



The Agroecology TPP **DIALOGUES**

Experiences from ABCD

How structured co-design engagement processes allow mobilizing assets and agency for efficient, equitable, and sustainable outcomes

11 July 2023



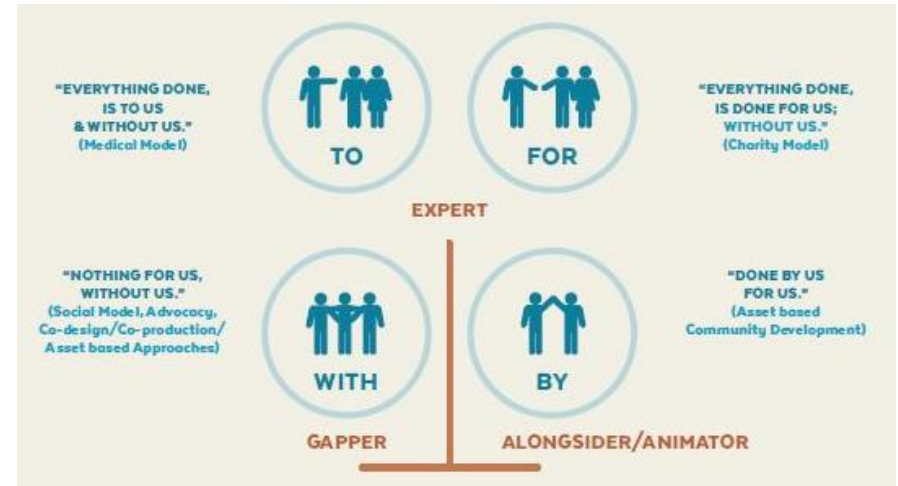
Background: Asset-based community-driven development (ABCD)

Origins

- Kretzmann & McKnight (1993): *Building communities from the inside out*
- Vast global community of practice – incl. ABCD Institute (US), Coady Institute (CA), etc.

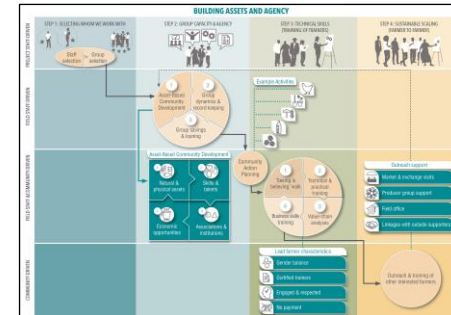
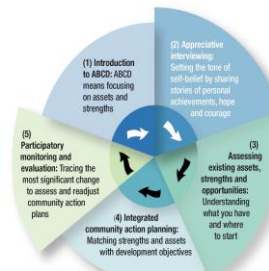
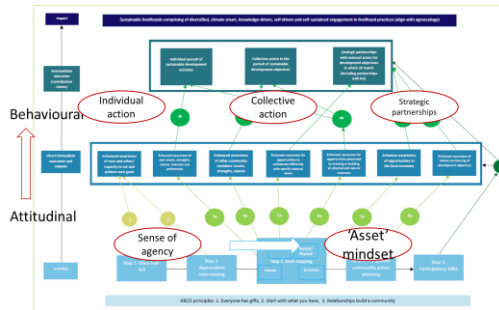
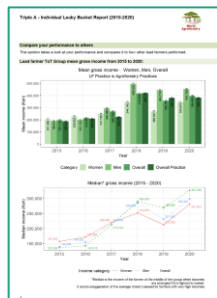
Change in perspective

- From external assessment to appreciative self-realization;
- from 'deliverables' to 'discoverables';
- from top-down 'services' to locally driven, community-wide, socio-political solutions.



Source: <https://transform-integratedcommunitycare.com/>

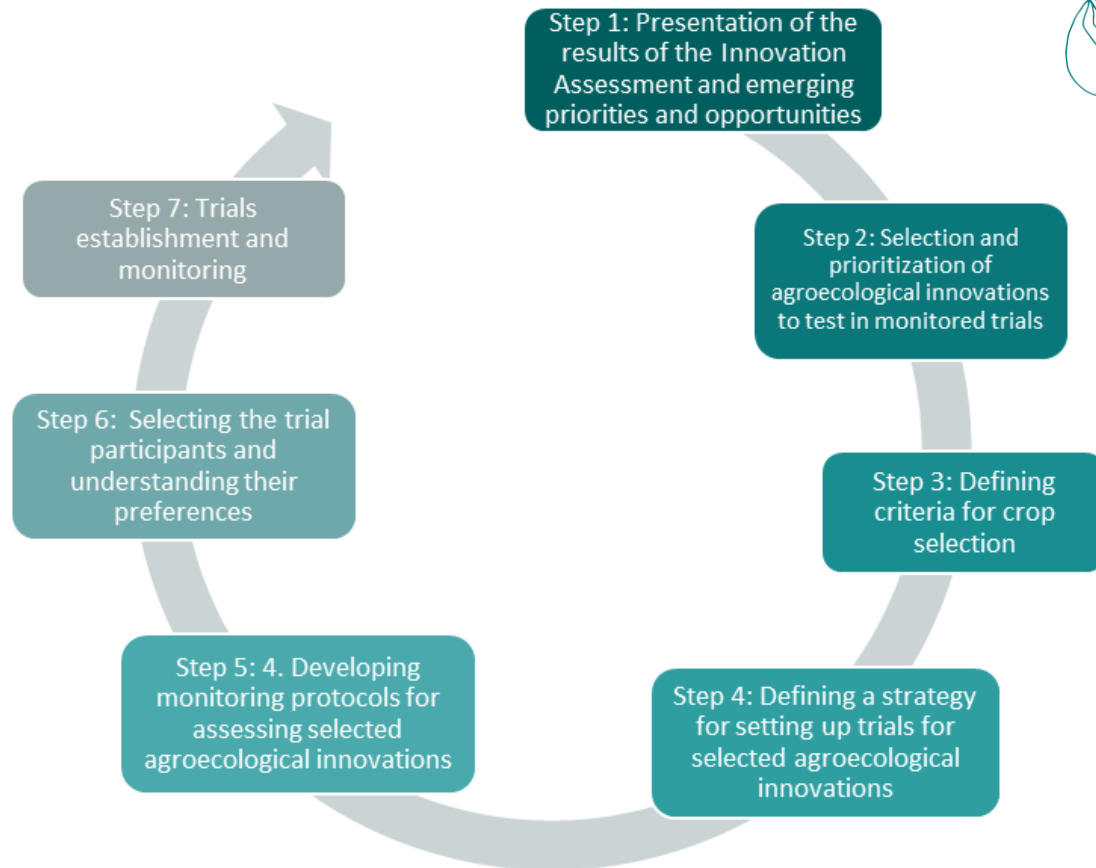






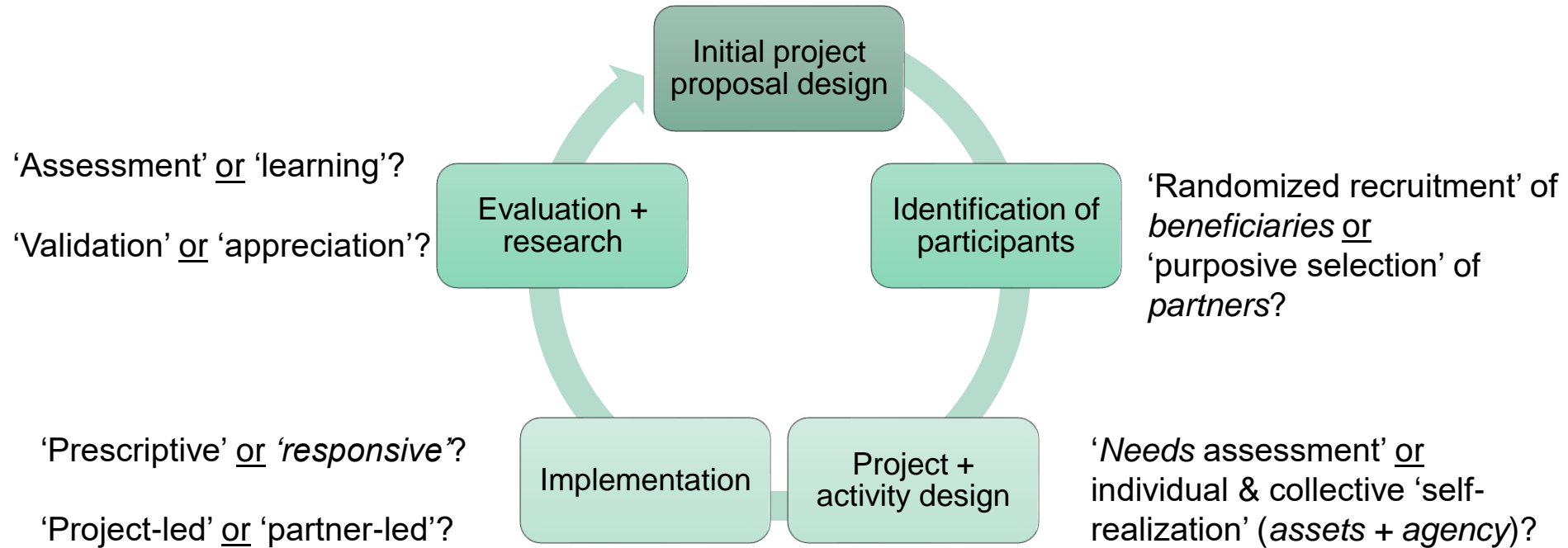
What is co-design... in R'n'D focused on- farm innovation?

Source: Kuria et al., 2024.





When and how else does co-design happen?





Conceptual reflections - opportunities

In research-in-development context, co-creation/co-design have (at least) 2 sides:

- Outcome-focused processes:
What to do and how to structure activities to convey ownership and agency to achieve desired outcomes



Agency focus: Co-design & co-creation tools, methods etc.

- Self-reflexive attitude: **How to be a partner** by adopting relevant attitudes and practices as an external actor



Structural focus: Critical self-awareness & reflexivity → typically under-discussed!





‘Transdisciplinary approaches’ (HLPE, 2019; Sinclair, 2021):

- Problem-focused
- Solution-oriented
- Inclusive
- Reflexive.

‘Transdisciplinary research’ (Hauser et al., 2024):

- Integration of disciplines
- Collaboration
- Problem-solving orientation
- Innovation
- Impact and application.

Contextualization

‘Ethical co-design and engagement’ (Fuchs, 2024):

- Purposive partner selection across scales
- Embed all action in strong and continuous engagement framework that fosters responsive external action alongside community-driven action
- Adopt framing that is responsive to partners’ interests
- ‘Activate’ partners to self-assess, self-actualize, and self-mobilize – attitude change as precondition to behavior change
- In-build continuous and participatory self-evaluation and adaptative management cycles
- Co-design self-evaluation and other metrics
- Give back the data
- Regularly train and capacity build implementing teams in research and development ethics
- Take responsibility for how structure influences contents and outcomes





“Most projects fail because you don’t get the people right (...). If you address what is not felt, you will not succeed”.

Nicholas Syano (CEO, DNRC)





Supplementary material and references





Some insights on ‘ownership’

Partners’ ‘ownership’ – an important ingredient for sustainability - depends on partners

Seeing a problem and/or opportunity

Feeling concerned by the problem and/or opportunity

Realising they are able to do something about it (‘sense of agency’)

Being included in identifying and defining solutions

Steering implementation of proposed solutions

→ **As ‘external’ partners, we need to be mindful of and very deliberate in how we *enter* and *maintain* relationships that foster partners’ ownership.**





... and a few quick wins

- Some things are systemic and complex – and require strategic planning, transdisciplinary capacity and building, and institutional and personal will...
- ... and others are fairly easy:
 - **Remember** who we are (and what we can do) – an outsider who hopes to contribute positively to the lives and systems of people *who are at home* (so, at best, an ‘ally’)
 - **Listen** deeply: Before ‘collaborating’, get to know each other and seek a mutual ‘match’ through appreciative conversations and complete transparency
 - **Relate**: Prioritise relationship building at the beginning of an interaction, be reachable and accessible, explicitly request and valorise critical reflection
 - **Respond**: Rather than define and prescribe ‘solutions’, be *responsive* in our actions and words + make an effort to *frame* your actions in a language that valorises people and their capacities and skills, and that resonates with their priorities
 - **Share insights**: Share our results for fair learning opportunities



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Forests, Trees and
Agroforestry



Global
Landscapes
Forum



Resilient
Landscapes



Most recent publications

- **Fuchs, L.E., Orero, L., Kipkorir, L., Apondi, V.,** Owili, S. Sustainable scaling models for Regreening Africa: Focusing on smallholders' assets and agency to increase agroecological integration in Kenya. [\[submitted for publication\]](#)
- **Fuchs, L.E., Orero, L.,** van Dien, L.C., **Apondi, V., Kipkorir, L.,** Kamau, A., Muia, D., Michuki, G. and Njiru, R. Evidencing that process matters: Conceptualising and evaluating the contribution of an asset-based and agency-focused engagement approach to strengthening Regreening Africa outcomes in Kenya. [\[forthcoming\]](#)
- **Orero, L., Fuchs, L.E., Kipkorir, L., Apondi, V.,** van Dien, L.C. Giving smallholder farmers back the power over their data: Lessons from western Kenya. [\[submitted for publication\]](#)





Other publications

Fuchs, L. “Start with what you have and where you are”: ABCD, *WorldAgroforestry Blog*. 4 May 2022, <https://worldagroforestry.org/blog/2022/05/04/start-what-you-have-and-where-you-are-abcd>

Fuchs, LE, Orero, L, Ngoima, S., Kuyah, S., Neufeldt, H. Asset-Based Adaptation Project Promotes Tree and Shrub Diversity and Above-Ground Carbon Stocks in Smallholder Agroforestry Systems in Western Kenya. *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, 2022, 4: 773170, 14 pp. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ffgc.2021.773170>

Fuchs, LE, Orero, L, Apondi, VA, Kipkorir, L. How to stop wasting money in international development: Using a structured group selection approach to counter procedural inefficiency. *World Development Perspectives*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2021.100364>

Fuchs, L.E., Bourne, M., Achieng, W., Neely, C. Sustainability planning with community and local stakeholders: Guidance Note, World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi: Kenya, 2021, 26 pp. https://regreeningafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sustainability_Guidance_Note_Final.pdf

Fuchs, LE, Kipkorir, L, Apondi, V, Orero, L. Facilitating an Asset-Based Community-Driven (ABCD) Approach for Holistic Community Development: A Manual for Community Organising, World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi: Kenya, 2020, 36 pp. <http://www.worldagroforestry.org/publication/facilitating-asset-based-community-driven-abcd-approach-holistic-community-development>

Fuchs LE, Peters B, Neufeldt H. Identities, interests, and preferences matter: Fostering sustainable community development by building assets and agency in western Kenya. *Sustainable Development*. 2019; 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1934>

Fuchs, LE, Orero, L, Namoi, N, Neufeldt, H. How to Effectively Enhance Sustainable Livelihoods in Smallholder Systems: A Comparative Study from Western Kenya. *Sustainability*. 2019, 11 (Special Issue Sustainable Development of Tropical Agriculture), 1564, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11061564>

Fuchs, LE. Bridging the divide in community development: The importance of process in linking community demands and responsive external support. *Coady Innovation Series*, (8), 2018, 11 pp., <https://coady.stfx.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/IS8.pdf>

Cunningham, G., **Fuchs, LE, Orero, L, Apondi, VA, Kipkorir, L.** The Integrated Household Leaky Bucket. Building financial and economic literacy by doing: A simple guide to help smallholder farmers separate their farm and household revenues and expenses. *Coady Innovation Series*, (14), 2018, <https://coady.stfx.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IS14.pdf>





ABCD website (<https://cifor-icraf.org/abcd>)

Learn more about the work of the ABCD team by visiting the ABCD website:

Get an overview of the core concepts, the engagement processes, and the various tools that have been co-developed and implemented by the ABCD team since 2011.

Explore the team's latest [publications](#) on ABCD to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what it is all about.

Watch [videos](#) that feature stories and testimonials from communities about the ABCD process, tools and outcomes.

Learn more about the various ABCD projects.

[Making Agroforestry Work for Smallholder Farmers](#) (2011–2014) that aimed to improve agroforestry knowledge and land-management practices in selected watersheds in Nyando River Basin while focusing on climate change.

[Triple A Project: Accelerating Adoption of Agroforestry in Western Kenya](#) (2015–2019) that used an ABCD approach to scale sustainable adoption of best practices in agroforestry and agriculture.

[ABCD in Regreening](#) (2021–2023), a strategic collaboration with the Regreening Africa project to support the adoption of promoted land-restoration practices alongside a more widely framed efficient, sustainable and circular resource use at individual and communal levels based on the 'start where you are, use what you have' principles.

[Farmer-led Tools, Dashboard Development, and the Future of Farming](#) (2020–2022) that identifies participatory ways of collecting farm-level data, and pilots personalized data reports and feedback sessions to test how data can be made accessible to smallholders, especially women and girls, to improve their farming practices.

[Regreening Africa Sustainability Planning](#) (2021–2023) draws on the work of ICRAF's ABCD and [SHARED](#) teams. Their guidance note outlines six key steps to encourage and support sustained land restoration after project transition.





Lisa Elena Fuchs
Scientist II, Multifunctional Landscapes
Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT
Nairobi, Kenya

L.Fuchs@cgiar.org



ASSET
BASED
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

Include, Engage, Inspire

Visit our website bit.ly/AgEc_TPP