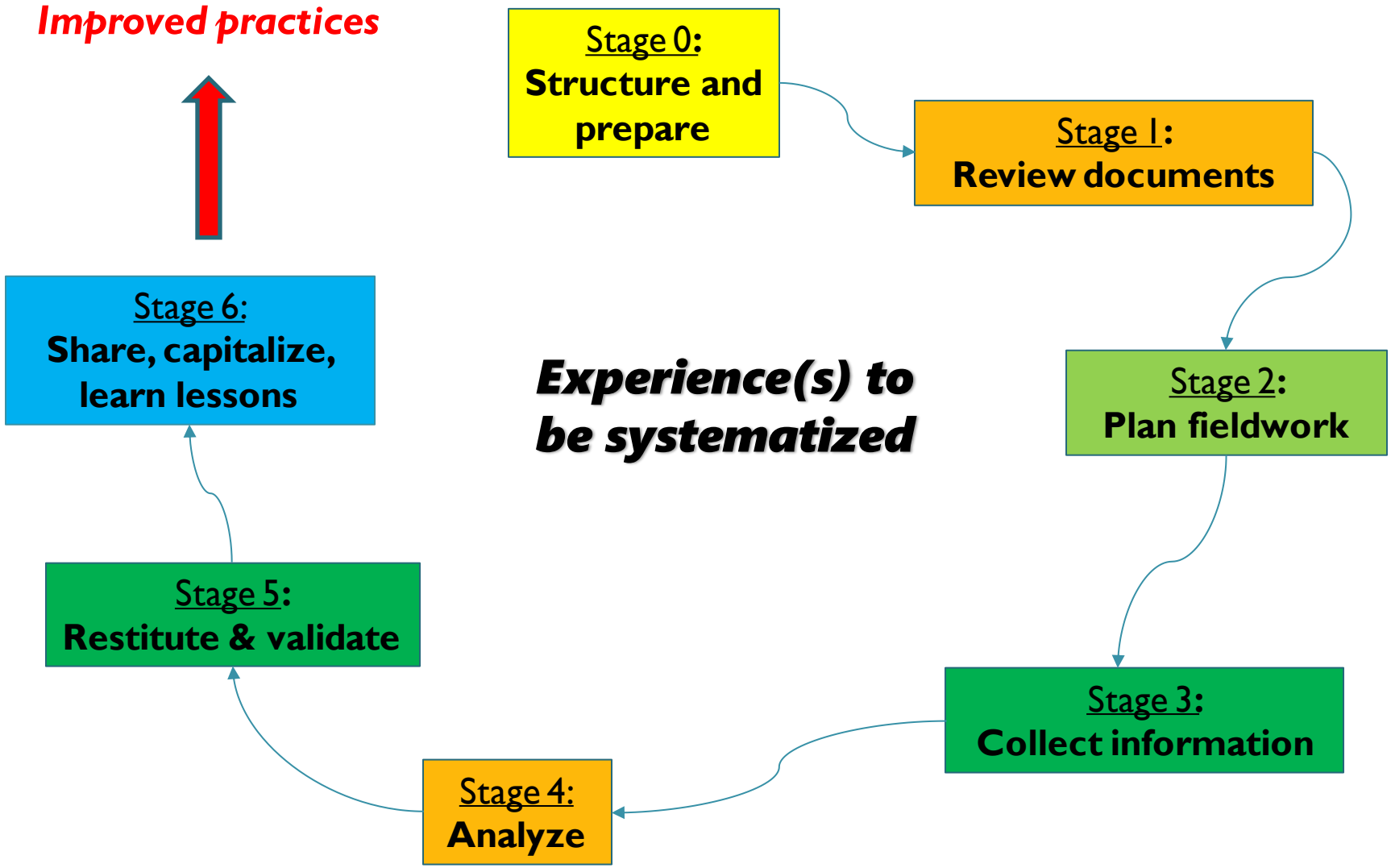
- **many** experiences to choose from, the vast majority not fully documented, or not from the point of view of the process
- Follow a **formal process of identification and selection of experiences to ensure** results and lessons will be of interest to the **organization** or **the partners** willing to engage in systematization

6 proposed stages

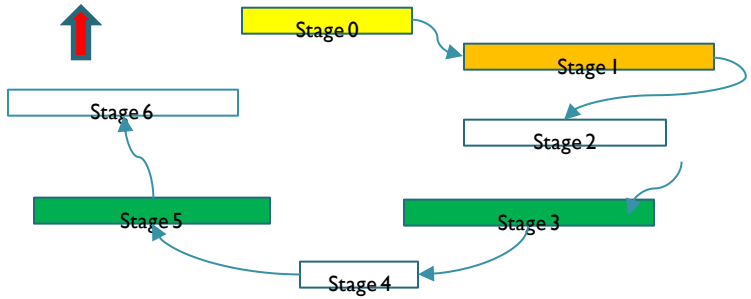
- ***Stage 0***: Clarify objectives, perimeter, team composition, build capacity, mobilize resources
- ***Stage 1***: Review existing doc.
- ***Stage 2:*** Prepare field work
- ***Stage 3***: Collect information
- ***Stage 4***: Organize and analyze info
- ***Stage 5***: Restitute & validate with case stakeholders
- ***Stage 6***: Share, capitalize & feed database, draw generic lessons

Starting point: the case(s) to be systematized have already been selected at a preliminary stage

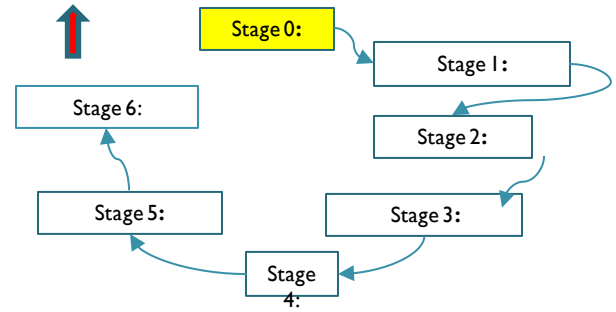
The 6 stages visually



Zoom in on selected stages



Stage 0:
Structure and plan 1/2



Main activities:

- Constitute a mixed **team** (researchers + local actors), assign clear responsibilities and **roles**, ensure **appropriation** of objectives & method
- Clarify **specific objectives** pursued and **specific learning dimensions / questions**
- Delineate the **perimeter of the case study**

Stage 0: Structure and plan 2/2

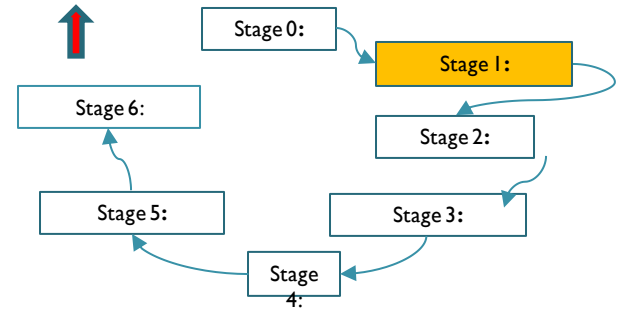
- Training & Capacity building
  - Acquire mastery of the overall methodology, of specific tools, of technical aspects of the case (!)
- Develop a work plan

Duration ≈ 5-10 days *(full-time equivalent)*

Attention points Stage 0

- Whatever is decided during stage 0 influences the whole systematization process
- work plan will need to be **refined or adapted** according to unforeseen circumstances or actual progress in systematization.
- The need for training / capacity building, depends on the team's previous experience & skill set
  - *consider conceptual aspects, practical aspects, soft skills, technical skills, etc.*

Stage 1: Documentary review



Main activities:

- Conduct exploratory interviews with resource persons to understand the overall case / process, identify key documents, identify main phases or critical aspects
- Identify and obtain existing documentation
- Read and extract from the documentation what is relevant to **build an initial hypothesis of how the intervention** / innovation trajectory unfolded,
- Identify gaps, doubts and inconsistencies to be addressed and resolved in phase 3

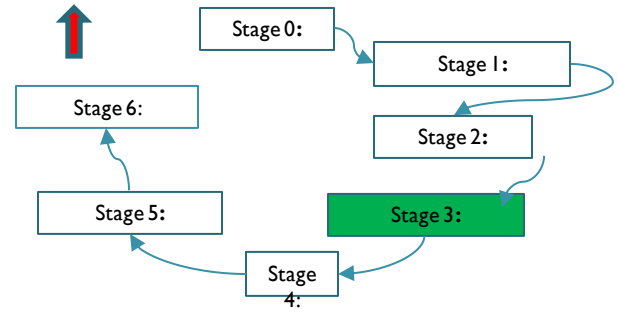
Duration: ≈ 10-20 days (full-time equivalent)

(but depends on ease of contacting resource persons and accessing docs)

Attention points Stage 1

- Use various paths and strategies to identify and retrieve relevant documents
- Use a meticulous & critical attitude to read, extract and structure information according to the analytical framework / the key questions
- Do not confuse intentions with actual facts
- Be aware of '*positive bias*' in reporting to donors

Stage 3: Collecting info 1/2



Main activities:

- Collect information with the key actors and informants defined in Stage 2, in selected sites, using mostly SSI and FGD
- Focus = completing the intervention / innovation timeline and responding to the learning objectives and questions and the various components of the analytical framework

In addition...

- multi-stakeholder workshop may come in handy
- gather selected quantitative information (yields, statistics, sales records, etc.) to complement the more qualitative interview data

Stage 3: Collecting info 2/2

And also...

- Make direct observations if possible / relevant
- Document visually the interviews / focus groups / workshop,: photos, videos, testimonies

- Duration: ≈ 10-15 days (full-time equivalent)

Attention points Stage 3

- Ensuring you conduct good interviews: ***a technique and an art*** (cf. session 1 Monday 19).

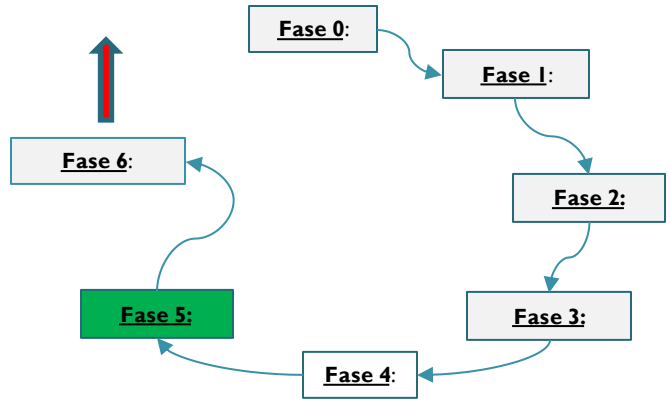
  ➔ interviewing is a key task for researchers
- Plan sufficient time to interview "enough" and diverse local actors, open space for interviews not initially planned ("snowball" effect)

Attention points Stage 3

- Do the transcription and "polishing" of individual interviews or FGD as quickly as possible
  - To be able to rely on memory before it evaporates
  - To identify topics or clues for subsequent interviews.

➔ schedule formal transcription times in the agenda of the field work

Stage 5: Restitute & validate with stakeholders



- Confront / compare your interpretation with that of the actors
  - to validate results, to fill gaps, to adjust / expand the understanding, to stimulate the expression of a diversity of viewpoints.
- **Main activity**: organize a **multi-stakeholders workshop**
- Outputs = refined and finalized versions of the key results, the story, the timeline, the lessons

Duration: ≈ 5 days (full-time equivalent)

Attention points Stage 5

- The workshop's objective is not to present results as such, but to ***encourage critical discussion and validation by participants***
- Presentation of results must be selective (key points) and highly pedagogical
- **As always**: ensure good (external?) facilitation
- **Who participates in the workshop** is critical

Can this generic method be adapted to the specificities of a case?

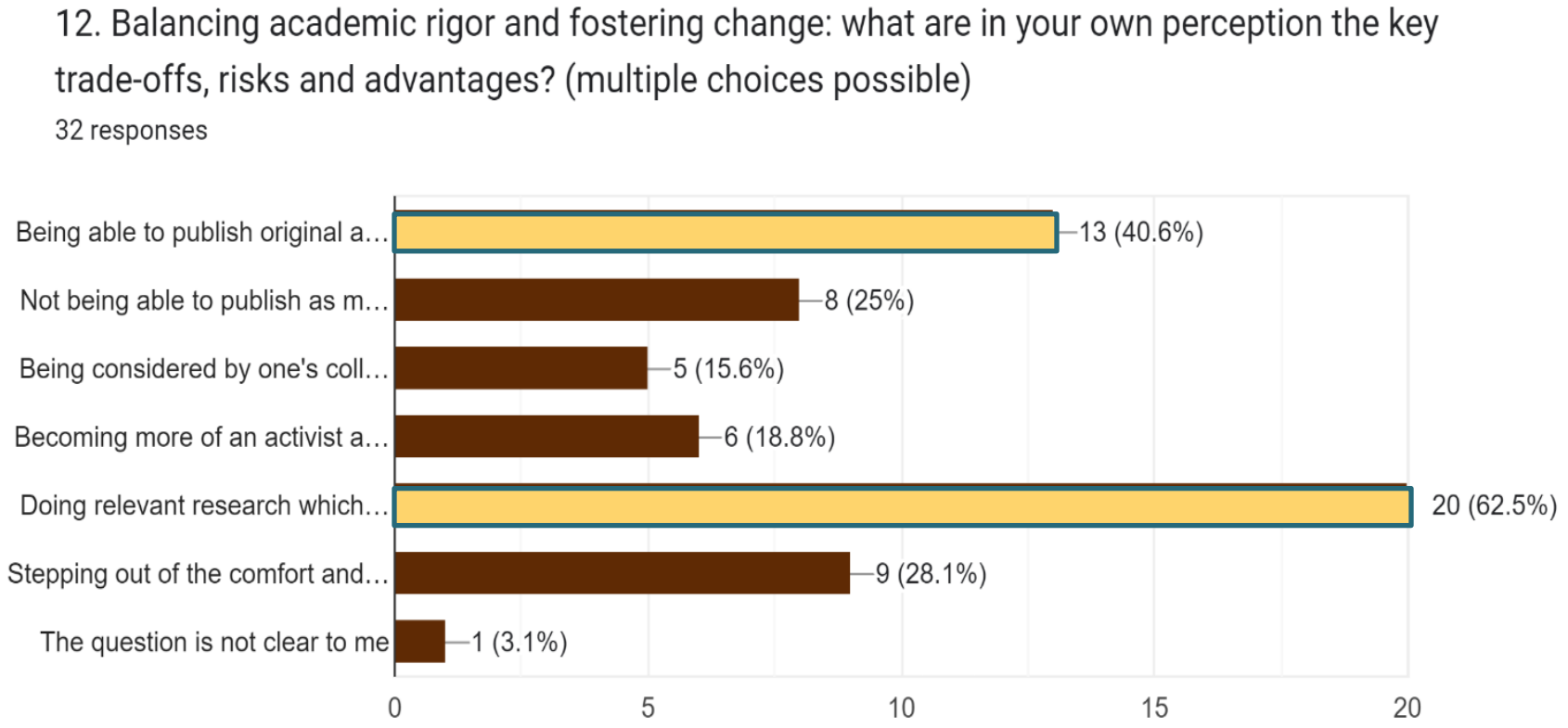
- It depends on whether it is a stand-alone study, or if it is part of a comparative study
- Valid reasons that may lead to adapting the method:
  - Resources and time available / specificity of context / specific objectives pursued / experience, skills and preferences of persons in charge.
- Where is there flexibility?
  - Defining the perimeter, selecting specific tools, number of interviews, designing interview guides, etc.
- Ensure adjustments are consistent with the principles and the generic analytical framework / the specific learning questions,

Global attention points

- **Selection of "interesting" case(s) is critical for identifying** valuable lessons
- Ensure the **quality of the information** and its relevance
- Ensure the **systematization process is truly participatory**
- Find **the right balance** between **being generic** / using a **standard method** vs. **adapting the method** to a specific case
- Ensure final results & lessons are **appropriated & used by the target audience(s)**

Making A-R work in your projects

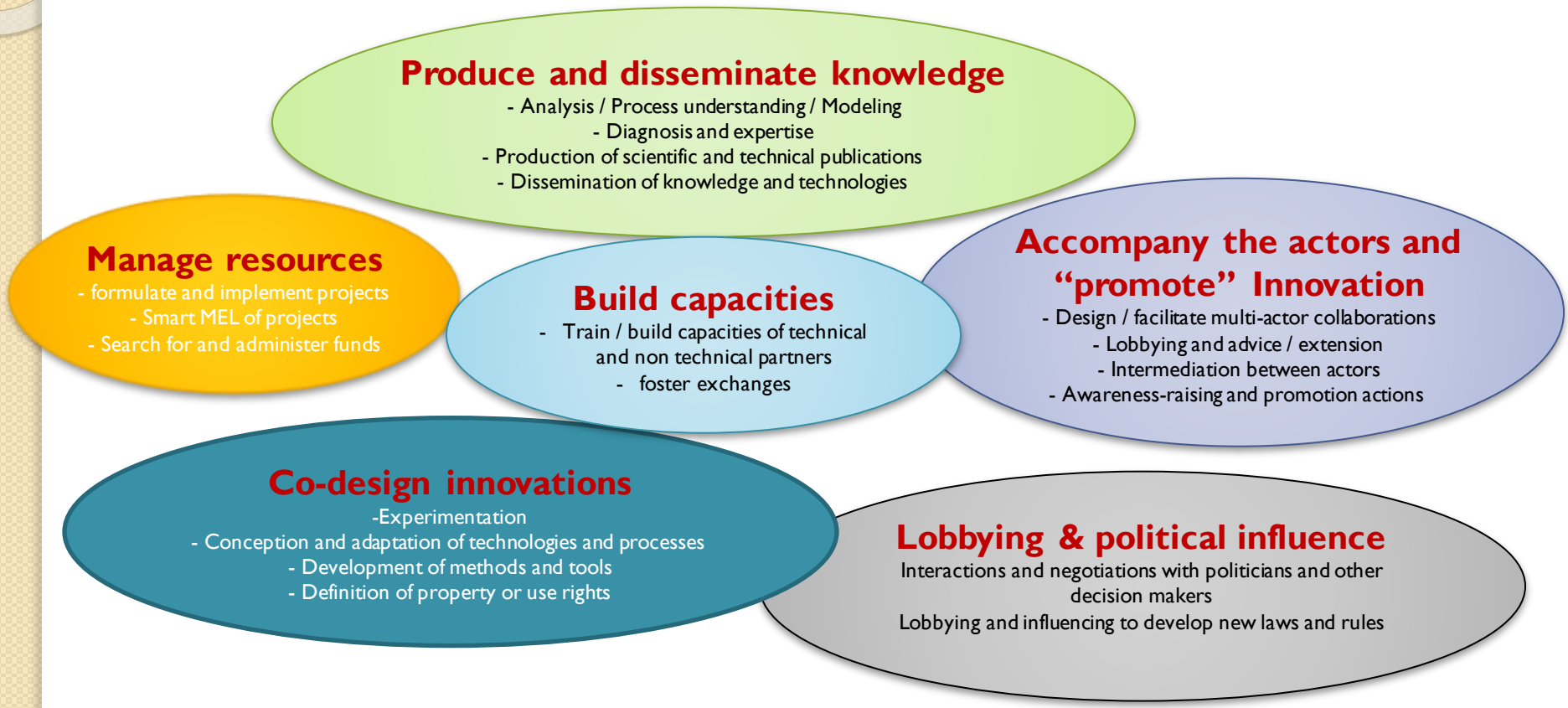
Trade-offs, risks and advantages of doing A-R as a researcher



Source: Registration form survey

Reg

6 main functions of researchers that contribute to implementing Action-Research and fostering innovation & change



Debate 1/2 (5 mn)

Are there internal obstacles to implementing genuine, quality A-R in your organization / in your DESIRA project?

Obstacles to implementing A-R

- Individual issues:
  - skills, attitude, motivation, lack of time
- Collective / project level:
  - (lack of) interdisciplinarity, time, resources, decision-making process
- Organizational
  - Recognition / incentives, Organizational culture, administrative rules
- System-wide
  - financial incentives, project culture, donors / calls, mainstream scientific & technological culture

Debate 2/2 (5 mn)

What can you do about it?

Building capacities for engaging in & implementing A-R successfully is key!

Capacity building: modalities

- Formal training
- Systematizing past experiences
- **Learning by doing**
- **Organizing learning events / moments within your project (MEL)**
- Coaching / support by colleagues
- Exchanging among colleagues, joining a CoP (e.g. LIFT…)

1. Identification and appraisal of the existing skills of the participants that will be useful in the ARP via analysis of existing practices and the participants' experience with teamwork, in innovation development, and in participatory approaches, etc.

2. Principles and basic concepts of the ARP:
– Origin and definition
– Ethical aspects, and attitudes and values that underlie the ARP
– ARP stages and cycles, general aspects of the process of innovation
– Governance of an ARP, ARP set-ups, steering, and monitoring and evaluation
– An ARP's results
– Principles for negotiation between stakeholders, and for co-construction
– Reflexivity
– Power relationships, asymmetries between stakeholders, imparting autonom

3. Involvement of different stakeholders (farmers, farmer organizations, researchers, etc.) in ARP set-ups and its specifics

4. Joint planning of a cycle or standalone activities

5. Collegial experimentation: planning, implementation, evaluation, systemization

6. Managing communications in an AR

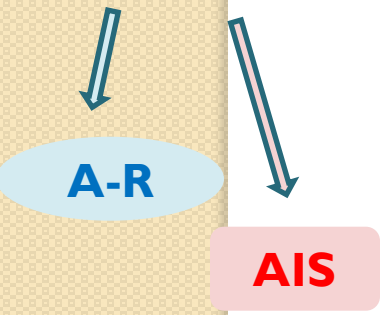
7. Participatory methods, techniques, and tools, in particular:
– Participatory diagnosis
– Organization and facilitation of meetings, workshops, and exchange days and visits
– Training and functioning of farmers' groups
– Modalities for negotiation, management, and conflict resolution
– Undertaking reflexivity

Fundamentals of initial training on AR

A-R and AIS perspective: how to make them work together?

- Should be fairly easy, don't you think?
  - "Change" A-R is talking about = Innovation(s)

Coming from



- Pay attention to…
  - Diversity of innovation dimensions
  - Environment
  - Knowledge production, hybridization of K
  - The collective researcher
  - Engaging with multiple stakeholders
  - multiscalar nature of interactions and changes
  - Ethics
  - Policy implications

Synthesis & final thoughts

What have we seen in this special session?

- Some **key concepts** to understand what Action-Research is about, implement it and foster innovation
- A *brief overview* of some **basic methods & tools**
  - semi-structured interviews and focus groups, facilitation, diagnosis of a situation, multistakeholder spaces, participatory experimentation, local innovation, systematizing experiences
- A **number of recommendations, critical reflections and attention points** about the use of such methods and tools
- We have practiced (too little) about SSI, and organizing a co-design workshop
- We have seen that there are **numerous interrelationships** between these methods and tools

What have we **NOT** seen or done?

- Many methods & tools that can also contribute to the same goal of implementing Action-Research and fostering innovation
- Operational details of how to mobilize and implement the various methods & tools mentioned
- Exchanges between participants have been limited, really sorry!
- Learning by doing!

Synthesis and final thoughts

- Many methods & tools can and should be mobilized
- For each method or tool, several alternatives are available in the literature / the Internet
- ***Always adapt to the specific context you work in***, and be ***realistic*** about what can be done.
- A **good command** of M&T is essential to obtain quality, meaningful results:
- Beyond the method or the specific tool, **the most important thing is the congruence with the expected objectives**: avoid giving priority to the tool over the objective!

A matter of attitude & personal development!

- Ignoring concepts, not mastering tools and methods is a problem...
- But implementing A-R and fostering innovation also depends strongly on individuals and project team...
  - *knowing how to listen, be humble and self-critical of their way of being, behaving, thinking , relating with others*
  - *Respecting the others, have empathy and curiosity, be truly committed to contributing to improving things, and not just "doing your job" or "implementing what the projects says"*
  - *Being patient, being optimistic, being persevering*
  - *Wanting and knowing how to "learn by doing" continuously*

What's next if you want to implement Action-Research successfully and make change happen?

- **Read more!** Internet gives you access to plenty of amazing resources!
- **Systematize** some of your own experiences, or that of your partners, to better understand them and learn from them
- **Learn by doing!**
- **Share** what you have learned with your project colleagues and encourage "grounded" discussions about the situation you face and the changes or improvements you consider relevant to introduce in your individual and collective research practices

Take home messages: your take

- Message 1
- Message 2
- Etc.

A few take home messages…1/2

- Successful action-research involves **organizing an iterative interaction process** between researchers and multiple actors over time within the framework of **well-structured and properly facilitated multistakeholder spaces.**
- Setting or **clarifying one's objectives**, and **finding methods or tools that fit these objectives**
- **Ensuring quality and continuous dialogue** among stakeholders that learn to trust each other should be a major focus and concern

A few take home messages…2/2

- **Quality** initial **diagnosis** is key to **identifying relevant demands** and forming productive & meaningful **partnerships** and **increasing the likelihood of achieving eventual success**.
- **Organizing "meaningful" events** as part of an Action-Research process requires **proper preparation & follow-up**
- The **systematization** of **experiences** is key to **learn from successes and mistakes** and **improve practices**
- Action-research is **as much a question of (personal, collective) attitude and empathy towards "the others"** than a question of mastering methods and tools

Your final questions or comments?

Contact:

bernard.triomphe@cirad.fr

3 Questions – answer on Klaxoon board

(One idea per post-it, pls indicate name of your project)

https://app.klaxoon.com/participate/board/CXJNNM5

- Key **take-aways** from this special session that might help you implement Action-Research in your DESIRA project?
- Any **doubts** you might have about what was presented?
- **Other specific methods and tools** you wish could be included in a future course?
- Any other **suggestions to improve this course** (content, form) in the future?

Useful references

Action-research

Lewin, 1948. *Resolving Social Conflicts*. Harper and Row, New York, 230 p.

Liu, 1997. *Fondements et pratiques de la recherche-action*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 350 p.

Faure et al. 2014. *Action Research in partnership. Innovating with rural stakeholders*. CTA / QUAE

Chevalier and Buckles, 2019:. *Participatory action research: Theory and methods for engaged inquiry*. Routledge, 2019. 2d edition

General interest 1/2

- Buckles, Triomphe y Sain, 1999: Cover crops in hillside agriculture: Farmer innovation with mucuna. ICIID, CIMMYT y CATIE, 1999. 242 p. http://hdl.handle.net/10625/24747

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- Faure et al., 2020: A participatory method to assess the contribution of agricultural research to societal changes in developing countries. Research Evaluation, 29 (2) : p. 158-170 *(available upon request with your tutor)*

- Blundo Canto et al., 2019: Building a culture of impact in an international agricultural research organization: Process and reflective learning. *Research Evaluation*, 28 (2) : p. 136-144. *(available upon request with your tutor)*

Sistematizing experiences

- Selener, Daniel, 1997: "Manual de sistematización participativa." *Quito, EC, Instituto Internacional de Reconstrucción Rural.*
- Holliday, Óscar Jara. "Sistematización de experiencias, investigación y evaluación: aproximaciones desde tres ángulos." *F (x)= Educación Global Research* 1 (2012): 56-70
- Historias de Innovation desarrolladas dentro del marco del proyecto CDAIS en Centroamérica:
  - Villeda M y R Mejía, 2018: Preservación de la calidad y comercialización del café, promoviendo la colaboración. Una historia de cambio en Honduras. CDAIS y SAG-DICTA
  - Villeda M y E Ordoñez, 2018: Creando espacios a los productores de cacao para encontrar mercados y desarrollar capacidades. Una historia de cambio en Honduras. CDAIS y SAG-DICTA
  - (existen todo una serie de historias similares en el sitio CDAIS. Pero solo parece existir versiones en inglés. Ver https://cdais.net/publications/guatemala/ y también https://cdais.net/publications/honduras/

Systematizing 2/2

- FAO distnce course on capitalization of experiences (French and English versions available) https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=325

- **Algunos videos interesantes** sobre el tema general "¿Porque sistematizar?"
  - "La Importancia de sistematizar la experiencia": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxQaGi-orfc
  - La Sistematización como herramienta metodológica: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-aQJJ3fP6M

Interesting videos on some of the topics covered in the course – In Spanish

Tema	Observaciones
Innovation local	http://fipah-hn.org/que-hacemos/video/ Video sobre experiencia FIPAH con metodología CIAL algunas entrevistas en inglés sin sub-títulos…
Intercambio de experiencias	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhxMTVoOdYY&feature=em-upload_owner 1er encuentro nacional de agricultores innovadores de Bolivia (todo, 13:38 mn)
Entrevistas semi-estructuradas	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWLZwLN96O8 La encuesta semiestructurada (< 3 mn, completa)
Facilitación	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poeN-nWimLw ¿Que es un facilitador? Buena Introduction, sencillo y que cubre los esenciales 3'12" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jew7a20OPZc ¿Que es lo que hacen los facilitadores ? Muy sencillo, muy didáctico, muy corto 3'42" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeieQZm6TXE Rol del/la facilitador/a (podría venir al final de las diapositivas, o como parte de "para saber mas" - ilustrado con participantes reales y momentos de un taller) 8'18"
Evaluación impacto	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8l4k8PSIpG8 Sinopsis de la evaluación de impacto Interesante, sugerir mirar todo aunque sea un poco largo (9'43")