Exploiting Complexity



Insights for Oxfam from Complexity and ACCRA's Adaptation and Resilience Safari

Patrick Beautement, Christine Broenner
A presentation to: Oxfam Complexity Group

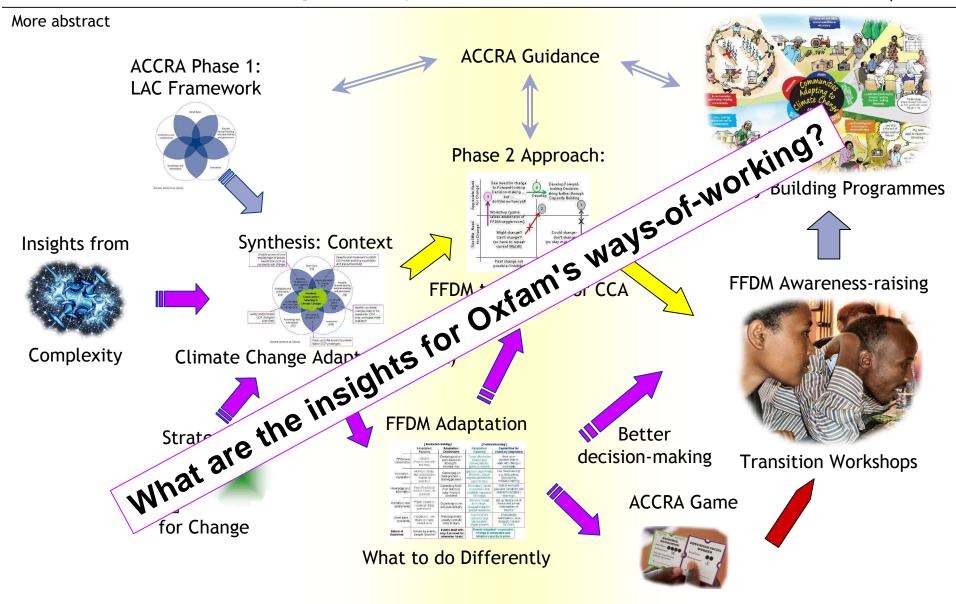
Date: 08 Jul 2013

http://complexitydemystified.wordpress.com/

http://www.abaci.net/library/lib-index.htm

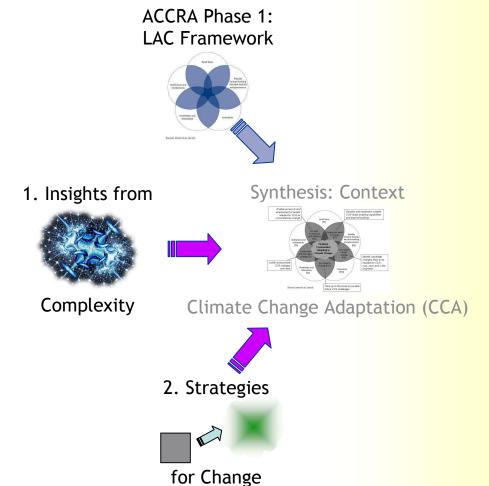
ACCRA's Complexity Safari: Landmarks

More practical



Experiences of FFDM

More abstract



01 Insights: Ten principles of Complexity

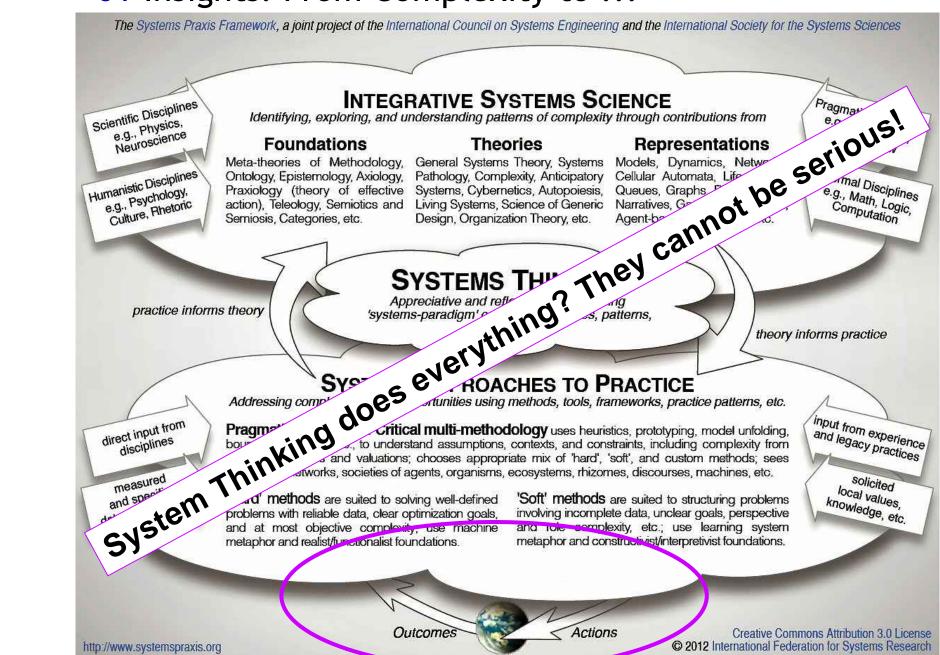


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historicity and are these abstractions real-world-ready?

path
path
slanguage ence

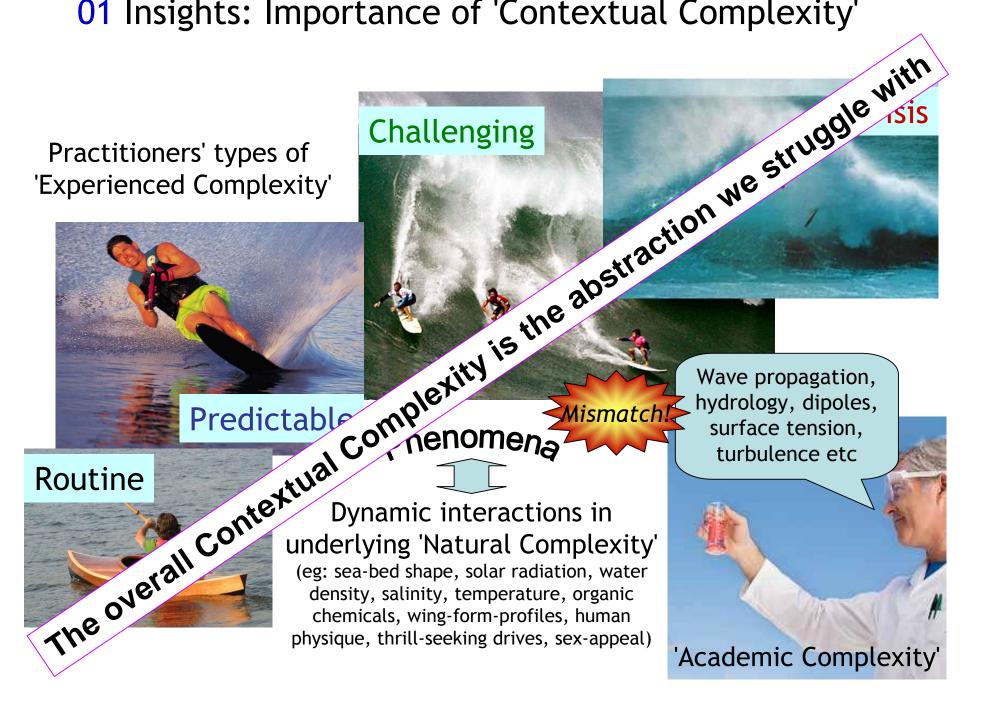
Insights: From Complexity to ???



01 Insights: From Complexity to Practice?

SCIENTISTS Practitioners' Needs? nath e corrhis explains what it is, but not what it ated to do the corrhise explains what it is, but not w Applications 'Engineering' **Fundamental** Source disciplines prepared for Not addressed! engendering more agility and adaptivity cognitive joint, coalition and sciences information decision support in sciences complex environments **Utillity?** physical sciences influencing behaviour exploiting complexity engaging with the now, Complex economics shaping the future **Operations** social sciences ? Context / Environment?

01 Insights: Importance of 'Contextual Complexity'



01 Insights: Complexity to Simplicity = Context is Everything



• The *features* that the child and the cat experience *in the context* are '*simplicity* itself' - underlying 'complexity' is 'hidden'.



• For practice, changes in Contextual Complexity are the drivers ...

01 Insights: Summary



- So, insights for practitioners:
 - academic complexity terms can be wrongly used in a reductionist manner in practitioners papers
 - insights from complexity need to be 'translated' both into language and into forms that are relevant to contexts
 - context understanding is diverse there is no 'single view
 of the truth' nor single perspective that is 'right'
 - people in the context already have many pragmatic ways of working with the 'features' of interest - augment them as they are more likely to have the 'requisite variety'
- At the end of the day, practice has to be focussed on bringing about the desired / expected change ...



02 Strategies for Change

Aspects of 'Change-worthiness'

		Open to change - appreciates what to sense	Can reason about change - has will to intervene	Can engage, influence - and learn by doing	Ability to Change	
Example Caricatures	Effective practice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Well-placed	
	Inhibited practice	Yes	Yes, but not how	No, so powerless	Aware, well meaning, but inhibited Aware, intent missing, 'dysfunctional' Aware, not interested in opportunity Could do it, can't detect what or when Has visions, dreams about change 'Loose-cannon' capability - miss-aligned	
	'Elephant in a porcelain shop'	Yes, but misinterprets	No, 'empty- headed'	Yes, but inappropriate		
	Watcher / 'lurker'	Yes, 'voyeur'	No	No		
	III-informed intervention	No, so 'blind'	Yes, based on own doing	Yes, but ill- informed		
	'Arm-chair' intervention	No	Yes, hypothetically	No		
	Interfering intervention	No	No	Yes, impulsively		
	Entrenched institution	No	No, in 'world of their own'	No	Detached, indifferent	

Consequences in Real-World Terms

O2 Strategies for Change: Transition and Transformation



Transition:

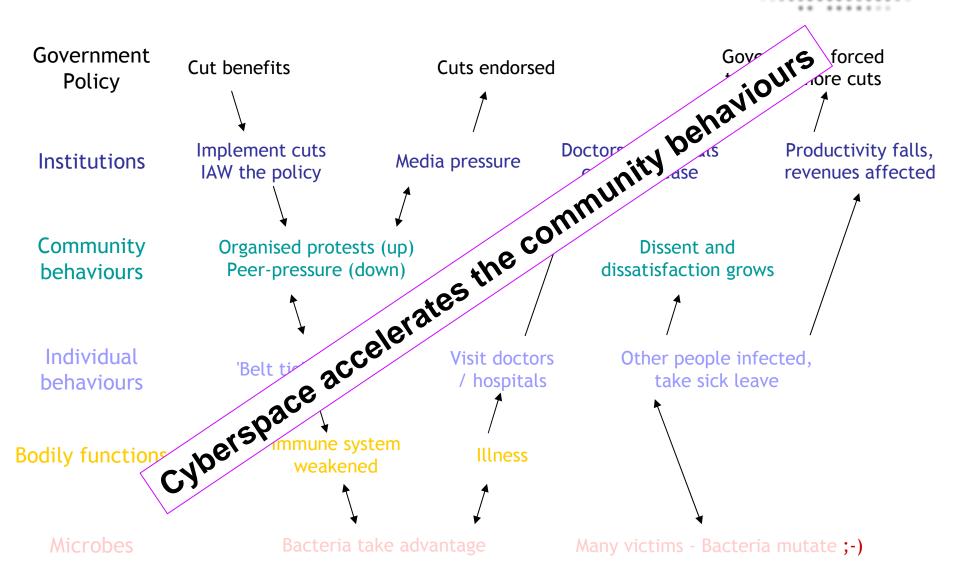
- evolutionary: going from here to there 'rationally' whilst essentially retaining the previous behaviours
 - largely backward-looking, then extrapolating forward

Transformation:

- metamorphosis / disruptive: the post change form and function may be entirely novel
 - no 'rational' route between here and there, no certainty
 - uses 'imagineering' to conceive of possible futures and then, for example, backcast to see what to change
- For a steam engineer, you can't get to iPod devices and Facebook software using the techniques you used before ...
 - indeed you wouldn't even be able to comprehend them using steam-engine thinking

O2 Strategies for Change: Appreciate the Levels, Scales and Domains - example





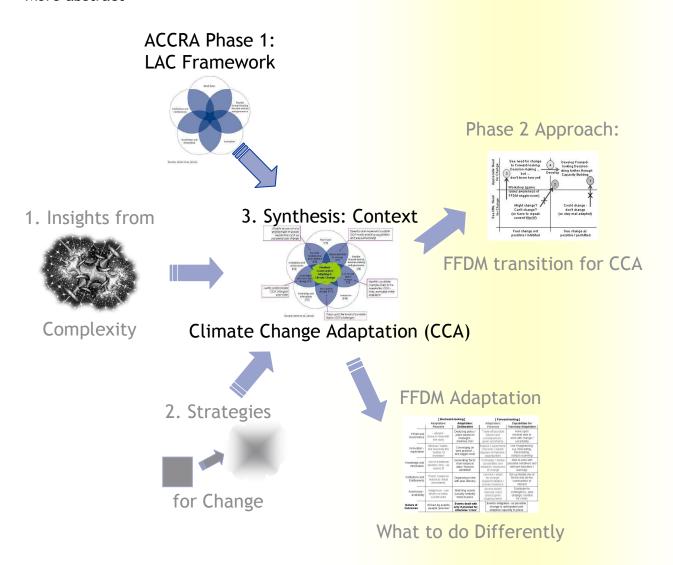
02 Strategies for Change: Summary



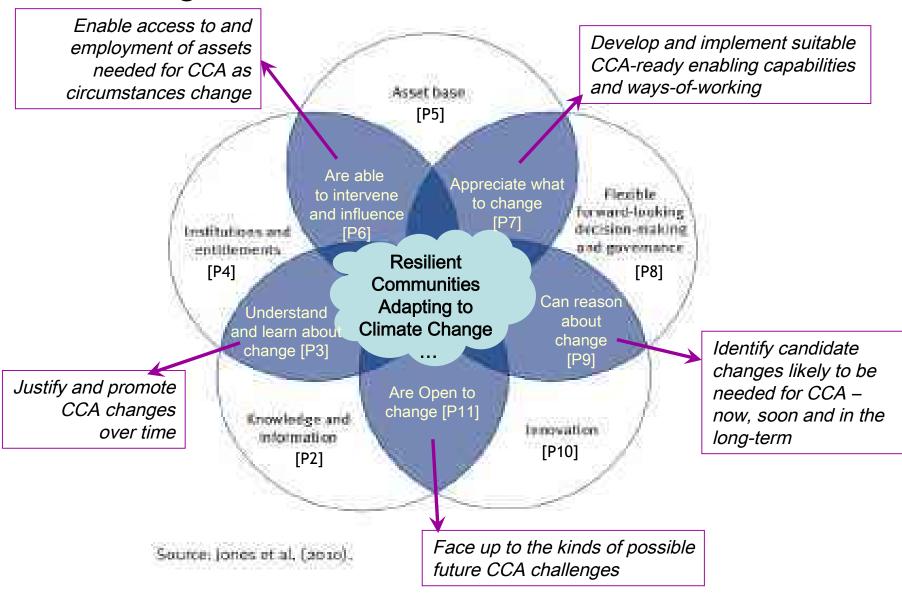
- So, for effective change:
 - there must be the mindsets, abilities, capabilities and relationships appropriate to the context
 - the different natures of the transition / transformations to be made need to be appreciated
 - lack of certainty and predictability has to be embraced
 - the engagement, shaping and influences will need to work across many levels and scales



More abstract



03 Synthesis: Complexity Insights, Change Strategies and the LAC



03 Synthesis Summary: What would Good CCA Decision-making look like?

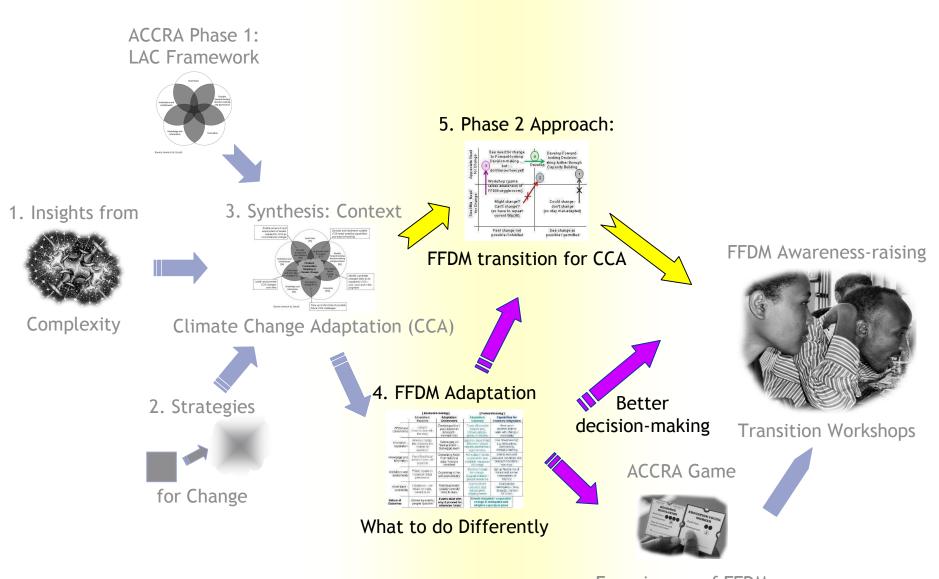


The ACCRA Phase 2 team took the CCA principles from their 2013 paper, plotted them onto the LAC and then developed the following 'Good Decision-Making' criteria ...

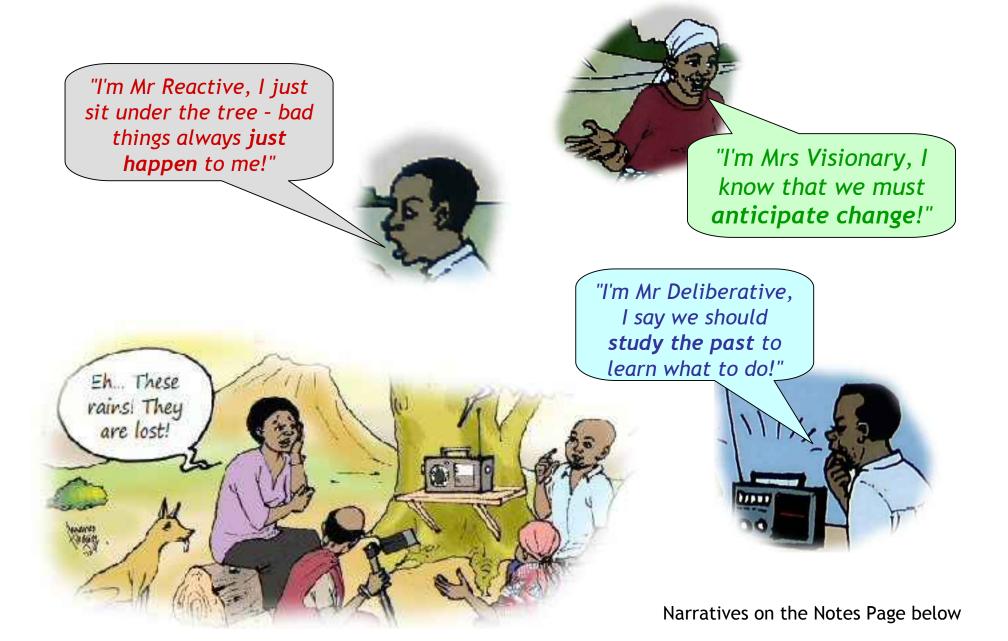
- So, Resilient communities adapting to climate change will have good decision-making when they:
 - accept that they *need to be ready for future events* brought about by climate change;
 - can think about the consequences of possible change in a determined way;
 - can appreciate what they need to change practically to be resilient and adaptive;
 - can intervene and influence to implement the decisions in collaboration with the appropriate people;
 - can understand the nature of CCA and learn from 'doing things' differently' over time ...



More abstract



04 FFDM Adaptation: Some narratives



04 FFDM Adaptation: What to do differently

		[Backward-looking]			[Forward-looking]			
		Adaptation: Reactive	Adaptation: Deliberative	1	Adaptation: <i>Visionary</i>	Capabilities Visionary Adap		
ACCRA LAC Characteristics	FFDM and Governance	- <i>Absent</i> - [Have to deal with the now]	Deducing policy / plans based on hindsight - minimise 'risk'	CO	de-off possible futures and nsequences - en uncertainty	Have oper mindset able work with cha uncertaint	e to nge /	
	Innovation - exploration	Minimal / habits, but necessity the 'mother of invention'	Converging on 'best practice' – test wiggle-room	Dis degre	ore / experiment. cover / exploit ees-of-freedom / pportunities	Use 'Imaginee e.g. forecast backcastin horizon scan	ing, g,	
	Knowledge / Information	Use of traditional wisdom / lore - as seems fit	Generating 'facts' from historical data / 'lessons identified'	ро	mulate / iterate ssibilities and olish 'measures' of change	Able to work with plausible narratives and relevant indicators / warnings		
	Institutions / Entitlements	'Fixed', based on historical / tribal precedents	Organising in line with plan delivery	Devolve / adapt for change. Support initiative / proven resilience		Set up flexible formal and ad communities interest	l-hoc	
	Asset base / Availability	Indigenous - use what's on hand, current skills	Matching assets (usually centrally held) to plans	Access what's relevant / best placed given ongoing needs		Distribute for contingency - plus strategic / central for crises		
Nature of Outcomes		Driven by events, people 'passive'	Events dealt with only if planned for, otherwise 'crisis'	Events mitigated - as possible change is anticipated and adaptive capacity in place				

04 FFDM Adaptation: What to do differently in practice means, for example ...

[1.1] - Recognising and prioritising short- and long-term benefits, by ...

- planning beyond 5 years, considering possible futures as well as projections of current situations
- having and using flexible national priorities and resource allocation

[1.5] - Working in collaborative ways, and integrating cross-sector by ...

- sharing risk and vulnerability analyses from national to local levels as needed
- using integrated analysis, planning and implementation beyond single sectors
- promoting holistic approaches to activities, interactions and relationships
- integrating flexible local, regional and district planning

Planning is flexible and incorporates adaptive long-term climate, social and economic issues across sectors and levels including stakeholders

[1.4] - Planning by reflecting and adapting continuously over time, by

- incorporating broader factors than at present which challenge assumptions and 'received wisdom'
- being prepared to / actually adapting plans as circumstances change

[1.2] - Looking for possibilities and opportunities (finding space to act), by ...

- being guided by risk, capacity and vulnerability analysis
- accepting future uncertainties at local level
- looking for opportunities in national priorities
- being skilled at judging what is now appropriate
- requiring appropriate changes in the donor policies

[1.3] - Appreciating informal interactions (social), maximising intangible (community) benefits, such as ...

- identifying those which should be included in national development plan priorities
- ensuring participation of women and other special groups



05 ACCRA Phase 2 Approach: Transitioning to FFDM for CCA nge nooking Decisions before the wareness of through the nead F.

CCA block Harness

TDM awareness

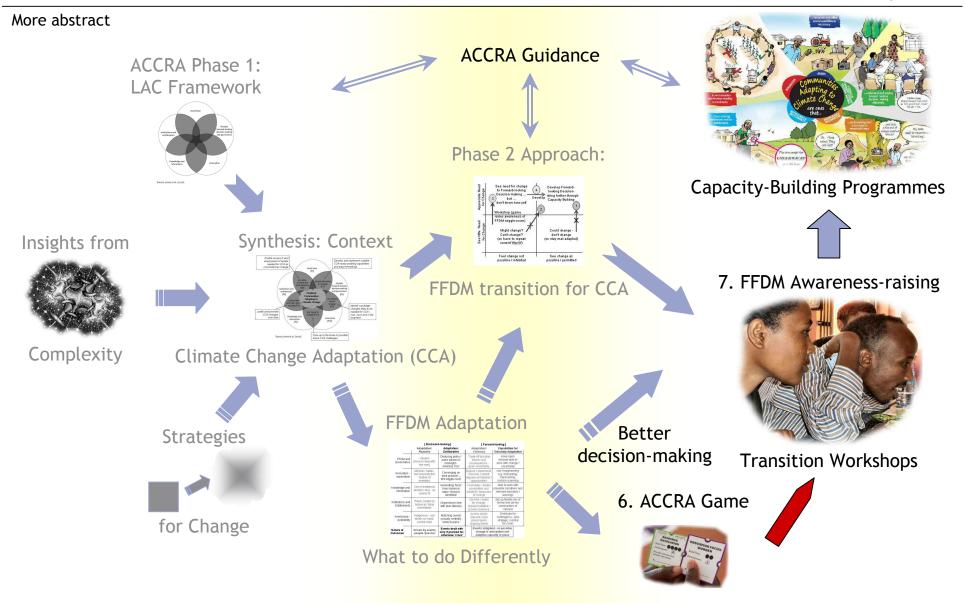
TDM awarene Adaptive, resilient In-Country realines capacity realised evelop Forwardlooking Decisionmaking further through Capacity Could change don't change (so stay mal-adapted) See change as possible / permitted

- Transition to FFDM WsoW: Adopt and employ set of FFDM organisational principles through Capacity Building.



ACCRA's Complexity Safari: Landmarks

More practical



Experiences of FFDM

06 ACCRA Game: Experiences of FFDM - of the Need to Work Differently for CCA

, CCA in reality

- JOEVELOPER prize: invest over your district needs development with other and ap Projects collaborate with other contracts.

 Win the DIVERSITY DEVELORER CONTRACT.

 Win the FLEXIBLE wider connection point in the read of the connection point within the read.









of these things and maybe win the top prize: BEST

07 FFDM Awareness Raising: ACCRA Incountry Workshops

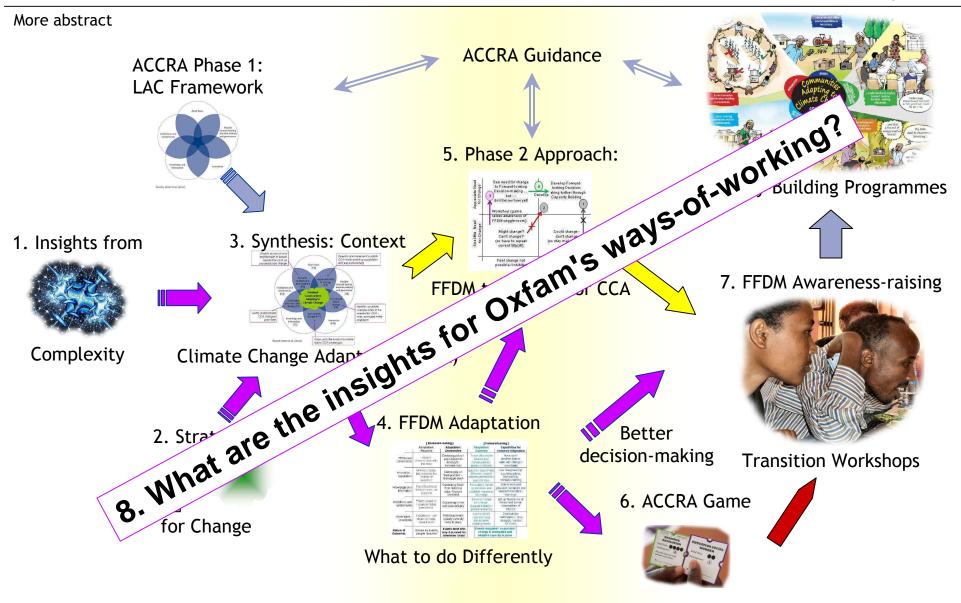


- Held in Uganda (2012), and Ethiopia and Mozambique.
- Programme:
 - Pre-survey about CCA and FFDM
 - Background to CCA and the need for FFDM
 - Introduction to the ACCRA Game play two rounds
 - Reflect on FFDM and different ways-of working
 - ACCRA Game play two rounds and identify 'winners'
 - Reflect on what to do differently in practice planning exercise using FFDM techniques
 - Capacity-building questionnaire intentions for the future
 - Post survey about CCA and FFDM ways-of-working
- Follow-on capacity-building activity will be followed by impact assessments report to be published 2014.



ACCRA's Complexity Safari: Landmarks

More practical



Experiences of FFDM

08 Insights for Oxfam: A generic Enterprise Framework



Q2 Sponsor User

Policy and Vision

Operate and Adapt

Challenges

'Technical'

Enterprise

'Gov<mark>ernance</mark> Hub'

Real-world Focus

Solution Focus

Capability Provision

Develop and 'Experiment'

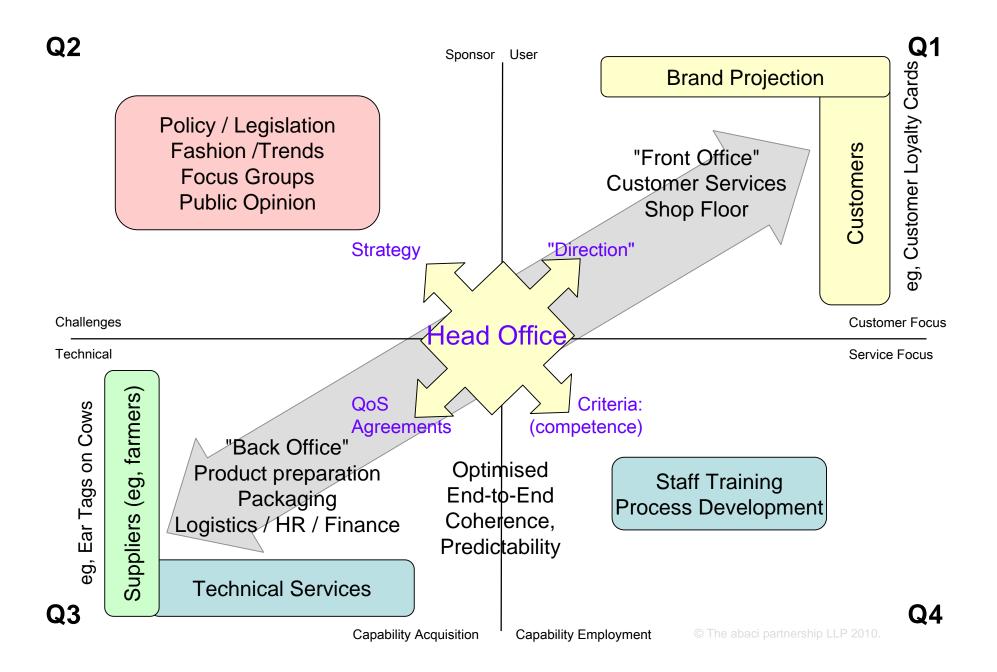
Q3

Capability Management

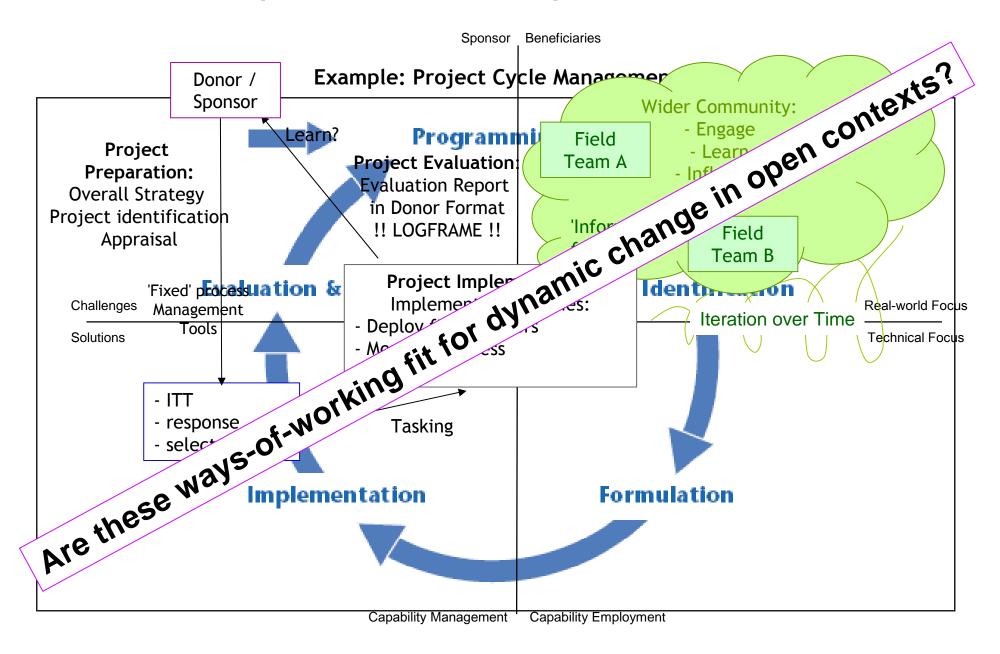
Capability Employment

Q4

08 Insights for Oxfam: Model of a Supermarket Chain



08 Development Aid example



08 Development Aid Contexts - Communities

The **abaci**Partnership

of Practice Wider Environment (Natural)

'Beliefsystems' 'Community' (Benevolent, charities)

Institutions (Public, law and order)

'Silent majority' (Consumers)

Individuals, entities (Private) – Commerce (Enterprise, free market)

'Multi-Cultural' (Social, family)

Dynamics, purpose, behaviours:

- How they form, cohere, persist and transition inter-dependencies
- Organisational structures / forms
- degrees of coupling / clamping,
 degrees of freedom / wiggle room
- Types of power and control (p168)

Intellectuals (Free-thinkers, inc. Arts) 'Dysfunctional' Groups / Individuals

Terrorism Organised crime

Corruption

Modellers! - Note the 'contradictions'!₃₅

08 Complexity: Insights for Oxfam



- The language and perspectives of academic complexity are poorly matched to that of practice and should not be imposed arbitrarily.
- Context is the driver of practice and every context is always complex, different and always dynamically changing.
- Practice already has a pragmatic language for describing and working with contextual complexity.
- Key to the synthesis of complexity and practice is developing competencies / context-relevant tools for:
 - appreciating the drivers of change in the context
 - engaging appropriately with those drivers to set the conditions for transition or transformation
 - judging what, given the change, to do differently in practice
 - applying the insights effectively with the changing context by working with the realities.
- The consequences at the policy level must be addressed if change is to be nurtured ... discuss ...

08 Complexity: Eleven principles that underpin CCA and resilience issues



The following principles, as they are derived from complexity science insights, reflect the integrative and iterative manner in which ongoing effective CCA can be maximised:

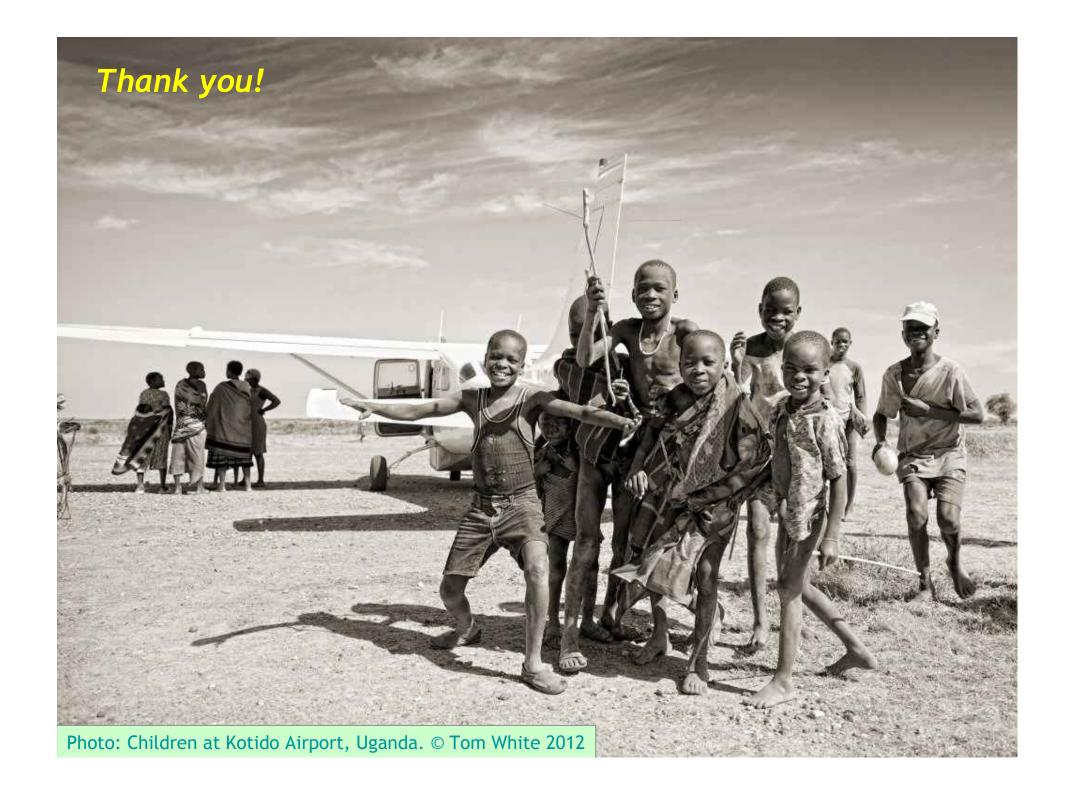
- Principle 1: Dynamic, ongoing 'complex' CCA can be influenced purposefully.
- Principle 2: Context understanding is diverse there is no 'single view of the truth'.
- Principle 3: Change is ongoing, dynamic and multi-level there is no 'end-state'.
- Principle 4: There are many qualities of power and influence to accommodate.
- Principle 5: It is necessary to appreciate who is/what are best placed to bring about change.
- Principle 6: CCA requires that 'interventions' have the necessary Requisite Variety, i.e. have appropriate 'Complexity-Worthiness' given the desired changes.
- Principle 7: CCA is not just about adapting, but is also about being able to adapt the adapting and learn.
- Principle 8: Different decision-making and problem-solving styles are required for different situations.
- Principle 9: When reasoning about change, past evidence does not guarantee future prediction.
- Principle 10: When innovating, transformation may be the only valid option.
- Principle 11: Change will be impeded unless appropriate degrees of freedom and 'wiggle room' are available..



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[1] Understanding and employing forward-looking decision-making means ...

[1.1] - Recognising and prioritising short- and long-term benefits, by ...

- planning beyond 5 years, considering possible futures as well as projections of current situations
- having and using flexible national priorities and resource allocation

[1.5] - Working in collaborative ways, and integrating cross-sector by ...

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[1.3] - Appreciating informal interactions (social), maximising intangible (community) benefits, such as ...

- identifying those which should be included in national development plan priorities
- ensuring participation of women and other special groups

[2] Using knowledge and information in a meaningful way means ...

[2.1] - Recognising appreciating and incorporating the value of local knowledge, by ...

- exploring indigenous knowledge and insights to identify those that still work
- emphasising the importance of timely information provision

[2.5] – Expressing,
visualising and
communicating
information in an
accessible manner, by ...

- ensuring that usable and accessible media are used
- simplifying the information provided to users
- acting on the need to provide different types of information to different users: youth, women, PLWD (People Living with Disabilities)
- better academic expertise at working with local communities
- using local examples

People get timely information in useable formats to support forward-looking decision-making via established communication and feedback channels

[2.4] - Teaching children and adults the utility of information, and how to interpret it by ...

- building community capacity to interpret and translate information
- giving women's views a voice
- building ability to use technology effectively

[2.2] - Integrating crosssector information, by ...

- collaborating actively across the communications and feedback channels
- willingly sharing lessons and experiences across sectors
- creating 'platforms' for sharing lessons and experiences (forums)
- networking openly
- sharing responsibility and accountability through planning
- monitoring and evaluating in adaptive ways (different indicators)

[2.3] - Appreciating what is available and where it is – and trusting it, by ...

- highlighting key resources that provide timely information
- establishing channels for communication and feedback by using suitable shared platforms
- exploiting technology appropriately

[3] Having evolving institutions and fair entitlements means ...

[3.1] - Collaborating across agencies and communities, by ...

- involving stakeholders in decision-making processes at all levels (regardless of tribe, age, race or gender)
- improving coordination, integration and sharing of information across disciplines (scientific and indigenous)
- providing working facilities

[3.5] - Recognising rights and responsibilities, by ...

- involving all stakeholders including beneficiaries and duty-bearers, (including women and children) sense of ownership
- providing (self) enforcement of policies, laws and responsibilities
- respecting rights to information, land titles etc
- sensitizing rights holders / duty bearers to their responsibilities

An enabling
environment
exists in which
equitable access,
control and
decision-making
(involving
vulnerable groups)
occur

[3.4] - Providing advice, protection and support, such as ...

- providing protection and support to those carrying out enforcement
- provide assets and resources needed (eg, transport)

[3.2] - Being trustworthy and respecting contracts / agreements, by ...

- sharing relevant information and adhering to terms and conditions in agreements openly
- formulating relevant policies about to unsure enforcement
- acknowledging and acting on the need for trust and showing respect in practice
- setting binding timeframes for agreements
- ratifying agreements

[3.3] - Promoting equitable access to and control of resources at all levels by ...

- engaging in fair negotiation and arbitration (by neutral arbitrators accepted by both parties)
- empowering vulnerable groups such as women and children
- exposing those who act in selfish interests
- encouraging community participation

[4] Fostering innovation and developing enabling environments means ...

[4.1] - Supporting new ideas with incentives, such as ...

- encouraging planners and implementers to gain insights from continuous monitoring and adapting
- those which encourage communitylevel contributions
- providing benefits to those addressing trans-boundary concerns
- rewarding leaders who have courage for the greater good
- opeining resource centres

[4.5] - Nurturing a participatory, trans-boundary environment, by

- introducing new organisations and (regional) institutions which facilitate dialogue
- supporting and promoting existing institutions that aid communication and feedback
- respecting community-level contributions
- involving duty-bearers and practitioners
- recognising migration of animals across borders

Innovations are adaptive and anticipatory and enable people to have ownership, grasp opportunities and deal with climate change sustainably

[4.4] - Learning from experimenting, from successes and from failures, by ...

- exploring innovations, guided by risk and vulnerability assessments based on possible futures not just current concerns
- allocating resources which allow experiential learning and feedback (eg, copying and developing, expose visits)

[4.2] - Being prepared to try new things, do existing things differently, such as ...

- actively looking to improve ongoing activities and actually doing them differently
- looking for and exploiting opportunities across all sectors / activities – networking in new ways
- planning from the bottom-up
- exploring indigenous innovations
- incorporate spirit of volunteerism

[4.3] - Promoting selfgenerated initiatives, such as ...

- diversifying livelihoods
- suggesting new ways-ofworking for ongoing activities
- supporting community-driven processes and traditional methods (where appropriate)
- planning initiated from the bottom-up

[5] Accessing and utilising assets / capabilities as necessary means ...

[5.1] - Knowing what / who / when is available, where they are and their status (abilities, willing-ness, able to work / function etc), by ...

- focussing on community sustainable diversification skills and experiments
- utilising private-sector / NGO involvement
- doing adaptive resource management
- understanding needs, costs / overheads of working differently

[5.5] - Having the means to 'pay' for assets / capabilities, such as, by ...

- utilising the opportunities available via new markets and sectors
- sharing skills and capabilities
- being able to ensure the sustainability / availability of assets and capabilities
- cooperating on shared provision

Processes,
people's abilities
and skills
development,
social networks,
information sharing
etc comes first
over physical
(money-based)
assets

[5.4] - Being prepared to share and re-allocate assets / capabilities, by ...

- building on information and experience-sharing
- being open about the actual availability and utility of assets
- promotion of regional cooperation

[5.2] - Involving other sectors (in decisions about competing priorities etc), by ...

- incorporating community-based skills and insights
- working up from communitylevel crop / livestock value addition to the national
- including private-sector contributions
- encouraging cross-planning sector coordination meetings

[5.3] - Being trained and competent in their use / deployment, by ...

- focussing on development of community-based business skills
- employing capabilities available at any level, including via market linkages
- training of decision-makers
- putting in place capacitybuilding to enable change

