THE ARC OF HISTORY

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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.]