



The 3rd International Forum
on Water and Food
Tshwane, South Africa
November 14 – 17, 2011



Co-hosted by:



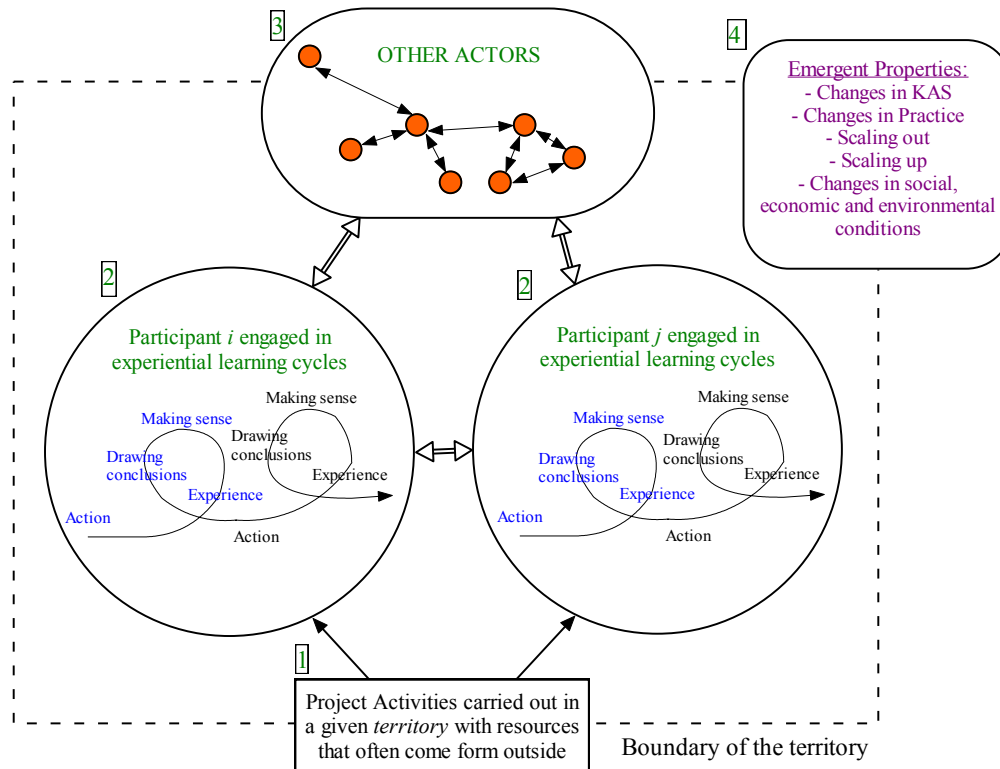
Harnessing Complexity to Trigger a Blue Revolution: The CPWF's Theory of Change

BORU DOUTHWAITE

CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF), Sri Lanka

bdouthwaite@gmail.com

Session: Learning to Innovate



WHICH WAY TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES?

Key Message

There is nothing as useful as a good theory. Programs such as the CPWF, which aim to intervene and be part of complex systems, can do so more intelligently and effectively if guided by theories of change. This presentation describes and offers up for critique the theories and concepts that have guided CPWF action during Phase II.

Summary

The CPWF ‘theory of change’ in very general terms is as follows: 1) the necessary improvements in water management and water productivity will result from processes of both social and technical innovation; 2) innovation systems in basins and sub-basins are complex adaptive systems (CAS); 3) the algorithm that drives grassroots innovation processes in CAS is Learning Selection, analogous to natural selection in the natural world; 4) CAS theory and the Learning Selection model offer deep insights into research strategies to catalyze the equitable and sustainable changes required; and, 5) the CPWF carries out its research to develop strategies and interventions, and champion them, through strengthening networks and working in partnership. This approach is similar to the open source and mass collaboration innovation models that can harness complexity and are currently revolutionizing the business world. We believe these models can also revolutionize the scientific world and that the CPWF’s theory of change will find resonance with others navigating similar multi-institutional initiatives to make a real difference in the world.