

Multi-stakeholder innovation facilities: A critical perspective

Marc Schut – CGIAR/Wageningen University
(m.schut@cgiar.org)

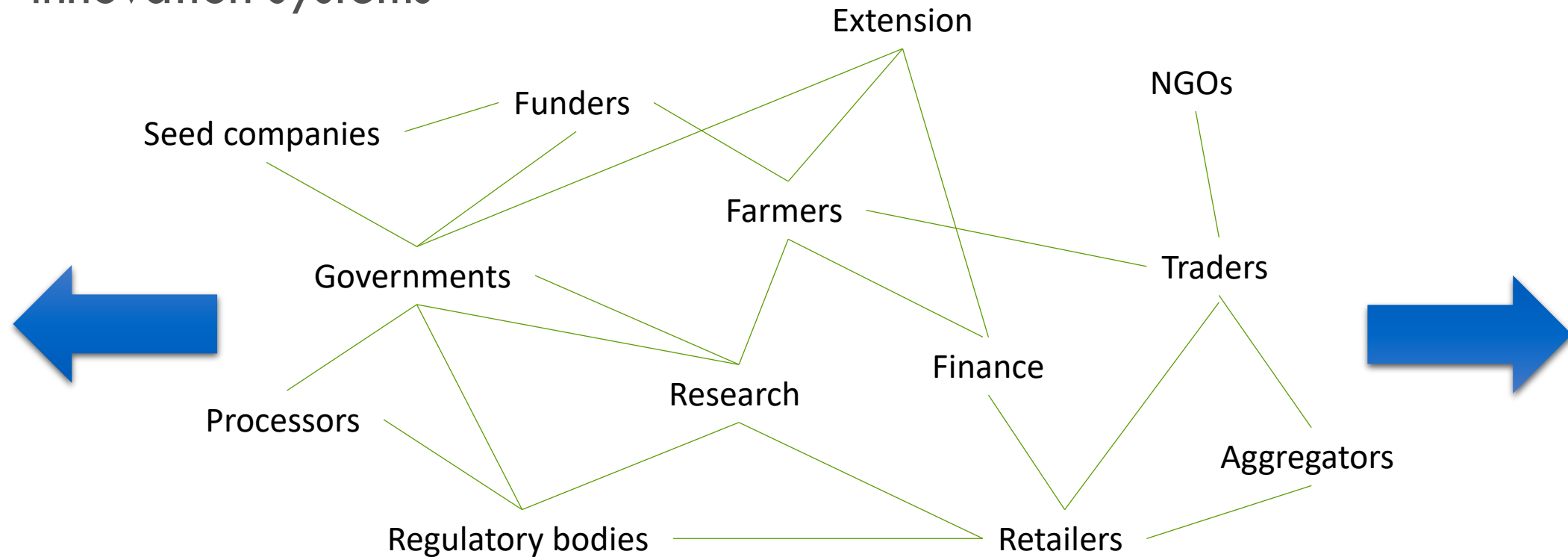
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Key messages

- Innovation platforms are fast becoming part of the mantra of agricultural research and development projects and programs
- Their basic tenet is that stakeholders depend on one another to achieve agricultural development and innovation outcomes
- Hence need a space where they can learn, negotiate, and coordinate to overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities through a facilitated innovation process
- Innovation platforms do not provide a solution to all agricultural research or development problems
- Critical reflection is needed on when, where and for what issues innovation platforms form an appropriate intervention approach

Why multi-stakeholder innovation processes?

- Innovation and scaling processes are embedded in agricultural innovation systems



Coordination around a set of common goals is key

Different names, often same functions

- Innovation platforms
- Multi-stakeholder platforms
- Living labs
- Innovation hubs
- Participatory action research

Definitions

An innovation platform is a space for learning and change. It is a group of individuals (who often represent organizations) with different backgrounds and interests: farmers, traders, food processors, researchers, government officials etc. The members come together to diagnose problems, identify opportunities and find ways to achieve their goals. They may design and imple-




Platform interventions in system change

THE POWER OF CONVENING

10

SUMMARY
Expert teams with the best frameworks may still experience blockers and breakdowns if they haven't considered how to bring together stakeholders thoughtfully. Convening diverse groups enables divergent perspectives to be heard, creating the space for shared problem solving and action.

WHEN TO USE IT?
To bring together a group (of any size) to address your chosen topic. From a meeting to a full-scale strategy process, thinking through who is in your process and how you bring them together is key.

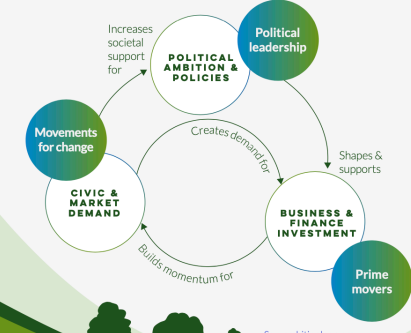


AMBITION LOOPS

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SUMMARY
Societal change involves those who govern, those who produce and invest in making things, and all of us as citizens and users. Ambition loops help us explore how we all come together to create and sustain bold action, and create rapid, self-reinforcing change.

WHEN TO USE IT?
Use with system maps to explore where leadership for change can originate, and how to link up actors in positive reinforcing loops.



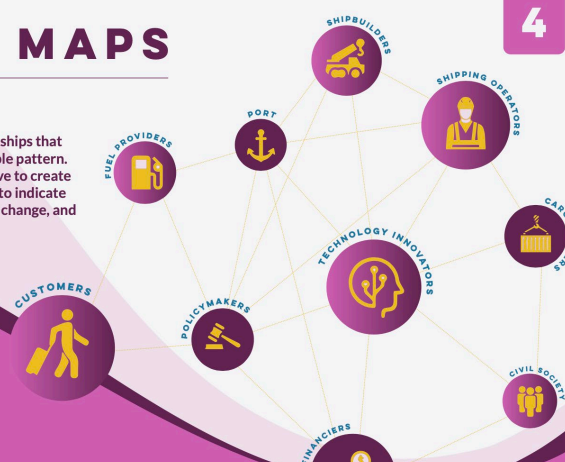
See: ambitionloop.org

SYSTEM MAPS

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SUMMARY
A system is a set of dynamic relationships that leads to a repeatable and recognisable pattern. To reach a zero carbon world, we have to create new patterns. We use system maps to indicate the actors involved in the process of change, and the relationships between them.

WHEN TO USE IT?
To identify who matters to a transition, how they can be part of the new pattern, and where campaigns can be focused.




TIPPING POINTS AND CASCADES

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SUMMARY
A tipping point is a place where a small intervention can trigger a large response, sending a system into a qualitatively different future state. In transitions, tipping points can exist where a new solution becomes more affordable, accessible, profitable, attractive, socially acceptable, or higher performing than old solutions.

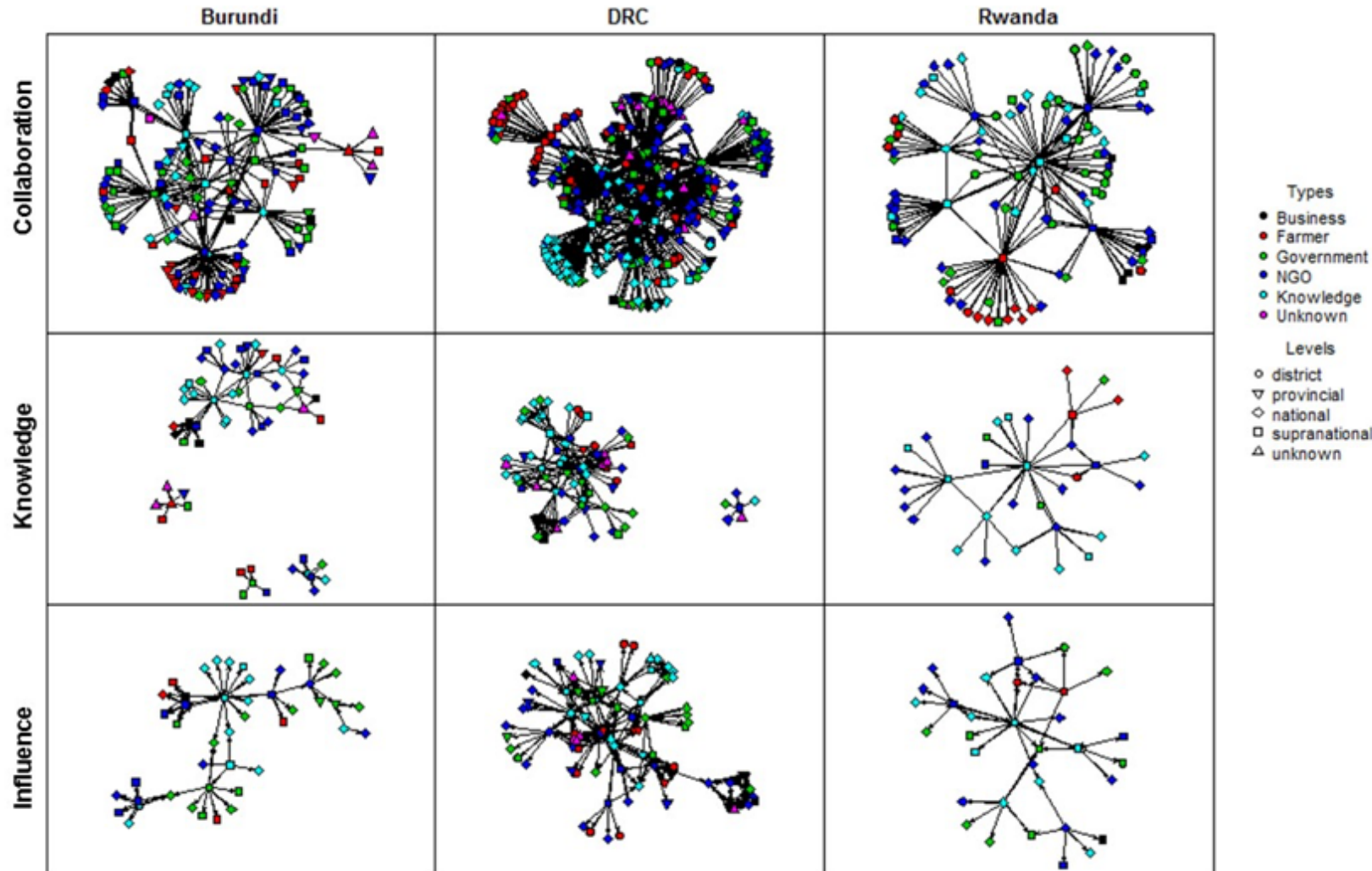
Once a critical mass of actors has adopted a new technology or practice this can prompt the rest to follow, triggering a rapid system-wide cascade of change throughout the sector.

WHEN TO USE IT?
To identify the level of effort, or extent of an intervention, that could lead to disproportionately large results and can therefore serve as a policy or international cooperation goal.



- Be clear about how the innovation facility fits within broader processes of transformation and change
- Set clear objectives focused on strengthening or challenging existing systems

Is a platform approach always needed?



- Depends on problem that is being tackled
- Depends on the solution that is being offered
- Depends on the governance/ political/ institutional context (more on this later)

Participation and platform composition

- What is the function the platform is expected to fulfil?
 - Agenda setting/ advocacy
 - Resource mobilization
 - Entrepreneurial activities
 - Innovation development
- Which stakeholders are best positioned to fulfill those functions/ at which level do they operate?
- Function-oriented vs Equality-oriented

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Article



Compositional dynamics of multilevel innovation platforms in agricultural research for development

Dieuwke Lamers,¹ Marc Schut,^{2,*} Laurens Klerkx³ and Piet van Asten⁴

¹International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Bujumbura, Burundi; ²International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kigali, Rwanda and Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; ³Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen University, The Netherlands and ⁴International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kampala, Uganda

*Corresponding author. Email: m.schut@cgiar.org

Abstract

Innovation platforms (IPs) form a popular vehicle in agricultural research for development (AR4D) to facilitate stakeholder interaction, agenda setting, and collective action toward sustainable agricultural development. In this article, we analyze multilevel stakeholder engagement in fulfilling seven key innovation system functions. Data are gathered from experiences with interlinked community and (sub)national IPs established under a global AR4D program aimed at stimulating sustainable agricultural development in Central Africa. Our findings show that all innovation systems functions required multilevel action, but that fulfillment of specific functions demands for strategic involvement of specific stakeholders at specific levels. We observed that a research- and dissemination-oriented sequence in the functions was prioritized in AR4D IPs and argue that such a sequence may be different in other types of (business) IPs. Our findings provide an incentive to think function oriented about compositional dynamics (stakeholder groups * levels) in innovation processes, rather than striving for equal stakeholder participation.

Key words: inclusive innovation; functions of innovation systems; systemic instruments; transdisciplinary science; scales; multilevel action.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, agricultural research for development (AR4D) expanded its scope and boundaries. Recurrent failure of the ‘old’ linear technology transfer approach to realize the development potential of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and instil transitions to sustainable agriculture, stimulated scientists to better consider the complex context in which technologies were to be applied (Hounkonnou et al. 2012; Pamuk et al. 2015; Röling 2009). A gradual shift took place from narrow technology-oriented approaches to more holistic systems approaches that focus on understanding how interactions between different value chains, actors, and organizations across different levels influence agricultural innovation processes (Douthwaite et al. 2009; Klerkx et al. 2012). In line with generic debates on the emergence of a more interactive and transdisciplinary science (Schut et al. 2014; Turnhout et al. 2013; Wittmayer and Schöpke 2014), this has prompted a reorientation of AR4D enlarging the scope of problems targeted and the groups of stakeholders that participate in finding solutions to these problems (Adekunle and Fatunbi 2012;

Birch et al. 2011; Hounkonnou et al. 2012; Kropp et al. 2001; Schut et al. 2015a; Woodhill 2014).

One of the most evolved and widely advocated systems approaches in AR4D, especially in SSA, is the agricultural innovation system (AIS) approach (Foran et al. 2014; Hall et al. 2003; Kilelu et al. 2013; Klerkx et al. 2013; Schut et al. 2015a). This approach is heavily influenced by the thinking on national, sectoral, and technological innovation systems. As Klerkx et al. (2012) have indicated, the AIS approach emerged from a merger of approaches to study innovation in agriculture (such as the Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems approach—Röling 2009) and the literature on national, sectoral, and technological innovation systems (Heckert et al. 2007; Lundvall 1992; Lundvall et al. 2009; Malerba 2002) which has its empirical applications mostly in industrial sectors. AIS are, in some studies, approached as national or sectoral systems, analyzing innovation capacity at a country or subsector level (e.g. dairy, horticulture), but are sometimes also seen as technological innovation systems in which a particular

Agenda setting and flexibility

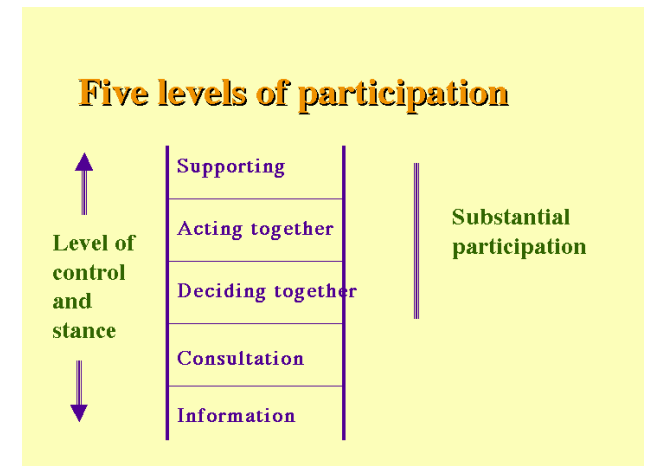
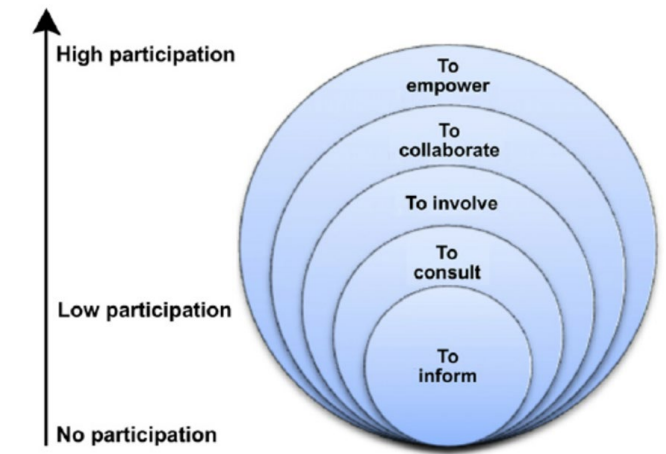
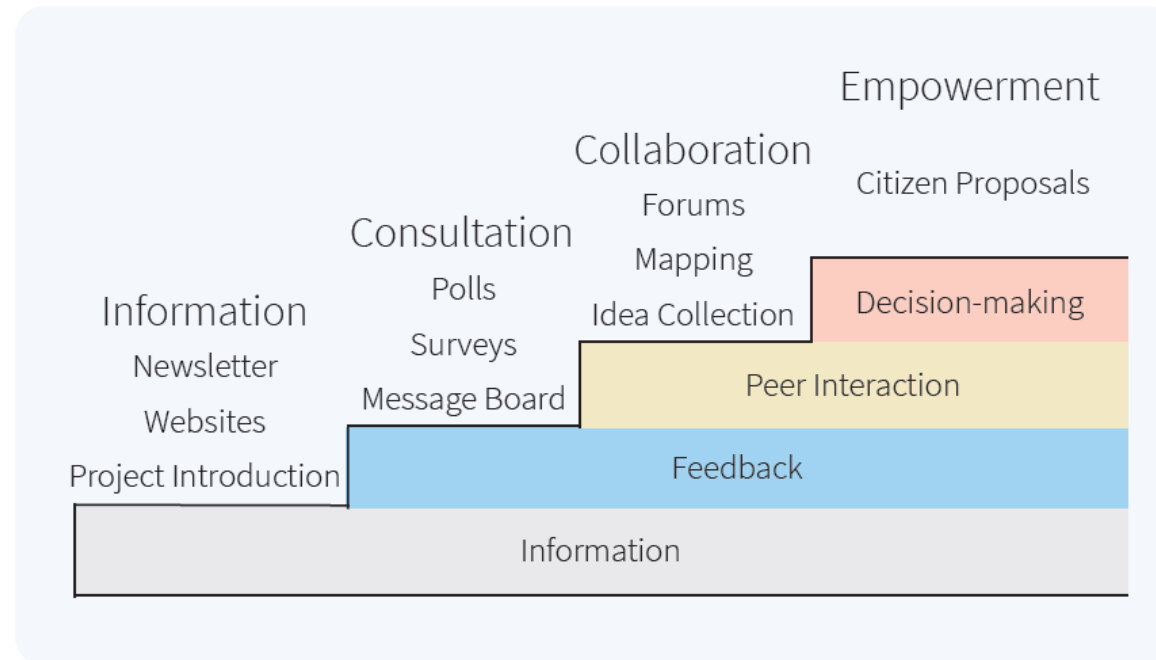
- Who's in the driving seat?
- Projects and programs often have predetermined goals, ambitions, partnerships, activities and budgets
- What space do platform actors have to redefine the agenda, change partners and decide on how funds are spent?
- Facilitation and power dynamics
- This is likely to create tensions that require institutional innovation



Level of engagement/ participation

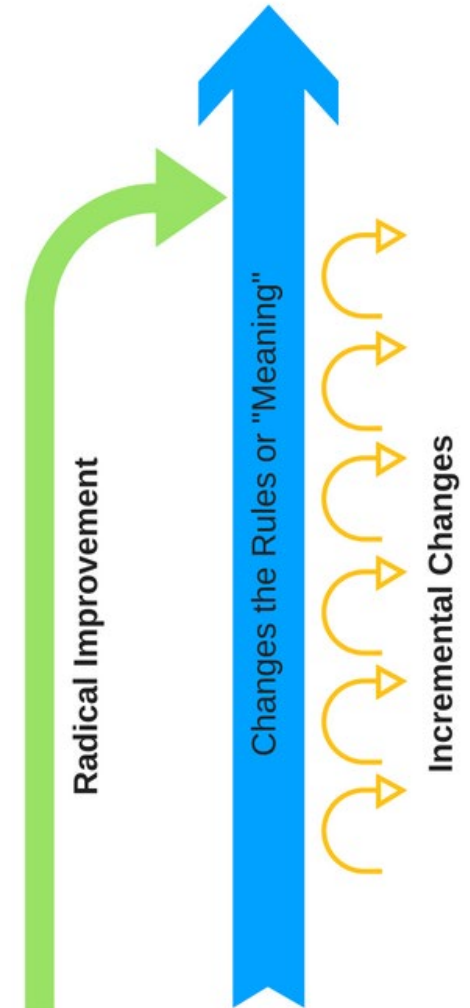
- Engagement levels can be different for different stakeholder groups throughout different stages of the process

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Collective action/
co-invest
- Support/
empower



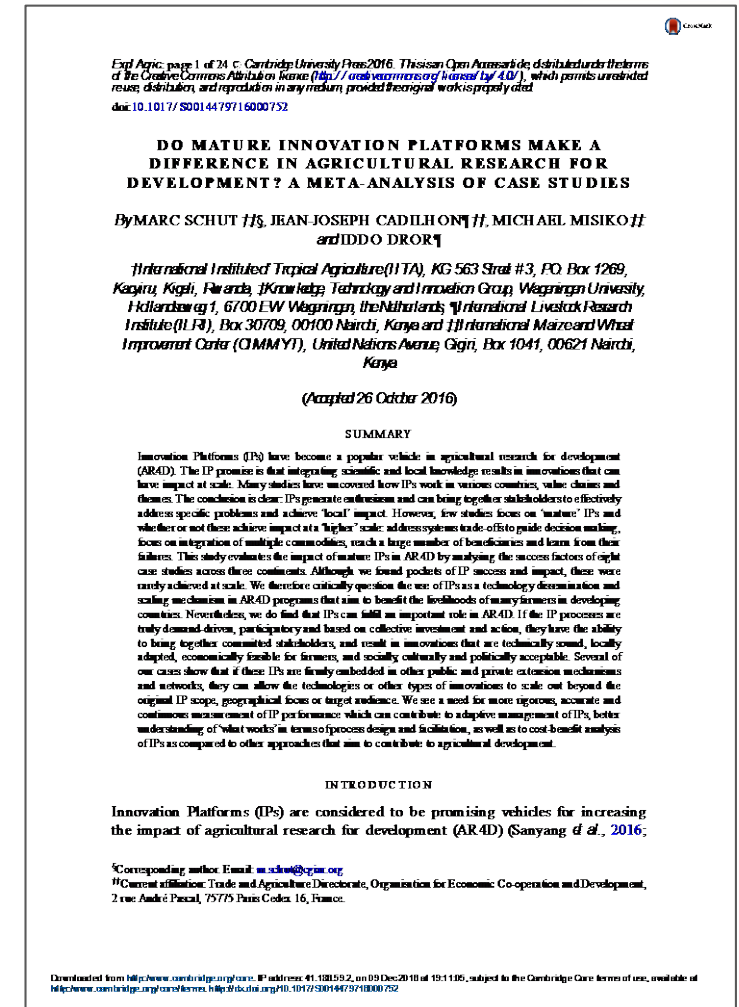
Multi-stakeholder platforms and innovation

- Generally speaking problem analysis and initial stages of innovation development (ideation, design) benefit from multi-stakeholder approaches
- However, consensus-based/ democratic innovation processes may favour more incremental innovation over radical or disruptive innovation that are needed to transform agri-food systems



Multi-stakeholder platforms and scaling

- Sustainable scaling of innovations happens through:
 - Commercialization pathway
 - Public policy pathway
 - A combination of both (PPP)
- Commercial scaling pathways may drive exclusivity, rather than inclusivity
- Platform may fulfill more of a coordination/strategizing function rather than doing the innovation scaling

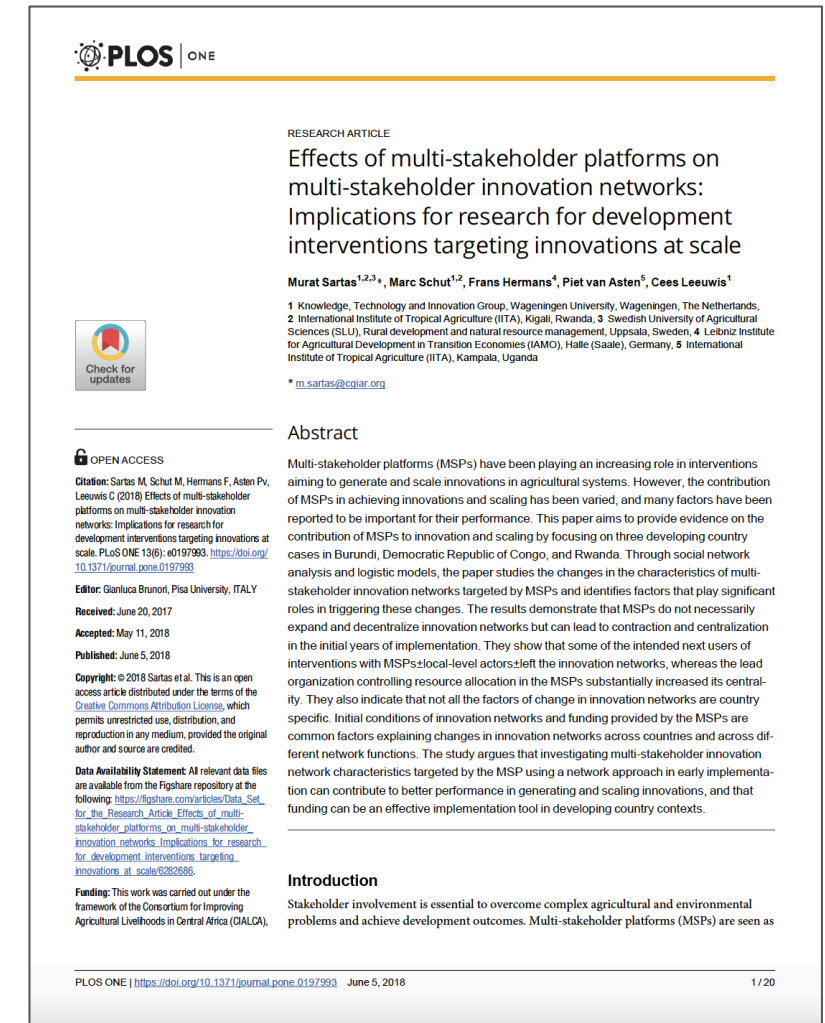


Costs of innovation platforms?

- Innovation platforms are resource intensive (facilitation, meeting costs, etc.)
- That's no problem for funders, as long as initial investment has spillover effects and benefit users beyond the original platform
- Case study from Uganda showed that costs per farmer were between USD 83 p/year (compared to USD53 for FFS-participant and USD7.36 for farmers reached through the government extension system)
- Cost-efficient scaling mechanisms need to be in place to ensure return on/ beyond innovation platform investment

Ownership and co-investment

- How to ensure ownership?
- Stakeholder engagement and ownership can easily be focused around resources that the platform may offer
- It is very important to ensure that representatives co-invest in the platform, as this is a proxy for the platforms (potential) added value

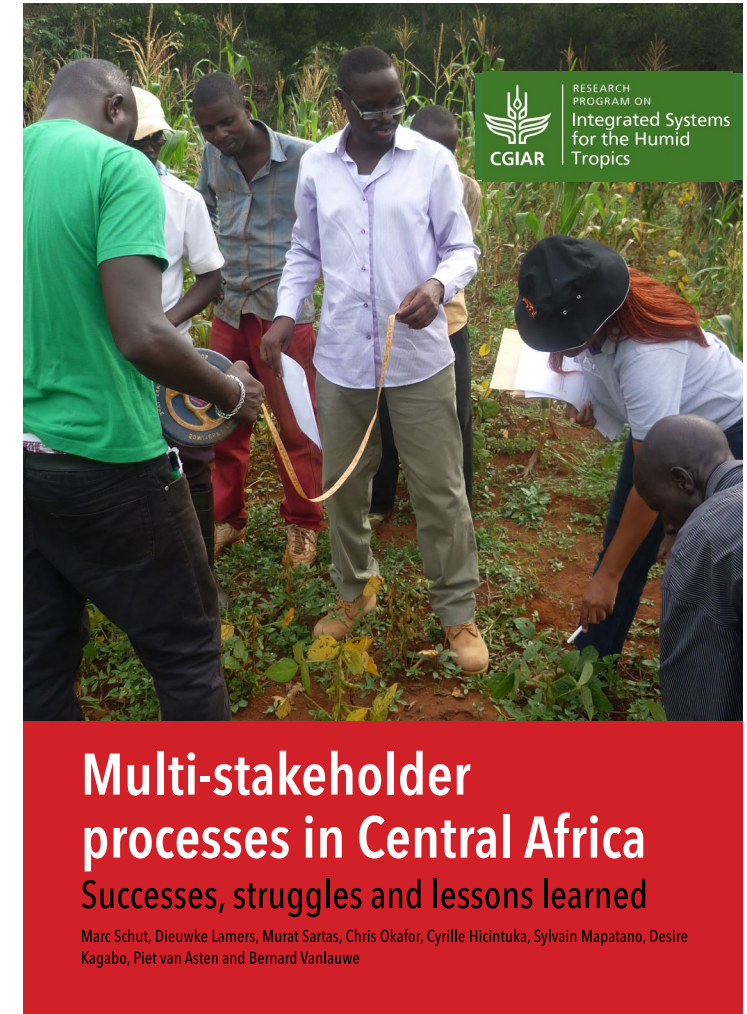


Sustainability and exit-strategy

- When establishing innovation platforms under projects or programs or interventions we need to manage expectations about what it will/ will not do
- Sustainability should not always be the goal. Platforms can focus on achieving short term goals and then dissolve
- Exit-strategies need to be a topic of discussion during platform establishment
- Strengthening existing platforms/ networks is a good way to support ongoing stakeholder collaboration and action where there is already a clear mandate and scope

What is the role of culture?

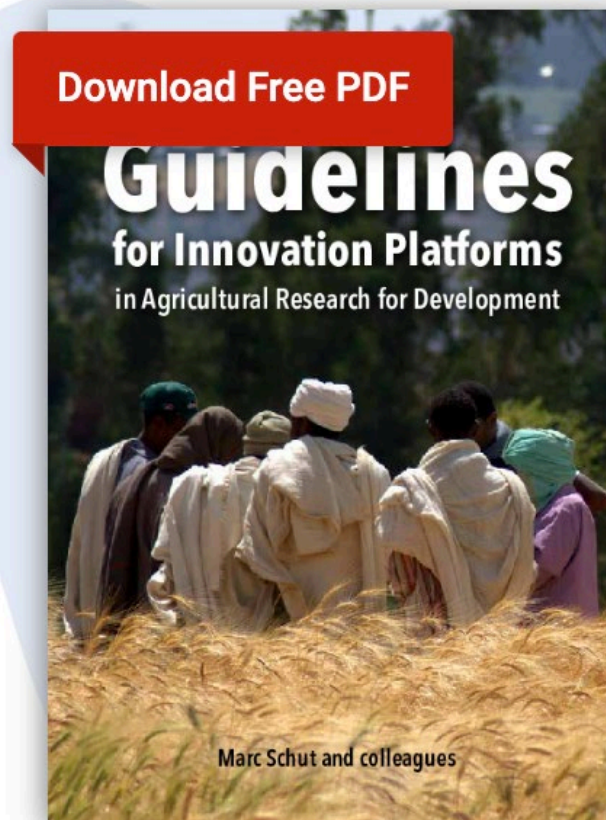
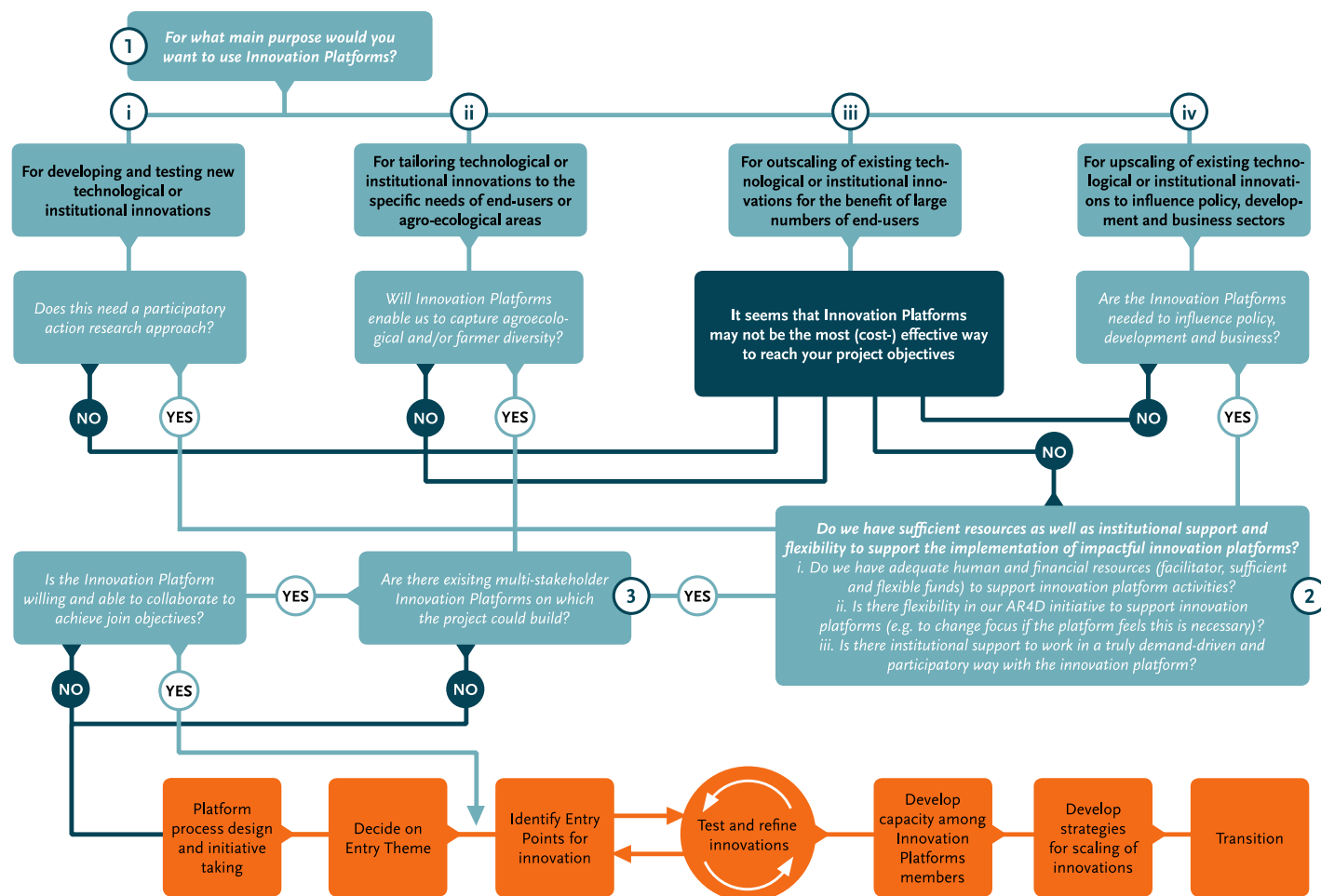
- The perceived (added) value of multi-stakeholder approaches to innovation varies across space and time
- In some cultures multi-stakeholder approaches may be seen as positive, in other cultures as inefficient
- Newly established platforms may be seen as undermining existing structures for stakeholder collaboration



Critical questions

- Ask yourself the following question
 - For what main purpose would you want to use innovation platform as key stakeholder engagement approach?
 - Is a platform approach the most efficient way to bring these stakeholders together?
 - Do we have sufficient resources as well as institutional support and flexibility to support the implementation of impactful innovation platforms?
 - Are there existing multi-stakeholder innovation platforms on which the project could build/ strengthen
- In addition, discuss what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure ownership, co-investment and exist-strategy?

Decision tree



Available [here](#)

Resources


Innovation Platforms

Synopsis of Innovation Platforms in Agricultural Research and Development[☆]

Marc Schut^{a,b}, Laurens Klerkx^b, Josey Kamanda^c, Murat Sartas^{a,b}, and Cees Leeuwis^b, ^aInternational Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kigali, Rwanda; ^b Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, the Netherlands; and ^c Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire

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Date: 2015-08-01
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INNOVATION PLATFORMS FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Evaluating the mature innovation platforms landscape



Edited by
Iddo Dror, Jean-Joseph Cadilhon, Marc Schut,
Michael Misiko and Shreya Maheshwari

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INNOVATION PLATFORMS IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Ex-ante Appraisal of the Purposes and Conditions Under Which Innovation Platforms can Contribute to Agricultural Development Outcomes

By MARC SCHUT[†], JOSEY KAMANDA[§], ANDREAS GRAMZOW[¶], THOMAS DUBOIS[¶], DIETMAR STOIAN[†], JENS A. ANDERSSON[†], IDDO DROR^{§§}, MURAT SARTAS[†], REMCO MUR^{¶¶}, SHINAN KASSAM^{††}, HERMAN BROUWER^{†††}, ANDRÉ DEVAUX^{§§§}, CLAUDIO VELLASCO^{§§§}, RICA JOY FLOR^{¶¶¶}, MARTIN GUMMERT^{††††}, DJUNA BUIZER[†], CYNTHIA McDUGALL^{††††}, KRISTIN DAVIS^{§§§§}, SABINE HOMANN-KEE TU^{¶¶¶¶} and MARK LUNDY^{††††}

[†]International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kigali, Rwanda, [§]Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen University, the Netherlands, ^{§§}Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire, [¶]World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg), Arusha, Tanzania, ^{††}Bioversity International, Montpellier, France, ^{†††}International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Texcoco, Mexico, ^{§§§}International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya, ^{¶¶¶}ITP Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, ^{††††}Caritas Switzerland, Tajikistan, ^{§§§§}International Potato Center (CIP), Quito, Ecuador, ^{¶¶¶¶}International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Phnom Penh, Cambodia, ^{†††††}International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, ^{†††††}WorldFish, Penang, Malaysia, ^{§§§§§}International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, USA, ^{¶¶¶¶¶}International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, India and ^{†††††}International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Cali, Colombia

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SUMMARY

Innovation platforms are fast becoming part of the mantra of agricultural research for development projects and programmes. Their basic intent is that stakeholders depend on one another to achieve agricultural development outcomes, and hence create a space where they can learn, negotiate and coordinate to overcome challenges and capture opportunities through a facilitated innovation process. Although much has been written on how to implement and facilitate innovation platforms effectively, few studies support ex-ante appraisal of when and for what purpose innovation platforms provide an appropriate mechanism for achieving development outcomes, and what kinds of human and financial resource investments and enabling environments are required. Without these insights, innovation platforms run the risk of being promoted as a panacea for all problems in the agricultural sector. This study makes clear that not all constraints will require innovation platforms and, if there is a simpler and cheaper


[†]Corresponding author. Email: m.schut@cgiar.org

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