THE ARC OF HISTORY

Janice Jiggins
Knowledge, Technology & Innovation, Wageningen University, The Netherlands
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The History

• 1981-86 Kansas State University
• 1989 ASFRE – worldwide movement
• Cropping systems; methods & capacity building; whole farm systems; product development in systems contexts; learning systems; institutional issues in R,D,E; empowering, visioning futures; responding to change in socio-economies & natural resource states; agro-ecosystem analysis; food security, sustainability, climate change
The FSRE movement’s core business

• Development & application of methods, tools, research teams, processes, systems theory, & institutionalisation of capacities to address smallholders’ needs & opportunities

• European IFSA
  – Recognising small scale & family farming in Europe
  – Opening to the south and east
  – Engaging with systemic transformations

‘Business as usual is not an option’ [IAASTD, 2009]

• Our notable contributions to systemic transformations in
  – Farming systems
  – Agro-ecological systems
  – Food systems
  – Research systems & extension [advisory, IT etc]
  – Innovation capacities & strategies
Farming systems

- Crops [livestock] improvements in a whole farm context
- New designs for whole farm systems
- Options for combining productivity, sustainability, equity
- Seed systems

Agro-ecological systems

- Avoiding harm [pollution, pesticides etc]
- Farming & catchments: co-managing uses of water
- Landscape mosaics: restraining monocultures
- Sustaining functions – biodiversity, erosion, soils
Food systems

• Food cultures
• Food qualities & consumer concerns
• Health outcomes
• Strengthening the bonds between food cultures, territorial identities, & production systems
• Civil society movements

Research & extension systems

• Numerous initiatives; some lasting impacts
  – academic journals
  – Training, tools, methods
  – Organic & agro-ecological options
  – EU legislation
  – Sustainability issues
• Many failures – mainstream researching & [privatised] extension
  – remain in linear, transfer mode
  – Technology production line
Innovation capacities & strategies

- Increasing recognition of complexity, urgency, risk
- But most innovation is technology-led change in response to currently dominant market signals & corporate interests
- Ex: we continue to use nitrogen to subsidise photosynthesis
- If this continues, as the wombat said – ‘we are all doomed!’

Are we doomed?

- ‘Business thrives in the real world’
- Meta-research [so much research is lousy]
- Food security resides in [also] supporting small farmers & agro-ecological mosaics
- Entomophagy, urban agriculture, & phosphorus recovery……..
- Demand management [food, water, fossil fuel use etc.]