



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Integrated Systems
for the Humid
Tropics



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Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical
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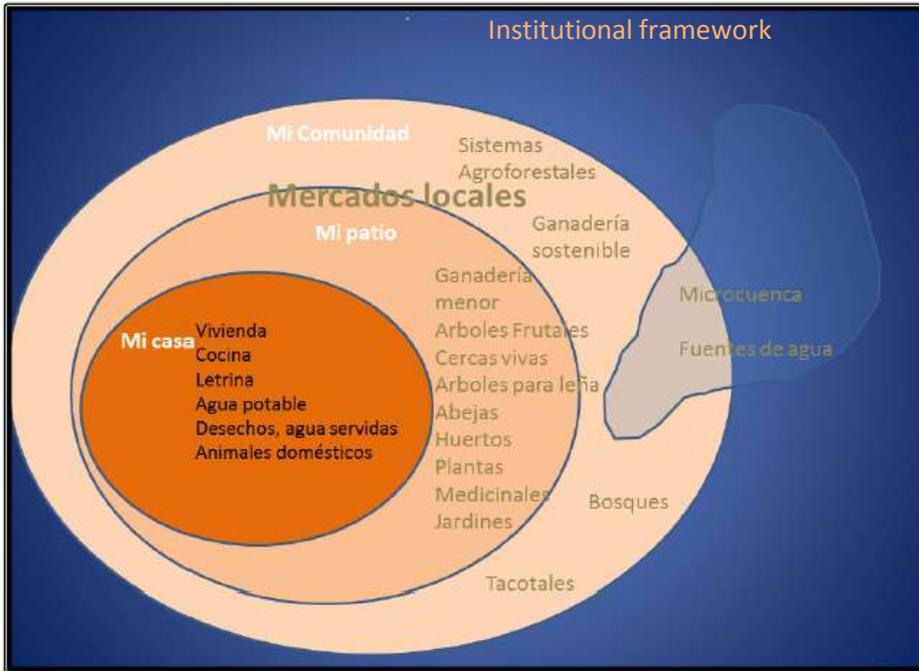
Innovation platforms at work: Supporting the transition to agroecological farming in Nicaragua

Katharina Schiller
Sept. 17, 2015

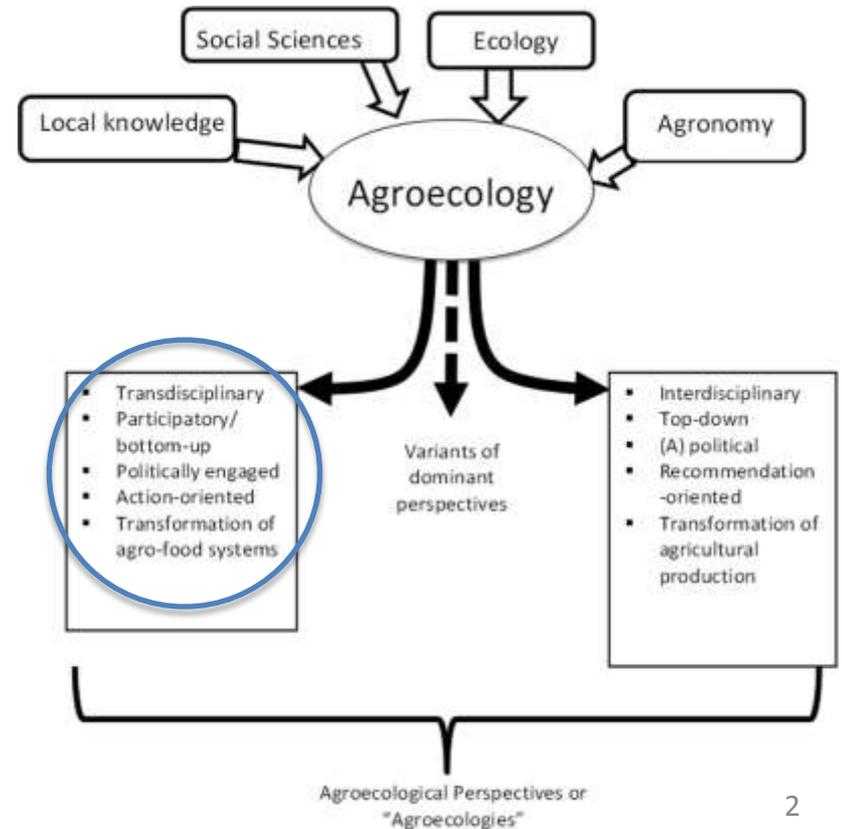
Transitions in agroecological farming

Agroecology

beyond a “set of agricultural practices to produce significant amounts of food by valorizing

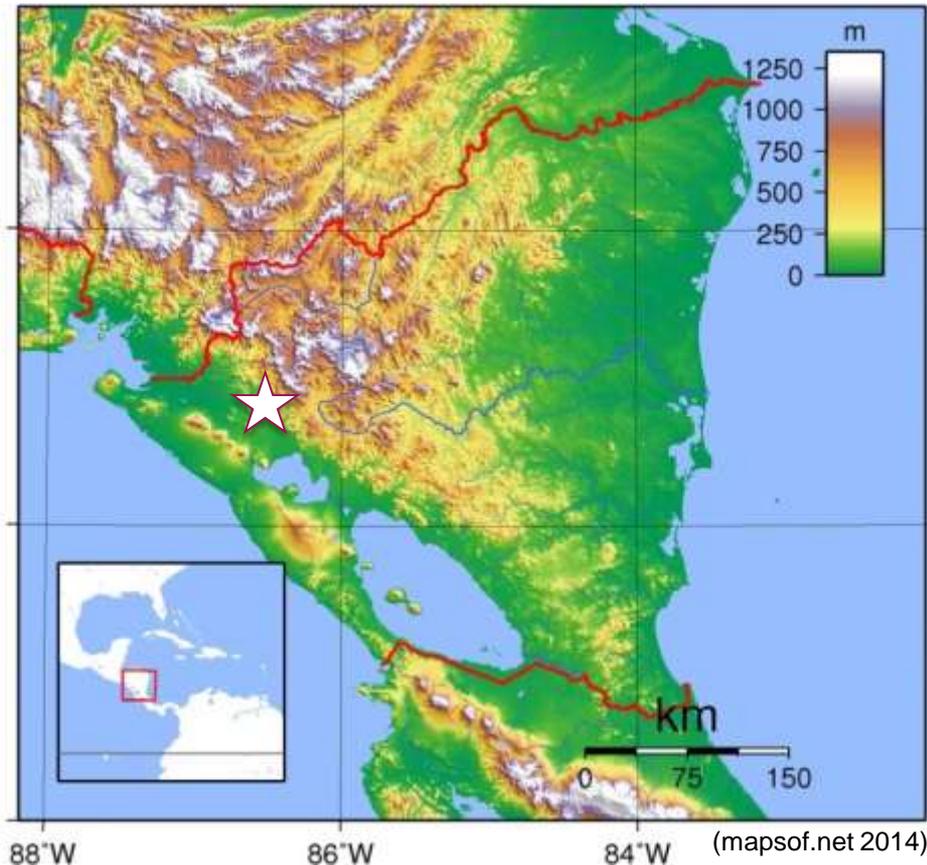


(MAGFOR 2013:18)



(Ernesto Méndez et al 2013:7)

Nicaragua



- tropics: highest potential bioproductivity, most biodiverse, hit hard by climate change
- 30 years of Movimiento Campesino a Campesino spreading agroecological practices amongst small farmers
- 1998: Hurricane Mitch: agroecological farms shown to be more resilient
- 2011: Agroecology and Organic Production Law (Ley 765) and NTON

Research question:

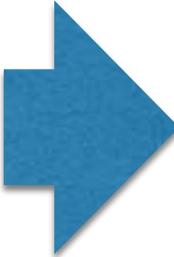
What is necessary to increase the use of agroecological practices by farmers?

A: Case study → functional analysis of ‘basic grains’ innovation platform (IP) in Estelí 

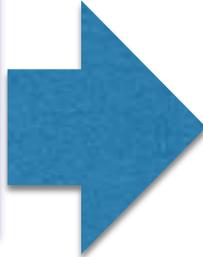


Research methods

Review of scientific and grey literature, and government and Learning Alliance organizations' documents concerning agroecology



Pre-survey interviews with farmers working with the Learning Alliance organizations



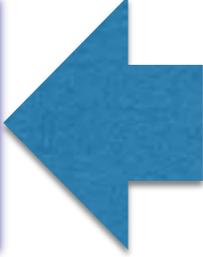
Survey of 120 farmers: practitioners and non-practitioners of agroecology



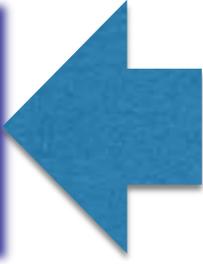
Interviews with stakeholders from the Learning Alliance organizations, and relevant government, national, and international institutions



Workshop with agroecological farmers who are part of Learning Alliance organizations



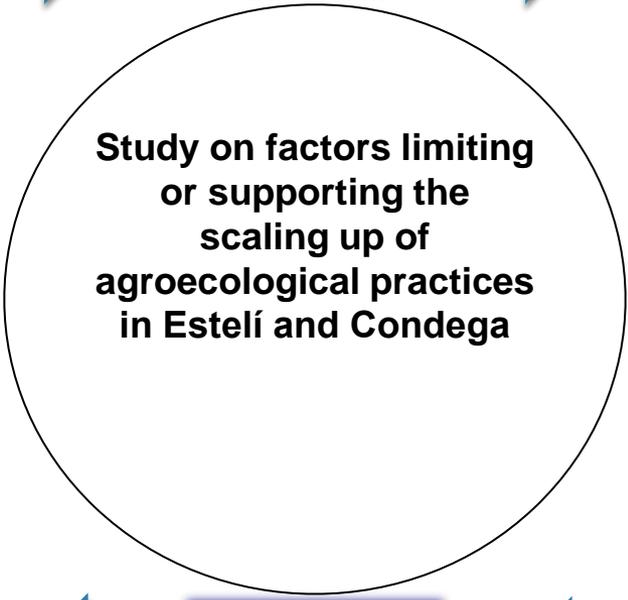
Workshop with stakeholders from Learning Alliance organizations



Analysis of results - qualitative - quantitative



Joint interpretation of results: Post-study workshops with farmers and stakeholders from Learning Alliance organizations



Study on factors limiting or supporting the scaling up of agroecological practices in Estelí and Condega

Functional analysis: Strong and weak functions of the basic grains innovation platform in Estelí, Nicaragua

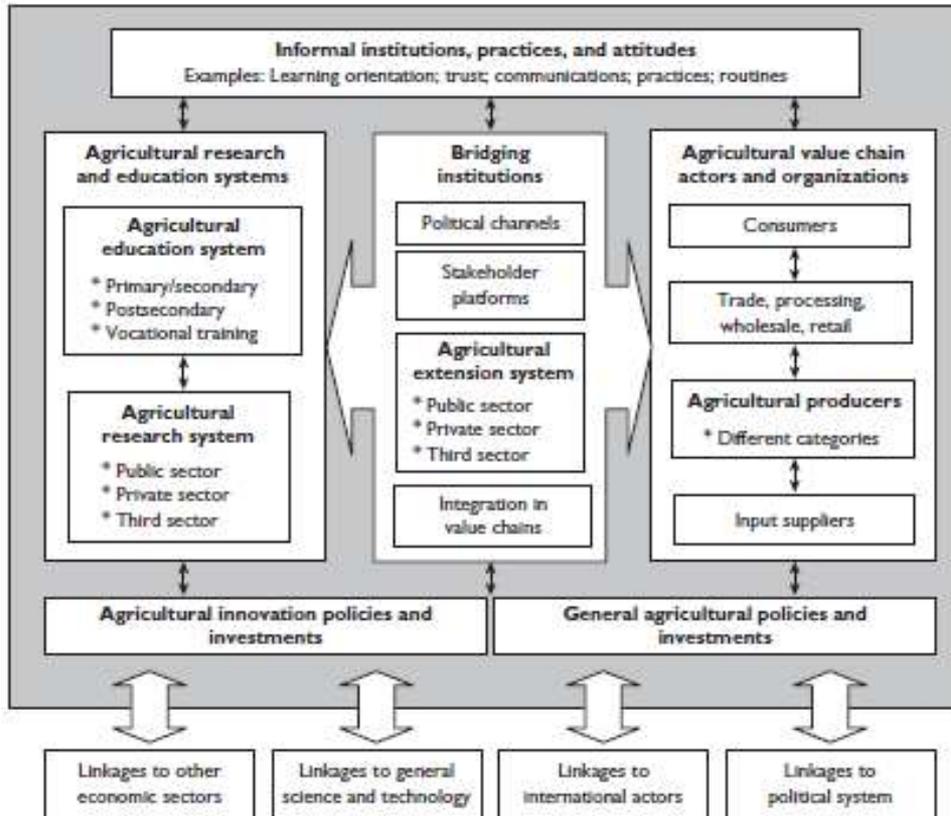
→ **Goal:** Technically feasible, social-culturally acceptable and economically viable suggestions for possible future optimization of innovation platform activities

Innovation intermediaries

- facilitators “in any aspect of the innovation process between two or more parties” (Howells 2006:720)
- facilitate interactions and cooperation between stakeholders

Innovation platform (IP):

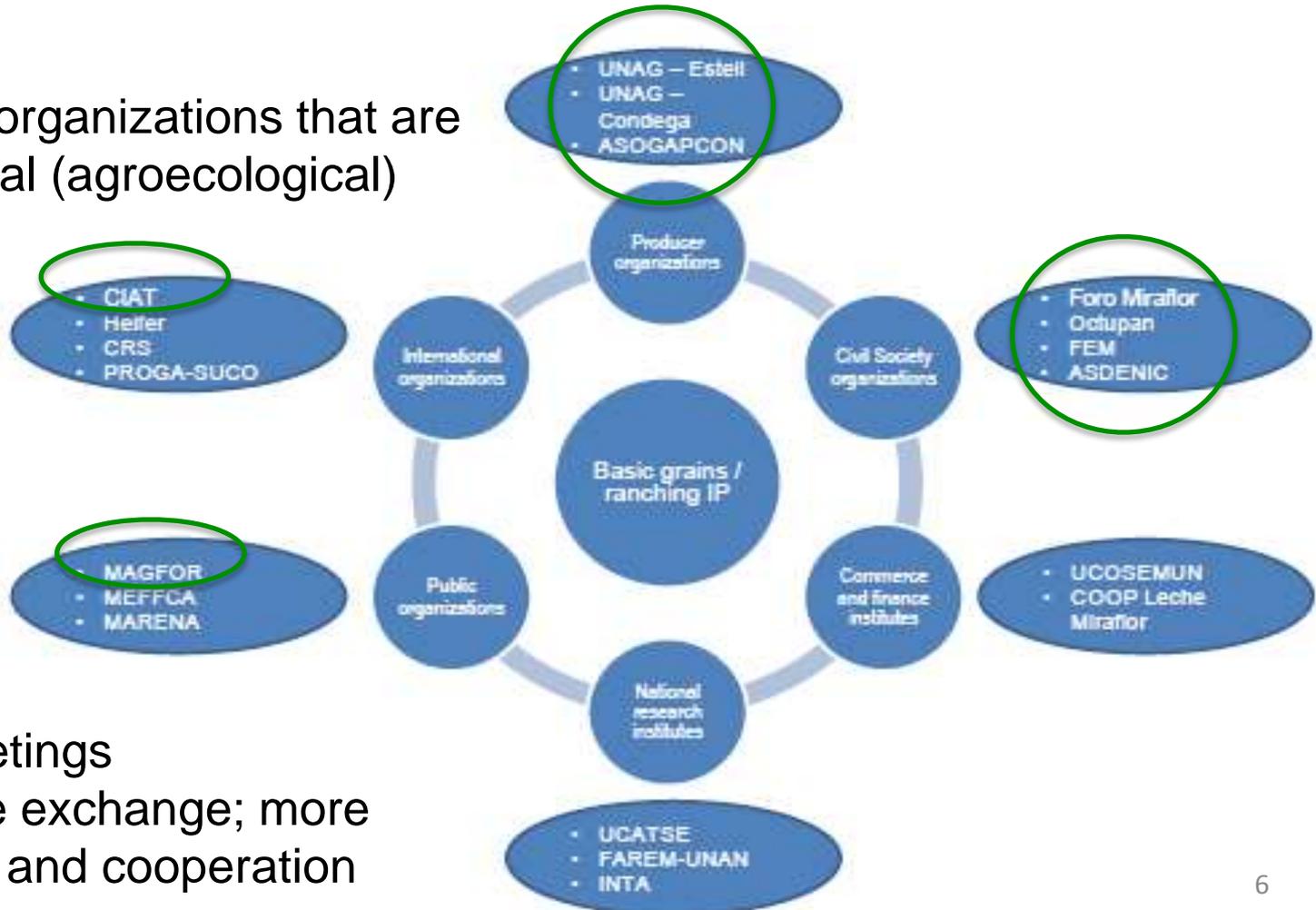
“equitable, dynamic spaces designed to bring heterogeneous actors together to exchange knowledge and take action to solve a common problem” (Cadilhon 2013:1)



(Spielman and Birner 2008)

Basic grains IP in Estelí: a 'Territorial Learning Alliance'

- brings together organizations that are working with local (agroecological) smallholders

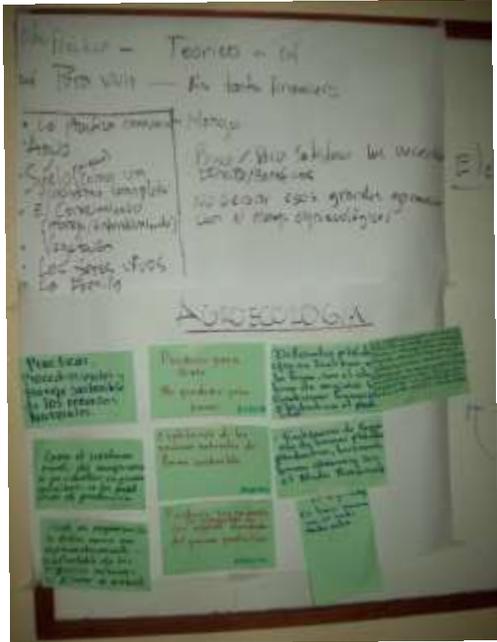


- workshops, meetings
- goal: knowledge exchange; more local interaction and cooperation



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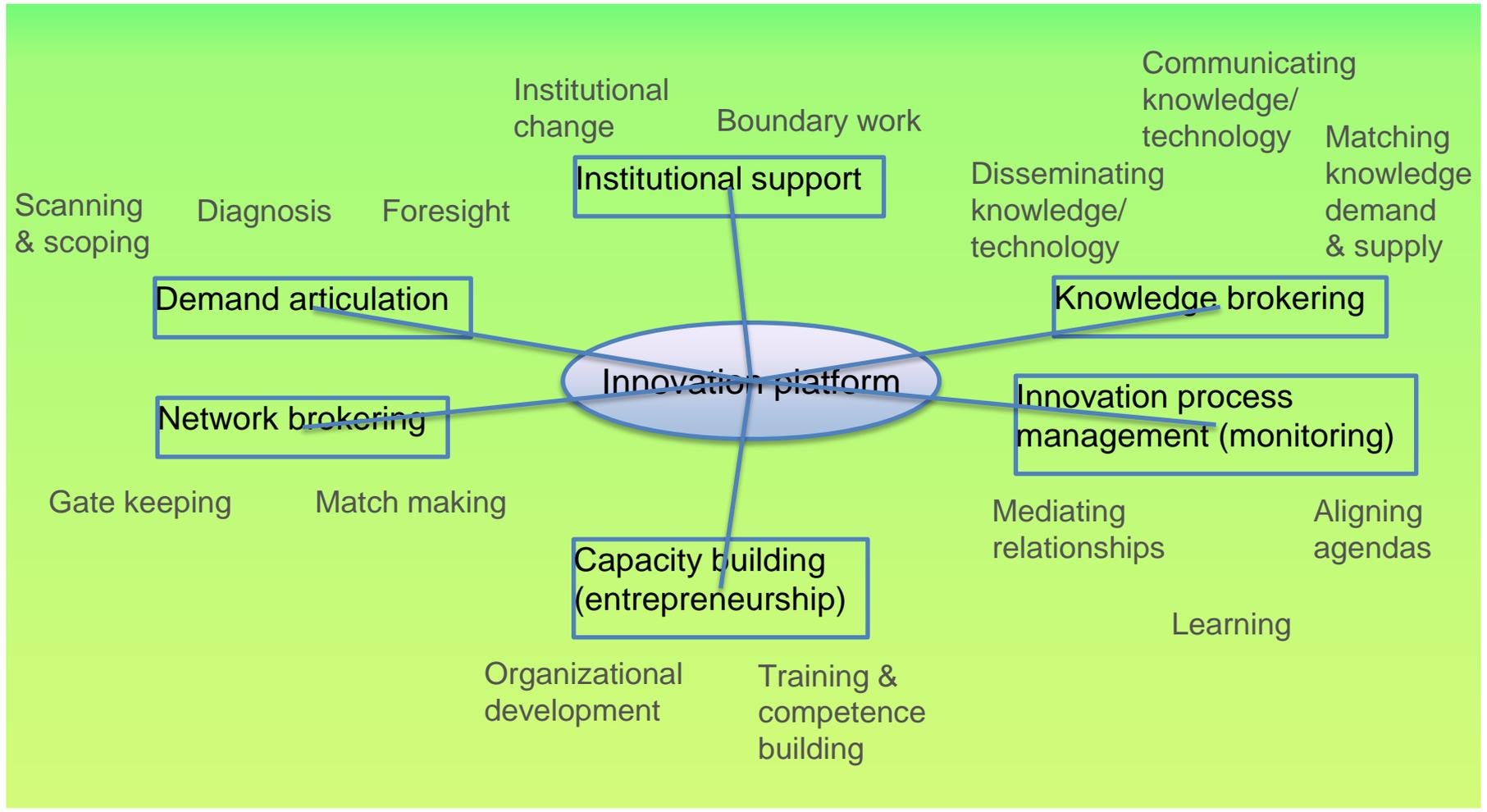
'Basic grains' Territorial Learning Alliance



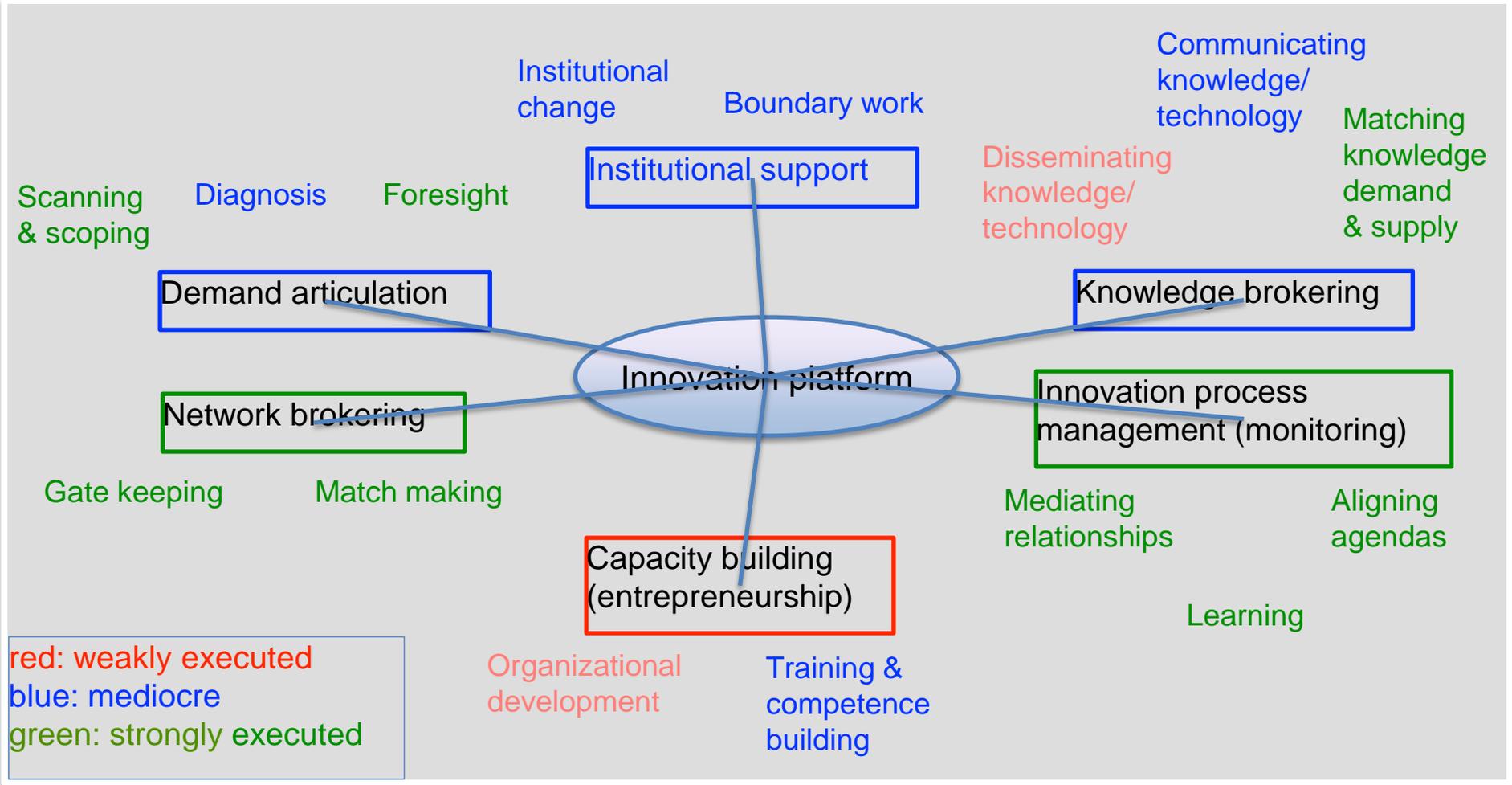


Functions of IPs

= intermediate variables between structure and system performance
(Jacobsson & Bergek 2011,46)



Functional analysis: basic grains IP





Conclusions

Functions	Recommendations for functional improvement
Demand articulation	- assessment of market situation
Knowledge brokerage	- disseminating information on benefits of agroecological products to consumers - communicating results of (scientific) research back to producers → 2016 results analysis workshops
Institutional support	- more boundary work = integrating other actors (Banco Produzcamos, market outlets) - creation of LINK model business plan for each step in the value chain, from producer to supermarket
Capacity building	- trainings in national agroecological production standards, for members of organizations and farmers - pamphlets on agroecological practices for farmers - farmer-to-farmer exchanges - demonstration farms - linking with universities to train youth



Systemic issues:

- financial products specific to agroecological production
- subventions for farmers during transition period
- sufficient production of bio-inputs; timely availability
- differentiation of agroecological products in markets
- support for national public certification scheme
- dissemination of information on benefits of agroecological produce to consumers

Further information:

- Innovation platforms at work: Supporting the transition to agroecological farming in Nicaragua
- Scaling up agroecology in Nicaragua: Linking systemic and individual determinants (poster, Sec
- academia.edu, researchgate.net



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Discussion

- concerted alignment of IP functions
- synergies of IP functions
- building on strong extant knowledge and experience base, (in)formal structures, strong motivations of actors





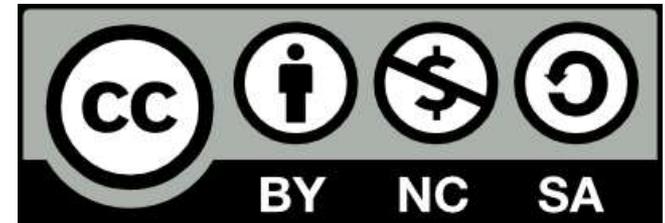
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Humidtropics is a CGIAR Research Program which aims to help poor farm families in tropical Africa, Asia, and Americas to boost their income from integrated agricultural systems intensification while preserving their land for future generations. Research organizations involved in core partnership with Humidtropics are AVRDC, Bioversity, CIAT, CIP, FARA, icipe, ICRAF, ILRI, IITA, IWMI and WUR.

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QUESTIONS?

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