



**Reflections and insights from the Southern Africa Food Lab
and the
Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture Project:
A Learning History**

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Reos

Summary

Introduction:

The Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL) was created in 2009 by a group of concerned role players who recognised that transformation in the food system requires a shared understanding of the food security problem, fresh thinking about possible solutions, and joint action. Only in this way could one jointly create a food system that works for all. In the initial stages, a number of initiatives or “innovations” were identified – ideas and practical innovations that participants felt could contribute in one way or another to transforming the food system, and ideas that they had particular energy to pursue. One particular innovation that gained traction towards the end of 2011 was a project called *“Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture: A social dialogue and learning project”* (SSCA). This project was designed to strengthen linkages between research and processes of social dialogue, policy debate, media dissemination and institutional learning among stakeholders involved in the development of smallholder agriculture. The first two-year phase (2012-2014) was co-funded by the Ford Foundation, the Southern Africa Trust, Oxfam, and the Mellon Foundation.

The project included several multi-stakeholder social dialogue processes. Recognising the novel dimensions of the initiative, and its likely implications for the emerging agenda of the SAFL, leaders in the SSCA project called for a participatory research project to document and learn from the process and experiences of both the SSCA project and the SAFL. Taking some time to pause and reflect on the experiences of the SSCA during the latter part of 2013 and the first few months of 2014 seemed particularly appropriate, given that the SAFL had initiated a leadership transition during this time period. It was felt that insights from this study could specifically inform the kind of leadership that might be required of both the SAFL and the SSCA team in the future.

The intentions of the research were four-fold, namely to: 1) document the history of the SSCA project within the broader context of the SAFL; 2) learn from it; 3) inform the future work of the SAFL; and 4) contribute to the global conversation on social change strategies. This document addresses the first three of these intentions and provides the raw material for future development of academic papers that will explore, *inter alia*, questions regarding how social change strategies are facilitated and implemented.

Methodology:

In line with the collaborative learning-by-doing approach intrinsic to the SAFL, the SAFL leadership decided to undertake this study, focusing on the SSCA project as a lens through which to reflect and learn, based on an action research methodology called a “learning history”. Central to action research is its commitment to integrating action and reflection, theory and practice, through a process of experiential learning. Great importance is placed on conducting research in a participatory manner, with or by insiders of the organisation, community or subject being studied (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2; Wilson, 2009, p.189). A learning history is *“an action research approach to learning that seeks to bring analysis and story together in a way that has value for those originally involved in the case as well as those seeking to learn from it”* (Gearty, 2006, p. 3). A learning history can be described as a *“jointly told tale”* (Van Maanen 1998) between the researcher as outsider and participants as insiders. Researchers in the United States developed this approach with a specific view to enabling learning from experience as opposed to learning from fact and analysis (Roth & Kleiner, 1998; Roth & Bradbury 2008).

In line with the learning history approach, the research process included the following steps:

1. **Design of the research process:** this included identifying people to interview and developing an interview guide.
2. **Conducting interviews:** this was undertaken with 11 interview participants, representing the SAFL steering group, the SSCA project group as well as participants of the SSCA multi-stakeholder process, to ensure a diversity of perspectives and experiences. All interviews were transcribed.
3. **Interview analysis:** Interviews were used to help develop the historical narrative of the SSCA within the broader context of the SAFL based on people's experiences and recollections. The interviews were analysed for emerging insights, reflections and themes.
4. **Desktop review:** Internal SAFL and SSCA documents, such as workshop reports were used to augment the historical narrative as well as the themes that emerged from the interviews.
5. **Drafting an initial SSCA historical narrative and drawing out initial insights:** The first draft of the report primarily involved drafting the initial historical narrative of the SSCA. While the study had chosen to focus on the SSCA, it became clear that the story of the SSCA could not be fully understood without understanding the story of the SAFL and the broader external context. Thus, the narrative wove in all these aspects.
6. **Presenting draft material at a collaborative validation workshop:** A half-day collaborative validation workshop was held on the 27th November 2013 with people that had been interviewed and a number of additional members from the SAFL Steering Group. The primary intention of this workshop was to validate and enrich the draft learning history by inviting workshop participants to comment and add their perspectives on both the historical narrative and the emerging themes, and to stimulate reflection and learning on the SSCA project in particular and the SAFL more broadly.
7. **Iterative refinement of the narrative and the emerging themes:** A second draft of the narrative and further development of the reflections, insights and themes was completed between December 2013 and February 2014, based on the discussions and recommendations from the validation workshop.
8. **Presentation of key insights at a SAFL Steering Group meeting:** Some of the key insights from the research process were shared with the SAFL Steering Group on the 17th February 2014. The discussions and feedback from this presentation were incorporated into the final report.
9. **Finalisation of report:** The final report incorporated and synthesised the range of views from the interviews and from the various group discussions, and incorporated the desktop literature, to provide a more complete historical narrative, a set of reflections, and initial explorations of what these reflections and insights might mean for the SAFL and the SSCA.

The Historical narrative:

The story of the SAFL as it is told here is largely a story of a confluence of like-minded people that somehow found their way to the SAFL and the SSCA, either through their passion for food systems change or because of their appreciation of the power of the U-Process, a social change methodology that is used for tackling tough complex problems around the world, or both. The story of the SAFL and the SSCA can be divided into six broad time periods, illustrated in Figure 1. A summary of each of these periods is provided below.

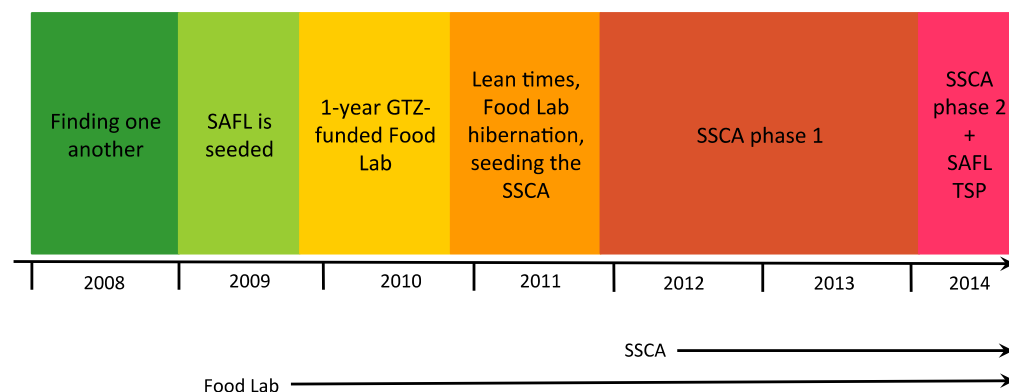


Figure 1: An overview of the main periods of the SAFL

Finding one another: 2004 – 2008

This period marks the time in which the two founders of the SAFL, namely Milla McLachlan from Stellenbosch University and Ralph Hamann from the University of Cape Town found their way to each other and discovered that they shared a mutual passion for food systems change, a mutual frustration for the way in which the issue was being tackled and a mutual appreciation of the power of the U-Process (Box 1) for enabling constructive multi-stakeholder dialogue and for surfacing innovative ways to address tough complex problems. Both Milla and Ralph were involved in separate pieces of research on food security in Southern Africa (funded by DBSA and GTZ respectively) and decided that they wanted to facilitate a multi-stakeholder conversation on food security using the research they had both been involved in as a springboard for that discussion. Through Ralph, Colleen Magner and Vanessa Sayers, both from Reos Partners, were brought in to help design and facilitate such a conversation. Reos Partners had contributed to the development of the U-Process.

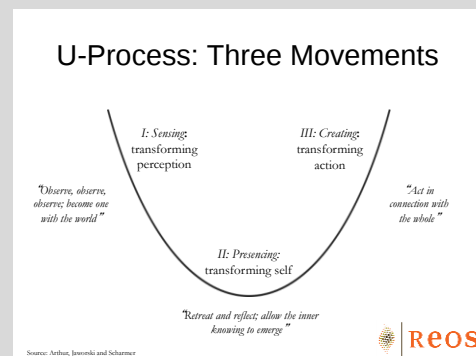
Box 1: A brief description of the U-Process and Change Labs

The U-Process:

The U-Process is a methodology for addressing highly complex challenges. It is a “social technology” for effecting the transformation of reality, within and across the worlds of business, government, and civil society.

In using the U-Process, an individual or team undertakes three activities or movements: *Sensing* the current reality of the system of which they are part, carefully and in depth; *Presencing* and reflecting to allow their “inner knowing” to emerge, about what is going on and what they have to do; and then *Realising* [or *Creating*], acting swiftly to bring forth a new reality.

~ http://www.generonconsulting.com/publications/papers/pdfs/U-Process_Social_Technology.pdf



Change Lab: A sustained U-Process

A Change Lab is a multi-stakeholder effort to address a complex social challenge. In a Change Lab, a committed alliance of influential government, business and civil society leaders engage in a rhythmic U-Process of *Co-Sensing*, *Co-Presencing*, and *Co-Creating*. These teams produce new insights about their system (including their own role in it) and new high-leverage options to shift it; new and stronger relationships within their team and with other stakeholders; strengthened capacities to work together and to lead and effect change; and a sustained stream of new actions through which they co-create a new social reality.

~ <http://alaiainstitute.org/blog/track/solving-tough-problems-the-change-lab-approach-to-co-creating-new-social-realities/>

Seeding the SAFL: October 2008 – October 2009

A working group was formed towards the end of 2008 to support the organisation and facilitation of a one-day workshop in early 2009. This working group including Scott Drimie, who had been one of the researchers for the DBSA-funded research, and Tatjana von Bormann, from WWF. On the 25th February 2009, approximately 70 people gathered at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in Johannesburg to share the DBSA and GTZ research on food security; to discuss some of the “stuck issues” with regard to food security in South Africa; to share the U-Process as an approach for addressing sustainable food security through a multi-stakeholder collaboration process; and to explore possibilities for a way forward. Colleen and Vanessa facilitated the process. WWF funded the event. Notable participants were Kenneth Carden who was working for Woolworths at the time, Ulli Klins, who at the time was working for GTZ but later moved to the Southern Africa Trust (SAT), as well as Christina Golino at the time from DBSA, Candice Kelly from the Sustainability Institute and Florian Kroll from the University of Witwatersrand, all of whom still serve on the SAFL Steering Committee.

By the end of this workshop, it had become clear that there was a high level of commitment and enthusiasm around the issue of food security and that there was much excitement about the possibility of improved collaboration with one another. Emanating from this workshop was strong agreement and endorsement that an inclusive, participatory process that allowed for the constructive exchange of information and perspectives between the different sectors was important, and that such dialogue would need to be linked to decisive action and strong leadership. Emerging from the February workshop, a steering group, which became known as the Southern Africa Food Security Change Lab Steering Group, was formed. Based on the outcomes of the workshop, a proposal for a multi-stakeholder process using a Change Lab approach based on the U-Process was developed and submitted to GTZ in September 2009. In November 2009 GTZ approved funding for a 1-year Food Security Change Lab.

The Food Security Change Lab: November 2009 – November 2010

This period was marked by a number of specific activities used in Change Lab processes. The first was more than 20 dialogue interviews with people representing a diversity of views and positions within the food system, from which themes and insights were derived through an internal synthesis process and compiled into a synthesis report. The second was a series of learning journeys (See Box 2) to Johannesburg (May 2010), Cape Town (May 2010) and Limpopo (August 2010). This culminated in the first Food Security Change Lab Innovation workshop, facilitated by Colleen and Vanessa, held on the 6th and 7th September 2010 at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) and attended by over 50 people, about half of whom were representatives from the private sector in different parts of the food value chain, from agricultural inputs to wholesale and retail. This workshop was designed to enable the SAFL to move from one mode of learning (through observation and reflection) to another mode (learning by doing), building on the energy for change that had built up in the system so as to identify and prototype “innovations” (defined by the SAFL as a new idea or way of working) that could have a ripple effect on the food system as a whole. By the end of the two days, five areas for innovation had emerged, including two on primary production. These were as follows:

Box 2: What is a Learning Journey?

A learning journey is a way of exposing a group of people (who are united in their interest in a particular issue but diverse in their positions and perspectives on that issue) to the current realities, experiences and stories of people most directly affected by that issue. This exposure is an entry point into a deeper understanding of these realities and into a deeper engagement with one another about how to address these realities. Learning journeys complement more formal forms of research and have the added benefit of galvanising action, especially collaborative action for change.

- Understanding primary producers' skills needs: *How are farmers and other primary producers empowered through skills development for sustainable food security?* (Led by Kenneth Carden, Woolworths).
- Collating the Goodness in Primary Production: *What works for primary producers and how do we build on this?* (Led by Tatjana von Bormann, WWF).

It was during this time that Rebecca Freeth and Dineo Ndlanzi, both from Reos, first made their entrance into the SAFL as part of the support team. It was also at this workshop that Canny Geyer from Oxfam GB was first exposed to the SAFL. ZZ2 entered into the SAFL orbit through the learning journeys, while Paula Nimpuno from the Ford Foundation initiated a conversation with Milla, after becoming aware of the SAFL through the Sustainable Food Lab based in the USA, which Adam Kahane, from Reos Partners in Cambridge USA, co-founded.

The lean period: incubating the next phase: 2011

With the completion of the GTZ-funded process, this period marked a very lean phase in the story of the SAFL, characterised by two parallel sets of activities that coalesced in the latter half of 2011.

The first was the activities occurring within the SAFL, which is essentially a story of incubation. Since financial resources were scarce, the activities of the SAFL were limited to a few breakfast dialogues and short learning journeys tacked on to SAFL Steering Group meetings. During this period, Milla, Ralph and Vanessa in particular kept the conversations going. Due to organisational changes within Reos, Colleen stepped out of the SAFL process at this stage.

During this time, most of the innovations that had been identified during the September 2010 innovation workshop seemed to lose momentum or fade. However, Kenneth and Tatjana managed to keep the conversation on their innovations on primary production going. In December 2010, Kenneth left Woolworths to begin independent consulting and suddenly had time on his hands to pursue his interests and passions, which were largely focused on supporting primary producers into commercial agriculture.

Meanwhile, Paula from the Ford Foundation, Andries du Toit and Ben Cousins from the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), and Milla and Scott from the SAFL entered into discussions with one another. In about 2008, PLAAS had, quite independently of the SAFL, conceived of and received funding from Ford for a research project looking at pro-poor value chain governance. It was a project that experienced some major challenges, including an inadequate understanding of what a value chain is. A crucial challenge from PLAAS's perspective was that they were very good at drawing together role-players on the producer side but struggled to enrol other value chain actors. Both PLAAS and Ford agreed that more research was required. Andries had been aware of the SAFL since its inception and although interested in it, he had always been too busy to engage. After initiating a conversation with Milla in late 2010, Paula suggested in early 2011 that PLAAS and the SAFL submit a joint proposal to Ford that integrated PLAAS' research with a social dialogue process. A research proposal exploring private sector engagement with smallholder farmers was submitted to Ford in September 2011 and accepted by the close of 2011. This project became known as the *Supporting Smallholders in Commercial Agriculture (SSCA)* project.

The SSCA project: January 2012 – January 2014

This period can be split up into two phases that roughly correspond with the two years that the SSCA has been operational. It also consisted of two parallel but interconnected work-streams, namely the research and social dialogue work-streams. The research stream was driven by Ben Cousins and Andries du Toit, and three research interns. The social dialogue

stream was originally held by Milla, Kenneth and Vanessa, and over this period came to consist of Kenneth, Scott, Rebecca and Dineo, with Colleen coming back into the picture during the latter part of 2013.

The first year (2012) primarily focused on getting the research underway and further refining the design of the social dialogue. The first major event of the SSCA project was the inception workshop attended by about 30 people, which was held at STIAS in Stellenbosch on the 16th and 17th April 2012. This workshop was facilitated by Vanessa and a Reos colleague, Yvonne Field, with support from Rebecca. The objectives of the workshop were to launch the project, build relationships, “sense” different parts of the food system, mapping what was already known to help identify key gaps, and to create a shared understanding and language for some key concepts. After the inception meeting the SAFL team and PLAAS began to meet regularly, in part to support the PLAAS interns in their process of trying to refine their research and also to begin to explore what the social dialogue component of the project might look like. The research started with a national scan to develop a database of all projects in South Africa involving private sector and smallholders. The research team identified a total of approximately 230 relevant projects and produced 45 case studies to provide more insight into what was actually happening in reality. By the end of 2012, the majority of case studies had been completed. Meanwhile, during the latter half of 2012, the team began to design the social dialogue component in earnest. Three proposals submitted were funded. The Ford Foundation provided additional funding to expand the social dialogue component of the SSCA to include one multi-day rural learning journey and a social dialogue. The Southern Africa Trust (SAT), funded a second rural learning journey and social dialogue. Oxfam funded a third, urban learning journey, where farmers who had hosted the rural learning journeys could learn first hand about commercial supply chains and also be included in the social dialogue process.

In year two, (January 2013 to January 2014) the social dialogue component of the project took off. It was characterised by the social dialogue process and the research informing each other. With funding for the learning journeys and the social dialogue component secured, and greater clarity of what the social dialogue component might look like, the SSCA team was able to move into externally-facing mode: enrolling multi-sectoral participants into the SSCA process and preparing for the two three-day rural Learning Journeys that were planned for April to Kwazulu-Natal on Market Access) and June (to Limpopo on extension services and support). Kenneth and Dineo held consultative meetings with grassroots and farmers organisations in May. These meetings were used to ensure that the voices of various smallholder associations and representative bodies would be heard and incorporated into the learning journeys and subsequent public dialogues. Through a highly emergent process, it became clear after the KZN Learning Journey that the social dialogue gathering could take the form of an innovation lab, which over time, developed into a series of two innovation labs (August and October 2013). The urban learning journey looking at commercial supply chains was organised to coincide with the first innovation lab.

Over the course of the learning journeys, participants were asked to engage with a series of questions: What am I seeing? What’s becoming clearer to me about the system of small-scale farming? How does this impact on the way I think about my work? What’s my role and what do I have energy to do with what I’m seeing here? The Limpopo learning journey culminated with a series of conversations around the question: what ideas or actions can I initiate now?

Five initial innovations that emerged as a result of the two rural learning journeys were proposed during the first innovation lab. By the end of the first innovation lab, six innovations had been refined, as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Revised innovations at the end of the first innovation Lab

Title	Summary	Lead
Entry Level Checklist	Produce a non-accredited checklist that increases market access, increases resilience/sustainability and provides a roadmap to Local G.A.P. certification.	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden
Market Segmentation	Perform a market segmentation study of a discrete area in order to better understand the current markets, smallholders supply and identify key actors or processes that would be necessary to facilitate change.	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden
Monitoring and Evaluation	Develop an M&E process to monitor performance of smallholder farmers within extension service support programmes.	Sarah Chapman, Institute for Monitoring and Evaluation, UCT.
Pilot the coordinating model as defined in the draft Extension Policy	Test the collaborative approach and co-ordinating model outlined in the draft Extension policy to inform the implementation of the policy.	Kenneth Carden
Graduation of farmers	Create criteria, co-ordinated at the municipal level, for subsistence-oriented smallholders to graduate to market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains, and mechanisms to support this graduation.	Lawrence Mkhalihi, Biowatch
Smallholders' voices	Create spaces for farmer-to-farmer engagement and collaboration to allow farmers to talk to each other and share and engage in policy making; and to create a space for farmers and other stakeholders to have dialogue with NGOs, academics and policy makers.	Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam
Collaboration between Z22 and local smallholder farmers	Making localised data, farming methods, and ecological approaches available to members of the Mopani Farmers' Association in Limpopo.	Sidney Luckett, Independent
Bridging the Divide	Multi-sectoral co-operation and alignment for the benefit of smallholder farmers.	Jemina Moeng (DAFF – Smallholder Development) Busi Mdaka (DRDLR)

These innovations were further developed for the second innovation lab in October, during which time, they were refined and then presented to a panel of three people who understood the South African food system but who had not been involved in the SSCA project. The panellists were invited to look at these ideas with fresh eyes, to give incisive, honest and compassionate feedback in a way that facilitated the ideas and innovations to grow. The rest of the innovation lab focused on integrating this feedback into the individual innovation teams' plans, taking stock of progress made and planning the next steps. Groups were encouraged to look carefully at their innovations in light of the feedback received and to be willing to let their innovations go should the it no longer seem desirable, viable or feasible. All groups decided to continue with their innovations. The workshop ended with an exploration of the areas of synergy and overlap and practical next steps as an entire group. A suggestion was made that all 6 innovations focus on two districts, namely Mopani (Limpopo Province) and Umkhanyakude (KwaZulu Natal), with each innovation team choosing which site or sites to focus on, and that the teams would put together a coordinated concept document for each district. This idea drew a fair amount of discussion, about the tension of holding the integrity and building on what is already working at a small scale in individual innovations, while at the same time creating the connections and coordination among the innovations where this is

beneficial to all. Table 2 provides a summary of the revised titles of the innovations and their initial thoughts about being involved in the pilot districts.

Table 2: Revised titles of innovations and initial thoughts regarding their involvement in pilot sites.

Innovation Number	Title	Team Leads	Initial thoughts about pilot Districts
1A	Food Safety Standards (previously called: Entry Level Checklist)	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden	I [Dianna] would welcome integrating this innovation into a larger group, but given the uncertainty of our team's next steps, it is hard to envision how this innovation would specifically fit in at the moment. Contacting those we agreed on and speaking further with Kenneth Carden and Prof. Cousins may help elucidate the path further.
1B	Building local economies in South Africa: how smallholder farmers make markets work for them (previously called Market Segmentation)	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden	We are open to this collaboration because of the synergies it may create in the learning process, the holistic vision it may provide, and the strength of a funding proposal that hits so many key targets. Our hesitations lie in the complexity, delay, and research fatigue (for the smallholders) it may create. We would be happy to continue discussing this.
2	Influencing and enabling the national policy on extension and advisory services.	Kenneth Carden	This innovation team has effectively already decided to consolidate with the Bridging the Divide Innovation (Innovation 6) listed during the first innovation Lab. The innovation does need to work closely with the Voices of the small-scale farmers innovation (Innovation 4) as the voices of small-scale farmers are going to be vital before and during the pilot phase. Discussions will be held in November with that team on how these two innovations collaborate. Discussions will also be held with each of the other innovations regarding the configuration of the pilots and opportunities to synergise between innovations. It will be particularly vital that when the SAFL innovations speak to government (e.g. Limpopo and KZN Departments of Agriculture) and funders we do this in an organised fashion.
3	Create criteria, coordinated at municipal level, for agro-ecological subsistence-oriented smallholders to graduate to market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains, and mechanisms to support this graduation.	Lawrence Mkhaliphi, Biowatch	This innovation was dropped shortly after the second innovation lab because it hadn't gained enough traction.

Innovation Number	Title	Team Leads	Initial Thoughts About Pilot Districts
4	Create ways of getting more small-scale farmers' voices heard in this work and in policy development.	Canny Geyer, Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam	The idea is welcomed. However the group will need to discuss to avoid being a "sub-project" of group 2 or other groups. Therefore, in the future events, the smallholders and the other members of group 4 shall more strongly express their needs and interests.
5	Agro-ecosystem Awareness	Sidney Lockett, Independent	Supportive in principle subject to outcomes of further discussions regarding sensitivities expressed at the meeting by myself.
6	Bridging the Divide	Jemina Moeng (DAFF – Smallholder Development) Busi Mdaka (DRDLR)	Due to the absence of both team leads at the second innovation workshop, this innovation was incorporated into Innovation 2

After the end of the second innovation lab it was agreed that a final, two-day transition lab would be organised for January 2014. The day prior to the transition lab was devoted to training innovation team leads and one "champion" from their respective innovation groups in the kind of leadership that would be needed in their teams going forward, while also introducing them to the concepts of social prototyping (See Box 3) and action learning. The transition lab itself focused on taking stock of what had transpired in this initial phase of the SSCA project, and preparing for a subsequent phase of prototyping the innovations.

Box 3: Prototyping

Experimenting with a new idea in a rapid, low-risk way in order to learn - which includes learning from early mistakes.

During this transition lab, the PLAAS researchers presented their most recent work and each of the innovation team leads provided updates on their innovations. Innovation 3 had been discontinued and Innovation 6 had been integrated into Innovation 2, but progress had been made on the remaining innovations. A draft plan for the next phase of the SSCA was also presented, which is illustrated in Figure 2. The subsequent 6 – 9 months were to consist of at least one design meeting, one review meeting, a learning journey and one innovation lab, most likely in September or October, with the expectation that teams would have completed at least one prototyping round before then.

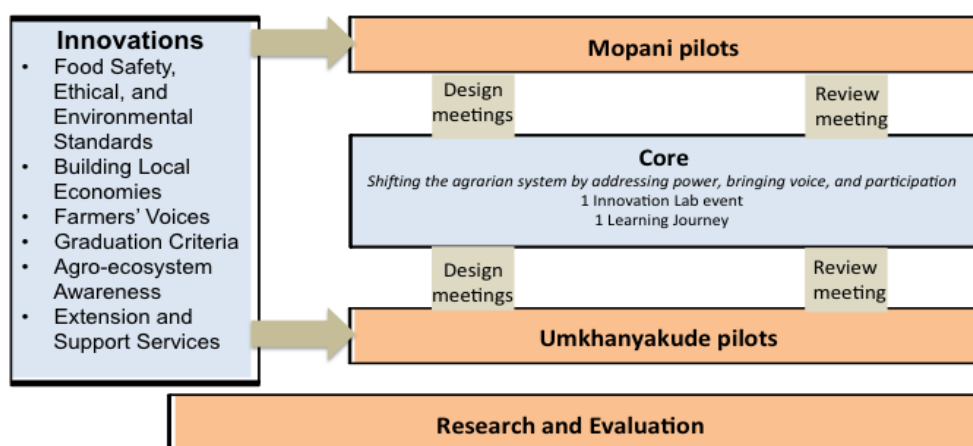


Figure 2: The way forward for the SSCA project in 2014.

The SAFL: 2014 onwards

The SAFL has secured funding from Ford for the next phase of the SSCA, which will enable each of the innovation teams to start prototyping in two rural districts while more funds are being sourced. The SAFL has also secured funding for first phase of a Transformative Scenario Process on Food Futures for South Africa with the intention of creating a set of scenarios of the Future of the South African Food system over the next 16 years, in the midst of the possible uncertainties that may arise, and for convening a learning and social dialogue process on social protection and livelihoods based on Ford Foundation experiences in southern Africa.

Reflections:

A number of insights and reflections surfaced from the process of undertaking this research. They are summarised below.

Reflection 1: Reflections on purpose and underlying assumptions:

While there seems to be superficial agreement by interview participants of both the purpose of the SAFL and the SSCA, it is apparent that there are many different and unexamined interpretations, assumptions and concepts underpinning each person's understanding. For example the meaning of the word "food system", what constitutes "desired change" and assumptions about how change happens is different for different people. This highlights the potential for miscommunication amongst stakeholders who may think they are speaking about the same thing, but are in fact missing each other in quite fundamental ways. It appears that insufficient time has been given within the SAFL generally to making the inherent assumptions, interpretations and positions apparent. Exploring people's understanding about purpose also raised the potential "killer assumption" about the scalability of interventions, where *"the determinants of success in smallholder farming are often enormously local and context specific"*.

Reflection 2: Reflections on methodology

Several research participants commented that the Food Lab's theory of change had not been made explicit to the broader SSCA. This ties in with the point made in Reflection 1 that people's assumptions about how change happens differs amongst participants within the SSCA. Since the reflections on methodology are premised on the U-process and the theory of change that underpins it, some of the key assumptions are included below.

The SAFL's theory of change

The Lab's theory of change is that complex issues cannot be solved by one player but by bringing together a microcosm of key and influential players of the social system concerned in a spirit of dialogue one can generate a new and perhaps more collective understanding of the system and one's role in it – including what is working and what is not. Moreover, the new relationships and new appreciation of the range of diverse perspectives can create new ideas and new possibilities that were not visible or possible before. A collective design approach, predicated on a willingness to try out new ideas and learn together, to discard what doesn't work and to refine what looks promising, ensures that new ideas are translated into concrete action. The U-process thus assumes that systemic change becomes possible when one collectively sees the system with new eyes, open oneself – individually and collectively – to reframing and re-visioning the situation, and engages together in bringing the desired system into being. To be sustainable, these changes need to happen at the level of the individual, organisations and wider system of which one is a part.

To what degree have participants' thinking, perceptions and relationships changed?

Given that the U-process is premised on transforming perspectives and thinking as well as transforming relations, to what degree has the SSCA been able to achieve both?

With regard to transformation in thinking or perception, there is no single answer to this question, in part because the answer to this question is so subjective – what might be a new way of thinking for one person may not be new for another – and partly because participants entered the process at such different starting points. For some there certainly have been profound shifts in thinking and letting go of known and usual ways of thinking about the issue. However, this is unlikely to be everyone's experience. Likewise, for those who have been involved in the SAFL for a while, it would seem that most have gained new insights and ideas throughout the process, but whether this translates into an entirely new way of thinking and seeing the issues is difficult to answer. And even if such shifts have taken place, a question that still remains is: *are the changes in ways people are thinking and seeing the world translating into new ways of tackling the issues and taking action?* The other related question that a number of research participants continued to ask during this learning history was whether the innovations are really innovative. If they are, this could be an indication that people's new ways of thinking has permeated how they think about both the challenges and the potential new ways of working that can be envisaged.

In reflecting on shifts and changes in relationships, probably the most apparent has been the depth of relationships and trust that has formed between members of the core SSCA group. During their interviews, all of the core members of the SSCA spoke of their deepening relationships with one another and what a profound impact this had on how they worked together. Firstly, the trust and respect for one another grew enormously in the process of working together over the years and was grounded in a common worldview and approach to complex issues. This trust in one another enabled the individuals to bring more of themselves into the space and process, "warts and all". The strength of these relationships also allowed the core group to trust in the process more, in particular its emergent nature, without necessarily knowing exactly what they were doing or where they were going. This in turn seems to have enabled the SSCA "system" to self-regulate or course-correct. This level of trust extended to the relationship between the SSCA core team and PLAAS, which translated into how the *"material aspects of the project"* were managed. Relationships between the SSCA project team and several of the donors also appear to have taken a different route to the usual transactional relationships between funders and recipients. The immersion of donors as participants in the project was named as an important dimension in building trust and relationships and assisted in their growing understanding of the process. This in turn enabled very different conversations and interactions about funding and reallocation of funds.

In terms of relationships that have shifted amongst the SSCA participants, probably the best example is between the Mopani Farmers Union (MFU) and ZZ2 (a successful commercial farming operation). These organisations comprise farmers operating at very different scales, with a huge difference in resources available to them and vastly different levels of value chain integration, but who work in close physical proximity to one another and who had not until the SSCA, previously engaged with each other at all. A member of the MFU is leading this innovation and both players appear to be benefiting significantly from the relationship. Incidentally, this relationship also enabled the establishment of a relationship between MFU and the Department of Water Affairs, which was a door previously closed to MFU.

It is worthwhile noting that all these relationships have been developed among individuals. The question that has been raised is whether these relationships translate into institutional change within the organisations of which they are a part. At the same time, while most

participants are embedded within an institution, it seems that it is the individuals that are the agents for change, rather than an organisation or institution. If this is the case, *what does that mean for institutional transformation?*

How has the design and process enabled change?

At least two specific aspects of the SSCA process have been identified as enabling change. The first was the way in which the social dialogue events worked with diverse players and perspectives, creating opportunities for constructive dialogue and trust building and how it was able to constantly enrol and welcome new participants into the process. The second component that many interview participants emphasised, was the experiential, engaging and reflective nature of the learning journeys. These were highly effective for opening people up to other perspectives, challenging people's thinking and assumptions they held about the issue and other players, and for helping them see how much of their own embedded assumptions and interpretations cloud how they experience and interpret their experiences. The multi-day learning journeys were noted as being particularly transformative for relationships, as there was no easy way for participants to exit the process when things became heated or challenging, but also because there were spaces where people could relax and engage with each other more informally over several days. A final component that enabled some of the changes to occur was the fact that SSCA emerged from a set of long-standing relationships and conversations and that both the SAFL and SSCA are viewed as long-term initiatives.

What design and process questions have surfaced?

A number of questions on design and process surfaced during the learning history, which are summarised below.

What are the impacts and implications of through-flow?

The implication that change – which requires shifts in people's thinking and relationships – takes time, is that participants of a change lab such as the SSCA need to be in it for the long haul. The reality of the SSCA has been that there has been a high degree of through-flow. Of all the participants who have been involved in the SSCA (excluding the PLAAS, SAFL and Reos teams), only 15% of people attended three or more of the key SSCA events. In addition, only one participant who was present at the inception meeting was present at the transition lab, and of those that attended either of the rural learning journeys, a total of only 7 participants were present at the final transition lab. Retention is somewhat higher from an institutional perspective, with approximately 28% (14 out of 50) of organisations having attended three or more of the key SSCA events, even if, as was the case with a number of organisations, individuals from those organisations only attended one or two events at most.

The potential impact of this through-flow is different for different stages of the process. For example, fresh eyes and ways of thinking can be very useful in the dialogue phase of the U-Process. However in the co-creating phase where innovations are being developed, this through-flow may be more disruptive to making progress. It has also meant that some of those leading the innovations have not been through the entire process and therefore may more easily default into old ways of thinking, relating and acting.

How important is depth ("presencing") to the process?

From some accounts, the process lacked a certain degree of depth, especially in terms of deep personal transformation and reflection. As one of the SSCA facilitators articulated: *"My experience of U-Processes is that the bottom of the U gets squashed between an extended sensing period and an extended creating or co-creating process"*. Having said this, questions

have been raised about how important it is to go through a full U-Process in order to shift the system. As one interview participant suggested, perhaps, *“so much of what doesn’t work [is] because we just simply just don’t talk to each other”*, and that simply getting people into a room together to share and listen is a sufficient catalyst for change.

It appears that much of what the SSCA has been working with has been about beginning to build trust and bridge relationships amongst players that do not normally engage with each other. As such, depth of process may not have been that important. However, there is a question regarding how deep the existing relationships go and whether they would withstand any major conflicts. It also seems that when engaging with complex issues for which there is not simple answer, then depth of process, especially at a personal level, is important, as one needs to truly let go of one’s old solutions and paradigms for something new to emerge.

What is the balance between reflection and action, process and content?

Inherent in the U-Process is a tension between reflection and action, process and content that needs to constantly be managed. There have certainly been moments within the SSCA, such as during the transition lab, where the system’s need and readiness for action and content was missed. This was articulated by some members of the SSCA hosting team during the debriefing session of the transition lab. At the same time, it is important to continue to create opportunities for reflecting and receiving feedback from the system on what is and is not working and how the process needs to be adjusted to address what is needed. As one of the research participants pointed out, *“If we believe that change starts with us shifting our mental models, what makes talking part of the change process? When is talking a ‘talk-shop’ and when is it talking for change?”*

Reflection 3: Working with power

Given the country’s history, most South Africans generally associate notions of power with “power over” – with dominance, exclusion, privilege and rank. However, there are many dimensions to power, not just the dark, degenerative side. There is also a generative power, namely “power with,” “power to” and “power within”: power that empowers, shifts perceptions and galvanizes action. This section explores both degenerative and generative aspects of power and how conscious the SSCA and its members have been of both, by exploring relevant dimensions of power at a contextual, internal SSCA and personal level.

Power and the contextual environment

Issues relating to the degenerative aspects of power and how they play out with regard to smallholder farmers framed a great deal of the SSCA. However, it appears that these issues have not been sufficiently foregrounded in the delivery of the SSCA. Issues of power asymmetry were also raised by some of the interview participants. In discussing these issues during the validation workshop in November 2013, questions relating to methodology and the Lab’s theory of change were raised, namely:

How does the U, and our use of it, manage the politics of food and the politics of change? And is it a politically (and economically) naive approach?

A number of people raised the question of whether the SSCA had a sufficient understanding of the players, including both their leverage points and their constraints and whether it had identified the right institutions, but also the right individuals – individuals with power and influence – to bring about the change that is required.

Power within the SSCA

In assessing who interview participants generally perceived as important institutions, government and private sector were repeatedly highlighted. This is presumably because of their perceived power in the food system. Based on Figure 3, support from the private sector drifted over time, while government participation steadily increased. What is interesting to note is that the NGO sector was by far the most represented sector in all the events, with smallholder farmers becoming increasingly involved but still in the minority.

It is interesting to reflect on who people view as important players. As one of the participants pointed out, this *“reflect[s] our fixation on positional power, and lack of appreciation for other forms of power and how to exercise them effectively for change”*. Linked to this is a belief that many in the SSCA seem to hold, that effecting change is dependent upon the involvement of certain important and influential players, rather than focusing on what agency already exists within the SSCA and those who are committed and energised. Focusing on certain groups that have a certain kind of power may also blind one to alternative sources of power or opportunities for action and innovation. It seems that this dependency myth can compromise taking appropriate action, for fear of losing seemingly powerful and crucial players.

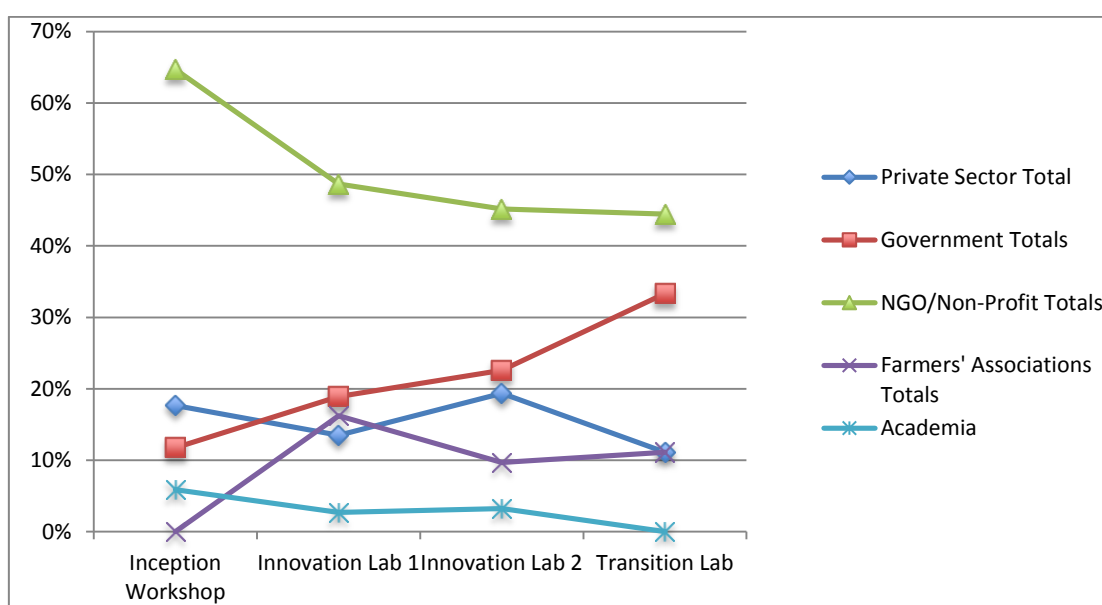


Figure 3: Percentage attendance of the key SSCA social dialogue events by sector.

Another questions that was raised was about whether the SSCA had been strategic enough about leveraging the *“tempered radicals”* (*“... people who want to succeed in their organizations yet want to live by their [own] values or identities, even if they are somehow at odds with the dominant culture of their organizations”* (Meyerson, 2001)), that exist in various institutions. There are a number of people within the SSCA *“who are in quite traditional jobs, and who are themselves risk takers, and see the bigger picture, and are fed by the kind of approach that the SAFL is working on”*. The question here is *how can these individuals be better supported as they face the constraints and challenges within their own organisations?*

It is clear that the focus of the SSCA has been steered and shaped by those with assumed and perceived power, in particular by donors and academics. More recently, the SSCA became alert to its internal power dynamics and potential power asymmetries, and began to engage very actively in this enquiry. This inquiry it particularly important as it moves towards placing smallholder farmers at the centre of the second phase of the project. In doing so, it will need to engage with and challenge a number of existing assumptions and dilemmas around power

and the entrenched patterns of perceived and assumed power and powerlessness. The first dynamic is one of assumed and perceived power, which is socially legitimized. As has already been highlighted, most people readily defer to institutional, positional and expert power. A second challenge is around the resourcing of the project and the interconnectedness between power and money, and who ends up steering and dominating the discourse. A third consideration is the degree to which the historical legacy of the country still plays itself out in the psyches, behaviours and actions of South Africans. For example, white men and women and those with formal education were on the whole vocal in the SSCA events. This is in contrast the smallholder farmers who participated in the innovation labs many of whom may not have felt comfortable in expressing themselves, especially in the face of the high number of participants holding institutional, positional or expert power, where the majority of conversations were occurring in English, and where the form of presenting and discussing issues may have been done in an unfamiliar and inaccessible form. These underlying dynamics surfaced a number of questions and dilemmas, including the following:

- *How do we place smallholder farmers central to the SSCA without slipping into naïve populism?*
- *How do we facilitate and enable the quieter voices, especially those of smallholder farmers, in a way that is not patronising?*
- *How do we enable everyone to be powerful, not just a small minority?*
- *How do we balance expert knowledge with other sources of knowledge?*
- *How do we navigate the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion?*
- *How do we create the conditions for conflict to be generative?*

Power and the individual

It appears that in some cases, individuals have been blind to their own impact within the SSCA group, whether it be in terms of how they over-exercise their power, or it's opposite – where individuals shy away or are unable to adequately exercise their power in the room. It also seems that for the SSCA group as a whole, the connection has not been made between the personal change that is required in order for the system to change. This is a major challenge for the SAFL leadership in general, and the SSCA in particular to bring personal depth and transformation to the process, especially as it seeks to move into the co-creating phase.

Reflection 4: Reflections on the flow of money

The SSCA was able to mobilise sufficient resources that enabled it to become far bigger and ambitious than initially envisaged. It also meant that those actively working on the programme were able to immerse themselves fully in the process because there was a basic but sufficient retainer available. This sufficiency of financial resources for the first phase of the SSCA is in stark contrast with the incredibly lean times that the SAFL faced, especially in 2011. A question that surfaces is: what enabled the money to flow for the SSCA? A number of possible reasons were cited, namely that the topic of smallholder farmers was timely, that the SSCA was housed within credible academic institutions, and finally the fact that most of the funders were participants of the SSCA enabled them to develop a much better understanding of and appreciation for the process, which in turn allowed for a great deal of flexibility in how the funds were spent and, at times, reallocated.

While the SSCA was fairly well resourced, it is important to bear in mind that that the SAFL was kept alive during the lean times by the passion and commitment of core SAFL members, and that the SSCA was built on the foundations of a number of long-term relationships that been established within the SAFL over the years. In addition, a number of research participants believe that the value of the lean times lay in demonstrating the deep passion and commitment of the core team, which in turn helped strengthen the trust and respect within

this small group. Furthermore, not having the pressures of a funder or a project or deliverables allowed the SAFL members to engage in a very deliberate, mindful process and to respond to what was needed, rather than what was expected from donors. In a world where it is assumed that money is essential for taking action, it may be useful for the SAFL to explore what processes may benefit from being released from the pressures of donor expectations and what activities can be undertaken with little or no budget.

Reflection 5: Reflections on the relationship between social dialogue and research

While a number of people in the SAFL and SSCA leadership were excited by the potential for rigorous research to enrich and deepen the dialogue, it appears that the potential for this was not fully realised in the first phase of the SSCA, primarily because the full results and findings of the research were not available until after the first phase had been completed. What this meant for the first phase of the SSCA was that the dialogue process was not able to leverage fully off the research. Bearing this in mind, certain components of the research that were introduced into the social dialogue process, such as the smallholder typologies by Cousins and Chikazunga (2013), were helpful to several participants in helping them differentiate what class or type of smallholders their projects were serving. Another key contribution of the research was to help demonstrate that the food system, including farming systems, farmer types, markets and value chains are much more diverse, differentiated and complex than anyone had previously realised and that this realisation certainly helped inform the learning process for the participants in the project.

While most of the research results were not available during the first phase of the SSCA, a number of participants indicated that the interaction between the PLAAS and SAFL teams in the design of both the research and the social dialogue processes was mutually beneficial and a highly generative relationship, and the presence of the researchers in the social dialogue events brought an intellectual rigour that greatly strengthened the process.

Implications for the SAFL and SSCA

This section synthesises ideas that emerged from interviews, various group discussions about suggested ways forward, the historical narrative, and the reflections and their implications, for the SAFL in general, and where relevant for the SSCA in particular. It is divided into three sub-sections. The first deals with the potential future focus and roles of both the SAFL and the SSCA; the second focuses on what might be required of the leadership of the SAFL and/or SSCA going forward; and the third are some practical considerations for both the SAFL and the SSCA.

The potential focus and roles of the SAFL and SSCA

One of the potential roles of the SAFL is for it to alert South Africans (and potentially those beyond our borders) to the real dangers of not paying sufficient attention to the dysfunctions and failures of our national and regional food system, and to contribute towards actions that can address these failings. To achieve this, the SAFL needs to continue to draw on its strength as a convenor and enabler of dialogue and social change processes, which create spaces for participants to tap into their own humanity and which create an incubator for social innovation and experimentation. In addition, there is a growing call for the SAFL to play a much stronger advocacy role in both the policy and public arena in order to raise the profile and importance of investing in food systems change towards a system that works for all.

Within the broader context of the SAFL, there is a growing interest and enthusiasm for focusing the SSCA activities on the concept of a nourishing local food economy, that is

empowering and nurturing to local, mostly rural communities, but which at the same time engages in the broader food system of South Africa, and in particular moves towards bridging the artificial rural-urban divide.

What might be required of the SAFL and/or SSCA leadership?

This section explores a number of questions, which are articulated below.

How does the SAFL leadership need to be in this process?

This learning history points to a need for leaders of this process to become increasingly vigilant of their own assumptions and defaults that contribute to keeping things stuck. These include the following:

- To pay attention to the limits, and assumptions inherent in the SAFL's theory of social change, and how to engage with others who hold very different views on how change happens;
- To sharpen its language, and recognise when to be explicit about the meanings assigned to terms, such as "innovation", "prototyping" "presencing, "transformation", and the assumptions behind the use of these words;
- To catch the dependency myths the leadership may buy into, that diminish the sense of agency within the SAFL and to focus on what the SAFL can change, while remaining aware of structural constraints; and
- For individuals to cultivate greater self-awareness of their own thoughts, perceptions, feelings, actions and reactions, as the SAFL more deeply engages with questions of power, difference and conflict.

What does the SAFL leadership need?

There is a strong call to create the conditions, spaces and opportunities for deep conflict and differences to surface. These conditions may include asking members of the SAFL leadership what it is they need in order to feel safe to enter such a process, which is by its very nature emotionally exposing and personally risky for many, and which is invariably going to tap into people's vulnerabilities.

What does the SAFL leadership need to know and understand in this work as it moves forward?

A number of suggestions were made during the learning history that could help the SAFL understand its internal and external system better. They are as follows:

- Follow up with participants who are no longer part of the SSCA or the SAFL to determine their reasons for no longer engaging in the process.
- Conduct a power analysis: What might that look like, given that all those involved in the SAFL (including the facilitators) are inside the system? What experience do other initiatives have of this?
- Engage with the Sustainable Food Lab to see what the SAFL can learn from them.
- Follow up with the innovations developed in 2010 that have not taken off to find out what the SAFL can learn from them.
- For any new social dialogue process that the SAFL embarks on, to spend time interrogating who the "right" people are for that particular process.

What does the SAFL leadership need to bear in mind when designing and implementing any process?

A number of suggestions and insights regarding enrolment and participation, design principles and funding considerations were identified.

The learning history highlighted the importance that those involved in selecting participants need to understand the political and institutional landscape better – so understanding who the right people are within an institution to target. However, this needs to be balanced with where the existing relationships are, and to work with the willing, avoiding the trap of becoming too analytical and rational in the process. It seems that part of what enables social change processes such as change labs to work is creating conditions where opportunities for synchronicity and surprise are maximised.

In the enrolment process, it is important to ask the question of why particular people are being enrolled, to pay attention to the default power dynamics that are likely to play out and to make sure that some thought is given to balancing participation between the traditionally more and less powerful voices. In selecting individual participants, thought needs to be given to their potential constraints in terms of participation and what impact this might have on the process itself. At the same time potential participants need to understand that what they will be entering what is intended as a long-term process and that both the individuals and the group are likely to benefit most from consistent and on-going participation throughout the process. If the process is a change lab, it is also useful to point out that it is those who have been through the entire process are the ones best positioned to lead the innovations. These ideals and intentions need to be balanced by a high degree of flexibility on the part of the hosting team, to work with the realities and constraints of the participants themselves. It may therefore be useful to have an open conversation about what this might look like at the early stages of a process.

In terms of design principles, it is important to ask upfront whether the U-process is best suited for achieving the intended outcomes of any particular process. Is the issue being tackled a “stuck” complex problem (rather than a complicated or simple one), where other approaches have failed to bring about fundamental shifts? If it is, the next question is how deeply participants need to go through the U-Process given the intention of the process. If depth is important, then one of the clear design principles is to create a container where deep relationships can be developed, which in turn enable generative conflict and challenging dialogue to surface, which in itself can be a major catalyst for change. In creating this container, creating trust and safety within the group is very important. Other principles and considerations for both design and implementation are as follows:

- Create spaces for unpacking assumptions about terms, concepts, and language;
- Exploring and working with multiple ways of knowing and communicating;
- Be mindful of balancing action and reflection, process and content and to become alert to when each is needed;
- In both the design of social dialogue processes and in developing innovations, consider what the most appropriate scale is for a particular intervention;
- Apply the principle of co-creation: while there may be a deliberate design and process in place, can one create more spaces where participants can shape and give feedback to the process? This also feeds in with the principle of creating the conditions for generative conflict to surface; and
- As all these processes take time, the duration of individual social dialogue processes needs to be seriously considered.

Finally, from a funding perspective, much of what the SAFL is seeking funding for can probably be sought from conventional donors, although conventional donors are generally not willing to invest heavily in facilitated processes. There are some processes and activities that are “high risk”, such as funding innovations that have not yet been created, and have no people or institutions assigned to them. For these high-risk activities, it may be worth exploring with

donors that the SAFL has good relationship with, whether they would consider funding these activities, as well as to seek other “non-conventional” donors.

In the process of developing relationships with new donors, the best way is to immerse them in the process, ideally by inviting them on a learning journey, where they can experience first hand of what the process is about. All donors should also be encouraged to be participants of the process.

Practical considerations for the SAFL and the SSCA

A number of practical suggestions were made during the interviews and subsequent discussions that relate specifically to structural aspects of the SAFL, such as the composition of the steering group, its organisational model, where it should be located geographically and the most suitable institutional home.

Specific practical considerations for the SSCA related to: facilitating in the vernacular wherever possible, and designing processes that speak first and foremost to smallholder farmers while not alienating any of the other stakeholders; dealing with the logical challenges of innovation teams being spread across the provinces; ensuring the correct balance and representation of participants; and aspects and issues to be considered in the scope for the second phase of the SSCA.

Conclusion

A learning history is hard to “conclude”. One set of questions, once posed and engaged with, reveals another layer of questions, and so the excavation process continues. For the sake of drawing a line, however temporary, at this point, this conclusion will refract the freshest set of questions through the lens of four tensions. These tensions all deal with the fundamental task of a convenor, such as the SAFL, of trying to create a set of enabling conditions for change.

Tension 1: how to create conditions for people to experience different ways of *seeing* and *being*, without forfeiting *content* and *action*? The combination of three learning journeys with two innovation labs made it possible to focus on each of these at different times. Two factors are becoming apparent: the size of a group and the consistency of a group. It proved more possible to weave the elements of seeing and being with those of content and action in a workshop with a smaller group of innovation team leaders in January 2014. On the matter of consistency, the SSCA experience suggests limiting the number of newcomers after the sensing process, without closing the door when people with different perspectives and sources of influence knock on it.

Tension 2: how to create the conditions for a diverse people (holding different roles, priorities and ideologies) to build relationships and work together, without smoothing over disagreements on key issues? There are two things to try in future: 1) hold a round of peer-to-peer dialogue interviews during the sensing phase to surface assumptions about the issue (in the case of SSCA, small-scale farming) and to work with these assumptions during the relationship-building process; and 2) offer a skilled facilitator to each of the innovation teams as they form, someone who can help the group to work through disagreements as they arise.

Tension 3: how to create the conditions for less familiar ways of working – with *hands* and *heart* rather than just the *head* - without losing the necessary intellectual rigour? The aspect of timing is important here in establishing a rhythm of dialogue, research and innovation that

inform one another. This includes making theories of change more explicit as curiosity about them develops - not too early in the process and not too late.

Tension 4: how to create the conditions for a collective process with a microcosm of the “system” while giving sufficient attention to individuals? Specific learnings relate to the enrolment process and the process of ongoing relationships with participants. The SSCA project paid a lot of attention to identifying and recruiting specific people. Their enrolment could have more deliberately warmed them up, so that they embarked on the experience with more awareness of what kind of investment it would require from them in order to realise a new order of change and innovation. There are opportunities in future to provide more structured support to individuals – especially, perhaps the “tempered radicals” – to enable their leadership, both in their home institutions and within the SSCA.

The Food Lab and the Supporting Smallholder work continues and will no doubt continue to generate learning for all those involved. We look forward to pursuing our learning edges within the Food Lab. If you're reading this as a convenor, facilitator or participant of another change process, we welcome engagement with you about what you're learning.

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List of acronyms

AFSUN	African Food Security Urban Network
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DAFF	National Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DEA	National Department of Environmental Affairs
DoA	National Department of Agriculture
DRDLR	National Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DWA	National Department of Water Affairs
GTZ	German Organisation for Technical Cooperation
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
KZN	Kwazulu-Natal
LAMOSA	Land Access Movement of South Africa
LDA	Limpopo Department of Agriculture
MFU	Mopani Farmers' Union
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NBI	National Business Initiative
NDA	Nkuzi Development Association
NDP	National Development Plan
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
PPP	Public-Private-Partnerships
SAFL	Southern Africa Food Lab
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAT	Southern Africa Trust
SSCA	<i>Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture</i> project
STIAS	Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study
UCT	University of Cape Town
UCT GSB	UCT Graduate School of Business
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Why was the research commissioned?

The Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL) was created in 2009 by a group of concerned role players who recognised that transformation in the food system to one that works for all, requires a shared understanding of the food security problem, fresh thinking about possible solutions, and joint action. In the initial stages of the SAFL, a number of initiatives or “innovations” were identified – ideas that the role players felt could contribute in one way or another to transform the food system, and ideas that they had particular energy to pursue. One particular innovation that gained traction towards the end of 2011 was a project called *“Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture: A social dialogue and learning project”* (SSCA). This project was designed to ensure that research is used to support processes of social dialogue, policy debate, media dissemination and institutional learning among stakeholders involved in the development of smallholder agriculture. The first two-year phase of this project was co-funded by the Ford Foundation, the Southern Africa Trust (SAT), Oxfam GB, and the Mellon Foundation and commenced at the beginning of 2012. This first phase of the SSCA came to an end in February 2014.

Over the course of the first phase, the SSCA project included several major multi-stakeholder social dialogue processes. Recognising the novel dimensions of the initiative, and its likely implications for the emerging agenda of the SAFL, leaders in the SSCA project called for a participatory action research project to document and learn from the process and experiences of both the SSCA project and the SAFL. Taking some time to pause and reflect on the experiences of the SSCA during the latter part of 2013 and the first few months of 2014 seemed particularly appropriate, given that the SAFL had initiated a leadership transition during this time period. It was felt that insights from this study could specifically inform the kind of leadership that might be required of both the SAFL and the SSCA team in the future.

What was the purpose of the research?

The intentions of the research were four-fold. In addition to documenting what had been done over the course of the SSCA project, learning from it, and informing the future work of the SAFL, the research was also intended to contribute to the global conversation on social change strategies. This document addresses the first three of these intentions and provides the raw material for future development of academic papers that will explore, *inter alia*, questions regarding how social change strategies are facilitated and implemented.

For whom was this research undertaken?

This research has been undertaken with a number of audiences in mind. The primary audience are individuals directly involved and engaged in the research in some way, either through being interviewed or participating in formal or informal discussions. The second is the broader SAFL leadership, who were not directly involved in this study (such as members of the SAFL Steering Group who were not present at the Steering Group meeting where the research was discussed). Since the insights and lessons from this study may well be relevant to a wider audience, including the broader SSCA group and the social change community, the executive summary has been written as a stand-alone summary report, with this broader audience in mind.

How has this document been developed and written?

The methodology chapter (Chapter 2) will deal in greater detail with the research approach and tools used. What is worth mentioning at this stage is that the general approach to both the research and its documentation has been one of drawing on people's personal insights and experiences, rather than merely the hard "facts" of the matter. Further, it has been characterised by iteratively learning together from what was surfacing from the research as it unfolded, rather than completing a final written product before presenting it to those who are central to the SSCA and SAFL. For these reasons, the document is not an objective synthesis of a set reality, but rather an attempt to collectively make meaning from multiple perspectives and also to allow individuals to draw their own conclusions from what has emerged.

As the primary researcher and documenter, I have chosen to include my own voice and perspectives within the document in the first person, rather than try and eliminate my subjective perspectives. I have done this for a number of reasons. Firstly, I see myself as part of the SAFL, and thus need to include my voice as one of the multiple perspectives that has created the narrative of this document. Secondly I have been the primary person to synthesise, analyse and begin to make meaning of what has emerged. Given that this research is about individual and collective meaning-making, which is a fundamental subjective and personal endeavour, it seems particularly important to make my own subjectivity and perspectives explicit. At the same time I have done my best to reflect the spectrum and diversity of voices and opinions of those who participated in this study in as impartial a way as possible.

How to read this document?

Since there is some potentially sensitive material that has been disclosed in this report, the intention is for this to remain an internal document, available to the SAFL and SSCA core leadership. The request is that this document not be distributed further without prior permission from the SAFL Director, Scott Drimie.

If you are reading this introduction and simply want to glean the main insights that have emerged from the research, it is recommended that you read just the executive summary. However, if you are interested in the details of the SSCA and what it means for the SAFL in particular, then it may well be worthwhile to read the entire report, which, excluding the executive summary, is divided into five chapters. This first introductory chapter is followed by a chapter on methodology (Chapter 2), and a chapter providing a historical narrative of the SAFL and SSCA project (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 synthesises a collection of insights and reflections that emerged during the research, while Chapter 5 explores some potential implications of these insights for both the SSCA and the SAFL. It is worthwhile mentioning that this document has not been written with an academic audience in mind. Thus, certain sections that are standard academic practice, such as a literature review are not included in this report.

If you choose to read the full document, you will come across a range of different people and organisations. For easy reference, a brief summary of key individuals and organisations, and their relationship to the SAFL and/or the SSCA are provided in Appendix 1.

In reading this document please be aware that this is not a final product with a set of definitive implementable recommendations, but rather a contribution to evolving conversations. While we as the research team (namely Milla McLachlan, Rebecca Freeth and I, Karen Goldberg) have done our best to capture the main insights and reflections, it is inevitable that there will have been many gems that we have missed. You might also find that some of what is encapsulated here is well aligned with your worldview or what you already know, while other components

jar with how you see the world or the conclusions you draw from what has been written. We hope that whatever your response is to this work that it can enrich the learning within the SAFL, as we collectively sense, feel and imagine our way into the future.

In reading the main report, a few components require clarification. Firstly, quotes that were drawn out of either interviews or recorded group conversations have been colour-coded according to the individual’s relationship to how close to the centre of the SSCA design and delivery process they had been. This was done because of a sense I had fairly early on in the analysis that those most central to the process tended to have quite convergent experiences, while the views of those more peripheral, were much more diverse. This colour coding also provides some context to the quotes when they are not directly attributed to an individual. The categories are as follows:

Quotes in Red:

The core SSCA team.

Quotes in Orange:

The SSCA support team, which included key members of the Steering Group. I also include my own quotes which were recorded and used in the document in this section, and where appropriate indicate that they are my opinions.

Quotes in Green:

Participants of the SSCA. Quotes from the evaluation forms filled out at the end of the various social dialogue processes are also included here.

Quotes in Blue:

SAFL Steering group members who were not directly involved in the SSCA.

A detailed list of the participants of the research and which categories they were assigned to, is included in Appendix 2.

These quotes are mostly included in speech-bubbles in Chapter 3 (Historical narrative) while they are mostly incorporated into the text in Chapter 4 (Reflections).

Apart from speech-bubbles for these direct quotes, a number of other types of “call-outs” are used in Chapter 3 in particular. They are as follows:

Key events that occurred, external to, but relevant, to the SAFL and/or SSCA

Direct quotes from interviews or recorded discussions

Quotes and references from literature

My own musings and thoughts

CHAPTER 2: Methodology

In line with the collaborative learning-by-doing approach intrinsic to the SAFL, the SAFL leadership decided to undertake this study focusing on the SSCA project as a lens through which to reflect and learn, based on an action research methodology called a *“learning history”*.

Central to action research is its commitment to integrating action and reflection, theory and practice, through a process of experiential learning. Action research engages with issues of real concern, *“seeking to address issues of significance concerning the flourishing of human persons, their communities and the wider ecology in which we participate”* (Reason & Bradbury 2008 p.4). Given its intention of driving social change, it becomes *“an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice”* (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p.13). For this reason, great importance is placed on conducting research in a participatory manner, with or by insiders of the organisation, community or subject being studied (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p.2; Wilson, 2009, p.189).

The learning history approach was originally developed by researchers from MIT’s Society for Organizational Learning (Roth & Kleiner, 1998). According to Gearty (2006, p.3), a learning history is *“an action research approach to learning that seeks to bring analysis and story together in a way that has value for those originally involved in the case as well as those seeking to learn from it.”* A learning history can be described as a *“jointly told tale”* (Van Maanen 1998) between the researcher as outsider, and participants as insiders. Researchers in the United States developed this approach with a specific view to enabling learning from experience, as opposed to learning from fact and analysis (Roth & Kleiner, 1998; Roth & Bradbury 2008). According to Gearty (2009, p.25), *“learning history revels in the messy human story... So it charts an event or occurrence of significance from the perspectives and experiences of those who have been involved.”*

In line with the learning history approach, the research process included the following steps:

1. Design of the research methodology;
2. Interviews;
3. Interview analysis;
4. Desktop review;
5. Drafting an initial SSCA historical narrative and drawing out initial insights;
6. A collaborative validation workshop;
7. Iterative refinement of the narrative and the emerging themes;
8. Presentation of key insights at a SAFL Steering Group meeting; and
9. Finalisation of report.

Each of these steps is elaborated below.

1. Design of the research methodology

In discussion with Milla McLachlan and Rebecca Freeth, who made up the supervisory and support team to this research, a total of 12 individuals were identified as important to interview. They were as follows:

1. Andries du Toit – Director of PLAAS and instrumental in securing funding for the SSCA.
2. Busi Mdaka – Senior Manager at the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), who has become a major champion of the SSCA.

3. Canny Geyer – Oxfam GB.
4. Davison Chikazunga – PLAAS research intern.
5. Dineo Ndlanzi – part of the SSCA support team, primarily responsible for logistics of the SSCA.
6. Kenneth Carden – Part of the SSCA core team.
7. Lawrence Mkhalihi – Biowatch, one of the active SSCA participants.
8. Milla McLachlan – Former Director of the SAFL.
9. Paula Nimpuno – Ford Foundation.
10. Rebecca Freeth – Part of the core SSCA, leading on process design and facilitation.
11. Scott Drimie – New Director of the SAFL and part of the core SSCA team.
12. Vanessa Sayers – Partner at Reos Partners, who lead the SAFL design and facilitation process until mid-2012.

These individuals were chosen either because of their depth of experience with or knowledge of the SAFL or SSCA process, or because of the diversity of perspectives and experiences they could offer to this research.

During this step, an initial timeline of the SAFL and SSCA events was developed, which would help in the process of piecing the information emerging from the interviews and the SAFL documentation together. In addition, an interview guide was developed, focusing on the following high-level questions:

- How has our thinking about the purpose and methods of the SAFL evolved over time?
- The theory of change used in the SAFL and SSCA is that large system change involves change at individual, organisational and systemic levels. What, if any, changes have emerged at individual and organisational levels?
- What is shifting in how leaders within the SAFL and SSCA see the problem of food security?
- What are the implications of learning among leaders and stakeholders in the SAFL and SSCA for how social change strategies are facilitated and implemented?

The interview guide used during the interviews is included in Appendix 3.

2. Interviews

All but one of the 12 people originally identified were interviewed between the end of October and the middle of November 2013 (See Appendix 2). The interviews were semi-structured and were based on the interview guide (Appendix 3). Prior to each interview, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form (See Appendix 4). The consent form included a clause indicating that their quotes would be unattributed. With permission, all interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed for interview analysis.

3. Interview analysis

All transcripts were read through to check for accuracy of transcription and were sent to participants for their input and comments, including indicating any sections of their interviews they did not want to have quoted in any documentation. Once this was complete, I began to piece together a more detailed narrative of the SSCA within the broader timeline of the SAFL, based on participants' recollections and insights. At the same time, Milla and I organised an internal synthesis workshop. I had read through each transcript once and we

spent the day reading through some of the transcripts again and began to draw out some preliminary insights and themes. I then continued this process on my own.

4. Desktop review

Parallel to the interview analysis, I began reading the internal SAFL and SSCA documents, such as workshop reports, to help augment the historical narrative as well as the themes that emerged from the interviews. This information was integrated fully into the final report (see Step 9).

5. Drafting an initial SSCA historical narrative and drawing out initial insights

The first draft of the report primarily involved drafting the initial historical narrative of the SSCA. While the study had chosen to focus on the SSCA, I soon realised that the story of the SSCA Project could not be fully understood or appreciated without understanding the story of the SAFL and the broader external context. Thus, the narrative wove in all these aspects.

Some initial reflections and insights were also included, though at this stage, they were still very rudimentary.

The aim during this stage of writing was to develop an engaging narrative that honoured the nuances of the individual stories that had been shared while at the same time stimulating further inquiry and exploration.

In the process of drafting this document, the question of whether or not to attribute quotes to specific people strongly surfaced. As is usual in most research that involves interviewing people, we had initially committed to the interviewees that we would keep their interviews anonymous. However, as the research unfolded it became clear that a great deal of learning would be lost for the core SAFL/SSCA leadership if quotations weren't attributed, especially when this study was in the first place to allow the SAFL/SSCA leadership to learn from the project and from one another. At the same time, we needed to honour the spirit in which participants of the research had shared their experiences and so it was decided that that we would keep the quotes anonymous for the first draft but raise this question with participants at the validation workshop set for the end of November.

6. Collaborative validation workshop

A total of 14 individuals participated in a collaborative half-day workshop set for the 27th November 2013 at UCT GSB. This included 7 of the 11 people interviewed, as well as additional members of the SAFL. Appendix 2 indicates who participated in this workshop.

The primary intention of this workshop was to validate and enrich the draft learning history by inviting and welcoming workshop participants to comment and add their perspectives on both the historical narrative and the emerging themes and to stimulate reflection and learning, on the SSCA project in particular, and the SAFL more broadly.

Specific objectives of the workshop included:

1. Providing the next step in the crafting of our “jointly told tale” of the SSCA and its implications for the SAFL and social change strategies;
2. To agree on the broad strokes of the historical narrative and to record responses to the narrative;

3. To deepen the insights and reflections that had emerged through initial analysis and from discussions at the workshop; and
4. To generate and further develop themes emerging from the narrative.

The comments, discussions and insights from this workshop were used in the further refinement of both the historical narrative and the development of key reflections and insights.

In discussing the issue of attribution, there was a strong call for the quotes to be attributed to individuals, at least for the benefit of the internal group (which included the original people interviewed and the participants of the validation workshop), but that any such documentation be kept confidential. This issue required further consideration for the final document, as some of the people interviewed had done so on the premise of non-attribution and this needed to be respected. The way in which this has finally been resolved is articulated in Step 9.

7. Iterative refinement of the narrative and the emerging themes

A second draft of the narrative and further development of the reflections, insights and themes was undertaken between December 2013 and February 2014, based on the discussions during and recommendations emerging from the validation workshop.

8. Presentation of key insights at an SAFL Steering Group meeting

Some of the key insights from the research process were shared with the SAFL Steering Group on the 17th February 2014, which was attended by a total of 13 people (See Appendix 2 for who attended this meeting). For five of those present, this was their first exposure to the research. The discussions and feedback from this presentation were incorporated into the final report.

9. Finalisation of report

This document represents the final report of this study. It incorporates and synthesises the range of views from the interviews and from the various discussions and insights gleaned from the various workshops and presentations made. In addition, I was able to have several informal discussions with various people, who helped fill in some of the remaining gaps in understanding or knowledge. The desktop literature has also been incorporated, especially in support of finalising, augmenting and verifying the historical narrative.

In terms of attribution, the final decision was made that for the historical narrative section, individual's experiences and recollections would be directly attributed unless they were raising potentially sensitive issues or where participants did not want to be directly quoted. In the reflections section, quotes are generally not directly attributed, unless the context for their quotes would be lost, in which case, individuals gave their permission for direct attribution. All quotes were colour-coded according to the categories described on Page 4.

It is also worth noting that the insights that emerged from this research include but move beyond the original research questions (See Step 1). This is common in action research, where the process of undertaking the research in turn refines or alters the original research questions.

CHAPTER 3: The SAFL and SSCA Historical Narrative

Overview

The story of the SAFL as it is told here is largely a story of a confluence of like-minded people that somehow found their way to the SAFL and the SSCA, either through their passion for food systems change or because of their appreciation of the power of the U-Process (See Box 1 for more information), and more often than not a combination of both.

This chapter provides an overview of both the SSCA and the SAFL. It is based on a combination of people's recollections, and is supported by available SAFL documentation, such as workshop reports. Because much of this narrative deliberately draws out individual's personal experiences, rather than the "hard facts" of an event, there are places in the narrative where multiple, sometimes contrary views are represented. The intention is to stimulate and challenge the thinking and assumptions, especially within the SAFL/SSCA leadership. This is also in keeping with socially complex issues, where many players and many (often opposing) perspectives need to be accommodated in problem framing and resolution. You may also find inaccuracies in the storyline. If so, please don't hesitate to let the SAFL Director, Scott Drimie, know.

Figure 1 captures the main time periods of the SAFL, each of which is described separately in the sections below. These descriptions are augmented by direct quotes from interview participants or from group discussions, as well as reference to some of the key southern African events occurring during the relevant time period.

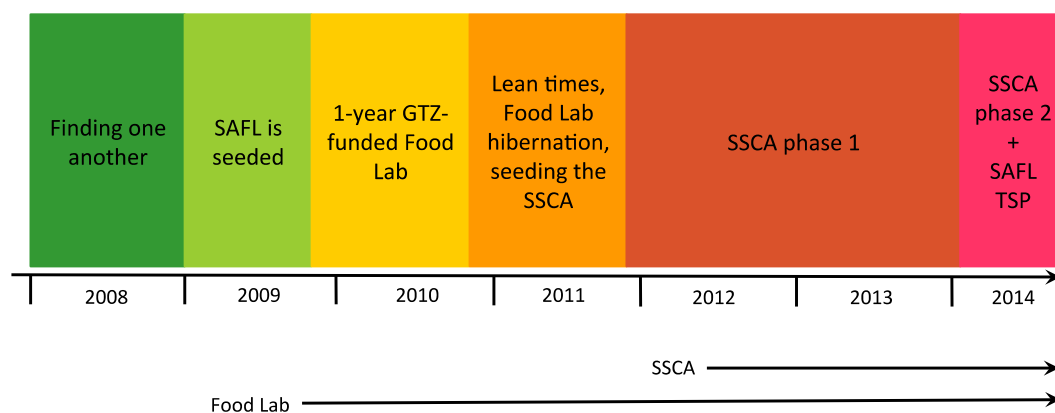


Figure 1: An overview of the main periods of the SAFL.

Period 1: Finding one another

Time period: 2004 – 2008

The story of the SAFL is a tapestry formed from the myriad of individual threads that have woven together in surprising and serendipitous ways for at least a decade. Depending on who one speaks to, the story of the SAFL will have a different beginning. But let us begin this narrative by focusing on the experiences of one of the founders of the SAFL, Milla McLachlan. For her, the story of the SAFL started in 2004 in New York City, where she found herself catching a cab with Adam Kahane after a planning meeting on the Bhavishya Initiative on child under-nutrition in India, which they had both attended. Adam, who was

working for Generon at that time, co-founded Reos Partners with eight other people, including Colleen Magner, in 2007. Milla had previously encountered the U-Process (See Box 1) while searching for innovative approaches to food and nutrition challenges, in her work at the World Bank. Adam had been involved in developing the concept with Otto Scharmer and others while working at Generon. Milla found the application of the U-Process to the food system, as demonstrated in the establishment of the Sustainable Food Lab, inspiring. Milla returned to South Africa from the United States in 2006 and later took up an academic position in the Division of Human Nutrition in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University.

Box 1: A brief description of the U-Process and Change Labs

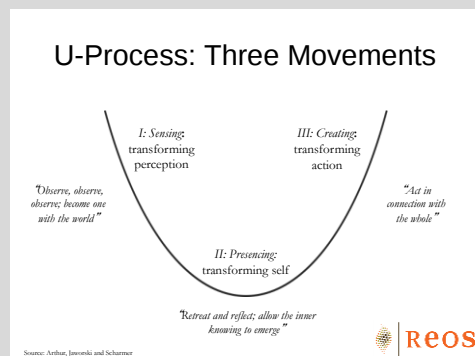
The U-Process:

The U-Process is a methodology for addressing highly complex challenges. It is a “social technology” for effecting the transformation of reality, within and across the worlds of business, government, and civil society.

In using the U-Process, an individual or team undertakes three activities or movements: **Sensing** the current reality of the system of which they are part, carefully and in depth; **Presencing** and reflecting to allow their “inner knowing” to emerge, about what is going on and what they have to do; and then **Realising** [or Creating], acting swiftly to bring forth a new reality.

~ http://www.generonconsulting.com/publications/papers/pdfs/U-Process_Social_Technology.pdf

Note: When we talk about the “left hand side” or the “right hand side” of the U we are referring to *Sensing* and *Realising* respectively.



Change Labs:

A Change Lab is a multi-stakeholder effort to address a complex social challenge. In a Change Lab, a committed alliance of influential government, business and civil society leaders engage in a rhythmic “U-Process” of Co-Sensing, Co-Presencing, and Co-Creating. These teams produce new insights about their system (including their own role in it) and new high-leverage options to shift it; new and stronger relationships within their team and with other stakeholders; strengthened capacities to work together and to lead and effect change; and a sustained stream of new actions through which they co-create a new social reality.

~ <http://aliainstitute.org/blog/track/solving-tough-problems-the-change-lab-approach-to-co-creating-new-social-realities/>

In 2008, the Development Bank of Southern African (DBSA) commissioned a research review of what was known about food security in South Africa. This review coincided with leadership shifts in the ANC and resolutions at the Polokwane Conference to prioritise the issue of food security in South Africa. It also coincided with a major food price crisis in 2007/2008. Milla had been contracted as a consultant to DBSA and oversaw the preparation of a series of research papers on the topic. Scott Drimie was one of the researchers. At the same time GTZ had commissioned Ralph Hamann at the University of Cape Town (UCT) to undertake research on the role of the private sector in enhancing food security in South Africa. Someone from DBSA suggested to Milla that she contact Ralph to interview him and to ask him to write a paper for the DBSA project.

After Polokwane, Zuma argued that one of the key focus areas would be food security ... it would have a rural bent... So as part of the preparation for this new government in waiting, Development Bank of Southern Africa facilitated a process where this question was really looked at and they brought in quite divergent views, mostly research and academic, to look at elements of it.

**Xenophobic attacks,
May 2008**

Record increases in the price of food and other basic commodities in the months preceding the attacks led a number of commentators to link the attacks to economic hardships within communities.
~CPS, 2009

Milla recalls meeting Ralph at Rhodes Memorial in early 2008. During their conversation they discovered that they shared both a similar frustration with the conventional ways of engaging with the issues of food security and a common interest and conceptual understanding of the U-Process. They became very excited about the idea of initiating a multi-stakeholder dialogue and change process around the issue of food security in South Africa using the U-Process and the associated Change Lab methodology that had so successfully been implemented by the Sustainable Food Lab. Ralph knew Colleen Magner, who had co-founded

Reos in South Africa and agreed to speak with her about whether she was interested in helping design and facilitate such a process, which she was, and so the conversation between Ralph, Milla and Colleen began.

Incidentally, Scott Drimie was also familiar with the U-Process. He had read up on the Mont Fleur Scenario process (See Box 2) during his studies in the early 2000s, which Adam Kahane had spearheaded. This influenced the paper he wrote for DBSA, which proposed some kind of transformative change process for the food system in South Africa.

Box 2: The Mont Fleur scenarios

The Mont Fleur scenario exercise was carried out in South Africa in 1991-92. The purpose of the exercise was to stimulate debate about how to shape policy over the next 10 years in the country. It brought together a diverse group of 22 prominent South Africans from across the political spectrum (including politicians, activists, academics and business people) to develop and disseminate a set of stories about what might happen in their country during this period.
<http://www.unep.org/ieacp/iea/training/manual/module6/1248.aspx>

Period 2: Seeding the SAFL

Time period: October 2008 – November 2009

The DBSA researchers came together to share their papers in October 2008. Colleen and Vanessa Sayers, one of the other Reos partners, were invited to this. A strong recognition emerged from this gathering of the importance of sharing the research with a broader group of people and that there were some significant synergies and convergence of world views in the room. As a result of the wide interest in taking this conversation further with a broader group of stakeholders, a working group was formed towards the end of 2008 to support the organisation and facilitation of a one-day workshop in early 2009. This process was championed by Milla and Ralph, with support from Colleen, Vanessa, and Scott, as well as Christina Golino and Thierry Giordano of DBSA, Tatjana von Bormann from WWF, Steve Mohlabi from the National Department of Agriculture (DoA), four people from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (namely Cameron Jacobs, Yuri Ramkissoo, Christine Jesseman and Tseliso Thipanyane), Doris Popp from GTZ, and Achieng Ojwang from the National Business Initiative (NBI). During this time Colleen worked closely with Milla and Ralph to design a process that had as its starting point the outcomes of the DBSA research but was envisaged as the start of a much longer-term process.

On the 25th February 2009, approximately 70 people gathered at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in Johannesburg. WWF funded the event. Several people who are still active in the SAFL today were at that meeting. In addition to Colleen, Scott, Milla, Ralph, and Tatjana who were part of the working group, notable participants were Adam Kahane,

Kenneth Carden who was working for Woolworths at the time, Ulli Klins, who at the time was working for GTZ, as well as Candice Kelly from the Sustainability Institute and Florian Kroll from the University of Witwatersrand, both of whom still serve on the SAFL Steering Committee.

A brief summary of the workshop is provided below. It is primarily based on excerpts from the workshop report (SAFL 2009a).

The GIBS conference in February 2009 struck me as being something quite different...It wasn't just a typical conference ... It was very much more interactive, breaking out into groups and then really clear that there were facilitators moving around to try and get the groups to coalesce around something.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- To share some recent research on food security;
- To discuss some of the “stuck issues” with regard to food security in South Africa – that is, challenges for which existing approaches are unlikely to achieve resolution;
- To share an approach for addressing sustainable food security through a multi-stakeholder collaboration process; and
- To explore possibilities for a way forward.

The workshop was divided into five main sessions, namely: 1) Why we are here? 2) How are we doing on food security? 3) A multi-stakeholder approach: What can be done? 4) What are the “stuck” issues? 5) The way forward.

During the workshop, participants raised the following as stuck issues:

Clusters	“Stuck” issues
Attitudes	Consumerism too high Politicisation and vested interests
Land reform and agriculture policy	Lack of enabling policy environment Land reform Commercial agriculture and smallholders
Infrastructure and capacity	Affordable food prices Lack of capacity and funding to implement projects Total neglect of agriculture Lack of government execution of policy, support and vision Lack of communication and enforcement of natural resource management best practice Agro-logistics
Innovation	Stuck in traditional view of types of agricultural products Sourcing food with regards to environmental sustainability Waste management Irrational fears of new technologies
Food prices Competitiveness and value chain	Access Food price determination and understanding Food prices Clear understanding of who owns the food supply chain – ensuring competition in food supply Competitiveness of value chains
Common understanding and vision	Food security is not a top development priority (political will and commitment) Lack of common understanding and vision Diversity of view points (conflict)

Clusters	"Stuck" issues
Alignment and coordination	Lack of coordination and integration between stakeholders and role players in food security Coordination of effort between public and private Political and business leadership and awareness Alignment of key players (government; civil society, private sector) Lack of alignment (common vision, strategy and action)

These clusters of stuck issues were further explored in small groups, each focusing on the following questions:

- What is unresolved (what is not working now)?
- What aspects of the issues could be resolved?
- Where do we start?
- Who needs to be involved to resolve the issue?

By the end of this workshop, it had become clear that there was a high level of commitment and enthusiasm around the issue of food security and that there was much excitement about the possibility of improved collaboration with one another. It was also clear that there were disparate understandings of the issues amongst participants.

Emanating from this workshop was strong agreement and endorsement that an inclusive, participatory process that allowed for the constructive exchange of information and perspectives between the different sectors was important, and that such dialogue would need to be linked to decisive action and strong leadership. Participants were unanimous in their interest and readiness to be part of a collaborative process going forward. Ralph, on behalf of the working group, indicated that the content and spirit of the discussions at the workshop would inform a proposal for the way forward.

One of the major outputs of that conference was that food security is a complex issue. It's an issue that's going to take ... collaborative work from different role players.

South African General Elections: April 2009

The 2009 general elections ushered in a new electoral mandate for the Government of South Africa leading it to prepare the Mid Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) that defines the priorities, strategic objectives and targets for the Government of South Africa for the period 2009 - 2014. These priorities have been expressed in the form of 12 outcomes that guide the planning and resource allocation process. Relevant outcomes include: a healthy life of all South Africans (Outcome 2); vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities with food security for all (Outcome 7); and sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life (Outcome 8). (The Presidency, 2009)

Emerging from the February workshop, a steering group, initially called the Southern Africa Food Security Change Lab Steering Group, was formed. This Steering Group consisted of Milla, Ralph, Colleen, Vanessa, Scott as well as Christina Golino (DBSA), Steve Mohlabi (DoA), Tatjana von Bormann (WWF), Cameron Jacobs (SAHRC), Miriam Altman (Human Science Research Council – HSRC), Edmore Mangoti (Action Aid), Brian Leroni (Massmart Holdings), Louise Duys (Unilever), Kenneth Carden (Woolworths) and Andre Nel (Pick 'n Pay). These meetings were initially funded by DBSA. Based on the outcomes of the workshop, a proposal for a multi-stakeholder process using a Change Lab approach was developed. The stated aim of the proposal was *"to build upon the multi-stakeholder workshop of February 2009 to develop an innovation- and action-oriented strategic alliance between business, government and civil society to enhance food security in southern Africa"* (SAFL, 2009b).

It had initially looked like the DBSA would fund the process. However, from several accounts, the senior management within DBSA seemed ambivalent about driving the process on food security any further, and so while key individuals, in particular Christina Golino, have remained involved and supportive of the process in their personal capacity, funding and support had to be sourced elsewhere.

One of the participants at the February workshop was Doris Popp from GTZ, the organisation that had funded the research that Ralph had undertaken. Due to his earlier engagement with GTZ, Ralph took a leadership role in building the relationship with GTZ. While the Change Lab process that was being proposed did not fit within her programme area, when funding leads began to dry up, Doris was instrumental in exploring ways in which GTZ might be able to fund the proposal. At the time GTZ had a strong private sector focus, and expressed interest in the proposed process, given that it showed potential to result in projects involving the private sector.

The proposal was submitted in September 2009. After a month of back and forth questions and amendments, it was finally approved in November.

Period 3: The GTZ-funded Food Security Change Lab

Time period: November 2009 – November 2010

This period follows the story and experiences of those involved in the one-year GIZ funded Change Lab process, which in many ways signalled the establishment of the SAFL. This process consisted of a number of elements, including the following: dialogue interviews with more than 20 people representing a diversity of views and positions of the food system, from which themes and insights were derived through an internal synthesis process; three “learning journeys” (See Box 3 for more information); and an innovation workshop. It was during this time that Rebecca Freeth, Dineo Ndlanzi and Busi Dlamini, all from Reos, became involved in the SAFL. It was also during this period that both Ford Foundation and Oxfam GB entered into the SAFL orbit.

Box 3: What is a Learning Journey?

A learning journey is a way of exposing a group of people (who are united in their interest in a particular issue but diverse in their positions and perspectives on that issue) to the current realities, experiences and stories of people most directly affected by that issue. This exposure is an entry point into a deeper understanding of these realities and into a deeper engagement with one another about how to address these realities. Learning journeys complement more formal forms of research and have the added benefit of galvanising action, especially collaborative action for change.

The sections below summarise the three phases of this process.

Phase 1: Dialogue interviews and synthesis process

Time period: November 2009 – February 2010

Most of the dialogue interviews took place early in 2010. The aims of these interviews were to draw out multiple perspectives on the issues and opportunities within the current food system within South Africa and to enrol the interviewees into the conversation and the idea of the Food Security Change Lab. Notable interviewees included Andries du Toit from PLAAS, Tatjana von Bormann and Kenneth Carden.

The interviews were transcribed and then analysed at a small internal workshop facilitated by Rebecca, and attended by Vanessa, Colleen, Milla and Ralph. The aim of this internal workshop was to draw out clusters of themes and possibilities for change that were then developed into a synthesis report. This report surfaced the main issues that different players were grappling with (Table 1), as well as multiple perspectives on the broad systemic issues and opportunities and hopes of different players within the food system (Table 2), as well as identifying two approaches to change (Table 3). These are all captured below and are drawn directly from the Food Security Change Lab Phase II Report To GTZ (SAFL, 2010a).

At that synthesis workshop it wasn't clear ... what might happen beyond this intensive year of GTZ funding, but it was clear that here were these two academics [Milla and Ralph] ... who were such complementary convenors, who really understood this kind of process: both Ralph and Milla are steeped in understanding the social process and so it was wide open to all kinds of possibilities and that they were able to ... allow it to be completely emergent.

Table 1: The main concern to key players.

1. Consumers	2. Retailers	3. Manufacturers
Is there enough food? Is it affordable? Where does welfare fit in? Is it needed, or welcome, or does it quash people's ability to meet their own needs?	Concerns about security of supply. Questions about where competition or collaboration is most appropriate (e.g. waste / logistics)	Interest in possible multi-stakeholder collaboration. Seen from the outside as being most affected by collusion.
4. Farmers	5. Input Providers (fertilizer, seed, plus land, energy, water)	6. Government
Concern about serious decline in numbers. Many challenges of impact of historical legacy. Challenges of linking emerging farmers into supply chain. Questions around roles of large and small: both / and? Farm workers perceived as "unlucky" and the least powerful players.	Concern about concentration of supply in few global hands and very little power among South African players. Fears about lack of sustainability of water and energy supply. Significant impact of land related concerns.	Unintended consequence of shift in policy in 1994 (deregulation of farming and agriculture) on food security. Need for better communication. Need for more integrated view of the issue. Underinvestment in R & D.

Table 2: Broad systemic issues, opportunities and hopes of stakeholders.

Broad systemic issues identified:	• Current food system meets the needs of "Mrs Constantia"; • "The consumer is quiet"; • "Farmers are price takers" (farmers are squeezed between a very concentrated set of input providers and a very concentrated set of retailers); and • "Government policy exacerbates the rural / urban divide".
Seeds of change and possibility:	• Collaboration among retailers on food safety, quality and packaging; • Some looking at sourcing food locally; • Commercial farmers willing to support emerging farmers in some areas; and • People looking at alternative distribution channels.
Hopes / wants for the future:	• Private sector keen to collaborate in clearly defined areas; • More focus on regionally based food systems; • Increase the bargaining power of farmers in the chain; • Use academic knowledge to support practice better (e.g. Ideas for balanced food baskets at household level); and • More alternative supply chain options.

Table 3: Two approaches to change.

More radical/long-term approach to change	More cautious/short-term approach to change
• Mind shift change; • From food economy to food community; • Major shifts in what is grown and what is eaten – staples; and • Pay more attention to sustainability issues.	• Incremental change is more realistic; • Short supply chains; • Add more alternative supply chains; and • Expand sources of food: move into Africa.

Phase 2: The Learning journeys and a one-day workshop:

Time period: March – August 2010

According to the Phase II report to GTZ (SAFL, 2010a) *“A clear outcome of the synthesis work undertaken at the end of Phase I, was that poor consumers and farmers are relatively ‘voiceless’ in the system. This had shown up in the lack of their view being expressed directly from them in the interviews and was also revealed through interviewees’ comments. As one way to enable their perspective and needs to emerge more clearly to help drive effective change in the system, the Steering Committee approved the design of Learning Journeys around the themes of ‘How do people feed themselves?’ and ‘What’s it like to be a farmer?’”*

Between May and August 2010, three two-day learning journeys were organised around these two questions. The two urban learning journeys (Johannesburg and Cape Town) focusing on the first question, while the rural learning journey to Limpopo focused on the second. The Johannesburg and Cape Town learning journeys took place in May 2010, followed quickly by a one-day workshop held in Johannesburg, with the Limpopo learning journey taking place in August, after the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Each of these events is briefly described below. This account is largely based on the Phase II report to GTZ (SAFL, 2010a), with supporting quotes and anecdotes from the learning history interviews.

Joburg Learning Journey

The Johannesburg learning journey took place on the 17th and 18th May and was facilitated by Vanessa and Colleen, with logistics support from Dineo. The first day included presentations from Pick ‘n Pay on how they set up their franchise store in Soshanguve, with emphasis on working with local suppliers to build a locally trusted brand; and research on household food consumption in Lusaka, Harare, Gaborone, Cape Town and Johannesburg, conducted as part of the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) research in 2008/9. It also included a walking tour through Hillbrow and Yeoville to talk to street vendors and shop owners selling food and to find out more about the choices available to poor consumers. The second day started with a visit to the Joburg Fresh Produce Market, where discussions centred on how this market sources its produce; followed by a visit to the Pick ‘n Pay franchise in Soshanguve, where participants met with local management to discuss the operations and supply chains of the store. This was followed by a meeting with the Orange Farming Consortium of emerging farmers in the Winterberg, who supply the Pick ‘n Pay franchise. Both days ended with participants sharing their observations and insights with one another.

I remember this one woman who is a big permaculture activist standing there in the Joburg food produce market going, “oh my God, there I was thinking I could get these small women producers into the big system, there is no way I’m ever going to get them in this system. We have to look for alternative systems. We have to create different chains. There is no way we can line up the size of the guys I work with, with the size of this thing”.

Cape Town Learning Journey

The Cape Town learning journey took place on the 26th and 27th May and was facilitated by Vanessa and Busi. The first day was spent mostly in Philippi, and included learning from AFSUN's research into how local households in Cape Town feed themselves. It also included walking around Philippi to get a better feel for the buying options available to poor consumers. The group visited a community garden in the local clinic. While at the clinic they were invited to view the main community garden situated in a nearby school. This day also included a visit to the Philippi Food Bank distribution centre. The second day started at the Cape Town Fresh Produce Market in Epping and continued to Elsie's River, meeting Imraahn Ismail-Mukaddam, shop owner, and initiator of the Consumer Action Network who shared his story of how he got involved in the bread price exposé, inspired by his previous involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle and community mobilisation. He spoke of the challenges of competing with big retailers that have buying power and therefore can offer lower prices, and other limiting factors including competition from non-nationals like Somali and Bangladeshi emerging small businesses. The day was concluded with a walking tour in Elsie's River where the group met informal traders mostly selling vegetables and some fish, as well as their customers.

People went to the Joburg fresh produce market and they saw for the first time how big it is, how industrialized it is, how absolutely impossible it is for small guys to get in there and then same thing in Cape Town and then going and watching coloured guys selling fish off the back of a bakkie ... just the stark, massive differences and the total disconnect between the big system.

One-day workshop

A workshop facilitated by Colleen, Vanessa and Busi, which was held at GIBS on the 28th May, directly after the Cape Town learning journey, was attended by 17 participants from both the Johannesburg and Cape Town learning journeys, as well as others who had not been able to participate but wanted to get a flavour of the experiences and to start working with the learnings. This workshop aimed to look at what participants were learning about the food system through both the interviews that had been undertaken and the learning journeys. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Share insights from recent interviews and learning journeys across the food security system;
- Create opportunities to reconnect with others across the food security system; and
- Map out what opportunities lay ahead in the Food Security Change Lab for the rest of 2010.

The day consisted of sharing and digesting the key findings from the synthesis report; providing a brief overview of the two learning journeys that had already been undertaken; looking at food security through a systemic lens; mapping existing food security initiatives and what part of the food system participants relate to; and pursuing discussions on topics participants wanted to address together.

The outcomes of this workshop fed into the innovations developed in the innovation workshop later that year.

Limpopo Learning Journey

Finally, a small group went on a two-day learning journey to Limpopo on the 10th and 11th August, which was facilitated by Colleen and Busi. It included a visit to ZZ2, a successful commercial farming operation, which has made a significant shift towards sustainable soil management practices; a meeting with representatives of a new women's goat farming co-operative; and a visit to an emerging farmer group focused on fruit growing.

Phase 3: The Food Security Change Lab Innovation Workshop

Time-period: 6-7 September 2010

Food riots erupt in Mozambique, 4 Sep 2010

Rioting continued in Maputo, Mozambique's capital city, for a third day on Friday in response to increased bread prices and the general rise in the cost of living. At least 10 people are dead, including a six-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, and more than 400 wounded as police have opened fired on angry demonstrators. Hundreds of people have been arrested.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2010/09/moz-a-s04.html>

In the aftermath of food riots in Maputo the previous week, a two-day innovation workshop was held at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) on the 6th and 7th September, and was designed to enable the SAFL to move from one mode of learning (through observation and reflection) to another mode (learning by doing); to build on the energy for change that had built up in the system; and to prototype innovations that could have a ripple effect on the food system as a whole. According to the workshop report, it was attended by approximately 50

participants, about half of whom represented the private sector in different parts of the food value chains, from agricultural inputs to wholesale and retail. Government was not so well represented. This was Canny Geyer's (Oxfam) first engagement with the process.

Much of this summary is based on the SAFL workshop report (SAFL, 2010b). The workshop was facilitated by Colleen and Vanessa, with Busi involved in logistical support and Rebecca as documenter. It began with two provocations. The first was by Knowledge Mkwhara from Limpopo, who told the story of people he had encountered through his work as a musician and their experiences of the rural food system. His observations included that the existing markets work against the needs of small farmers; that producing one's own food has little appeal where he lives, with people instead aspiring to consume highly processed, cheap food with very low nutritional value; and that *"there's no dialogue to sustain people who are struggling against the odds."* (SAFL, 2010b, p.6) Adam Kahane provided the second provocation, on how to solve tough problems. Drawing on twenty years of working in multi-stakeholder settings with complex social problems, Adam offered an approach that *"requires us to focus on two separate things at the same time"* (SAFL, 2010b, p.6). The first is to focus on the parts: *"the potential of each living entity to realise itself... to pay attention ... to what matters to each sector and person within the system and to what the potential is in each of these parts. In practice, this means enquiring of and listening to others, while making clear what matters to you. This requires us to change the way we have conversations"* (SAFL, 2010b, p.5-6). The second is to focus on *"the drive to reunite that which is fragmented...to pay attention to the interconnectedness and the potential of the whole: economic system, ecological systems, social systems at local, national and global levels. It is essential to keep an eye on both"* (SAFL, 2010b, pp. 6-7).

Milla McLachlan then provided an overview of the Food Security Change Lab to date, which included providing a summary of the dialogue interviews and synthesis report and the three learning journeys undertaken.

When I joined, I was very surprised about the very diverse range of stakeholders the Lab brought together, and not just stakeholders for the sake of having somebody in the room, but really senior people ... so I was very, very impressed to see such a collaborative discussion on issues around food security.

The biggest thing that stood out for me [was] how quality of food affects health... because we've been deprived of the luxuries within the context of South Africa, black people in South Africa, so coming out of 1994 we had aspirational foods, ... meaning the aspirational processed foods... and just seeing what was being spoken in that room, I see those scenarios play out in Alex mostly.

The rest of the workshop focused primarily on developing a set of “innovations” (which can be defined as a new idea or way of working), based on four themes that had emerged from the learning journeys, while at the same time making room for other innovations to emerge.

The four original innovation themes that had emerged from the learning journeys (with the theme hosts mentioned in brackets) included the following:

- **Reignite agricultural skills support for sustainable improvement in farming productivity** (Tatjana von Bormann, WWF and Kenneth Carden, Woolworths). This includes support to farmers to better care for land and water resources, as well as support to emerging farmers to join the supply chain. This is about rethinking how we do extension.
- **Packaging: Improving sustainability and lowering food prices** (Brian Leroni, Massmart)/
- **Better quality food through Base of the Pyramid opportunities** (Miriam Altman, HSRC). How do we improve food throughout the supply chain, not just at the production end – especially so that better quality food is available to the lower income end of the market?
- **Traceability: Can it be a tool for market access?** (Esbeth van Dyk, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research – CSIR) The ability to trace a food product back to source. It can be challenging for farmers to make their products traceable – does this represent a barrier to entry to the market? Or can we transform this into a tool for market access?

By the end of the two days, five innovations had emerged from this workshop, including two on primary production (See Innovation C and D in Table 4 below). Over time, Innovation D evolved into a new innovation team dealing with urban issues.

Table 4: The innovation themes emerging from the innovation workshop

Innovation	Description	Team leads and participants
Innovation A	<i>Packaging: What can the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry do to improve accessibility of Bottom of the Pyramid consumption of nutritious food by leveraging packaging opportunities in the FMCG supply chain?</i>	Led by B Leroni, Massmart with participants from Tiger Brands, Pioneer Foods, Pick ‘n Pay, Unilever and Nampak
Innovation B	<i>Using Bottom of the Pyramid opportunities to improve quality, affordable food: How can we, together, support players in the food system to empower poor people to access affordable, safe, nutritious and fortified food sustainably?</i>	Led by Miriam Altman, HSRC with participants from UCT, University of Stellenbosch, the Food Bank, Meshfield, Consumer Goods Council, GAIN and others
Innovation C	Understanding primary producers’ skills needs: How are farmers and other primary producers empowered through skills development for sustainable food security?	Led by K Carden, Woolworths, with participants from SAHRC, Sustainability Institute, CSIR and Omnia Fertiliser
Innovation D	Collating the Goodness in Primary Production: What works for primary producers and how do we build on this?	Led by T von Bormann, WWF with participants from NEPAD Business Foundation, AFSUN, NAMC, Sustainability Institute, Oxfam UK and others
Innovation E	A National Conversation on Food Security	Led by C Golino, DBSA with participation from UCT, SAHRC, independent journalist Leonie Joubert and others.

Wrapping up the GTZ project

Time period: September - November 2010

The period between the end of the innovation workshop and the close of the GTZ project

State slaps nearly R1bn in penalties on Pioneer **Michael Bleby – Business Day 03 Nov 2010**

PIONEER Food Group yesterday agreed on an R855,7m bill with the Competition Commission, in a landmark settlement that is likely to shape the future of antitrust penalties in SA.

The deal announced yesterday allows Pioneer to clean the slate, and brings an end to all outstanding allegations of collusion and price-fixing against it.

Pioneer's tab — consisting of a R250m fine, a R250m contribution to a newly created incubator fund for small agrobusinesses, and an agreement to reduce its gross profit margin on flour and bread products to the tune of R160m — comes on top of a R195,7m fine imposed by the Competition Tribunal in February.

was marked by ongoing activities by the innovation teams, and a transition workshop held on the 11th November, which largely focused on the proposal for the way forward for the Lab as a whole, while offering some time to participants from previous workshops to continue work in their innovation teams, and for new entrants to orient themselves to the Lab in a Q&A session. Between 20 and 30 people attended the workshop in the very formal DBSA boardroom. There was also a presentation from GTZ on the possibilities for funding a public private partnership for the SAFL (SAFL, 2010c). The SAFL Steering Group noted that the GTZ requirements for such a partnership would require a scale of funding that was premature for the stage the SAFL had reached.

What was proposed at this workshop was the facilitation of an on-going multi-stakeholder dialogue to strategically direct and govern, provide accountability and legitimacy, and support targeted innovation teams, working on the following themes:

- Providing for improved distribution, logistics and packaging for poor people's access to nutritious, safe and affordable food (two of the existing innovation teams focused on this);
- Providing for better informed and more integrated initiatives to support environmentally friendly and productive primary production of food, paying particular attention to achieving better integration of emerging producers in new or existing value chains (two of the existing innovation teams focused on this).

A number of the interviewees and participants of the learning history validation workshop mentioned that the relationship between GTZ and the SAFL was at times quite challenging. The GTZ project manager who had been assigned to the SAFL had difficulty aligning the Lab's approach and process-related outputs and outcomes, with the rigorous performance matrices required by GTZ headquarters. It seems to have taken a great deal of Vanessa's and Ralph's time to navigate this relationship. GTZ staff did not engage directly in the process as participants but rather stayed at arms-length. Below is the closing paragraph in the Phase III report to GTZ (SAFL, 2010c), which speaks to the SAFL's views on the importance of donor participation in Change Lab processes.

GTZ took a significant calculated risk in being willing to fund an emerging process like the Change Lab and the whole process owes a debt of gratitude to them for having done so. Given the role that they have played, this has made it difficult for them to be involved and to retain the distance required for governance purposes. Nonetheless, the core team would have liked the donors to be able to participate in the Innovation Workshop, for example, to gain a better understanding of how the process operates and what its potentials and limitations are at first hand. Now that they are no longer playing the donor role, it is hoped that GTZ will consider becoming a participant in the Lab going forward.

Period 4: The lean period: incubating the next phase

Time period: 2011

With the completion of the GTZ-funded process, the SAFL entered a very different phase over the subsequent year, which consisted of two sets of activities that came together during the latter half of 2011. The first was the set of activities occurring within the SAFL, which is essentially a story of incubation. The other set of activities revolved around a discussion that developed between PLAAS and Ford following research that Ford had previously funded PLAAS to undertake on pro-poor value chain governance for smallholder farmers. PLAAS had experienced particular difficulties in drawing in value chain actors into this research and it became clear that a partnership with the SAFL might help them reach a wider range of stakeholders. Each of these separate processes is described below.

The SAFL: incubation

From the SAFL perspective, this was a period of very limited financial resources: Oxfam provided some funding that covered a small retainer for Vanessa and funded some Steering Group meetings and a few breakfast dialogues. A few short learning journeys were tacked onto the Steering Group meetings and were largely self-funded.

Walmart-Massmart merger poses risk to SA: ministers

SAPA- 2 August 2011

The R16.5-billion takeover of Massmart by US retail giant Walmart poses a risk to the SA economy if more stringent conditions are not applied to the merger agreement, says the government.

During this lean period, Milla, Ralph and Vanessa in particular kept the conversations going. Due to organisational changes within Reos, Colleen stepped out of the SAFL process at this stage. Although there was very little funding, Vanessa in particular, organisationally backed by Reos, chose to invest fully in the work. From Vanessa's perspective, if one wants to contribute to changing a system, one needs to be in it for the long haul.

Because there was virtually no money in the SAFL, people who wanted to stay connected with the process were suddenly asked to pay their own way, which as one interviewee said *"was a huge ask"*. This period may well have weeded out all but the most committed people and people who, due to their work circumstances were able to remain present to and contribute something to the process, such as being part of an organisation whose mandate was compatible with what the SAFL aimed to achieve.

Although the processes and time spent together during this time were thinly spread, there was still a great deal of value that some people derived from this period. For example, Canny had not been on any previous learning journeys, and found the learning journey to the Woolworths distribution centre that had been arranged to coincide with one of the steering groups to be a very powerful experience. In contrast, for others, this time was very frustrating in that the process did not seem to be moving beyond deepening the group's understanding of the system and its challenges into action.

During this period, most of the innovations that had been identified during the 2010 innovation workshop seemed to lose momentum or fade. A number of possible reasons were given for this. The most obvious one was lack of resources to continue to meet. Other reasons included the busyness of people's lives and the fact that some of the team leads had either committed to an innovation that did not dovetail with their work demands, or were consultants who were not able to commit the time to these innovations because of their need to earn an living. In the case of the Urban Design innovation (Innovation D, Table 4) it

also seems like it may have been an idea whose time had not yet come. In the cases of the *Bottom of the Pyramid* and the *National Conversation on Food Security* innovations (Innovation B and E, Table 4), changes in staff at the institutions leading these innovations and interpersonal dynamics were cited for the innovation not taking off. In the case of the packaging innovation (Innovation A, Table 4), some research was conducted, which resulted in Massmart choosing not to pursue the innovation, and those that wanted to pursue it did not have the energy, resources or influence to take it on. A final reason given was that that some of the innovations may not have been “*hooked onto the right people*”.

They channelled [the Urban Design innovation] into trying to look at design architects in an urban context to really consider the food system, and I think it was at their annual conference, so they offered this workshop ... and they didn't get anyone to sign up for it. So it was almost like it wasn't ready yet.

There was however one innovation that did not fade. It was the innovation that Kenneth had been leading looking at skills requirements in primary agriculture (Innovation C, Table 4). In December 2010, Kenneth has left Woolworths to begin independent consulting and suddenly had time on his hands to pursue his interests and passions. He had Tatjana as a particularly close ally, who was also very interested in this innovation, and who could justify spending time as part of the partnership role she played within WWF at the time. In addition, Canny from Oxfam was pushing for this innovation from the sidelines. Kenneth recalls that even during this period there were opportunities such as the breakfast dialogues to get together with Tatjana and others, and continue to work on refining and adapting the innovation. As they began to assess the skills gaps in primary producers, they realised that the biggest gaps were amongst smallholder farmers, which is where the idea of developing an innovation with smallholder farmers began to surface. At this point, innovation group members were doing pieces of research in their spare time and continuing to think about the innovation but there were no resources to explore the idea in any depth and formulate anything substantial.

I think it was just after that [innovation workshop] meeting that I started posing the questions to Milla and to Ralph ... but where is the small scale producers, where are their voices in this whole dialogue?

A research-dialogue project is conceived

Meanwhile, Ford and PLAAS had been in discussions with one another. Paula Nimpuno from the Ford Foundation had had a long-standing relationship with PLAAS since 1996. In about 2008, PLAAS had, quite independently of the SAFL, conceived of and received funding from Ford for a research project looking at pro-poor value chain governance. It was a project with a lot of problems, including an inadequate understanding of what a value chain is. The crucial problem from PLAAS's perspective was that they were very good at drawing together role-players on the producer side but struggled to enrol other value chain actors. Both PLAAS and Ford agreed that more research was required. Andries had been aware of the SAFL from its inception and although interested in it, had always been too busy to engage.

Independently, Paula had become aware of the SAFL as a result of hearing about the Sustainable Food Lab in the United States and had made contact with Milla in late-2010. Emerging from these conversations with Milla, Paula suggested that PLAAS and the SAFL submit a joint proposal to Ford that integrated PLAAS' research with a social dialogue process. Ford also encouraged drawing students into the process, which was a very attractive proposition for PLAAS.

We heard the word 'students' and a light went up in our eyes and saw an opportunity for drawing bright PhD students into this project.

In the winter of 2011, Milla, Scott, Andries and Ben Cousins, also from PLAAS, met on the veranda of the Sustainability Institute in Stellenbosch to explore ideas for the proposal. At the time, Ben was interested in understanding private sector involvement in smallholder development. The idea that emerged was a proposal that brought together students from PLAAS and social dialogue processes to scope what was going on with smallholder farmers in the country in relation to private sector engagement and to develop some lessons about approaches that might be scalable. From this initial discussion Andries spearheaded the development of the proposal and submitting it to Ford in September 2011. A summary of the framing and questions of this proposal are included in Box 4 below.

Ben's argument at the time was, 'you can't open the Farmers Weekly without hearing about a new scheme'. We don't know how much of them are smoke and mirrors, we don't know how much of them are actually interesting, could we develop an approach to try to come to some kind of systematic understanding of it?'

Box 4: The SSCA Proposal: Framing and Questions

Framing:

The Southern African farming landscape is characterized by an increasing diversity of private sector and governmental initiatives and schemes aimed at supporting smallholder farming by improving productivity and supporting market access. Often these initiatives are framed in highly optimistic terms, often linked to brand positioning and marketing corporate social responsibility commitments. No clarity exists yet about whether these initiatives can deliver on their promises, and whether approaches have been found that are sustainable and can be scaled up. These initiatives... need to be rigorously assessed... to distinguish sustainable initiatives from one-off schemes, identify factors contributing to sustainability, and to assess the veracity of the claims surrounding these initiatives. PLAAS and the South African Food Lab will respond to this need by supporting a process of research, analysis, institutional learning and policy engagement aimed at identifying workable models for small farmer support, and for private sector involvement in small farmer development. In this partnership, it is proposed that PLAAS takes the lead in facilitating and supporting a programme of research; while the Southern Africa Food Lab will support a process of institutional learning, including problem framing, and policy engagement aimed at strengthening the links between formal research and stakeholder dialogue and action processes.

Goals and research questions:

1. To promote a successful smallholder sector that can compete in commercial agricultural markets, generate decent livelihoods, support food security, and support land and agrarian reform.
2. To channel energy for innovation in private sector partnerships with smallholders into a shared search for sustainable and scalable solutions that can benefit the food sector as a whole.
3. To develop an understanding of the scope and range of innovation and experimentation in the smallholder sector in South Africa.
4. To learn lessons about the viability, sustainability, equitability and scalability of promising approaches to supporting smallholders.
5. To identify scalable options for equitable and sustainable private sector partnerships that can support smallholder farmers transition into commercial agriculture.
6. To capture the lessons of this process and to disseminate them to inform other role players and stakeholders.
7. To build capacity among young and promising social science researchers for research into smallholder agriculture and rural development.

Questions for learning and enquiry:

1. What are the emerging models and approaches of private sector support for revitalizing the small farming sector?
2. To what extent do they succeed in improving production, productivity and sustainability among producers?

3. To what extent do they succeed in creating favourable conditions for market access and what are the factors that facilitate or hamper such access?
4. Do they contribute to improving the food security and nutritional status of participating households?
5. What are the prospects of these projects to be replicated or to be scaled up? What are the material and policy constraints faced by these projects, and what are the prospects of overcoming these?

~(PLAAS and SAFL, 2011)

The discussions between Milla, Scott, Andries and Ben seem to have happened very much behind the scenes because even Kenneth was unsure of how the SSCA, as representing the link between research and social dialogue, came to be. However there is general agreement that it was through the conversations between Andries, Milla and Paula and the subsequent funding secured from Ford that the SAFL found its wings again, and Kenneth and Tatjana's innovation found a project home in the *Supporting Smallholders in Commercial Agriculture* project.

I'm not entirely sure how those discussions started... something happened between Milla and Andries, ... But essentially what morphed out of that was a project that would link social dialogue with research. ... I'm also not sure if it didn't actually come from Paula in a way... And that's where the thing actually took seed and suddenly gained momentum.

Period 5: The Supporting Smallholders in Commercial Agriculture (SSCA) project

Time period: January 2012 – January 2014

This period can be split up into two phases that roughly correspond with the two years that the SSCA project has been operational. The first year (2012) was primarily focused on getting the PLAAS research underway and further refining the design of the social dialogue. January 2013 to January 2014 has seen the social dialogue component being implemented, alongside and in conversation the PLAAS research team, which consisted of Prof Ben Cousins and Prof Andries du Toit and three research interns, Adetola (Tola) Okunlola, Davison Chikazunga, and Mngqobi Ngubane. The SAFL team originally consisted of Milla, Kenneth and Vanessa, with some support from Rebecca, which transitioned to a team consisting of Kenneth, Scott, Rebecca and Dineo, with Colleen coming back into the picture during the latter part of 2013 to support the innovation labs. Lorna Ely from Reos provided project management support for 2012 and the first half of 2013, while I was brought in to help document the innovation labs and undertake this learning history during the latter half of 2013.

The two phases of the SSCA are discussed separately below.

Phase 1: Getting started

Time period: April – December 2012

The original Ford grant had included funds for the research component, as well as funds for an inception meeting, funds for regular meetings and some kind of large dialogue process that integrated the PLAAS research, the details of which still needed to be clarified.

The first major event of the SSCA project was the inception workshop, which was held at Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) in Stellenbosch on the 16th and 17th April 2012. This workshop was facilitated by Vanessa and a Reos colleague called Yvonne Field, with support from Rebecca. Rebecca had remained in conversation with Vanessa after the 2010 synthesis workshop indicating her interest in somehow being involved in the project. When the SSCA project began to gain traction, Vanessa had drawn in Rebecca as a thinking and design partner to the project.

According to the workshop report (SAFL, 2012a) just over 30 people attended this workshop representing *“a relevant and diverse group of thinkers and actors within the food system, ranging from small-scale farmers, academics, fertiliser representatives, and large supermarkets to members of government”*.

As noted in the inception report (SAFL, 2012a), the objectives of the workshop were to build a shared understanding of the project’s purpose, objectives and planned processes; to introduce the project team and develop relationships with key stakeholders; to “sense” different parts of the food system, meeting it and mapping what was already known to help identify key gaps; and to create a shared understanding and language for some of the key concepts within the project.

Throughout the social dialogue process key issues were raised by different members of the party. These issues can be grouped into six key themes:

1. The importance of promoting smallholder development.
2. Definitions of a “smallholder”.
3. Issues around certification processes.
4. Government capacity to assist smallholders.
5. Willingness to change within the food system.
6. The role of BEE in the process.

A description of each of these themes is provided in the inception report. However, some of the themes that recurred later in the project are worth highlighting. The first is the importance of developing a working definition of what a smallholder is. According to the Inception Report (SAFL, 2012a), *“It was noted that there are different definitions of what a ‘smallholder’ is in relation to the position and necessity of such a construct. The group realised that the conflicting definitions can and will lead to differences in indicators and therefore outcomes of projects and policies directed towards smallholders.”*

The second recurring theme was that of certification. *“The certification processes currently in place in South Africa (GlobalGAP, S.A.GAP) as well as the extremely high standards set by the large supermarkets were recognised to be a major impediment to smallholders accessing markets. It was suggested that a new, more appropriate set of regulations be created or, if this is not possible, the formation of new local markets which bypass this system”* (SAFL, 2012a).

A third theme, was that of willingness, particularly of the big commercial players (i.e. commercial farmers and large supermarkets) to change and what this means for changing the food system in South Africa: *“The impetus for change is not necessarily coming from those with the most power for change within the system. There are several disincentives for large supermarkets to buy from smallholders such as lack of usable scale of produce and the expenses and difficulties involved with dealing with small, non-centralised entities. On this topic, there was a clear split of opinion: Those who felt it impossible to change/ transform the current system and that the only way for inclusion of small farmers is through adaptation of the current system (for big supermarkets to ‘join the party’) and those that felt that there is a way to create new, better food systems and markets for smallholders”* (SAFL, 2012a).

According to a number of people interviewed, this workshop was a difficult process. This is how Rebecca described her experience of it:

The thing that really stood out for me was that we just didn’t seem to be getting a lot of traction.... And Vanessa – in the last couple of hours –called a spade a spade, and said, ‘I’ve been working in the Food Lab for three or four years now, and I think we’re getting stuck in our conversation’. And that just precipitated what got called ‘a conversation about the elephant in the room’. And then people named what their elephants are.

These previously unnamed issues were summarised in the inception report (SAFL, 2012a) as follows:

- *The racialised nature of the debate.*
- *The lack of organisation and voicelessness of rural groups.*
- *Slow land ownership transformation.*
- *Inequality (within rural areas) exist and the situation in rural areas is a “ticking time bomb”.*
- *The formation of the black middle class and their attempts to overcome restraints on their own accumulation.*
- *Privilege and how the privileged (both the producer and consumer) maintain the current system.*

One of the key insights to emerge from this workshop was that the social dialogue process that had initially been envisaged would need to be substantially expanded. During this workshop, the idea of undertaking a learning journey surfaced, and Paula raised the possibility that Ford could be approached for an additional grant to host such a process. As the conversations proceeded, it became clear that two learning journeys on different topics would be ideal, which would each be followed by some kind of a dialogue process. This would require additional funding.

After the inception meeting the SAFL team and PLAAS began to meet regularly, in part to support the PLAAS interns in their process of trying to refine their research and also to begin to explore what the social dialogue component of the project might look like.

The research component began in earnest in May 2012. The first internal PLAAS-SAFL meetings focused on refining the research questions and direction for the research. It was eventually agreed that the research would start with a national scan: to develop a database of all projects (or as near to it as possible) involving the private sector and smallholders. The scan included going through every Farmer’s Weekly from 2009, capturing any initiative or project that involved private sector projects with smallholder farmers as well as contacting the various government departments. The scan revealed approximately 230 relevant projects across the country.

While this scan provided breadth of understanding, it lacked depth. For this reason, the researchers decided to develop a series of more in-depth case studies from these 230 projects. The research interns divided the country into three: Mngqobi visited KZN, Mpumalanga and the Free State, Davison undertook field trips to North West, Limpopo and Gauteng and Tola undertook her fieldwork in the Eastern, Northern and Western Cape. These visits included speaking to district government departments, especially from the Department of Agriculture, which Kenneth, due to his connections was able to facilitate. According to Andries these district offices were often the repositories of the most concrete and useful information about what was actually happening on the ground. The research interns also spoke with a range of other players, including commodity associations, agro-processors and retailers. By the end of 2012, the majority of the 45 case studies had been completed.

In the middle of 2012, as the PLAAS research was gaining momentum, internal shifts were occurring within the SAFL. Vanessa began discussions with Rebecca about Rebecca taking over Vanessa's role at the SAFL. At the same time, Milla indicated that she was planning to leave South Africa towards the end of 2013 and so the SAFL needed to start thinking about succession planning. The SSCA team meeting in July 2012 seems to have been a major transition point within the team – the passing of the metaphorical baton. Rebecca was supported in taking up the position of holding the SSCA from a Reos perspective, and Kenneth and Scott were invited to step into a greater leadership role in the face of Milla's eventual departure. Rebecca mostly took on the role of helping oversee the SSCA project and although she became a SAFL steering group member, her attention seems to have focused primarily on the SSCA project. Kenneth and Scott took on the dual roles of additional fundraising and the enrolment of private sector and government participants into the SSCA process.

In the latter half of 2012, Rebecca, Kenneth and Scott began to design the social dialogue component in earnest, which resulted in the development of a number of proposals, including two proposals that were successful. The one was to Ford to expand the social dialogue component of the SSCA project to include one multi-day learning journey and a social dialogue, and a proposal to the Southern Africa Trust (SAT), which included funding a second learning journey and social dialogue. The funding from SAT was part of a larger Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant focused on research and advocacy-based projects in several Southern African countries and how these influence policy through the use of media. This theory of change did not resonate with everyone at the SAFL but the team chose to accept the funds as it made a second multi-day learning journey possible.

It's definitely one view and it's important to explore it but it's a problem in terms of the assumptions embedded in it. But the money is great, it funds the whole learning journey and so we want to do it, go with it.

This raises a question for me about taking money from donors, even when the thinking is not aligned. Was this relationship different to the one with GTZ? Was the Food Lab able to do what it wanted with the money while at the same time manage the donor expectations? In the case of GTZ, it seems to have been a very different relationship. Can the same be said for the relationship with SAT?

In addition, in the process of Kenneth reporting back to the Steering Group in late 2012,

Canny suggested a third, reverse, urban learning journey that Oxfam would fund, where hosts, and particularly farmers who had hosted the rural learning journeys had the opportunity to experience their own urban learning journey and attend the innovation labs, in this way creating an opportunity for smallholder voices to be part of the social dialogues.

Additional Ford, SAT and Oxfam grants were all secured by October 2012.

It is worthwhile noting that not all proposals were successful. For example, a proposal to ICCO (The Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation) seems to have never reached the appropriate people, possibly because of the turnover of staff at the time.

Western Cape Farm Workers strike, August 2012 – January 2013

The series of strikes and protests that recently took place in and around farms in South Africa's Western Cape Province was fuelled by the deep-seated anger and frustration that workers feel. On a daily basis, farm workers face not only appalling wages, bad living conditions and precarious work, but also widespread racism, intimidation and humiliation.
<http://zabalaza.net/2013/02/09/reaping-what-you-sow-reflections-on-the-western-cape-farm-workers-strike/>

While the SAFL was fundraising to expand the social dialogue component, PLAAS approached the Mellon Foundation for a proposal that would, amongst other things, allow the research interns to proceed to PhDs, selecting case studies from the SSCA research as the focus areas for their dissertations. By the end of 2012, this funding, of approximately R2.4million was approved.

During the learning history validation workshop, Andries made the point that on a spectrum of engaged donors, Ford sit at one extreme and Mellon on the other.

Phase 2: SSCA – full steam ahead
Time period: January 2013 – January 2014

For the SSCA, 2013 marked the year that the social dialogue component of the project took flight, and was characterised by an interweaving between the SAFL's social dialogue process and the PLAAS research, with the research informing the social dialogue process, and vice versa. Figure 2 below provides an overview of how the activities and events of both the social dialogue and research process unfolded and interacted, and is discussed in more detail below. The regular SSCA steering committee meetings at PLAAS, which tended to happen a month or two before each social dialogue gathering or event helped bring the questions that were emerging from the research into the design of each of the events.

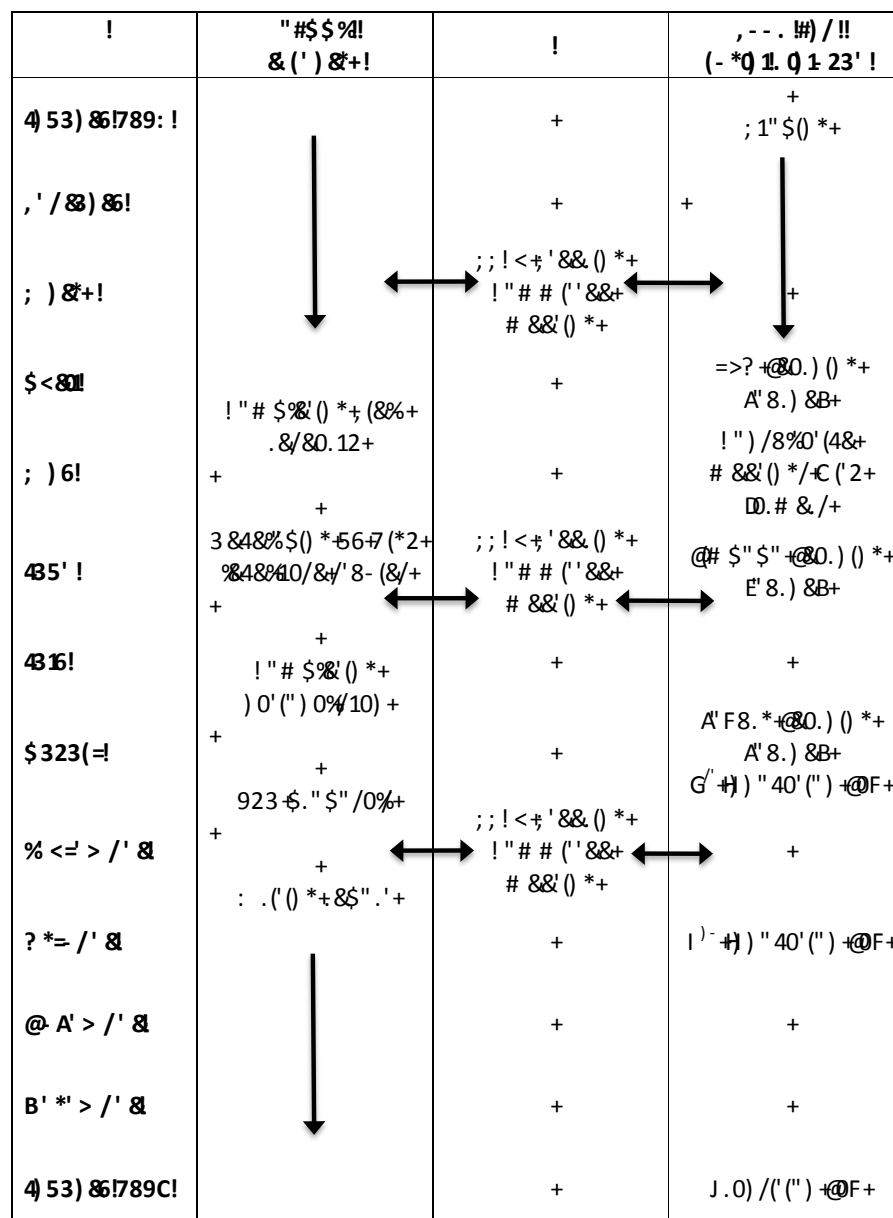


Figure 2: Overview of the two parallel components of the SSCA and how they interacted with and informed each other over the period: January 2013 – January 2014.

A summary of each component is provided below, followed by more detailed descriptions of the key events of the social dialogue component.

The PLAAS research

From a PLAAS perspective, the research interns had their hands full. Some of the fieldwork still needed to be completed and case studies written up. The research interns were also actively involved and made key inputs into the learning journeys and multi-stakeholder gatherings, feeding in some of the findings from their research. In addition, the research report required significant attention, especially during the latter part of 2013. While the researchers were addressing the high demands placed on them by the SSCA, they were simultaneously trying to develop their PhD proposals. According to Ben, this caused some challenges and tensions between the demands of the project and their academic track, which had to be carefully managed.

The SAFL Social Dialogue Process

According to the SSCA reports (SAFL, 2013b,c,d,e) the social dialogue was designed to:

- Solicit input from the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in smallholder agriculture;
- Facilitate a broad and systemic understanding of issues facing smallholder agriculture;
- Design innovations aimed to address certain agreed upon issues that require input in order to further shift the system towards a more sustainable and equitable path;
- Debate and inform official frameworks and policies;
- Facilitate alignment amongst stakeholders; and
- Communicate through the media.

With funding for two rural and one urban learning journey and some kind of social dialogue secured, and greater clarity of what the social dialogue component might look like, the SSCA team was able to move into externally-facing mode: of enrolling multi-sectoral participants into the SSCA process and beginning to prepare for the two rural learning journeys that were planned for April (a learning journey to Kwazulu-Natal on market access) and June (a learning journey to Limpopo on extension services and support). Through a highly emergent process, it became clear after the KZN Learning Journey that the social dialogue gathering would take the form of an innovation lab, which over time, developed into a series of two innovation labs. The main activities and events of this time period are highlighted below.

Scoping

Time period: January – May 2013

Dineo was brought into the SSCA team to help with the logistics of all learning journeys, while Rebecca and Kenneth went to both KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo beforehand to scope out sites and hosts for the learning journeys. In physically going to visit the sites and potential hosts, Kenneth and Rebecca would be able to develop a better sense of what would and what wouldn't work in the context of the learning journeys. They also needed to brief the hosts for each individual site visit so that they understood what a learning journey is about and what it is that they could expect. They received some useful suggestions from the PLAAS research interns of projects they might visit. In addition, Kenneth was very knowledgeable on both the learning journey themes and what initiatives and projects existed in these areas.

While the scoping itself overall was successful in that Rebecca and Kenneth identified and managed to secure all the site visits they were hoping for, they ran into difficulties with one of the hosts for the first learning journey. They had been very deliberate in the process of deciding who they wanted to participate and host the learning journeys. It was as a result of these deliberations that they realised that they wanted service providers to be hosts for the KZN market access learning journey and not participants. This meant that they would not be invited to be part of the reflection processes that took place at the end of every day. They were however invited to be participants for extension services learning journey to Limpopo. One of the service providers did not understand the reasons for this decision and apparently felt somewhat excluded. Members of the core SSCA group spoke about how difficult it was to navigate this conversation because *“we were dependent on them to assist us in setting up the learning journeys.”* Incidentally, during the interviews and the validation workshop, a number of people raised the question about why this decision to exclude service providers from the reflection process had been made.

We had a little bit of tension in the mix, in that certain individuals or groups were feeling excluded, and couldn't quite understand the process we were going through and wanted to get involved in parts of the process that [they weren't invited to].

This quote sits quite uncomfortably with me, in that it seems to set up – however unintentionally – a dynamic of “insider-outsider”, of those who are included in processes and those that aren't. If I had been the service provider I would probably also have felt excluded.

The first learning journey on market access, Kwazulu-Natal

Time period: 16 – 18 April 2013

Eighteen people participated in the three-day northern KZN learning journey from the 16th to 18th April. Participants included senior representatives from the National Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), the Land Bank, Ford Foundation, the Southern Africa Trust (SAT), the FoodBank, PLAAS, Pick n Pay, Spar and Woolworths, as well as a media specialist, two members of the SAFL and two facilitators from Reos. Lawrence Mkhalihi, from Biowatch, who became actively involved in subsequent SSCA events, was one of the hosts.

The purpose of this learning journey was to explore the possibilities and dilemmas of integrating smallholder farmers into commercial supply chains and to inform relevant policy frameworks. The learning journey aimed to achieve this by facilitating exposure to, and engagement with, some of the key issues, and acting as a catalyst for innovation where opportunities presented themselves.

The activities on this learning journey as well as the Limpopo learning journey were designed to stimulate dialogue about the role of the private sector, government and civil society in enabling smallholders to access markets. Specific facilitated dialogue sessions were held to develop the group's shared understanding of the following:

- Perspectives and challenges of smallholder farmers;
- Feedback from the market representatives on the viability of sourcing from

smallholder farmers;

- The developmental considerations to enable sourcing from smallholders;
- How the collective energies of the developmental partners can be aligned to contribute to each of these developmental considerations; and
- Shared priorities or innovations that could be taken forward by the group.

The learning journey commenced in Durban and then moved to northern KZN to focus on the area around Jozini and the Makhathini Flats. This area has been highlighted in the National Development Plan (NDP) as an area with vast untapped agricultural potential and where there should be greater support for Public-Private Partnerships. It is also an area in which smallholder farmers are involved in many different agricultural activities. The Makhathini Flats has also seen many development-oriented initiatives over the years and is currently the focus of a government sponsored infrastructural investment project (the Jozini Value Adding Centre) and a government procurement pilot project in which smallholder farmers are being linked with government institutions such as schools, public hospitals and prisons.

... speaking to [one of] the stallholders outside of the Spar; they are 30, 40, 50 kilometres from the farmers in Jozini, and they have just a tiny little collection of fruit on their stall, and when we asked where they got it from they said they'd driven to Johannesburg Fresh Produce Market. ... So, things that come from Jozini have gone past this space, and then they pursue it to Jo'burg ... I cannot see how they're making any profit. And yet I assume that these decisions are informed choices.

The facilitated dialogues on the second and third days aimed to distil the experiences and insights of participants. These dialogues generated many questions about smallholder access to market, which were as follows:

- *Why are we trying to incorporate smallholders into formal retail value chains?*
- *What are the right market access planning and co-ordination models to work with the different realities we're seeing? We need a market segmentation analysis to understand this better.*
- *How to plan so that farmers are planting with a particular market in mind and are able to diversify and get their produce to the various markets?*
- *How to create mutual understanding between smallholders and retailers when both sides are fed up with each other and not hearing each other?*
- *What planning and coordinating needs to happen between co-ops of smallholders, intermediary support organisations and retailers to overcome the hurdles?*
- *Where in this triangle could government best fit?*
- *When can I, in government, move on from supporting a particular farmer? What should I monitor to know you are ready to be alone?*
- *How to change a dependency mindset when we help to create it in the first place? We present ourselves as people who are going to provide support. How do we break this cycle of entitlement?*
- *How can we read smallholder behaviour differently – not as dependency but as agency, as market rationality, responsive to their particular context?*
- *How to facilitate more pro-active mindsets among smallholders?*
- *How do we change the terms of the conversation between people who hold market power and smallholders?*
- *How do we change the conditions for rural entrepreneurs? How do we create and support entrepreneurial thinking?*

- *What is the appropriate level of capitalisation and what should we be investing in to kick start entrepreneurship? How much should a smallholder re-invest from their income back into their business?*
- *What incentives do we, as government, provide to retailers?*
- *How to address the quality of smallholder produce? How to achieve minimum standards for retailers? What role can consumers play in making standards for retailers more realistic for smallholders?*
- *Why is bigger / more land considered better?*
- *Are we using existing technology effectively enough for market access?*
- *How can government and the private sector work together on a common plan for smallholders?*
- *What about chronically vulnerable smallholder farmers who need safety nets (such as social security, food bank and insurance mechanisms)? Are we being too commercial in linking smallholders to markets? Or are we talking only about smallholders who don't need social security safety nets?*
- *How do we develop a typology that takes adequate account of the full spectrum of realities facing smallholders, including those who need social grants?*
- *Can we expect smallholders to do everything in the value chain?*
- *Do we understand the constraints facing bakkie traders in the informal market?*

The final dialogue on the third day concentrated on what participants were ready to do about what they had experienced. Three groups formed and listed outcomes for taking their ideas further.

The first group considered safety standards for smallholder fresh produce supply to retailers. They agreed to work on a common standard, which would be less onerous than Global G.A.P but would deal with issues such as pesticides, microbial counts and ethics. The SAFL agreed to co-ordinate this process, with input from retailers and NGOs working on these issues.

The second group discussed scaling up successful innovations so that they can be adopted and enabled by both government (in terms of policy) and the markets. Questions to be tackled were: *"What do we mean by replicable success?"* and *"What research is needed to support this?"* The group agreed to apply their questions to the smallholder case studies PLAAS researchers are currently working on, and to understand underlying success factors.

The third group looked at the role of government in unlocking some of the dilemmas facing smallholders. They agreed to start shaping an academic research paper of learning from what is working.

Consultative meetings with grassroots and farmers' organisations

Time period: May 2013

At Oxfam's suggestion, consultative meetings were held with the Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA), Mopani Farmers' Union (MFU) and Nkuzi Development Association (NDA) during May 2013. Most of the information below is summarised from the consultative meeting report (SAFL, 2013a). These meetings were used to ensure that the voices of various smallholder associations and representative bodies would be heard and incorporated into the learning journeys and subsequent public dialogues. The consultative meetings with the two farmer associations were held in Limpopo, the location for the second learning journey focusing on extension and farmer support. A total of 19 farmers

from MFU (including Norah Mlondobozi and Adam Mabunda who have subsequently become very involved in the SSCA) and 13 farmers from the NDA attended these meetings.

These meetings provided useful input on the problems being faced by smallholder farmers and led to the farmers tabling certain recommendations on improving support. The overall message from the farmers was that regular consultation between service providers (mostly referring to government extension services) and smallholder farmers was required. Much mention was made of late or inappropriate support that was provided. The farmers also highlighted the necessity to have the provision of support monitored and evaluated.

These consultative meetings provided insights into the workings of certain smallholder farmer associations, unions and NGO's. There was a strong sense that these networks (where they exist) should be more effectively used to increase the levels of consultation between service providers and smallholder farmers.

In these meetings the SAFL team heard the familiar comment that farmers have a lot of researchers engaging with them and seeking input on their challenges and recommendations. They seldom get feedback on these studies. The SAFL committed to involving a number of the farmers from these meetings in the Limpopo learning journey as well as in the subsequent social dialogue events.

The second learning journey on extension services and support, Limpopo

Time period: 18 – 20 June 2013

A group of twenty people participated in this three day learning journey from the 18th to 20th June. Participants included government representatives from the National Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) as well as from Massmart, Phuhlisani Solutions, representatives from Technoserve and Lima, both extension service support organisations, NGO representatives from Biowatch and WWF, representatives from both Ford Foundation and Oxfam, as well as a media specialist, two members of the SAFL and two facilitators from Reos.

This learning journey to Limpopo was designed to explore the challenges of providing agricultural extension and support for smallholder farmers, and to engage with the emerging policy frameworks using the experiences of smallholders themselves.

The first day of the learning journey began with an initial discussion on the *National Draft Policy on Extension and Advisory Services to Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*, (DAFF, 2012) which defines extension and advisory services as “the active collaborative engagement of all stakeholders, actors and role-players involved in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries value chains, to support wise decision making and practices.” The policy proposes a move away from traditional top-down approaches to a focus on responding to users’ expressed needs, ambitions and circumstances, linked to participatory, shared research and learning. Those involved in

I think a big realisation has been that if you're a small scale farmer, if you don't have cash either in the form of loans, or subsidies, or whatever it is, you're really never going to be able to expand your enterprise and ... what really has struck me again and again is all of these multiple forms of support, none of which are actually about cash. And so it's this huge miss ... with the best of intentions... and hard work ... it just isn't adding up ... there's very little real listening to what's needed. There's a lot of throwing resources and services at, in deeply unstrategic ways.

providing extension and advice would mostly play a facilitation role, enabling access to information, advice and services, sometimes beyond the confines of agriculture itself. The new approach reflects a reduced operational role for the state and instead focuses on setting policy directions and coordinating extension and advisory services.

The first day also included engaging with farmers from MFU and NDA. Anna Selane, Norah Mlondobozi, Matome Malatjie and Adam Mabunda from MFU and David Baloyi from NDA, told their stories about extension and farmers support in order to initiate the enquiry and dialogue for the learning journey. Some of the issues the farmers raised were the following:

- *Sometimes extension officers are paternalistic in their approach, and don't consider the farmers' ideas and aspirations. Even though there's a lot of talk about Batho Pele and putting people first, but the extension officers don't always listen to the farmers.*
- *When they apply for assistance, it can take a long time to come.*
- *Farming is risky, and they need disaster relief, an "ambulance for farming".*
- *Assistance is needed with value adding and processing because straight farming involves very low margins and small profits.*
- *The distance to market makes it expensive to deliver, and there is a lot of spoilage.*
- *Government extension officers often have limited knowledge. Private extension support organisations seem to provide more appropriate support.*

The day concluded with participants dividing up into two groups, one travelling to farmers near Nwanedi and the other travelling to farmers near Thoyandou. Between the two groups, the visits on the second day involved speaking with farmers and farmer cooperatives government and private sector extension officers, the Tigerbrand agricultural advisor and the principal of the Madzivhandila Agricultural College.

That evening, the two groups reconvened at Makhado and after swapping stories of their respective visits over supper, sat in a circle to recount their observations and surface the questions these visits raised for them. Their questions can be clustered as follows:

Definitions

- 1) *What is the job description of an extension officer; what should it be? (What was it before 1994; why is it not working now?)*
- 2) *Do we understand what extension is?*
- 3) *What is an emerging farmer? (Where do you place this, relative to the family farmer or the food security group, the latter which seems to be shorthand for referring to the poorest of the poor, i.e. farmers who are growing food to survive?)*
- 4) *What is farming? What is farming for?*
- 5) *"Agriculture is a business": is this an absolute truth? If so, those farmers who are not functioning as businesses, what are they engaged in then?*

Collaboration and Co-operatives

- 6) *Do co-operatives work? What is a good model to replace them? (Co-ops are the only models we see implemented here. Seems as though they are not chosen in response to the realities on the ground. What criteria are being used to make this decision because it seems the co-op model is the only one being used?)*
- 7) *What coordination takes place at a farm level that is conducive to operations?*
- 8) *Is the membership to a collective driven by the objective of the person who joins (or doesn't, as the case may be)?*

The new draft policy on extension and advisory services

- 9) *What, out of what we saw on this trip, resonates with the new draft policy?*

- 10) *Does the new policy recognise the highly differentiated nature of smallholder farmers – that there isn't one category but many?*
- 11) *While the policy calls for a pluralistic approach, how will it meet this diverse "matrix" of what smallholder farmers are? (Basically a repeat of the above.)*
- 12) *Do we need a new extension policy? What about the current one is not working? What is the real problem?*
- 13) *Do we have an extension policy!?*
- 14) *How come it is 2013, 19 years into the new SA (and the amalgamation of the old South Africa with the homelands, and hence their respective extension policies, which is the messy policy we are stuck with now) are we only drawing up a proper extension policy now?*
- 15) *What is the trajectory of this policy in the next 18 months (with the election fast approaching) and what is our role in that trajectory?*
- 16) *How will the respective government departments deal with the implementation of the policy (e.g. Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) or Department of Water Affairs (DWA))?*
- 17) *Is there a pro-poor policy in agriculture?*

Markets and value chains

- 18) *Why would national marketing of a product work for an economist, but not for an extension officer?*

Capacity of extension officers

- 19) *How much should economic literacy play in the day-to-day actions of an extension officer? Why is there a separation of technological advice and economic advice (for instance, selecting a certain species to plant is a technical and financial decision)? Extension officers should be entrepreneurship extension officers.*
- 20) *What is the skill-set of these extension officers?*

General

- 21) *When we look at the portfolio of livelihood strategies that small scale farmers use to survive, some of them might not be agricultural in nature. Did any such livelihood strategies come up on the past two days that are relevant in this context?*
- 22) *Is there room for extension officers who are paid for their service? Given that private extension services are crowding out public services, should one not replace the other?*
- 23) *Why are extension officers not demonstrators and doers? Why are they extension officers and not farmers themselves?*
- 24) *Why is human resource development not central to current extension?*

On the third day, the group returned to Polokwane to further digest the experiences of the learning journeys, match them against the draft policy, and propose collaborative actions to address some of the key issues and questions about extension. Eight actions were proposed:

1. Produce a working paper and a 2-page brief on what we mean when we use different typologies to describe farmers (Initiator: Ben Cousins, PLAAS).
2. Draw on the existing database of private partnerships with smallholder farmers, and analyse these partnerships and their different impacts on smallholders (Initiator: Davison Chikazunga, PLAAS).
3. Explore how we can get more small scale farmers' voices heard in this process, and in policy development (Initiator: Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam).

4. Test the collaborative approach and co-ordinating model outlined in the draft policy so as to be rigorous with the hypotheses underlying this approach, and enable what works (Initiator: Kenneth Carden, SAFL).
5. Build a long-term PPP that would work inside DAFF, at the local municipal level, to find ways to unlock extension service blockages in the interests of subsistence farmers (Initiator AJ Gatley, Massmart).
6. Look at how graduation happens from subsistence to joining mainstream economy – as a contribution towards one of ten pilots led globally by the Ford Foundation (Initiator: Paula Nimpuno, Ford Foundation).
7. Create criteria, co-ordinated at the municipal level, for family farmers to graduate to small scale farmers, and mechanisms to support this graduation (Initiator: Laurence Mkhaliphi, Biowatch).
8. Explore how to get journalists more meaningfully engaged with this issue and frame a message for the media (Initiator: Leonie Joubert).

Third Urban Learning Journey on commercial supply chains, Johannesburg

Time period: 13 August 2013

A group of thirteen people, including a number of smallholder farmers who had participated in the previous learning journeys, and a few farmers from other areas of the country, representatives from NGOs, namely Biowatch and the Environmental Monitoring Group, as well as members of the SAFL and the Reos facilitation team gathered in Johannesburg on the 13th August for a one-day urban learning journey, directly preceding the first innovation lab to be held on the 14th and 15th August. The purpose of this learning journey was to provide farmers in particular with the opportunity to follow and experience what happens to their produce along the commercial supply chain. Incidentally, this was my first direct exposure to the SAFL and SSCA.

The learning journey included a visit to the Joburg Fresh Produce Market, and the Mandela People's Market, which is situated on the premises of the Joburg Fresh Produce Market, as well as parallel group visits, with one group visiting Farmwise, a vegetable packaging company and the other visiting the Woolworths Distribution Centre in Centurion.

That evening, the two groups reconvened to share and exchange experiences of the day. The facilitated reflection encouraged participants to stay loyal to what they experienced with their senses, rather than to go into interpretation of their experiences.

In my interview with Canny, he felt that more could have been done with this particular Learning Journey:

I am glad that Kenneth was able to bring some of the small scale producers out to Johannesburg to see things, but it would have been good to set up a meeting with the Director General of Agriculture, for them to speak, one-on-one, not at a community meeting with a government official who comes and graces the community with his or her presence. Given the profile that the Lab has, if you look at who attends these meetings, it would have been easy to organise.

The first SSCA Innovation Lab

Time period: 14 – 15 August 2013

This two-day innovation lab took place on Irene Dairy Farm in Gauteng on the 14th and 15th August 2013 and marked the return of Colleen to the SAFL. She, together with Rebecca facilitated the workshop. As Rebecca recalls, this was not an easy decision to make:

A decision that both Colleen and I had both come to three or four years back [was] that we wouldn't co-facilitate as two white women who were the same age, who have a similar education: it's too homogenous. And the difficult decision has been that actually we need Colleen's skill because she's the one person ...who's got the most experience of change labs, and particularly the right hand side of the U. And so we're still figuring that one out.

This innovation lab brought together about 45 participants from across the food system, including smallholder farmers, government officials from national and regional departments, NGOs, academics, retailers, commercial enterprises and donors. Approximately half the group had been to at least one of the two rural learning journeys.

The first day consisted of a number of academic and research inputs, provocations and opportunities for participants to think afresh and interactively about smallholder farming in South Africa, especially in terms of what is working and what is stuck.

One of the first presentations of the day was by Ben Cousins on a proposed definition and typology of smallholder farmers that he hoped would begin to do justice to the diversity of smallholder farmers that exist in South Africa. The four broad classes named were “subsistence-orientated smallholders”, “market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains”, “market-oriented smallholders in tight value chains” and “small-scale capitalist farmers” (Cousins and Chikazunga, 2013). A number of people interviewed mentioned how useful these typologies are for becoming more specific about what interventions might work for different types of smallholder farmers with different skills, interests and ambitions. However, others felt that typologies create artificial, simplified boxes that distract from the fact that every individual is different and unique and that it turns the lived experiences of individual smallholders into abstractions.

The typology of farmers was a very important tool for us to think about what kind of support can we tailor to different types of farmers. I think that that knowledge wasn't there before ... when Ben did that presentation, I suddenly saw my initiative is supporting the two last typologies and not the very poor farmers and so definitely we need to develop ways to build support for the poorest farmers.

We don't have time to get hung up by the typologies. Typologies will eventually just trip you, because eventually you are going to get to somebody who does not fall into a group and it can become very political.

A number of interview participants also expressed their view that very few people actually understand what a smallholder is and that many have a very skewed image of who they are and how they operate.

They are a very large contributor to food that is consumed in South Africa ... yet we know nothing about them.

A smallholder farmer is a very rational economic player. Actually, in most cases he's not a farmer... but because you want to recognise him as a farmer, he will be a farmer in that time when you are there, but you may find out that the moment you move out, he can become a teacher, he can become a businessman, he can become a hawker. The livelihoods of smallholder farmers are not understood in most cases.

The second day of the workshop focused on developing and building on the five innovations listed in Table 5 below that had emerged from the two rural learning journeys. The first three ideas surfaced from the KZN Learning Journey, with the last two arising from the Limpopo Learning Journey.

Table 5: The five initial innovations proposed, developed from ideas from the two rural learning journeys.

Innovation Number	Description	Team leads
1	Develop market segmentation and common safety standards for smallholder fresh produce supply to retailers.	Kenneth Carden and Dianna Moore, SAFL
2	Build a public-private partnership with DAFF at the local municipal level, to find ways to unblock extension service blockages in the interests of subsistence farmers.	AJ Gatley, Massmart
3	Create criteria, co-ordinated at the municipal level, for subsistence-oriented smallholders to graduate to market-oriented small holders in loose value chains, and mechanisms to support this graduation.	Lawrence Mkhalihi, Biowatch
4	Test the collaborative approach and co-ordinating model outlined in the draft Extension policy and enable what works.	Kenneth Carden, SAFL
5	Create ways of getting more small scale farmers' voices heard in this work and in policy development.	Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam

Two more ideas were added by Sidney Lockett and Jemina Moeng and Innovation 2 and 4 were combined. By the end of the day the following six innovations had been refined as indicated in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Revised innovations at the end of the first innovation lab.

Innovation Number	Title	Summary	Lead
1A	Entry Level Checklist	Non-accredited checklist that increases market access, increases resilience/sustainability and provides a roadmap to Local G.A.P. certification.	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden
1B	Market Segmentation	Perform a market segmentation study of a discrete area in order to better understand the current markets smallholders supply and identify key actors or processes that would be necessary to facilitate change.	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden
1C	Monitoring and Evaluation	An M&E system needs to be developed to monitor performance of smallholder farmers within extension service support programmes.	Sarah Chapman, Institute for Monitoring and Evaluation, UCT.
2	Pilot the coordinating model as defined in the draft extension policy	Test the collaborative approach and co-ordinating model outlined in the draft extension policy to inform the implementation of the policy.	Kenneth Carden

Innovation Number	Title	Summary	Lead
3	Graduation of farmers	Create criteria, co-ordinated at the municipal level, for subsistence-oriented smallholders to graduate to market-oriented small holders in loose value chains, and mechanisms to support this graduation.	Lawrence Mkhaliphi, Biowatch
4	Smallholders' voices	We want to create spaces for farmer-to-farmer engagement and collaboration to allow farmers to talk to each other and share and engage in policy making; and to create a space for farmers and other stakeholders to have dialogue with NGOs, academics and policy makers.	Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam
5	Collaboration between ZZ2 and local smallholder farmers	Making localised data, farming methods, and ecological approaches available to members of the Mopani Farmers' Association in Limpopo.	Sidney Luckett, Independent
6	Bridging the Divide	Multi-sectoral co-operation and alignment for the benefit of smallholder farmers.	Jemina Moeng (DAFF – Smallholder Development) Busi Mdaka (DRDLR)

The time between the two innovation labs

Time period: August – October 2013

Between the first and second workshop the innovation teams continued to work together, although some people felt that there was not enough time between the first and second innovation labs to make any meaningful progress. In some cases they also experienced logistical challenges such as having team members spread throughout the provinces and not having the resources to meet face-to-face during this time.

The other event during this time was an internal workshop that was organised between the SAFL, PLAAS and Reos. Championed by Ben and facilitated by Rebecca, the workshop aimed to unpack the various ideas and concepts on which the SSCA project rests, for example the notion of “food security” and what it means for different stakeholders. The idea for the workshop had emerged from Ben’s frustration during the first innovation lab about the language that was being used by the hosts and facilitators. As Ben articulated during the learning history validation workshop: *“the idea here is that ideas count: how you conceptualise something makes a big difference for how you decide to act and intervene in a system.”* Through this conversation, it became much clearer to those present that the SAFL is looking more broadly at the food system and not focusing just on food security. For a number of people interviewed, broader food system change had always been implicit to the SAFL but that in recent months this had become a much more explicit part of the SAFL’s

Food security is at the heart of what we’re thinking about but I now have a much deeper appreciation of how that fits within the broader food system.

So whereas we probably always said food system, I think we’re now saying it more strongly.

thinking and communication. However, it seems that not everyone within the SAFL shares this view. For some, the SAFL is, and should continue to be specifically about food security.

Second SSCA innovation Lab

Time period: 21 – 22 October 2013

Approximately 40 people attended the second innovation lab, again held on Irene Dairy Farm, from the 21st to the 22nd October. This lab was primarily focused on refining, assessing, and potentially discarding some of the innovations that had been developed during and subsequent to the first innovation lab.

The first day primarily involved presenting progress made on the innovations since the first innovation lab, and further refining them. Because both Jemina Moeng and Busi Mdaka were unable to make the innovation lab, the conversation on Bridging the Divide (Innovation 6 in Table 6) was integrated with Innovation 2 (Piloting a coordinating model, Table 6) and both Scott and Ben moved across from Group 6.

A few very exciting things happened at the last innovation Lab. [One was] the recognition that it's possible to work in collaboration with DAFF's development of a new policy on extension, and to support them in that without submitting to their demand that the policy has to be approved before a pilot can take place.

The second day began with a panel presentation to three panellists who understand the South African food system but have not been involved in the SSCA project. They were Ashraf Kariem from the National Planning Commission, Yuri Ramkissoo of the SAHRC (who had been a participant at the foundation workshop of the SAFL in 2009) and Brian Whittaker from Vumelana Advisory Fund. They were invited to look at the innovations with fresh eyes, and to provide incisive, honest and compassionate feedback – “an outside view in” – in a way that facilitated the ideas and innovations to grow. According to some people, some of the feedback was quite brutal, with a number of innovations being challenged regarding whether they really were innovative. The rest of the day focused on integrating this feedback into the individual Innovation teams, taking stock of progress made and planning the next steps. Groups were encouraged to look carefully at their innovations in light of the feedback received and be willing to let them go should the innovation no longer seem desirable, viable or feasible. All groups decided to continue with their innovations.

The closing plenary discussion for the day focused on exploring the areas of synergy and overlap and practical next steps as an entire group. Based on comments made by the panellists, Ben raised the challenge of fundraising for these innovations and suggested that Treasury could potentially fund an integrated package of innovations if it were championed through the National Planning Commission. A suggestion was made that all six innovations focus on two districts, namely Mopani and Umkhanyakude, with each innovation team choosing which site or sites to focus on, and that the teams would put together a coordinated concept document (or two concept documents for each of the districts).

Some discussion was held about offering an entire package in one of the areas, rather than splitting the innovations amongst the sites. Some preferred the Mopani District, as they felt it is better organised than Umkhanyakude. Having two sites could be helpful for drawing out lessons. However, there was a concern regarding whether the innovation teams had sufficient capacity to work in both pilot areas.

This idea drew a fair amount of discussion about the tension of holding the integrity and building on what is already working at a small scale in individual innovations, while at the

same time creating the connections and coordination among the innovations where this is beneficial to all. It also raised the potential that this approach could easily lead to falling into old ways of thinking about piloting and scalability; the challenge was put to the group to explore how to bring an innovative way of piloting into whatever proposal is developed. It was agreed that conceptual work would need to be done and that the pilots would need to be carefully designed and facilitated. It was agreed that Kenneth Carden, with the support of Duncan Stewart from Lima, would take the lead on taking this conversation further in discussion with the innovation team leads, with the intention of potentially developing a proposal.

Table 7 below provides an overview of each of the innovations, some of which took on new titles, and their initial responses to the idea of focusing on one or both pilot sites.

Table 7: Initial thoughts from the innovation teams regarding their involvement in the pilot sites.

Innovation Number	Title	Team Leads	Initial Thoughts About Pilot Districts
1A	Food Safety Standards	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden	I [Dianna] would welcome integrating this innovation into a larger group, but given the uncertainty of our team's next steps, it is hard to envision how this innovation would specifically fit in at the moment. Contacting those we agreed on and speaking further with Kenneth Carden and Prof. Cousins may help elucidate the path further.
1B	Building local economies in South Africa: how smallholder farmers in make markets work for them	Dianna Moore Kenneth Carden	We are open to this collaboration because of the synergies it may create in the learning process, the holistic vision it may provide, and the strength of a funding proposal that hits so many key targets. Our hesitations lie in the complexity, delay, and research fatigue (for the smallholders) it may create. We would be happy to continue discussing this.
2	Influencing and enabling the national policy on extension and advisory services.	Kenneth Carden	This innovation team has effectively already decided to consolidate with the Bridging the Divide Innovation (Innovation 6) listed during the first innovation lab. The innovation does need to work closely with the Voices of the small-scale farmers innovation (Innovation 4) as the voices of small-scale farmers are going to be vital before and during the pilot phase. Discussions will be held in November with that team on how these two innovations collaborate. Discussions will also be held with each of the other innovations regarding the configuration of the pilots and opportunities to synergise between innovations. It will be particularly vital that when the SAFL innovations speak to government (e.g. Limpopo and KZN Departments of Agriculture) and funders we do this in an organised fashion.

Innovation Number	Title	Team Leads	Initial Thoughts About Pilot Districts
3	Create criteria, coordinated at municipal level, for agro-ecological subsistence-oriented smallholders to graduate to market-oriented smallholders in loose value chains, and mechanisms to support this graduation.	Lawrence Mkhalihi, Biowatch	This innovation was dropped shortly after the second innovation lab because it hadn't gained enough traction.
4	Create ways of getting more small scale farmers' voices heard in this work and in policy development.	Canny Geyer, Rashmi Mistry, Oxfam	The idea is welcomed. However the group will need to discuss to avoid being a "sub-project" of group 2 or other groups. Therefore, in the future events, the smallholders and the other members of group 4 shall more strongly express their needs and interests.
5	Agro-ecosystem Awareness	Sidney Lockett, Independent	Supportive in principle subject to outcomes of further discussions regarding sensitivities expressed at the meeting by myself.
6	Bridging the Divide	Jemina Moeng (DAFF – Smallholder Development) Busi Mdaka (DRDLR)	Due to the absence of both team leads that the second innovation, this innovation was incorporated into Innovation 2.

In closing, Rebecca named a dynamic that she had been observing during the innovation lab about voices in the room, in terms of who was speaking and who was not, especially in relation to race. She made the observation that whereas in the previous innovation lab the innovations had equally been led by white and black people, this had shifted during the second innovation lab. By drawing the group's attention to this shifting dynamic, Rebecca hoped that the innovation lab as a whole could pattern itself differently in its leadership, so that the SSCA does not end up looking like an innovation lab could have looked 20 years ago in terms of its demographics, and so that all people in the SSCA can become powerful, not just a minority. This provocation by Rebecca seems to have precipitated a great deal of introspection in the SSCA about voice and power, which is explored in greater detail in Chapter 4 (**Reflection 3: Working with Power**, pages 65-72).

In their feedback forms a number of people found the panellist session to be the most valuable of the two days, although one participant felt quite differently: *"The session in which the outside 'experts' gave feedback wasn't very useful and therefore the time given to this session could have been more valuably used. Because they had not been exposed to the day 1 reports many of their observations missed the mark."*

A number of comments were also raised during the workshop around the fact that there was still not sufficient involvement and voice of smallholder farmers, and a strong call was made to place them central to the process.

I thought what we are going to do in this programme is for the smallholder farmer to take centre stage.

[There is a] need to create more space for many smallholder farmers to come together for bigger voice.

We are only talking about systems that are in place for helping the farmers, not at how the farmers wants to be structured and I think so far we are going to the historical way of doing it.

The time between the innovation lab and Transition Lab

Time period: November 2013 – January 2014

In the three months between the second innovation lab and the transition lab in January 2014, all the innovation teams, apart from Innovation 3 (Graduation Criteria innovation), continued to make significant progress, having taken to heart both what at times may have been experienced as pretty brutal feedback from the panellists, and the closing plenary discussion around coordinating innovations and issues of power. According to Rebecca all the innovation teams had *“started to make some changes, or started to think differently, or having had a conversation with another person who’s bringing, offering something new.”*

I listened to the feedback from the panel to the innovations, and it was pretty tough ... and I had anticipated people would feel pretty that the air had been taken out of their sails... and [yet] they’re all steaming ahead.

Innovation 3, led by Lawrence Mkhalihi from Biowatch, has been put on hold, as Biowatch made a decision at their strategic planning meeting after the second innovation lab that they would no longer be involved in the SSCA project.

The other innovation that faced some challenges during this period was Innovation 4 (Supporting smallholder voices). According to Rebecca:

Mandy [from the Environmental Monitoring Group] wrote an email to Kenneth saying: ‘I’m really concerned. It feels like we’re back in the usual business of lip service to farmers voice’. And Kenneth took her really seriously, and they had a conversation ... She was saying, ‘I’m not sure I can continue to be involved’. And as a result of the conversation they’ve had, she’s now co-leading that innovation with Norah [from Mopani Farmers Union], and ... between them [there is] this huge sense of what they could do together which will be ground-breaking around farmers voices. And so what one level looks like ... the most critical voice an innovation lab leaving disillusioned, has instead turned into her taking up leadership.

The SSCA host team also spent a great deal of time thinking about how to include more smallholder farmers, farmer unions, associations and cooperatives in the project and in the SAFL as a whole, and how farmers might themselves drive the SSCA innovations. As Rebecca articulated:

Phase 2 of the project envisages far higher numbers of small-scale farmers and unions, and cooperatives being directly involved in the lab as a whole. I’m seeing the potential for all of these things that are otherwise abstractions actually being meaningful and real for farmers themselves. And when I think about who we first sought to recruit, and just how oblivious we were to the necessity to have a significant number of farmers there, I’m amazed at my naivety.

The Transition Lab

Time period: 27 – 29 January 2014

The transition lab took place after the interviews and validation workshop had been concluded. However, this SSCA historical narrative would feel incomplete if the final event of the first phase of the SSCA were not included in this report. This section thus relies mostly on the transition lab report (SAFL, 2014) and the feedback forms from participants to provide an overview of both what transpired and how participants experienced the three days.

The transition lab once again took place at the Irene Dairy farm, from the 27th to 29th January 2014. Its primary purpose was for involved stakeholders to take stock of what had transpired in this initial phase of the SSCA project, and to prepare for shifting their attention to a subsequent phase of prototyping the innovations that had been defined in the first phase.

The first day of the transition lab was devoted to training innovation team leads and one “champion” from their respective innovation groups in the kind of leadership that would be needed in their teams going forward, while also introducing them to the concepts of social prototyping and action learning.

The specific objectives of the first day were to:

1. Take stock of the innovation teams and plans for the prototyping phase of the SSCA project;
2. Work with key questions or needs which exist within the groups;
3. Convey to the team leads the new kind of leadership required for the next phase;
4. Propose a language and approach of action learning needed for prototyping;
5. Introduce and build capacities for effective prototyping; and
6. Prepare input for the next two days.

The day began with a presentation from Ben, who contrasted the traditional ‘blue-print’ approach for rural development projects with that of action learning. Questions and comments that arose from Ben’s presentation included the following:

- *How do we communicate / speak in a way that includes/ excludes?*
- *There are words and language that we commonly use that need clarification: food systems, food security, small farmer, etc.*
- *Has this approach been applied at a local level in South Africa?*
- *In this context, what is the “organisation”?*
- *What is the structure or container?*
- *Smallholder farmers need to be more involved. We need to link the innovations and then we need to start.*

This was followed by a presentation from Colleen, who outlined the concept of social prototyping and its principles. Rebecca then facilitated a reflective exercise to help the team leads understand what they needed to let go of in order to step more fully and openly into their leadership roles. Towards the end of the day, Colleen helped the leads and champions prepare for the next day, when they would be joined by the rest of their teammates.

In wrapping up the day, a number of reflections were made:

- *The project has prompted me to be less of a critic. I need to let go of my mania. Perhaps that is what I have to offer the project - less mania, more support.*
- *I need to let go of my fear of making a mistake.*

- *I have energy for this innovation; at the moment, it makes sense for me to drive it. However, we need to cast the net wide again as there may be new energetic leaders that come out of this process.*

The second day opened the lab up to all members of the innovation teams and focused on presentations that elucidated the findings of the SSCA project to date. A total of 32 people attended these two days. The first morning comprised presentations on the PLAAS research, which included an overview of the research process and outputs; the thinking behind and development of the typology of smallholders in South Africa today as detailed by Ben and Davison (Cousins and Chikazunga, 2013); the finding that the majority of support programmes offered by the private sector to smallholder farmers were in fact first initiated by farmers individually or by farmers' groups, challenging the myth that farmers are dependents waiting for someone else to take action; and what the innovations could learn from the research. Specific suggestions that were made for the innovations by the research team is captured in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Potential value of research to each innovation

Innovation number	What innovations could learn from the PLAAS research
Innovation 1B: Building Local Economies	• Our research shows a need for further research into variegated markets in South Africa. This will be a key goal of the Building Local Economies innovation. • PLAAS have offered methodological assistance to plan this innovation.
Innovation 2: Influencing and Enabling the National Policy on Extension and Advisory Services	• The research shows that extension services are generally disorganised and lacking capacity although individual extension officers do perform. • The research suggests that there is a lack of support for Class 1 farmers. This could be taken up by government extension services.
Innovation 3: Graduation Criteria	• Farmers can graduate between the levels of categorisation but it is not a simple, linear process. • There is a difference between graduating between markets and within a market that needs to be recognised. • Not all farmers are interested in graduating. We found that farming activities are often dependent on other livelihood strategies.
Innovation 4: Farmers' Voices	• There are a multitude of differing groups representing smallholder farmers. • This innovation should divide farmers into the sub-groups proposed. • Multiple farmer organisations exist in the country. Perhaps this team should focus more on the coordination of these groups.
Innovation 5: Agro-Ecosystem Awareness	• Consultants/mentors who train smallholders are often only used to large-scale farming techniques. • It is important to also train trainers, commercial farmer mentors, and NGOs in agro-eco system awareness. • Small scale NGOs are often involved in this arena. Could there be an opportunity to connect and involve other actors?

In the afternoon, I provided a summary of what had surfaced so far from the learning history, which was followed by Rebecca asking me what questions I was currently sitting with. The group was then asked to pair up and discuss these questions. Below are the questions and some of the responses from the group that were fed back in plenary:

Questions surfacing from the learning history	Some responses from the group
<i>How do we work with power and what does that mean for us at an individual level? How do we let go of control and feel comfortable when the rubber hits the road?</i>	• Dineo said that introversion and extroversion are context specific. How we are conditioned also affects our level of interaction. • Colleen felt a disproportionate amount of power because she facilitates a conversation amongst people who are more knowledgeable about a topic than she is. She asked, “<i>how do I break through my relationship with my own power? The worst thing would be to let go of my power and not fill it with anything else? How do I embrace my power?</i>”
<i>How do we work with less than ideal situations and still make them work? Our process goes through a long, reflective process, so how do we engage people who have not gone through the whole process?</i>	• We need to embrace the stability a core group brings while also embracing new people coming in. • We need to be careful bringing new people in, as it is time consuming to bring people up to speed. • We need to orientate newcomers not only to the content of the innovations but also the process that we use as it is different from the norm. • Newcomers should mostly be female farmers. • We have to ask ourselves whose behaviour we want to change? We need to bring in more farmers, private sector, and government officials as they hold the power to change. The challenge is how do we bring them in and keep them coming.

The next session focused on drawing out from the group what they felt was working, not working and new actions that could be taken, especially in light of the learning history reflections. A summary of the responses is provided below:

What’s working?	• Multi-disciplinary people coming together. • Embracing group dynamics and challenges. • Working with both content and process.
What’s not working?	• Relatively low level of involvement from government, private sector, and smallholder farmers. • The lack of a defined, concrete direction. • The lack of action. • Writing, speaking, and working only in English.
What we could start on?	• Engaging with core farmers at the individual level. • Monitoring and evaluating. • A new funding model for smallholders. • Meeting in a local area, eat local food, and speaking the local language. • Finding creative ways of involving farmers. • Clarifying what behaviour changes to we want to focus on.

The day concluded with an update on the innovations that were continuing. The session provided an opportunity for everyone in the group to understand the five innovations afresh and to hear about progress made since the second innovation lab.

The third day was an opportunity for teams to look forward, to not only progress the design of their innovations but also to crystallise the goals and values at the core of their projects. The day began with overviews of the two suggested pilot areas of the Mopani and Umkhanyakude Districts, which was followed by a presentation on the SAFL’s theory of

change. Rebecca gave an overview of the traditional linear developmental model and the increasingly popular idea of allowing learning processes to follow an emergent approach, especially when they are focused on complex issues such as food systems. She said that the encouragement here is to draw on both as appropriate.

She then went on to discuss the U-Process, which sits in the background of both the SSCA project and the SAFL more broadly and has informed how the process has been designed so far (See Box 1, page 10 for more information). She explained that the SSCA had entered *Sensing* during the learning journeys, followed by *Presensing* as the complexity of the issues at hand required the SSCA to look, then retreat and ask deep and personal questions in order to get clear on new insights, roles, and energy. This process led to *crystallizing*. This is what the innovation labs had been about. She then highlighted that the first two days of the transition lab had involved going back up the “U” to harvest the learnings and that the place where the group was now at was at crystallizing, just before the prototyping phase (See Box 5). Rebecca then explained the idea of social prototyping and the principles used during prototyping.

Box 5: Prototyping

What is prototyping?

A prototype is an early sample, model or release of a product built to test a concept or process or to act as a thing to be replicated or learned.

~Wikipedia

How is prototyping different from piloting?

Piloting is a linear, pre-planned approach, with the assumption that if we think it works, we role it out, and scale it up, whereas prototyping adopts a far more experimental approach of testing ideas with the intention of learning about what works and doesn't work.

This session ended with some verbal comments and feedback, which were as follows:

- *We came together to shift things institutionally. It was not about developing technical innovations. Can we broaden our term of innovation to include how we work together and to be constantly pushing ourselves to think through what we mean by “innovation”?*
- *Remember our assets, which are innovative relationships: we are not working from scratch: there is momentum.*
- *At what scale do we do things? E.g. Mopani District? One or two municipalities? A ward?*
- *It will be important to identify the type of value chains we want to be working with in our innovations.*
- *How do we prevent creating silos between innovations?*
- *How do we not get locked into the donor traps? Scott, Kenneth, Colleen have been looking for like-minded funders, who are interested in working in a different way.*

The following session focused on laying the foundations for district-level innovation. Colleen reminded the innovation groups that this next phase was about focusing on stuck situations for which there is no known solution, about trying out a different way of doing something because all the other ways didn't work. And while there was a lot of energy in the group to start planning, because the next phase is not likely going to be easy to resource, she encouraged the teams to make sure they are clear about their motivation and approach. In this light, groups were asked to discuss the following in their teams:

- **Deep intention:** *What is the change we want this innovation to enable? Why are we doing this?*
- **Deep principles:** *What deep beliefs and practices provide a guide for all that we do? What will make sure that you stick to your deep intentions with regard to language, reflection, failure, Farmer's Voices, etc. (guidelines, ethos, beginnings of a constitution)?*

- **Assumptions:** *What untested ideas about this innovation do we need to check out?*

The groups then had the opportunity to begin planning their innovations over the following 6 months, bearing in mind how they would prototype their innovation (i.e. what would they do to experiment, get feedback, reflect, learn, redesign). This was followed by the teams sharing their plans, and a discussion of how different innovations might link to support one another. Innovation 5 in particular seemed to have a number of linkages, which were as follows:

- *There is a direct link between ZZ2 and Innovation 1A (the Standards Innovation) – how to bring agro-ecology best practice into the standards discussion?*
- *Are there ways of linking to this innovation to the Innovation 2 (Collaborative Extension Innovation)? Perhaps a case study of bringing DAFF, DWA, ZZ2, private extension and district extension together would be a good idea.*
- *This innovation could be linked to the Innovation 1B (Market Segment Innovation), as MFU want to look at local distribution (e.g. bakkie traders and other options, not just through ZZ2 and contract).*

In closing this session, Ben offered a provocation specifically to Innovation 2, but that applied equally to the other teams. He cautioned against teams concerning themselves too early in with prototyping a product and to rather focus their time initially on designing the process. He used Innovation 2 as an example. Here, the end product would be a set of institutional relationships, which ensure that extension and support by differing agencies are complementary to one another in meeting the needs of farmers. But the process of getting there is a process of learning about why: what the issues are, who the key actors are, what the gaps are, deepening knowledge about the problems and in the process coming up with some ideas and possible solutions. Concentrating mostly on process is also a kind of a prototype. This might be where the real innovation lies. His question to all teams was: *How much have you been considering process before you test your product?*

The final session prior to closure of the transition lab was a plenary session on next steps. Kenneth outlined a draft plan for the next phase of the SSCA, which is illustrated in Figure 3, including a learning journey and an innovation lab. The next 6-9 months would consist of at least one design meeting, one review meeting, and one innovation lab, most likely in September or October, with the expectation that teams have completed at least one iteration round before the next innovation lab.

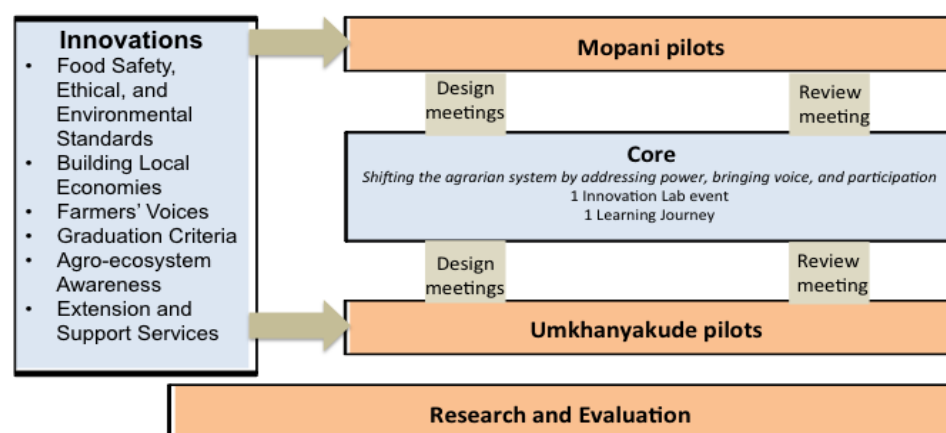


Figure 3: The proposed way forward for the SSCA project in 2014.

The transition lab ended with a wrap-up session, in which participants were asked to indicate how ready they were as individuals, as teams and as a group to enter into the next phase, based on the following ratings:

- 1) What phase 2? No, totally unready;
- 2) Feeling overwhelmed;
- 3) Getting there – still lots to prepare;
- 4) Just a few details to resolve and then we can get moving; and
- 5) Ready and rearing to go.

With regard to how ready people were personally, the majority of participants rated themselves at about 4. What was noticeable was that there was a huge range of readiness within the PLAAS staff, indicating a lack of institutional clarity about their role and future involvement. The question on team-readiness provided useful insights into which members of the team are the “reality checkers” and who are the people that are going to keep waving the optimism flag. As a whole, the team scored themselves an average of 3. This process officially concluded the transition lab.

I experienced the innovation labs themselves, and just how much energy there is, and commitment and determination, and good thinking and leadership is happening there, and I get very hopeful about what's possible.

As this was the last event of the first phase of the SSCA, it seems particularly useful to include some of the feedback, both from participants through their feedback forms, and comments from the debriefing session of the SSCA hosting team, as these in particular feed into the next steps for the SSCA and the SAFL leadership, and are picked up in Chapter 5 (**Implications for the SAFL and SSCA**, pages 77 – 84). Some suggestions for immediate next steps that were raised are not included here, but are integrated into Chapter 5.

Feedback from the participant evaluation forms:

As usual, there was a great deal of complementary feedback, and some of the feedback was not new, such as the request for more time and emphasising the need to involve other stakeholders. What was a fairly strong and repeated comment was the sense that it was time for less talk, more action. Some of the comments on this are included below:

- *Perhaps a little less reflection on the internal dynamics of the group and a little more planning activities/time.*
- *I love the facilitation of the workshop but never feel like we have enough focus on the innovations themselves.*
- *Get to practicalities/ design aspects sooner in the process.*

SSCA team debriefing

Below is an overview of what emerged from the debriefing session, which consisted of Rebecca, Milla, Dineo, Scott, Kenneth, Colleen and I.

- *The Monday workshop with team leads worked very well. It spread a sense of ownership and belonging to a larger core.*
- *It's still difficult for teams to work in a different way.*
- *We haven't successfully enabled ownership by the teams.*
- *Each innovation team needs different things at this point and this is a challenge.*
- *There's not enough stuff happening in the teams between gatherings.*
- *There was not enough time to focus on work in the teams.*
- *We didn't pay close enough attention to the signs of what was needed on the last day.*
- *The summary of prototyping on the third day didn't work. As a result, there's lack of momentum.*
- *There are lots of assumptions within the SSCA, which are not being caught and*

clarified.

- *Our use of language is still problematic; people are missing things. The process has erred on the side of being too emergent. There's not enough pegged in the ground. We weren't able to give people a clear enough map of the way ahead.*
- *It's inevitable that at the end of one phase and the beginning of another, things get shaken up a bit and one way of working starts to feel out of synch with what's needed. I think we're in that place right now.*

Current status of the SAFL

Milla has now officially handed over the reins to Scott. The SAFL Steering group is now made up of the following people: Ralph as chairperson, Milla, Scott, Rebecca, Colleen, Christina, Kenneth, Tatjana, Paula, Candice Kelly (Sustainability Institute), Abigail Harper (Stellenbosch University), Florian Kroll (Siyakhana Initiative for Ecological Health and Food Security), Norah Mlondobozi (Mopani Farmers Union), Busi Mdaka (DRDLR), Mthunzi Mncane (Massmart), Andre Nel (Pick 'n Pay) and Tom Murray (Woolworths).

Activities currently underway by SAFL, which include the SSCA activities are as follows:

- 1) **Facilitation of a Transformative Scenarios Process.** This is aimed at giving clear direction to the next phase of the SAFL, as well as strengthening the multi-sectoral partnerships across government, private sector, academia and civil society that characterise the initiative.
- 2) **Establishment of area-based pilot phase in Mopani District in Limpopo Province and Umkhanyakude District in KwaZulu-Natal to prototype new ways of working with small-scale farmers.** Through these pilots, which will be strongly co-defined by the farmers themselves, a proof of concept will be developed showing how generic support and infrastructure can underpin a thriving small-scale farming sector that contributes to local food systems and food security.
- 3) **Implementation of innovation in the pilots.** This involves a second, more intense phase of implementation of innovations defined in the first phase of the SSCA project. Prototyping and field research initiatives will be implemented that holistically address the underlying contributing factors that can improve small-scale farmer access to markets and support models.
- 4) **Policy debate and alignment.** The processes above will enable opportunities for stakeholder engagement on official policy frameworks such as the National Development Plan and the emerging Policy on Extension and Advisory Services to Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- 5) **Convening a learning and social dialogue process on social protection and livelihoods based on Ford Foundation experiences in southern Africa.** This will entail taking the learning from the Ford Foundation initiatives and exposing it to a broader range of experts working both academically and in practice.
- 6) **Facilitated learning journeys.** SAFL is proposing to convene a learning journey to areas of the country where social protection and livelihood issues are most stark.
- 7) **Public dialogue through two roundtables.** A public dialogue will be facilitated to bring the findings of the rural-based learning journeys into the public arena via two roundtables.

CHAPTER 4: Reflections from the Learning History

This chapter reflects on a number of themes, some of which were apparent at the beginning of the research while others have been emergent. The broad themes are: reflections on the **purpose**, assumptions and concepts; reflections on the **methodology**, which includes explaining the SAFL's theory of change, design and process aspects of the SSCA; reflections on working with **power**; reflections on the **flow of resources**, in particular financial resources; and finally, reflections on the **interplay between research and social dialogue**. Each of these reflections is supported and augmented by quotes from the original interviews, colour coded in the way outlined in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1, page 4).

Reflection 1: Reflections on purpose and underlying assumptions

While there seems to be superficial agreement by interview participants about the purpose of both the SAFL and the SSCA, it is apparent that there are many different and unexamined interpretations, assumptions and concepts at play. For example, different people understand the word "food system" and what constitutes "desired change" differently, and hold different assumptions about how change happens. This highlights the potential for major miscommunication amongst stakeholders who may think they are speaking about the same thing, but are in fact misunderstanding one another in quite fundamental ways. It seems that insufficient time has been given within the SAFL to making the inherent assumptions, interpretations and positions apparent. Exploring people's understanding about purpose also raised the potential "killer assumption" about the scalability of interventions, where *"the determinants of success in smallholder farming are often enormously local and context specific"*.

Purpose of the SAFL

When interview participants were asked to articulate their understanding of the purpose of the SAFL, the response was invariably around developing a clearer and collective systemic understanding of issues related to the food system in South Africa, and to then identify places within the system where something practical could be done to shift the things that aren't working. A number of people thought that the SAFL would focus mostly on the left hand side of the U (sensing together) and would struggle to get to grips with the right hand side (creating together).

I thought at the beginning it would be much more a forum for multi-sectoral dialogue with some discussion about solutions but that the full "U" would be something that would be quite elusive.

A number of people emphasised the role the SAFL could play in alerting people to the real dangers of not paying sufficient attention to a failing food system.

I still believe in the decades to come it will become [an emergency] if we don't pay more attention.

Somebody who had lived in Rwanda just before the ... genocide ... said: 'yes there was always conflict and tension between the Tutsis and the Hutus, but actually what happened was that in the months beforehand there was a crisis of productivity, of local production of food, and people started to get hungry, and that's the thing that tipped an ethnic tension into bloodletting'.

While this stated purpose seems clear enough, it belies some fundamental areas of confusion and divergence. The question of whether the SAFL should be focusing on food security within the broader context of food systems change has already been addressed in Chapter 3 (The SAFL and SSCA Historical Narrative, page 40). Moreover, participants have different interpretations about what comprises the food system and what desired change looks like. As one of the interviewees articulated:

Whose desire do we want to change? What are we desiring the food system to look like?

Regarding what change people think is possible, and the role that SAFL can play in this regard, participants seem to hold a spectrum of views, from those who believe that fundamental paradigmatic change is possible, to those that believe that at best incremental change is possible (for example see Chapter 3, Table 3, page 16 and Chapter 3, page 26:

In itself we will not change the food system. But it definitely does contribute to it.

How much leverage can something like the Food Lab have in the food system? How much change can it actually create?

With all we know about small farmers and the way they need to be supported, and the knowledge we have, why is that that small farmers are still not supported out there?

What is missing?

I came to this knowing that you don't fix systems overnight ... so my personal agenda has not been to change the food system or to have any kind of massive heroic journey through this thing. It has been much more one of facilitating a process and being prepared to deal with the ambiguity and the open-endedness of it, while also recognising the urgency.

These conversations have inevitably surfaced the assumptions about how systems change happens. These are picked up in Chapter 4 (**Reflection 2: The SAFL's theory of change**, page 56).

The assumptions of how change happens by those who founded the SAFL have clearly informed the stated and commonly understood purpose of the SAFL (around developing collective, systemic understanding and then seeking possible areas for action or intervention), premised on the U-Process. Even though the U-Process was referenced and explained during the social dialogue events such as the innovation labs, the theory of change underlying this approach has not been made explicit, except perhaps amongst the early founders and partners of the SAFL. Furthermore, as both Andries and Ben highlighted during the learning history validation workshop, the theory of change does not seem to have been sufficiently interrogated, especially in the face of the politics of power and power asymmetry in South Africa (See Chapter 4: **Reflection 3: Working with Power**, pages 65-72).

Purpose and focus of the SSCA

It seems that most people are in agreement regarding the original intended purpose of the SSCA, as undertaking research that will help in understanding the dynamics of smallholder farmer support in South Africa, integrating that with a social dialogue process and from there looking for areas where action could be taken. Perhaps unsurprisingly, different interview respondents emphasised different aspects of the project. Andries, for example mentioned the importance of this project both for learning about smallholder farmers in light of the shortcomings of their previous work and for capacitating young up-and-coming black students. Others focused less on the research and more on the potential for understanding, networking, developing deeper relationships and opportunities for effecting change within the food system. Rebecca was particularly drawn to the project because of this unique relationship between research and social dialogue. The intention for an

interactive and mutually supporting relationship between research and dialogue was probably initially more prominently envisioned by the SAFL team than PLAAS.

Since the early days of the SAFL, there has been particular interest in the interface between private sector activities and food security. GTZ commissioned Ralph Hamann to examine the *Role of Business and Cross-Sector Collaboration in Food Security in South Africa* (Hamann, 2008) and also pushed hard for the first phase of the SAFL to focus on Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs). Momentum grew for this concept when PLAAS elected to research private sector involvement in smallholder farmer support. The Ford Foundation, a key donor, was interested in the same topic. And clearly there was a great deal of interest and traction from the private sector, in particular from a number of retailers.

This rationale behind focusing on supporting smallholder farmers into commercial agriculture was not clear, especially to relative newcomers to the process, and some found this focus problematic, as it speaks to the aspirations of only a very small proportion of South Africa's smallholder farmers. Not all farmers want to become commercial farmers or be locked into retail market chains.

I was taken up by the concept of smallholder farming support. ... but the striking topic was moving the smallholder to commercial agriculture which to me is- not all smallholders could move to commercial agriculture and it shouldn't be a big drive.

Others felt that retailers are not really committed to smallholder farmers:

They [retailers] don't need them [smallholder farmers] so why are we constantly scratching there?

Some spoke about the title of the project being somewhat unfortunate in that it may be misleading and off-putting for some, at the scope of the SSCA seems to have become much broader than focusing on only supporting smallholders into commercial agriculture.

Another aspect that was key to the original proposal and certainly embedded within the hearts and minds of Andries and Paula was the idea that this project could help identify **scalable** and viable models and approaches of private sector support that the private sector could buy into during the social dialogue process.

If we find models that are viable, scalable, equitable and so on, we will try to use the leverage of the social dialogue process to get the big corporates to commit to scaling up and embarking on those projects.

In the initiative, our focus is in improving the livelihood opportunities for rural producers by linking them to markets, linking them to business services and technical assistance, bringing them to finance and do that at scale.

In both his interview and at the learning history workshop, Andries emphasised that the project's original assumption, that the research would be able to identify scalable models and approaches, was a "killer assumption":

Scalability is something that exists in the head of people in NGOs and bureaucracies ... The determinants of success in smallholder farming are often enormously local, context specific, so the idea that there will suddenly appear a best practice or a magic bullet or a clever formula that can be adopted on scale, that will somehow resolve the problems of smallholder agriculture, I think is highly dubious.

It is not clear whether this question of scalability as SSCA enters Phase 2 has been resolved. Also, what are the implications for funding and fundraising, given that most donors seek

scalable solutions? The question of scaling and scalability will be an important part of the conversation as SSCA moves into phase 2 (See Chapter 5: **Implications for the SAFL and SSCA**, pages 77 – 84).

In terms of the future focus of the SSCA, there is a growing interest within the SAFL towards localised responses and interventions, which appears to be generating a great deal of energy and excitement:

Can we begin to look at creating more economies in rural areas by creating alternative markets and alternative products in the rural economy, so people are not going to [the large retailers], but there are other products that can be sold in different markets?

If we are looking at things like local markets, because that's what farmers need, then are we not localising that food system and demonstrating much shorter, more sustainable, more nutritious nurturing system that maybe we could be working with, that in terms of things like food prices which really damage the system, these things are much more ... protected in some ways?

I'm more and more intrigued by more localised solutions and at the same time very aware and have to think about the system as a whole.

[The pilot] can demonstrate and reveal how a localised system can in fact become quite dynamic, can sustain small scale farmers such that their wellbeing or livelihood is improved.

This movement supports the concept that Milla and Andries have been developing around “nourishing local food economies”:

One of the most productive things that's come out of our discussions ... has been this notion of a nourishing local food economy ... it's a local food economy that provides decent livelihoods and ensures people have enough and nutritious food.

Implicit within this concept of nourishing local food economies is the move away from a purely rural focus to looking at the rural-urban interface as well as looking at peri-urban areas in the face of growing urbanisation.

Reflection 2: Reflections on methodology

In light of comment that the SAFL's theory of change has not been made explicit (See **Reflection 1: Purpose of the SAFL**, page 54), a summary of this is provided below. It also provides a good springboard for looking at how the process has played out in reality.

SAFL's theory of change – a summary

As already mention in Chapter 2 (Box 1, page 10) the SAFL's process is based on the U-Process, which posits that in dealing with complex problems, three aspects of complexity need to be tackled, namely *dynamic*, *social* and *generative* complexity (See Box 6). Dynamic complexity calls for systemic approaches, social complexity benefits from participatory approaches and a commitment to emergence is seen as an apt response to generative complexity. The SAFL's theory of change is that complex issues cannot be solved by one player but that if one can bring together a microcosm of key and influential players of the social system concerned in a spirit of dialogue, this can generate

Box 6: Three types of complexity

Dynamic complexity:
Cause and effect are far apart and interdependent.

Social complexity: Actors have diverse perspectives and interests.

Generative complexity:
Future is unfamiliar and undetermined.

a new and perhaps more collective understanding of the system and one's role in it – including what is working and what is not. New relationships, and a new appreciation of the range of perspectives, create the conditions to see possibilities that were not visible or possible before. A collective design approach – including a willingness to try out new ideas and learn together, to discard what doesn't work and refine what looks promising – increases the likelihood that new ideas will be translated into concrete action.

A summary of the U-Process was provided in Chapter 2, Box 1, page 10. Below is a somewhat more detailed description of the process.

As can be seen from Figure 4, there are very specific intentions at each of the stages of the U-Process at applied to change labs. The three stages are: *Sensing*, *Presencing* and *Creating* or, in the context of collaboration: *Co-Sensing*, *Co-Presencing* and *Co-Creating* (or alternatively referred to as *Co-Realising*).

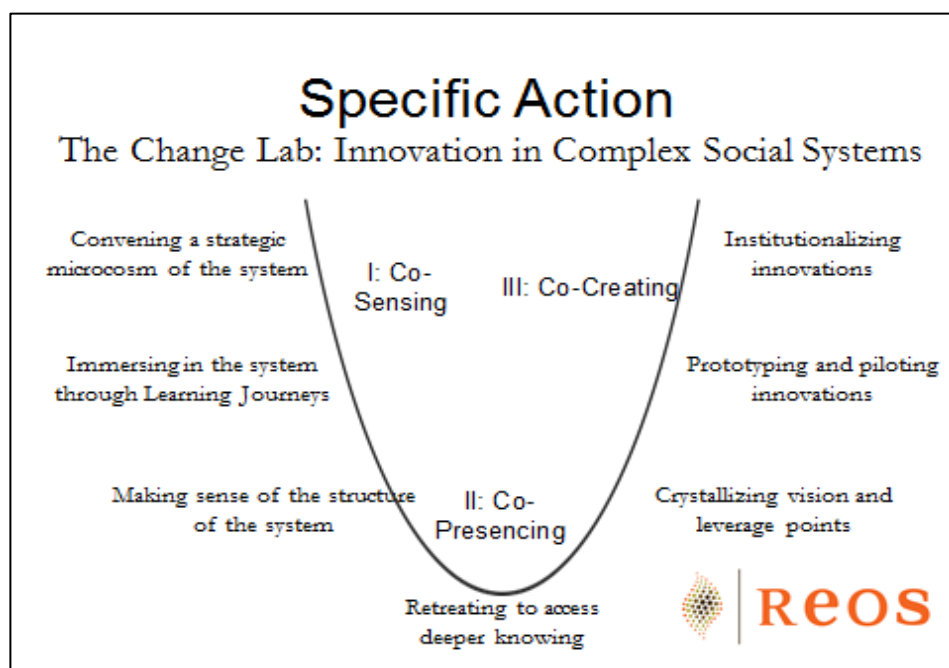


Figure 4: The stages of the U-Process

During the Co-Sensing stage, which is often referred to as the “left hand side of the U”, the intention at an individual level is to challenge and transform one's assumptions, perceptions and relationships, in order that one develops new ways of seeing and experiencing the system, oneself and one another. This is a process of opening up, and of letting go of one's own rigid position – to learn how to listen to new perspectives and to be willing to shift one's own perspective in the face of new information. It is also the space where people tend to shift from very linear and binary ways of thinking (either-or) to more inclusive ways to thinking (both/and). Energy that is often spent on disagreeing with, and blaming others for a situation is released and a deeper understanding emerges. Often this deeper understanding recognises one's own role in creating or maintaining the problem. The idea is that this process of seeing more of the system, beyond one's own fairly narrow view, and appreciating the perspectives of others – whether or not one agrees with them – expands the range of possibilities, and highlights the value of collaborative action.

The Co-Presencing stage can be characterised as “*sitting in the fire*”. Having cultivated a deeper and wider understanding of the situation, the process moves into a more reflective

mode. This is the “*bottom of the U*”, often accompanied by a sense of emptiness, of not-knowing and a feeling of being unequal to the task. The Presencing phase is one in which people contemplate their own role in addressing the situation and, sometimes in the context of a nature retreat, connect with a particular impulse or vision to respond.

Co-creating, which is often referred to as the “right hand side of the U”, is about *Crystallising* and then testing out (*Prototyping*) and experimenting with the new ideas that have emerged (See Box 5, page 48 for definition of Prototyping). Once ideas have crystallised and been articulated in a way that inspires others to work together to realise this idea, the prototyping process is guided by a number of principles, namely: “*fail early and fail often*”; “*go where the energy is*”; and “*many eyeballs tame complexity*” (i.e. the more people that are looking critically at a complex situation, the more unintended consequences will reveal themselves).

In a change lab process, these three main stages do not occur in one sequential U, but rather in a series of processes that build on one another. In the case of the SSCA project, the learning journeys were largely designed as part of the Co-Sensing and Co-Presencing stages, while the two innovation labs took participants through a process of co-Sensing and into the beginning of Co-Creating, prototyping and innovating. The transition lab then took participants through a mini-U-Process, ending at the crystallising phase. The research was intended to support both the Co-Sensing and Co-Creating phases.

In a nutshell, the theory of change implied by the “U” is that systemic change becomes possible when we collectively see the system with new eyes, open ourselves – individually and collectively – to reframing and re-visioning the situation, and engage together in bringing the desired system into being. To be sustainable, these changes need to happen at the level of the individual, organisations and the wider system of which we are a part.

Perspectives and experiences on change within the SSCA

The next section looks at how the SAFL’s theory of change played out in reality, based on the perspectives and experiences of those involved in the SSCA, including within the SSCA core and support team as well as the participants of the SSCA events. This section specifically looks at the degree to which the SSCA participants have developed new ways of thinking about the issues at hand, as well as the degree to which relationships have shifted so as to enable new and different ways of working together.

Are people beginning to think in new ways?

As articulated above, the premise of the U-Process is that participants expand their individual and collective understanding of the broader system that they are concerned about – in the case of the SSCA, the state of smallholder agriculture in South Africa – and very importantly develop new insights into their individual role in the system, both positive and negative. As mentioned in Reflection 2 (**The SAFL’s theory of change**, pages 56 – 58), developing new ways of thinking and seeing the world requires that as individuals, one becomes aware of and lets go of one’s own fixed views and opens oneself to how other people might be perceiving the world.

It seems that for some whose first experience of the U-Process was one of the SSCA events, there have been some profound shifts in thinking and letting go of known and usual ways of thinking about the issue:

“Don’t judge”, I like that approach because it takes us out from our comfort zone and from our normal thinking that I should understand the other part, not that I should be putting my own views only, but I must listen as well what the other part is doing ... the industries ... I always saw them as my competitor, so I didn’t care to listen to them, even if I open a document and read, I read it halfway, I said, ah, what is it going to help me? But now I’m listening to everybody and even at home I’m attempting to go to those meetings that I thought I won’t go to them.

While most who have been involved in the SAFL for a while, seem to have gained new insights and ideas throughout the process, a question that still remains (at least for me) is: *are the changes in ways people are thinking and seeing the world translating into new ways of tackling the issues and taking action?* I had an experience in the innovation team that was speaking about how to empower smallholder voices, where the conversation was dominated by people who are not smallholder farmers, even though a number of smallholder farmers were present. In one of the interviews I undertook, I made this reflection:

The conversation that I felt was missing was: let’s look at what’s happening in this dynamic of five or ten people: what is this telling us about the voice of smallholder farmers and the challenges for smallholder farmers to have a space when it’s been replicated here?

It felt to me at the time that we were missing a major reflexive learning opportunity of understanding within this small group how some of the power dynamics are established (See **Reflection 3: Working with power**, pages 65-72) and what the challenges and leverage points are for this innovation. One of the interviewees echoed my thoughts in this regard:

If that innovation group provides such a powerful lens onto the issue itself, why are we not using it?

The other related question that still seems to be on a number of people’s lips is: ***Are the innovations really innovative?*** If they are, this could be an indication that people’s new ways of thinking has permeated how they think about both the challenges and the potential new ways of working that can be envisaged. The panellists, in the second innovation lab certainly challenged a number of innovation teams on this (See Chapter 3: **Second SSCA innovation lab**, page 41). For some of the SSCA core team, bringing the innovations down to a district level, with the farmers’ voices innovation as central to the other innovations, is what is innovative. At the end of the transition lab, it seemed like this was still a question in a number of people’s minds. For example, during the debriefing session, mention was made of the fact that it is *“still difficult for teams to work in a different way”*.

To what degree have relationships changed?

In reflecting on shifts and changes in relationships, probably the most apparent has been the depth of relationships and trust that has formed between members of the core SSCA group. Other transformations seem to be the nature of relationships between the SSCA project team (both the SAFL and PLAAS) and several of the donors, as well as some of the relationships between participants of the broader SSCA process. The changes of each of these relationships are discussed further below.

During their interviews, all of the core members of the SSCA spoke of their deepening relationships with one another and what a profound impact this had had on how they worked together. Firstly, the trust and respect for one another has grown enormously in the

process of working together over the years built on a “*similar philosophy about systems, and complex systems*”. This trust in one another has enabled the individuals to bring more of themselves into the space and process:

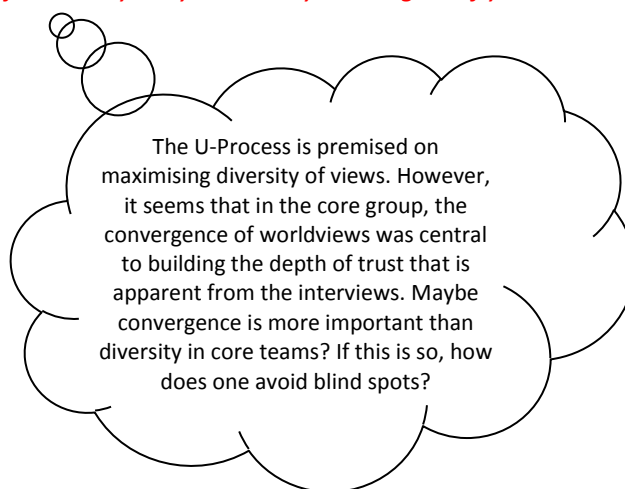
We don't spend a lot of time contesting the basics ... there's a strongly similar sense of what it means to be human, and so it's just ... very easy. It's like you bring all of you ... some of that is very skilful, and some of that at times is unskilful, and the relationship is what matters.

The strength of these relationships has also allowed the core group to trust in the process more, in particular its emergent nature, without necessarily knowing exactly what they were doing or where they were going:

There is so much mutual respect that enables us to keep leading together into uncertainty. It's amazing.

I feel totally clichéd to say it's all emergent... but we're just in a phase of a shared intention, a set of design principles that we've all bought into, and then what actually happens is up for grabs between us in conversation ... as we take each step.

I don't have to know all the answers, I don't have to perform in the same way, I can be part of this process of just being alongside, I can accompany it, which is very rewarding.



In her interview, Rebecca went further, to articulate how the relationships not just in the core group but within the SSCA more generally have allowed for the SSCA “system” to self-regulate or self-correct. An example of this was Rebecca naming the racial and gender dynamics in the second innovation lab, and how, with minimal effort, the innovation teams responded to this challenge.

I feel like I'm watching a boat that could constantly beach itself, or get caught on the rocks, and for reasons that I don't completely understand, it [the SSCA project] just keeps sailing into open water. And so the part of me that is more willing to embrace ... a more open, less rational way of knowing, says “ja, collectively we've created the conditions for this thing to find multiple ways to succeed”.

These reflections are supported by others in the SSCA core and supporting group.

This level of trust seems to have extended to the relationship between the SSCA core team and PLAAS, which is captured in Andries' comment:

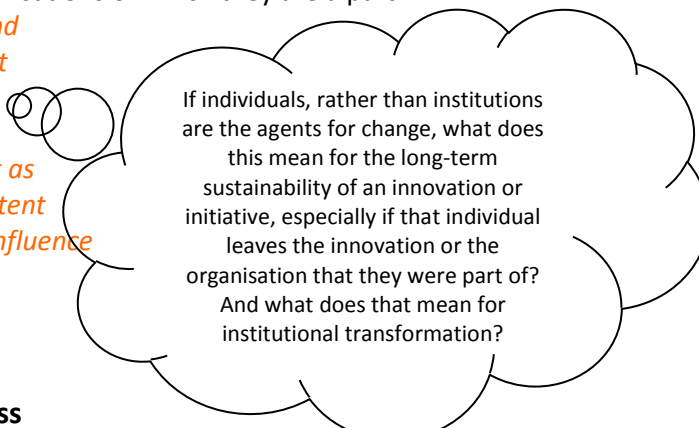
One the things that really worked, partly because I think there was a lot of trust between the players, we were able to have a very flexible approach to how we conducted the material aspects of the project.

Relationships between the SSCA project team and several of the donors have also taken a different route to the usual transactional relationships between funders and recipients. The immersion of donors as participants in the project seems to have been an important dimension in building trust and relationships and assisted in their growing understanding of the process. This in turn has enabled very different conversations and interactions about funding and reallocation of funds. This is explored further in Reflection 4 (**Reflections on the flow of money**, pages 73 – 74).

In terms of relationships that have shifted amongst the SSCA participants, probably the best example is between the Mopani Farmers Union (MFU) and ZZ2, players that work in the same geographical area but who had, until the SSCA, not engaged with each other at all. Adam Mabunda from the MFU is leading this innovation and both players appear to be benefiting significantly from the relationship. It does appear that the learning process is still uni-directional (i.e. ZZ2 is teaching and training MFU), and this innovation team has been challenged to explore what ZZ2 might be able to learn from the MFU. Incidentally, this relationship has also enabled a relationship between MFU and the Department of Water Affairs (DWA), which was a door that was not open to MFU before.

It is noteworthy that most relationship change has been at the individual level. One of the interview participants raised the question of whether these relationships translate into institutional change within the organisations of which they are a part:

It is good to have common ground but... I don't know to what extent the common ground is there because people feel comfortable with each other, individually, not as institutions and then, to what extent that common ground is able to influence institutions?



If individuals, rather than institutions are the agents for change, what does this mean for the long-term sustainability of an innovation or initiative, especially if that individual leaves the innovation or the organisation that they were part of? And what does that mean for institutional transformation?

Reflections on design and process

Following on from the previous section, this set of reflections focuses on what in the design and process of the SSCA may have enabled some of the transformations observed, and what questions and challenges regarding process and design remain.

How has the design and process enabled change?

According to research participants at least two specific aspects of the SSCA process have enabled change. The first was the way in which the social dialogue events worked with diverse players and perspectives, creating opportunities for constructive dialogue and trust building and was able to constantly enrol and welcome new participants into the process. These were comments that were repeatedly made in the innovation lab feedback forms. The second component that many interview participants emphasised, was the experiential, engaging and reflective nature of the learning journeys. These were highly effective for opening people up to other perspectives, challenging people's thinking and assumptions about the issue and other players, and for helping them see how much of their own embedded assumptions and interpretations cloud how they interpret their experiences.

Because of the questions that are asked, [it] forces you to really question your own assumptions, what you're seeing and what that experience means, and relating it back to a broader question about transforming the broader system.

When I was coming here first time, we had never been engaged in such combined efforts [with] different stakeholders of different diverse thinking.

In each and every one of those I felt a shift inside myself in terms of understanding much more from a sense of humanity what was wrong and sensing it and then consolidating my commitment to it.

I could also see that those who are willing to work, who are capable and enthusiastic, they are also stuck with the system that they cannot do anything about it because of the authorities above. They may want to change system but they can't.

The multi-day learning journeys seem to have been particularly transformative for relationships, as there was no easy way for participants to exit the process when things became heated or challenging, but also because there were opportunities for people to relax and engage with each other more informally over several days.

When the stakes are high and the trust is low, we can't rush learning journeys. You can't have a learning journey for a day or for a few hours, so these require time.

When you're locked into a combi with people [asking challenging questions] then you begin to you have to be on your toes ... But then it was moving from that heat ... of that little confined space, to the freedom of being at the lodge that evening, where, sitting in a circle, relaxing a little, ... that things began to shift.

There is something about putting a group of people into a space together, taking them through something fairly intense, that shifts them. You cannot do it when they go home in the evening and have to bath the kids.

A final component that has certainly enabled some of the changes to occur has been the fact that SSCA emerged from a set of relationships and conversations that have been ongoing since 2009 (and some even earlier) and that both the SAFL and SSCA are viewed as long-term initiatives.

What design and process questions have surfaced?

What are the impacts and implications of a high rate of participant through-flow?

If we believe that the kind of change the SSCA seeks to engender takes time, then participants need to be in it for the long haul.

The SSCA has seen a high degree of through-flow of participants. This is partly an artefact of the design, since participants were specifically invited to certain social dialogue events, but cannot fully be explained by this. Suggestions were made during the learning history process to follow up with those who had withdrawn from the SSCA to understand better people's reasons for leaving. This was beyond the scope of the research but is certainly worth pursuing in future (See Chapter 5: Implications for the SAFL and SSCA, pages 77 – 84.)

Of all the participants who have been involved in the SSCA, only 15% of people attended three or more of the key SSCA events (See Figure 5) (this excludes the PLAAS, SAFL and Reos teams). In addition, only one participant who was present at the inception meeting was present at the transition lab, and of those that attended either of the learning journeys, only 7 participants (7%) was present at the transition lab.

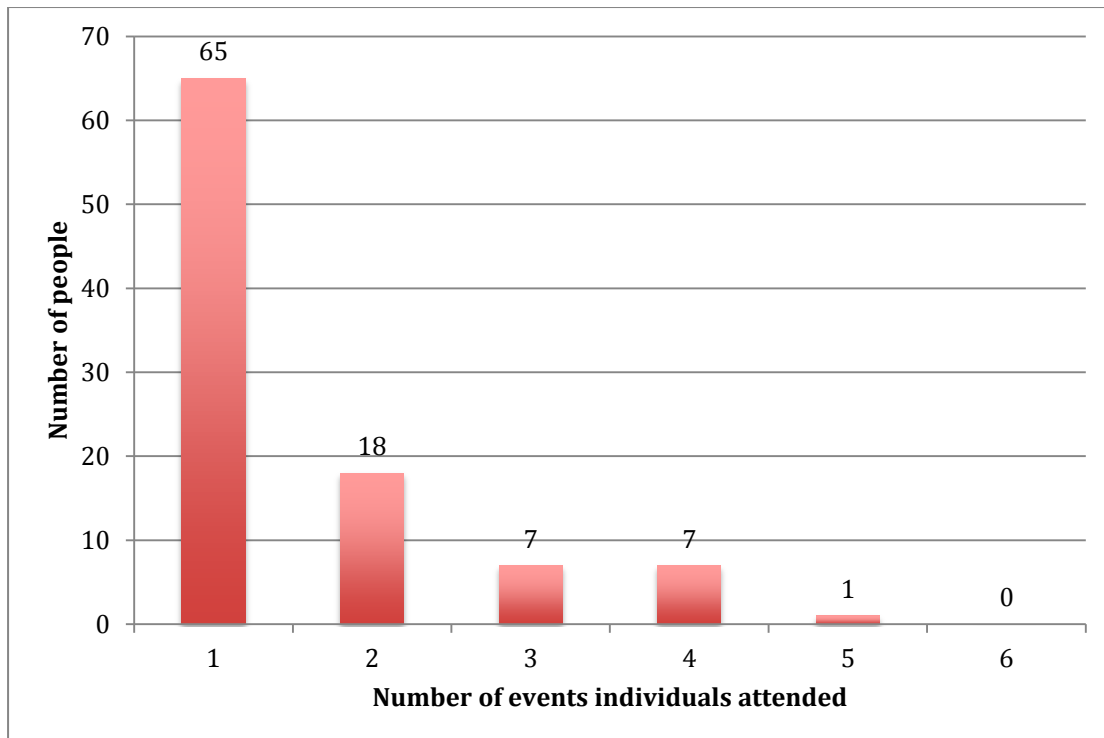


Figure 5: The number of people who attended main SSCA events.

Looking at attendance from an organisational perspective, retention is somewhat higher, with approximately 28% (14 out of 50) of organisations having attended three or more of the key SSCA events, even if, as was the case with Woolworths, WWF, Oxfam, the Southern Africa Trust and the Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA), individuals from those organisations only attended one or two events at most.

What impact might this high degree of through-flow have had on the SSCA in terms of transforming thinking and relationships and ultimately in the development of new ways of acting that can effect some kind of systems change?

Initial explorations of this question with research participants indicate that that fresh eyes and ways of thinking can be very useful in the Sensing (dialogue) phase of the U-Process, but that in the Co-Creating phase, more discretion may be required, especially regarding bringing in new people into the process. It appears that in the Co-Creating phase the common understanding of concepts and language and the relationships that have been developed are particularly important. As Milla emphasised, the innovation groups should be lead by people who have gone through the U-Process:

One of the principles of the “U” is that those who have been through the “U” are the leaders of that which goes up.

How important is depth (Presencing) to the process?

As mentioned in the previous section (Reflection 2: **Are people beginning to think in new ways?** Page 59), it seems that moments for deep personal reflection of the broader issues and participants’ individual role in entrenching or shifting them seem to have been missed. In addition, there are on-going questions regarding how innovative the innovations really are. The U-Process is premised on the importance of personal transformation and of the importance of Presencing for allowing new ideas to surface (Reflection 2: **The SAFL’s theory of change**, pages 56 – 58). *Could it mean that the SSCA process has not gone sufficiently*

deeply through the U-Process, in particular the Presencing phase? For Rebecca, this may well be the case:

My experience of U-Processes is that the bottom of the U gets squashed between an extended sensing period and an extended creating or co-creating process ... It's really hard to keep that time as wide open as had initially been intended.

As Vanessa pointed out:

If you haven't been through the bottom of the U, then you're kind of cutting across it all the time to get to the right hand side, so you often end up repeating old possible solutions.

Given the comments from participants on this topic, my sense is that much of what the SSCA has been working with has been about beginning to build trust and bridge relationships amongst players that do not normally engage in any form of collaborative dialogue and that at the beginning stages of such engagements, depth may not be that important. However, I am not sure how deep the existing relationships go and whether, at this stage, they would withstand any major conflicts. This is picked up in the next section (Reflection 3: **Working with power**, pages 65-72). It also seems to me that when engaging with complex issues for which there is not simple answer, then depth of process, especially at a personal level, is important, as one needs to truly let go of one's old solutions and paradigms for something new to emerge.

Reflection 3: Working with power

One of the strongest, complex and most nuanced themes to emerge from this learning history has been around various dimensions of power.

Given our history as South Africans, we generally associate notions of power with “power over” – with dominance, exclusion, privilege and rank. However, there are many dimensions to power, not just the dark, degenerative side. There is also a generative power, namely “power with,” “power to” and “power within”: power that empowers, shifts perceptions and galvanizes action.

This section explores both degenerative and generative aspects of power and how conscious the SSCA and its members have been of both, by exploring relevant dimensions of power at a contextual, internal SSCA and personal levels. Each of these is explored in a series of questions in separate sections below.

Power and the contextual environment

Is the SAFL leadership sufficiently taking into account the political, historical and social context in terms of power dynamics and voice?

Issues relating to the degenerative aspects of power and how they play out with regard to smallholder farmers has framed a great deal of the SSCA, as highlighted in the inception workshop (SAFL, 2012a) (See Chapter 3, **SSCA Phase 1: Getting started**, page 25). However, there is a sense that these issues have not been sufficiently foregrounded in the delivery of the SSCA, as is highlighted by the following quote:

The food system in South Africa reflects our current reality and the past, and it is characterised through power, and power is about race, class, gender, about these societal isms- and unless we put that in the centre of what we are doing, we are not going to shift that system...I do not think we have truly conscientised, embedded this individually enough to understand what the Lab is trying to do.

Issues of power asymmetry were also raised by some of the interview participants. One person spoke about a dialogue walk he had been on with a representative of a large food retailer:

We were talking about how we saw this project and I was talking about what we were learning ... about the dynamism of the informal and non-corporate part of the food retail sector and this person said to me: ‘surely you realise that we’re going to crush them?’ And that was a little bit of a reality check, and not because they’re evil, it’s just because the logic of competition in the South African food market is: you’re going to chase every single little bit of market segment you possibly can.

In discussing these issues during the validation workshop in November 2013, questions relating to methodology and the SAFL’s theory of change (See Reflection 2, pages 56 – 58) were raised, namely:

How does the U, and our use of it, manage the politics of food and the politics of change? And is it a politically (and economically) naive approach?

During the SAFL Steering Group meeting in February, participants made two important points in this regard. The first was that it is important that the SAFL leadership does not get too locked into the theory of change underlying the U-Process as the only relevant theory of

change. This is important, both because this approach to change may not always be relevant, and because being too invested in this one theory of change can limit the SAFL leadership's ability to engage with others who hold a different worldview or theory of change

We need to be sensitive and nuanced in our application of our theory of change, otherwise we risk alienating people.

The second point that was raised is that there is a danger that the SAFL is replicating what is already in the mainstream, by following what there is broad readiness for, rather than championing new ways of doing things.

To what degree does our methodology lead us to duplicate assumptions, which might be false or misleading?

Linked to this is that in the application of the U-Process it is possible that the areas of synergy and energy that a group identifies for action ends up being the lowest common denominator, rather than ideas and innovations that shake up the status quo:

In the U-Process you work with what you can agree on. In a way, you're not going to come up with a radical solution, you're going to come up with the lowest common denominator. So how do you really get to the radical stuff with a big group of people?

Do we have a sufficient understanding of the players, including both their leverage points and their constraints?

A number of people raised the question of whether the SSCA had identified the right institutions, but also the right individuals for the SSCA: individuals with power and influence to bring about the change that is required. As one interview participant suggested:

I don't know whether this SAFL has thought seriously enough about this. If you want to achieve regime change... who are the role players who are setting the rules of the game and can you get somebody to defect? Can you get somebody to break ranks?

The question was also raised of whether the internal politics of the institutions involved in the SSCA are sufficiently taken into account, including their interests, leverage points and constraints.

There are very different kinds of players ... government for example are interested and wanting to contribute but also very constrained. They're a key player but when it comes to developing innovation and implementing it, they are so constrained because of the internal politics of the department and with the wider world that this doesn't begin to happen.

Power and the internal SSCA environment

Has the SSCA been able to attract and retain important institutions and individuals?

Interview participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of government and the private sector. This is presumably because of their perceived power in the food system.

Figure 6 provides an overview of percentage participation of the different sectors for the key SSCA social dialogue events. The learning journeys are not included in this figure as participation in these events was primarily an artefact of who was invited. A number of interview participants felt that the SSCA hosting team had done well in enrolling big corporate players in the project, although Kenneth indicated that this support has drifted

over time, especially in terms of senior level participation. In fact, the transition lab notably did not include any representatives from the big retailers, and overall attendance of private sector dropped from 18% (3 people) at the inception workshop, to 11% (2 people) at the transition workshop. On the other hand, government participation has been steadily increasing, with their participation increasing from approximately 11.5% (2 people) of the total attendance at the inception workshop to 33% (6 people) at the transition lab. Having said this, Busi Mdaka who has become a major champion of the SSCA, was not able to make one of the key SSCA events, due to departmental demands that were made on her. This speaks to some of the internal constraints mentioned in the previous section and is an important factor to bear in mind in terms of the politics of government participation. Interestingly, the NGO sector are by far the most represented sector, accounting for between 45 and 65% of all participants in the four large social dialogue events, although there has been a decline in the percentage representation of this sector. Smallholder farmers on the other hand increased from very limited representation in the Inception workshop (1 person) to peaking at 16% (6 people) of participants in the first innovation lab and declining to about 10% (2 people) for both the second innovation lab and transition lab.

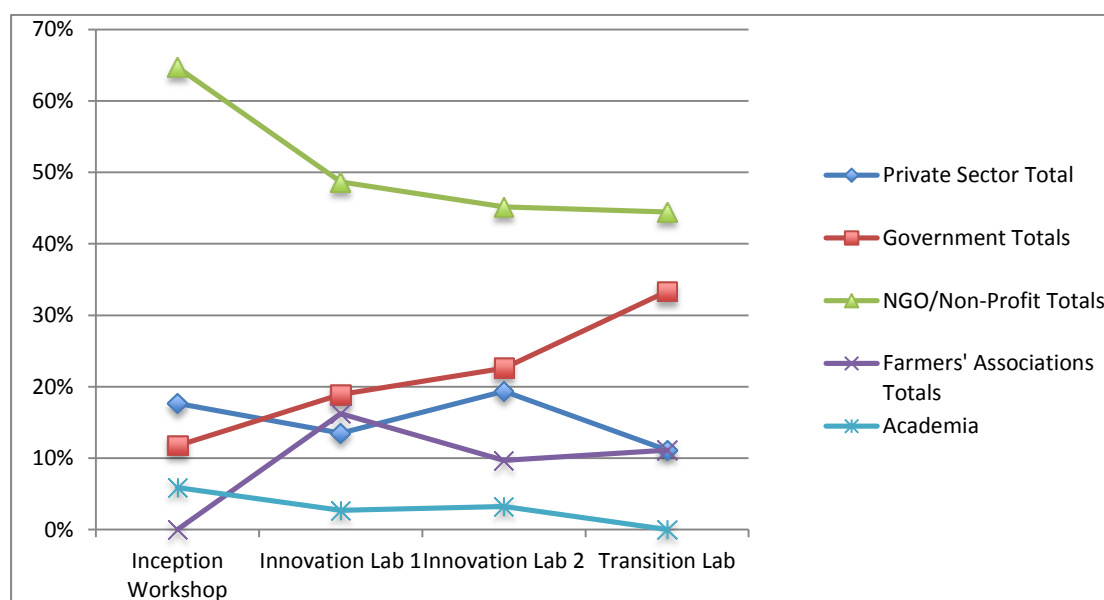


Figure 6: Percentage attendance of the key SSCA social dialogue events by sector.

Note: PLAAS staff and the SSCA hosting team were not included.

It is interesting to reflect on who people view as important players. As was highlighted in the 2012 inception report (SAFL, 2012a, p.2), *“The impetus for change is not necessarily coming from those with the most power for change within the system.”* Milla pointed out in reading a draft version of this section is that these views *“reflect our fixation on positional power, and lack of appreciation for other forms of power and how to exercise them effectively for change”*. Linked to this is a deeply entrenched belief that many of us seem to hold that effecting change is dependent upon the involvement of certain important and influential players, rather than focusing on what agency already exists within the SSCA in terms of those who are already committed and energised. Focusing on certain groups that have a certain kind of power may also blind us to alternative sources of power or opportunities for action and innovation. It also seems that this “dependency myth” can compromise taking appropriate action. Two examples spring to mind. The first was the example of the challenging dynamics that surfaced with one of the service providers who were hosts on the KZN learning journey, where the SSCA core team spent a great deal of time trying to *“smooth things over”* with them because the team felt dependent on them for setting up

the learning journey (See Chapter 3, **the SSCA Social Dialogue Process**: scoping, page 31). The other is an example that occurred during the GTZ-funded phase of the SAFL (2010), where there wasn't alignment between the SAFL and several participants of the process, but the SAFL leadership did not take action on this front:

We didn't have the courage our own convictions. I didn't feel to say to [an influential person involved in the SAFL process], 'We don't quite line up'... I think we were afraid of losing [high powered, well-known, influential] people but as a result ... you don't get the kind of clarity about: what are we doing here and what are we not doing here... we could have created more space for the remaining people if we'd had a clearer conversation.

Has the SSCA supported “tempered radicals” enough?

According to Meyerson, (2001),

‘Tempered Radicals’, are people who want to succeed in their organizations yet want to live by their values or identities, even if they are somehow at odds with the dominant culture of their organizations. Tempered radicals want to ... rock the boat and they want to stay in it... Tempered radicals are likely to think ‘out of the box’ because they are not fully in the box. As ‘outsiders within,’ they have both a critical and creative edge. They speak new ‘truths.’

Questions were raised about whether the SSCA has been strategic enough about leveraging the tempered radicals that exist in various institutions, specifically those within the SSCA. It seems that there are a number of people within the SSCA *“who are in quite traditional jobs, and who are themselves risk takers, and see the bigger picture, and are fed by the kind of approach that the Food Lab is working on.”* The question here is: *how can these individuals be better supported as they face the constraints and challenges within their own organisations?*

What are the dynamics around power and voice in the SSCA?

As already mentioned in Reflection 1 (**Purpose and focus of the SSCA**, Page 55), it is clear that the focus of the SSCA has been steered and shaped by those with assumed and perceived power, in particular by donors and academics.

As a direct result of Rebecca's provocation to the SSCA to become alert to the internal power dynamics and potential power asymmetries, the SSCA has begun to engage very actively in this enquiry, especially as it moves towards placing smallholder farmers at the centre of the second phase of the project. In doing so, it will need to engage with, and challenge existing assumptions and dilemmas around power and the entrenched patterns of perceived and assumed power and powerlessness. The nuances and complexities of this are discussed below.

The first dynamic is one of assumed and perceived power, which is socially legitimised. As has already been indicated, most of us automatically defer to institutional, positional and expert power. As one participant pointed out, this has played out in the SSCA and the development of the innovations:

What often happens is that people tend to listen to people who are more articulate. People tend to listen to people who have a track record ... the teams tend to be chosen on the basis of the louder voices.

Another challenge is around the resourcing the project and the interconnectedness between power and money, and who ends up steering and dominating the discourse:

You have to have people with some resources in there and then those then become people who have a lot of power in it.

As Rebecca pointed out in her provocation on the power asymmetries creeping into the second innovation lab, the historical legacy of the country still plays itself out in the psyches, behaviours and actions of South Africans. The example she gave was of white men beginning to dominate the leadership positions of the innovation teams, which had not been the case during the first innovation lab (See Chapter 3: **Second SSCA innovation lab**, page 43). However, there are many others – not just white men – who feel comfortable expressing themselves and who believe they have a legitimate view. In the SSCA context, they tend to have experienced formal higher education. In contrast, it is likely that many of the smallholder farmers who participated in the innovation labs in particular may not have felt particularly comfortable in expressing themselves, especially in the face of the high number of participants holding institutional, positional or expert power, where the majority of conversations were occurring in English, and where the form of presenting and discussing issues may have been done in an unfamiliar and inaccessible form (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, written materials). While none of the smallholder farmers has voiced this dynamic themselves, Dineo's candid account of how she has had to grapple with her own issues around this to be able to engage as an equal team player provides some powerful insights into what some of the smallholder farmers might be encountering when they first engage with the SSCA:

It can be very intimidating working with powerful, high-level, educated white people, as a young black woman. It can get overwhelming and finding your voice and your feet, because the Food Lab is dominantly run by white people, so it is a scary sort of thing.

These underlying dynamics have surfaced a number of questions and dilemmas, including the following:

How do we place smallholder farmers central to the SSCA without slipping into naïve populism?

There are clearly major challenges that will need to be navigated in this regard. The one will be how to create the conditions for co-creation. As one of the interview participants reflected:

How do we kill the “us and them” in the room? ... They [smallholder farmers] can be physically in the room, but are they co-creating with us?

This issue does not just pertain to relationships within the SSCA. As one of the smallholder farmers pointed out, one of the greatest challenges for smallholder farmers will be to shift their relationship with and attitudes towards the Department of Agriculture (DoA), from a dependency relationship to one of partnership.

Another challenge that the SSCA will need to navigate is how to balance smallholder participation with participation of the traditionally more powerful sectors, including the private sector and government. As one research participant articulated:

If we were over-subscribed [by senior private sector people], then we'd continue to entrench the current power... So we've got to do that [enrol more senior private sector people], but also make sure that we actually get the smallholders to almost dictate the processes.

How do we facilitate and enable the quieter voices, especially those of smallholder farmers, in a way that is not patronising?

This was a concern that was raised by one of the interview participants.

The voice of small farmers is an important one. They are in the room, but we don't hear their voices, and how do you facilitate that? ...We had that discussion about when do we really want to have an inclusive voice and when do you start being condescending?

How do we enable everyone to be powerful, not just a small minority?

For me, probably one of the most powerful provocations during the SSCA was Rebecca's challenge to us all at the end of the second innovation lab: *how can we enable everyone to be powerful? And how do we distribute power more evenly, without requiring that some relinquish their power in the process?* This learning history has revealed that the SAFL, the SSCA and the emerging innovations have been shaped by the passions, commitment, insight, influence and leadership styles of particular individuals, most of whom have been white men and women. In some of the interviews and discussions that surfaced during the learning history, I heard the tendency, from white men in particular, to think that the only way to balance power is for the currently powerful to deliberately step aside or silence themselves. However, for me, this feels like an old way of thinking about the issues, where the empowerment of one voice or group is contingent on the disempowerment of others. I also believe it would be a great loss for the SSCA if this were to happen. Other options are available. For example,

If we [white men and women] can see ourselves as catalysts to a wider distribution of power, enablers rather than blockers of a wider distribution of power, then we're onto something here.

It seems that SSCA participants are already beginning to engage with the challenge. Rebecca points to:

a number of white men who just get it and are working with it, and are opening doors, because they do have the power to do stuff.

How do we balance expert knowledge with other sources of knowledge?

During the learning history validation workshop, Ben mentioned the politics and power of knowledge, already referred to in this chapter as expert power. While the expert knowledge provided by PLAAS in particular, has been very valuable (See Reflection 5: **The interplay between research and social dialogue**, pages 75 – 76 for more information), Milla raised the question of whether this type of knowledge has been sufficiently balanced by other kinds of knowledge. Furthermore, while Ben's typologies elicited a range of different responses during the interviews, including some scepticism (See Chapter 3: **First SSCA innovation lab**, page 38), Ben was not challenged on this in the innovation lab itself.

How do we navigate the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion?

It is clear from the interviews that the core SSCA team were privy to information and processes that others, even close members of the support team, were not aware of. This has at times created a murkiness and confusion especially for the SSCA support team regarding the process (for example how certain decisions were made, how the PLAAS research and the social dialogue processes spoke to and informed one another, the future roles of particular support staff in the project). In some cases, this lack of

information or understanding of a particular process has led to a sense of uneasiness, and at times even mistrust, as was the case with one of the hosts of one of the learning journeys (See Chapter 3: **The SSCA Social Dialogue Process: scoping**, page 31).

The selection process, especially for the learning journeys may also well have set up a dynamic of insider-outsider, as reflected in this quote:

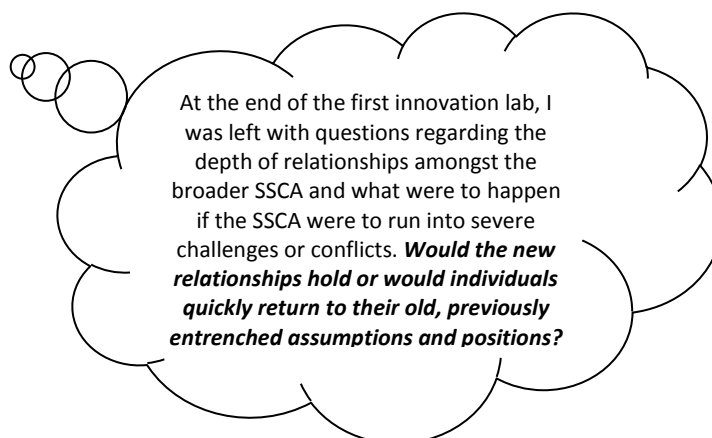
So with a learning journey you have your core team that are on the learning journey and then there are a number of hosts. I guess one of the learnings that we need to just think through or internalise is making it very clear up front, participants versus hosts.

While it might not be necessary or appropriate that everyone is privy to everything, it is important to be mindful of the potential for these dynamics to be present, especially when new people are enrolled, and this certainly has a bearing on trust-building within the SSCA. Ironically, the question of inclusion and exclusion and trust may also surface more strongly as a direct result of the depth of relationships that have been developed within the core SSCA team, which renders anyone not part of that group a relative outsider.

How do we create the conditions for conflict to be generative?

The SSCA has spent a great deal of time focusing on trust and relationship-building amongst diverse stakeholders. However, a number of people in the learning history validation workshop in November raised a concern that the process had not created adequate spaces for different views, contestation and difference to surface. Some felt that there was a discrepancy between the “feel-good” atmosphere of SSCA events and some of the underlying and unspoken dynamics that exist:

It's not all honky-dory: let's learn together. We bring assumptions, frameworks that bump up against one another, that contest with each other and they generate heat. Did we have enough space for negative energies, given that we were constrained in a two-day innovation lab? What happens to that negative energy?



This question was picked up during the SAFL Steering Group meeting held in February 2014. The discussion that evolved went on to distinguish between what participants called “surface” and “deep” conflict. For them, surface conflict is about difference and contestation amongst people who have little or no investment in their relationships, while deep conflict is about the fundamental differences and underlying issues that exist amongst those who have invested deeply in the relationships with each other. Often, with deep conflict, the stakes and the personal risk of surfacing these issues are much higher than surface conflict, as individuals have more to lose.

Conflict within deep relationships is a different kind of conflict than when you just run into disagreement. And the challenge for us is on both those ends. How do we bring more diverse people in and deal with surface conflict?... The harder question we need

to be asking ourselves is whether we are dealing with the deep conflict? Are we prepared to go the distance?

In these discussions, two key questions surfaced, namely:

What depth of relationships is necessary in order to surface the important differences and then deal with the conflict so that it doesn't erupt and split but actually builds enough container that we can deal with the really tough things?

What is our role in creating the conditions where that conflict is a source of learning and curiosity rather than a source of resignation, splitting, unhappiness, and resignation, which leads to people giving up and walking away?

Power and the individual

This section primarily focuses on some of the questions that have arisen for me in relation to power and the individuals that engage within the SSCA. As mentioned earlier, I see some blindness to personal impact, both in terms of over-exercising power and inadequately exercising the power we as individuals have available to us. It also seems to me that for the SSCA group as a whole, the connection has not been made that personal change required in order for the system to change.

The difficulty comes with the U when you have to act differently... when ... you have to think differently and you have to change.

This is thus a major challenge for the SAFL leadership in general, and the SSCA in particular, to make a stronger case for the importance of personal transformation as central to the process, especially as it seeks to move into the Co-Creating phase.

A number of questions surfaced for me from this learning history, which the SAFL might ask themselves as it navigates its way into the future. These are articulated in Chapter 5 (**Implications for the SAFL and SSCA**, page 78).

Reflection 4: Reflections on the flow of money

The SSCA so far has been a story where financial resources seemed to flow, which has enabled the project to become far bigger and more ambitious than initially envisaged. It has also meant that those actively working on the programme have been able to immerse themselves fully in the process because there is a basic but sufficient retainer available:

The retainer of two or three days a month has made it possible to just invest myself completely. Although I fill in a timesheet, it doesn't really matter to me whether it's three days or five. I feel like it gives enough security ... at a symbolic and a financial level that I can just immerse myself... And that changes the way I can work.

This flow of resources for the first phase of the SSCA is in stark contrast with the lean times that the SAFL faced, especially in 2011, and it begs the question of what enabled the money to flow for the SSCA? A number of observations from participants stand out in this regard. Firstly, it seems that the topic of smallholder farmers was timely:

It may very well be that it is simply because of the topic, the timeliness of it. Somehow it's linked to the land question in this year coming up.

At the moment, smallholder agriculture is the flavour of the month and everybody seems to be assuming that we really need to have more smallholder farmers on the land.

Secondly, the fact that the SSCA was housed by a credible academic institution seems to have played a major role in securing funding from most of the donors.

The fact that the Food Lab has been housed by a University, I think is central to its success.

Finally, it seems that the fact that most of the funders were participants of the SSCA enabled them to develop a much better understanding of and appreciation for the process, which in turn allowed for a great deal of flexibility in how the funds were spent and at times reallocated.

Although we've had the same number of events that we had envisaged, the events themselves have been of a completely different nature. And I think much bigger, much more ambitious than we initially dreamed. And because Paula from Ford, because Ulli from Southern Africa Trust, because Canny from Oxfam are actually participants in the process, you don't have to go cap in hand and say: we've changed this line item: it's been a conversation because we're all seeing together what this thing is becoming.

As already mentioned in Reflection 2 (**In what way have relationships changed?** page 61) it seems that real partnerships have developed between the SSCA core team and the donors, which are very different to the usual transactional relationships between donors and recipients. As one of the donors interviewed articulated:

This is the first time that these organisations are not thinking of money. ... They don't talk about funds in those discussions, they talk about: 'let's make this better for small farmers; let's add value to each other'.

Admittedly, the innovations themselves have been much harder to plan, and therefore budget for. This is in large part due to the fact that the nature of the SSCA and the underlying Change Lab methodology is that the ideas and innovations that are generated during the process are emergent and therefore unpredictable. This means that until the innovations have been sufficiently developed, it is difficult to begin to start fundraising for them. It would have been ideal if the SSCA could have raised at least some seed funding for

these innovations in advance, but without knowing anything about their activities or requirements, let alone which organisation might house them, most donors are unable to fund such innovations in advance within their current funding paradigm. As one of the research participants pointed out, this is one of the places where the inherent design of Change Labs collides with the current structures and mechanisms of how projects and programmes are funded:

So there's this very problematic contradiction between how ... socially innovative processes create things and the structures that money needs to land in those processes.

This participant also felt that there is a major gap, for what she calls “*disruptive donors*”, *who are like, thank you very much, we're not doing it the old way, we're doing it another way, we're going to trust the people we work with to deliver and we're going to be willing to accept that we'll lose 20% of the money, but we will knowingly lose it instead of... wasting 80% of the money because we just throw money at stuff that doesn't work.*”

While the SSCA has experienced relative ease in accessing resources, it is important to bear in mind that these fruits were harvested from what at times was a labour of love and commitment by core members of the SAFL, especially during the lean times of 2011, and on the basis of the many long-term relationships that have been built within the SAFL over the years. In addition, some research participants believe that there was real value in these lean times in that they weeded out everyone but the most committed and really seemed to help build the trust and respect within the core team. According to Rebecca, it seems like not having the pressures of a funder or a project or deliverables was a blessing for the SAFL in that it allowed a very deliberate, mindful process to unfold, which could respond to what was needed.

This time didn't have a lot of busyness, ... it was pared down because there wasn't much money ... and yet Vanessa was paying the kind of attention to it alongside Milla and Ralph that meant that it was really thoughtful. We could be much more sensitive to watching a process unfold and trying to understand what was needed next.

In a world and dominant paradigm where it is assumed that money is essential for taking action, it may be useful for the SAFL explore what processes may benefit from being released from the pressures of donor expectations and what activities can be undertaken with little or no budget.

Reflection 5: The interplay between research and social dialogue

I think dialogue in the absence of ... generative information can actually become quite an empty dialogue. It feels like dialogue that gets fed and resourced by a generative approach to research has far more life to it, particularly if it's a long-term process.

This is certainly a view held by a number of the SSCA core team members. However, the interviews demonstrated that the way in which the research and the social dialogue processes informed one another had not been apparent to everyone. This was certainly my experience. In the first iteration of the narrative history, there was virtually no reference to the PLAAS research, especially the research process. It was only during the validation workshop in November 2013, that the interplay between the PLAAS research and the SAFL social dialogue process was made explicit (See Chapter 3: **Phase 2: SSCA – full steam ahead**, Figure 2, page 29 for more information). In this regard, the validation workshop was particularly useful for a number of participants:

This [reviewing the narrative history] is so helpful because the questions I had always was: to what extent the PLAAS research was informing this [social dialogue] process. PLAAS people were in the room but sometimes I had the question on what is informing this dialogue: is it the learning journeys or research outcomes? So that was a question, which is now clear to me.

One of the main reasons why the research component did not play a more prominent role in the social dialogue processes was because of timing. As Andries pointed out in his interview:

People often want to know what the findings of research is going to be before the research is done, [or] while the research is done. We are still in the middle of the process of the research and I think this is very dangerous to announce results early.

What this meant for the first phase of the SSCA was that the dialogue process was not able to “leverage off the research”.

I would have liked to see the PLAAS research more at the core of the dissemination process and the learning... I think we haven't fully exploited the outcomes of that work.

It also appears that the SSCA core team assumed that the research results would be available sooner in the process:

I think the research did take longer ... PLAAS's processes... were delayed.

It's been slow, and I'm hopeful that the presentation of PLAAS's research at the January workshop really helps the system to see itself in a way that it hadn't seen before. So there's still some potential to be realised there.

Because many of the research findings were not available during the first phase of the SSCA, some people struggled to fully understand its value:

Would we actually get what we wanted out of the research anyway? Now that I can see what's been achieved in the research, so I'm still not 100% sure that we'll get a lot [from the research]... So there's a gap in my expectations.

Having said this, as mentioned in the historical narrative chapter (Chapter 3), the typologies developed by Cousins and Chikazunga (2013) were particularly useful for some people in helping differentiate what class of smallholders their projects were serving (see Chapter 3: **First SSCA innovation lab**, page 38). Thus, one of the key contributions of the PLAAS research was to help demonstrate that the food system, including farming systems, farmer types, markets and value chains are much more diverse, differentiated and complex than

anyone has previously realised and that this realisation has certainly helped inform the learning process for the participants in the project.

Andries, in the validation workshop confirmed this:

What we're going to have at the end of the year is a overall survey which charts some of the trends and some of the interesting patterns and I think which will be very useful as a way of highlighting how diverse the smallholder development scene is.

He further provided an outline of what the research report will comprise of, namely a literature review on the nature of the food system in South Africa as well as the nature of smallholders and the character of value chains in this country, followed by a set of key findings from the scan which is interwoven with boxes of some of the 45 high level case studies that were developed. The conclusion will consist of key analytical lessons.

While most of the research was not available during the first phase of the SSCA, what Milla in particular believes was very useful and important was the presence of the researchers themselves in the social dialogue processes, people who think in a rigorous way and have academic knowledge.

CHAPTER 5: Implications for the SAFL and SSCA

This chapter synthesises ideas about the future expressed during interviews and group discussions, together with insights arising from the historical narrative and the reflections chapter.

My intention is to steer away from categorical recommendations and rather reflect back what the broader SAFL system seems to be saying about what might be needed for the next stages of both the SAFL and SSCA. In writing this chapter I am very aware that some of what is captured here may already have been internalised and integrated into the thinking and planning for the next incarnations of the SAFL and the SSCA. However, I hope that everyone will find something of use to them and hope that at the very least this chapter can serve as a useful reminder to remain vigilant to complacency of thinking, relating and acting that inadvertently replicates the issues that the SAFL is trying to change.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first deals with the potential future focus and roles of both the SAFL and the SSCA; the second focuses on what might be required of leaders in the SAFL and/or SSCA going forward; and the third are some practical considerations for both the SAFL and the SSCA.

The potential focus and roles of the SAFL and SSCA

During the learning history, a stark warning was issued by a number of participants of this process: if the dysfunctions and failures of our national and regional food system are not addressed, this could lead to a crisis of humanitarian proportions (See Chapter 4: **Reflection 1: Purpose of the SAFL**, page 53). What I am hearing is that the SAFL is being called to alert South Africans (and potentially those beyond our borders) to the real dangers of not paying sufficient attention to this, and to contribute towards actions that can address these failings. To achieve this, the SAFL needs to continue to draw on its strength as a convenor and enabler of dialogue and social change processes, to create spaces for participants to tap into their own humanity and create an incubator for social innovation and experimentation. In addition, it seems like there is a growing call for the SAFL to play a much stronger advocacy role in both the policy and public arena, in order to raise the profile and importance of investing in food systems change, towards a system that works for all.

Within the broader context of the SAFL, there seems to be a growing interest in and enthusiasm for focusing the SSCA activities on the concept of a nourishing local food economy, that is empowering and nurturing to local, mostly rural communities, but which at the same time engages in the broader food system of South Africa (See Chapter 4: **Reflection 1: Purpose and Focus of the SSCA**, page 56), and in particular moves towards bridging the artificial rural-urban divide. There were a number of people who were involved during the initial stages of the SAFL that might be interested in re-engaging with the SSCA if this orientation is adopted, and may also re-invigorate the currently dormant innovation on urban food design (See Chapter 3, page 22). I am aware that the second phase of the SSCA is already underway, and that this may already have been integrated into the overarching design. If this is not the case, it might be worthwhile exploring how such a framing might be introduced into the process and to gauge the responses from those interested and already involved.

What might be required of the SAFL and/or SSCA leadership?

This section focuses on responding to four main questions, namely:

- *How do we, as leaders of this process?*
- *What does the SAFL leadership need?*
- *What do we need to know and understand in this work as we move forward?*
- *What do we need to bear in mind when designing and implementing any process?*

How to be, as leaders of this process?

This learning history points to a need for leaders of this process to become increasingly vigilant of their own assumptions and defaults that contribute to keeping things stuck. A few specific areas that require particular attention have already surfaced. The first relates to the theory of change that the SAFL buys into and the need to pay attention to where this theory is no longer appropriate, and how to engage with others who hold a very different view on how change happens. It is important to examine what change is possible through social dialogue and whether this matches what the SAFL wants to achieve. Related to this is the need to remain alert to the danger of the U-Process generating actions and approaches that reinforce, rather than shift old patterns of thinking, relating and action. If it only responds to where there are synergies and what the broader system is ready for, there is a risk of diluting more radical positions and compromising more radical actions. Lastly, it will be important to assess the appropriate degree of depth of the “U” for any given process and to mindfully design and facilitate the process bearing this aspect in mind.

Linked to this is the importance of the SAFL consciously sharpening its language and recognising when to be explicit about the meanings assigned to terms, and the assumptions behind the use of these terms.

A second area that deserves attention is to catch the dependency myths that can diminish a sense of agency within the SAFL, and to instead imagine alternatives, focusing on what is possible despite the structural constraints beyond the SAFL’s influence. This was raised in Chapter 4 (Reflection 3: **Power and the internal SSCA environment**, page 67), and relates to the entrenched belief that many in the SSCA seem to hold, that effecting change is dependent upon the involvement of certain important and influential players. It also relates to the how these assumptions about dependency on particular players can compromise one’s thinking or actions, for fear of losing these seemingly important players in the process.

And linked to this is the importance of being self-aware of one’s own thoughts, perceptions, feelings, actions and reactions, in the process of more deeply engaging with questions of power (one’s own and others’), difference and conflict. It may be useful to keep asking questions such as:

- *Are we aware of how our prejudices (both positive and negative) shape whose opinions we listen to and whose we tune out?*
- *Are we aware of our own impact in the room? What status, rank, position do we assume or is perceived of us?*
- *What is our relationship to our own power? Do we revel in it? Do we fear it? Do we underplay it?*
- *Are we aware of our own agency? Are we over-exercising, under-exercising it or getting the balance right?*
- *How do we respond to negative feedback or conflict?*

- *How do we not default to our old positions especially when challenged or threatened? How do we step outside of what is safe and known and comfortable for us and do things differently?*

What do the SAFL leadership team need?

There has been a strong call to create the conditions, spaces and opportunities for deep conflict and difference to surface. The word “*container*” has been used a number of times in this regard, a container that can “*surface the important differences and then deal with the conflict so that it doesn’t erupt and split*”; that can create “*the conditions where that conflict is a source of learning and curiosity rather than a source of resignation, splitting, unhappiness, and resignation, which leads to people giving up and walking away*”. What might this look like in practice? What are the conditions that create this container? While there are many approaches to working with conflict and “*heat*”, it has been my personal and professional experience that central to generative conflict is the creation of a “safety contract” with participants of a process: what do individuals need in order to feel safe to enter such a process, which is by its very nature emotionally exposing and personally risky for many, and which is invariably going to tap into people’s vulnerabilities? And on a practical level, would it be helpful to set up a special session for this or to include this during the next retreat?

What does the SAFL need to know and understand in this work as it moves forward?

A number of suggestions were made during the learning history that could help the SAFL understand the internal and external system better as SAFL and SSCA move forward. They are as follows:

- Follow up with participants who are no longer part of the SSCA or the SAFL to determine their reasons for no longer engaging in the process.
- Conduct a power analysis: What might that look like, given that we’re all (including the facilitators) inside the system? What experience do other initiatives have of this?
- Engage with the Sustainable Food Lab to see what can be learned from them.
- Follow up with the innovations developed in 2010 that have not taken off to find out what we can learn from them.

What does SAFL need to bear in mind when designing and implementing any process?

This learning history has provided rich material and insights for consideration when designing or implementing any process. These specifically relate to enrolment and participation, design principles and funding considerations. Each of these is addressed in turn.

Enrolment and participation:

The ideas and suggestions included here primarily relate to selecting and enrolling participants into new or existing processes, and some considerations for the induction process. A few thoughts on how to work with existing participants is also provided.

Selecting participants:

When selecting and enrolling participants into a new or existing project, it is important to spend time really interrogating who the “right” people for a process are. The learning history

has highlighted the importance that those involved in selecting participants need to understand the political and institutional landscape better – so understanding who the right people are within an institution to target. However, this needs to be balanced with tapping into existing relationships, and to work with the willing, avoiding the trap of becoming too analytical and rational in the process. It seems to be that part of what enables social change processes such as Change Labs to work is creating conditions where opportunities for synchronicity and surprise are maximised.

As enrolment and induction are time-consuming, it is also important to asking the question of why particular people are being enrolled, particularly once a process is underway. For example, the reason for bringing in people into a large social dialogue process is likely to be very different from enrolling people into an already-existing innovation team. Furthermore, in light of the reflections on power and power dynamics covered in Chapter 4 (Reflection 3: **Working with Power**, pages 65-72), especially in processes or initiatives where power asymmetries dominate, it is important to pay attention to the default power dynamics that are likely to play out and to make sure that some thought is given to balancing participation between the traditionally more and less powerful voices.

In selecting individual participants, it is important to bear in mind their potential constraints to participation and what impact this might have on the process itself. For example, by enrolling senior government officials, there is a risk that they can be withdrawn from the process at the whim of their superiors or ministers, even if they are personally deeply committed to the process; enrolling senior executives in the private sector may result in their wanting to hand over to others once the process moves towards action and prototyping; while for farmers, the demands of farming are likely to be of greater priority than participating in social change processes, especially during particular seasons.

While it is important for the SAFL to understand the very real political dynamics that occur within and between institutions, this needs to be balanced by an awareness of not narrowing its view of what is possible because of these dynamics.

Enrolment and induction:

In the induction process, it is important to orientate newcomers not only to content but also the process, concepts and language that are used, as it is different from the norm. At the same time it is important to give space to hear their perspectives and interpretations, so that the language and understanding of the SAFL can continue to evolve. This needs to be done in such a way that the hosting team does not get stuck in making sure that everyone is up to speed, at the cost of moving forward.

In the process of enrolment or induction, especially if it is at the beginning of a social dialogue process, it is important to make it clear to potential participants that what they will be entering is intended as a long-term process and that both the individuals and the group are likely to benefit most from consistent and on-going participation throughout the process. If the process is a Change Lab, it is probably also useful to point out that those who have been through the entire process are the ones best positioned to lead the innovations. At the same time, this needs to be balanced by a high degree of flexibility on the part of the hosting team, to work with the realities and constraints of the participants themselves. It may therefore be useful to have an open conversation about what this might look like at the early stages of any long-term process. The hosting team also needs to think through ways in which those who have not been through the whole process can be engaged and properly

inducted, not just at an intellectual level but also experientially. And finally, the team needs to find ways of working creatively with less than ideal conditions, challenging their own assumptions about how a process should or needs to be in order for it to be successful.

Working with existing participants

This learning history has demonstrated a high level of attrition within the SSCA. There could be many reasons for this, which have not yet been fully explored. What are the conversations that the hosting team needs to be having with participants that could reduce this level of attrition and what kind of support might this team be able to offer existing participants? Particular mention was made in the report of being more deliberate in the support of the tempered radicals within the SSCA (Chapter 4: Reflection 3: Reflection 3: **Working with Power**, page 68). How might the team be more proactive in engaging with and finding ways to support those individuals who are committed to effecting change within their own institutions but face enormous challenges in doing so?

Design principles, ideas and considerations:

A number of design principles and considerations have surfaced from the learning history.

The first is that in a design of any SAFL process, it is important to ask upfront whether the U-process is best suited for achieving the intended outcomes for a particular process. Is the issue being tackled a “stuck” complex problem (rather than a complicated or simple one), where other approaches have failed to bring about fundamental shifts? If it is, the next question that needs to be asked is how deeply participants need to go through the U-process given the intention for the process? There may be situations where depth is not necessary. It may also be that only some of the group (for example the core hosting group, or the innovation team leads) need to plumb the depths, while it may be less important for the broader group. If it becomes clear that depth is important, then my suggestion is to unapologetically commit to such depth: to design the process in such a way that there is sufficient space, time and resources, especially for Presencing, which is currently short-changed in how the SAFL has applied the U-process.

A note on Presencing

Some of the standard tools used for presencing (Vision Quest, Wilderness Retreats, Solo experiences) may not be appropriate given the South African cultural context. It would be worthwhile exploring this question further to ensure that the tools applied do not distract from, but are fit for purpose.

If depth is important, then one of the clear design principles is to create a container where deep relationships can be developed, which in turn enable generative conflict and challenging dialogue to surface. In establishing this container, creating trust and safety within the group is very important and could be enabled through the following means:

- Naming up front that the intention is to be able to at times enter into uncomfortable spaces and to elicit from participants what basic conditions need to be met in order for people to feel safe enough to engage in this way.
- Creating an explicit culture of “rewarding mistakes” and welcoming diversity, of developing curiosity about difference and feedback.
- Being aware of what sets up dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. For example, how are new people enrolled into an existing process in a way that they quickly feel integral to the group?

With such a container in place, there will be many opportunities to catch moments of real learning, for example where the group is unintentionally replicating at a micro-level what it is trying to change at a macro-level (for example see Chapter 4: Reflection 2: **Are people**

beginning to think in new ways? Page 59), and being able to challenge one another more to examine one's own assumptions or positions. Such a container will also enable facilitators to reveal and disrupt old power patterns more easily and potentially in a generative manner. This can be done in the moment as required, as was done during the second innovation lab (See Chapter 3: **Second SSCA innovation lab**, page 43). However there are also a range of tools available, such as a rank exercise, that can deliberately draw out these usually invisible dynamics. Furthermore, it is very clear that learning journeys, in particular multi-day learning journeys, are one of the most powerful and transformative tools for individuals in that they help open people up to their own blind spots and to the experiences and realities of others, provide space and time to really learn from and challenge one another, and allow participants to see both the challenges and opportunities with new eyes.

Other principles and considerations that have been surfaced for both design and implementation are as follows:

- Create spaces for unpacking assumptions about terms, concepts, and language (already mentioned above);
- Exploring and working with multiple ways of knowing and communicating;
- Be mindful of balancing action and reflection, process and content, and becoming alert to when each is needed;
- In both the design of social dialogue processes and developing innovations, consider what the most appropriate scale is for a particular intervention;
- Apply the principle of co-creation: while there may be a deliberate design and process in place, can more spaces be created where participants can shape and give feedback to the process? This also feeds in with the principle of creating the conditions for generative conflict to surface.

All these suggestions are time-consuming. Does this mean that social dialogue processes need to be designed to be longer – perhaps three-day social dialogue processes, rather than ones that are designed over two days? Allocating more time to these processes has consistently been mentioned in the participant feedback forms. It may well be worthwhile experimenting with this, to see whether this affects the ability of people to participate and also what impact such extra time might have on the quality and depth of the process.

Funding considerations

The majority of what the SAFL is seeking funding for can probably be sought from conventional donors, although conventional donors are generally not willing to invest heavily in facilitated processes. There are also some processes and activities that are “high risk”. For example, are there donors who would be willing to fund innovations that have not yet been created, and have no people or institutions assigned to them as yet? Who are the “*disruptive donors*” out there, people and institutes with an appetite for social innovation, who are willing breaking their own mould about how donor funding in particular is allocated and administered? Is it worthwhile to begin to seek out other sources of funding such as venture capital for social innovation? The Sustainable Food Lab was from the start financially sustainable because private sector committed to funding the Lab and the emerging innovations. However, the general sentiment within the SAFL is that it is not yet ready to become a subscription or membership organisation.

It is clear that the SAFL has developed a good relationship with a number of donors. Based on these relationships, one of the donors felt that the SAFL could have been bolder in asking for core funding from them, even in project proposals. For those donors who have been

immersed in and understand and trust the process, it may also be possible to seek funds for the more “high risk” components of SAFL’s work. Having said this, two of the individuals with whom the SAFL has had the closest relationship with have left or are in the process of leaving their donor organisations and it is unclear whether the depth of relationship will persist with the donor organisation once that individual has left. What it probably means is looking at both how to strengthen the institutional relationships with these donor organisations and how to develop new relationships with the less engaged donors or potential new donors. One thing that seems to have a major impact on the nature of the relationships between the SAFL and donors, is when they have been participants of the process, and more particularly if they have participated in learning journeys. It may be worthwhile inviting potential donors to learning journeys as a way of immersing them in the experience of what the process is about.

Practical considerations for the SAFL and the SSCA

A number of practical suggestions were made during the interviews and subsequent discussions that relate specifically to structural aspects of the SAFL, such as the composition of the Steering Group, its organisational model, where it should be located geographically and the most suitable institutional home.

With regard to practical considerations for projects such as the SSCA, a number of aspects are worth highlighting. The first, which in all likelihood has already been addressed, is for the SSCA events to be facilitated in the vernacular wherever possible, and that processes be designed in a way that speak first and foremost to smallholder farmers – how they learn and communicate best – while not alienating any of the other stakeholders. If possible, it would be ideal to have the social dialogue events in one of the districts. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind the multiple scales at which the SAFL works, namely nationally and regionally and locally – and the fact that working in this very local way is likely to create its own challenges and dilemmas that will need to be addressed. As a “bridging” organisation of sorts, the challenge is how to meaningfully link the scientific, technical and market-orientated language of government, private sector and service organisations, with the practical knowledge and wisdom of farmers and other practitioners, dealing with multiple languages and multiple ways of knowing and experiencing their reality.

The logistical challenges of innovation teams being spread across the provinces and not necessarily having the resources to meet face-to-face regularly is something that may well need to be managed, in light of the range of information and communication technology available to team members. Given that mobile phones are so ubiquitous, one avenue to be explored is how they might be employed to make communication easier, for example through the use of specific messaging apps.

In terms of expanding the diversity of stakeholders in the next phase of the SSCA, it is worthwhile holding the various considerations raised in the section above about enrolment and participation. Having said this, interview participants highlighted a number of stakeholder groupings that were missing from the first phase of the SSCA, which, for convenience, are listed below. This is unlikely to be a comprehensive list, but at least useful for cross-referencing purposes:

- **Youth and youth groups:** a very important grouping that is currently overlooked;
- **Farmer groupings and associations;**
- **Consumer associations and bodies;**

- **Private sector:** marketers, input suppliers (e.g. grain merchants, fertilizer companies); commodity associations and brokers; Johannesburg Stock Exchange;
- **Government departments:** Department of Water Affairs, department of Environmental Affairs, Department of Human Settlements, Department of Social Development, Department of Health; The Presidency; the National Agriculture Marketing Council;
- **Unions;** and
- **International organisations:** e.g. GIZ, USAID.

A number of other aspects regarding the scope of the second phase of the SSCA may require further discussion with the project team and in some cases with the broader stakeholder group. These are as follows:

- Is it worthwhile becoming very clear about the class of smallholders (according to Cousins and Chikazunga's 2013 smallholder typology) that this next phase will be focusing on?
- Engaging with the PLAAS research findings (not yet disseminated).
- Is the focus of this next project on private sector engagement still relevant?
- How does the framing of the project (within the broad concept of creating a nourishing local food economy while at the same time engaging in the broader food system of South Africa) resonate with the broader stakeholder group (See **The potential focus and roles of the SAFL and SSCA**, page 77 above)? This framing speaks to two underlying propositions. The first is to shift the focus from smallholder farming per se to one that considers a diverse set of livelihood strategies that together enhance people's resilience. The second is the proposition to dissolve the artificial division of rural and urban development in the context of the food system in general and food security in particular.

Issues that have previously been neglected that could be incorporated more explicitly into the next phase are as follows:

- Farming is performed by an aging population. This raises a concern both for future food security and a potential opportunity for the high numbers of unemployed youth in South Africa.
- Issues of climate change and environmental degradation.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

A learning history is hard to “conclude”. One set of questions, once posed and engaged with, reveals another layer of questions, and so the excavation process continues. For the sake of drawing a line, however temporary, at this point, this conclusion will refract the freshest set of questions through the lens of four tensions. These tensions all deal with the fundamental task of a convenor, such as the SAFL, of trying to create a set of enabling conditions for change.

Tension 1: how to create conditions for people to experience different ways of *seeing* and *being*, without forfeiting *content* and *action*? The combination of three learning journeys with two innovation labs made it possible to focus on each of these at different times. Two factors are becoming apparent: the size of a group and the consistency of a group. It proved more possible to weave the elements of seeing and being with those of content and action in a workshop with a smaller group of innovation team leaders in January 2014. On the matter of consistency, the SSCA experience suggests limiting the number of newcomers after the sensing process, without closing the door when people with different perspectives and sources of influence knock on it.

Tension 2: how to create the conditions for a diverse people (holding different roles, priorities and ideologies) to build relationships and work together, without smoothing over disagreements on key issues? There are two things to try in future: 1) hold a round of peer-to-peer dialogue interviews during the sensing phase to surface assumptions about the issue (in the case of SSCA, small-scale farming) and to work with these assumptions during the relationship-building process; and 2) offer a skilled facilitator to each of the innovation teams as they form, someone who can help the group to work through disagreements as they arise.

Tension 3: how to create the conditions for less familiar ways of working – with *hands* and *heart* rather than just the *head* - without losing the necessary intellectual rigour? The aspect of timing is important here in establishing a rhythm of dialogue, research and innovation that inform one another. This includes making theories of change more explicit as curiosity about them develops - not too early in the process and not too late.

Tension 4: how to create the conditions for a collective process with a microcosm of the “system” while giving sufficient attention to individuals? Specific learnings relate to the enrolment process and the process of ongoing relationships with participants. The SSCA project paid a lot of attention to identifying and recruiting specific people. Their enrolment could have more deliberately warmed them up, so that they embarked on the experience with more awareness of what kind of investment it would require from them in order to realise a new order of change and innovation. There are opportunities in future to provide more structured support to individuals – especially, perhaps the “tempered radicals” – to enable their leadership, both in their home institutions and within the SSCA.

The Food Lab and the Supporting Smallholder work continues and will no doubt continue to generate learning for all those involved. We look forward to pursuing our learning edges within the Food Lab. If you're reading this as a convenor, facilitator or participant of another change process, we welcome engagement with you about what you're learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key individuals and institutions mentioned in the report and their relation to the SAFL/SSCA

Table 9: List of key individuals mentioned in the report

Adam Kahane	Co-founder of Reos Partners and co-founder of the Sustainable Food Lab based in the USA. Adam was involved in the first two SAFL multi-stakeholder dialogues in 2009. Adam worked with Otto Scharmer at Generon Consulting and was part of the team that developed the U-Process.
Adam Mabunda	Farmer and member of the Mopani Farmers Union, based in Limpopo. Adam was introduced to the SSCA during the Limpopo learning journey and has become an active participant of the SSCA, co-leading one of the SSCA's innovations.
Adetola Okunlola	Researcher and PhD candidate at PLAAS. She was hired as a research intern for the research component of the SSCA project and became an active participant in the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Andries du Toit	Director at PLAAS. Andries was aware of the SAFL from its inception in 2009, but only became actively involved when it was suggested by Paula Nimpuno from the Ford Foundation, that PLAAS submit a joint proposal with the SAFL in 2011, which became the SSCA. Andries was not able to engage directly in most of the social dialogue component of the project, but supervised the research of the research interns assigned to the SSCA, namely Adetola Okunlola, Davison Chikazunga and Mngqobi Ngubane.
Ben Cousins	Founding director at PLAAS and was actively involved in the SSCA since its inception. He has participated in almost all the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Candice Kelly	Researcher at the Sustainability Institute. She was a participant of very first workshop that seeded the SAFL in early 2009 and is a member of the SAFL Steering Group.
Canny Geyer	Was Economic Justice coordinator at Oxfam GB. His first exposure to the SAFL was at the innovation workshop in September 2010, and became a member of the SAFL Steering Group in 2011. He was a strong advocate of ensuring smallholder voices were more adequately represented in the SSCA.
Christina Golino	Was a strong advocate of the SAFL when it was established in 2009. At the time she was working for DBSA and had been the person overseeing the 2008 DBSA commissioned-research that catalysed the establishment of the SAFL. She is a member of the SAFL steering group, but has not been directly involved in the SSCA.
Colleen Magner	Leads the Reos Southern Africa office. In late 2008, she was invited by Ralph and Milla into a conversation about designing a social dialogue around food security in South Africa, and remained actively involved in the SAFL until 2011. She has recently resurfaced in the SSCA, to help Rebecca co-facilitate the SSCA innovation labs.
Davison Chikazunga	Researcher and PhD candidate at PLAAS. He was hired as a research

	intern for the research component of the SSCA project and became an active participant in the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Dineo Ndlanzi	Reos Associate. She initially became involved in the SAFL as logistical coordinator in 2010. In 2013, she was asked to join the SSCA team by Rebecca and has been instrumental in logistics for the learning journeys and innovation labs. She has also increasingly taken on a facilitation and translation role when engaging farmers at a district level.
Florian Kroll	Researcher at the University of Witwatersrand and is part of the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN). He has been involved in the SAFL since its inception in 2009, and in 2010 co-lead an innovation on urban food security. He is a member of the SAFL steering group, but has not been directly involved in the SSCA.
James Garrett	He, together with Scott Drimie, was commissioned to undertake one of the studies for the DBSA. He was involved in the DBSA workshop that seeded the SAFL, but has not been involved since then.
Karen Goldberg	Reos Associate. She became part of the SSCA team in July 2013, focusing on documentation and research for both the SSCA and the SAFL.
Kenneth Carden	Kenneth Carden participated in the 2009 DBSA workshop as a representative of Woolworths at the time. He became very interested in the SAFL and has been an avid supporter ever since. Towards the end of 2010, he left Woolworths to become an independent consultant. With his particular interest in supporting smallholder farmers into commercial agriculture Kenneth went on to become the SSCA team lead, and has been particularly important for developing and maintaining relationships with private sector stakeholders, in particular retailers.
Milla McLachlan	Co-founded the SAFL, together with Ralph. Professor of Nutrition at the University of Stellenbosch, she oversaw the SAFL until the end of 2013 at which point she handed over to Scott Drimie. She was instrumental in setting up the SSCA, and has provided both support to the core SSCA team and has been an active participant of the SSCA social dialogue processes. She also supervised this study.
Mnqobi Ngubane	Researcher and PhD candidate at PLAAS. He was hired as a research intern for the research component of the SSCA project and became an active participant in the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Norah Mlondobozi	Farmer and member of the Mopani Farmers Union, based in Limpopo. She was introduced to the SSCA during the Limpopo learning journey and has become an active participant of the SSCA, co-leading one of the SSCA's innovations. In addition, she has recently become a member of the SAFL steering group.
Otto Scharmer	Is best known for his work on the "U-Process", which is the underlying design principle of the SAFL and the SSCA. He, together with members of Generon consulting, which included Adam Kahane, developed the theory and methodology.
Paula Nimpuno	Programme officer for the Ford Foundation, working on issues of economic fairness. She first came across SAFL in 2010 and was instrumental in encouraging PLAAS and Reos Partners to submit the joint research-social dialogue proposal to the Foundation in 2011, which became the SSCA project. She has provided both support to

	the project and has been an active participant of the social dialogue components.
Ralph Hamann	Co-founded the SAFL, together with Milla. He is a professor at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business and has been Chairman of the SAFL steering group since its establishment in 2009. He has not been very actively involved in the SSCA.
Rebecca Freeth	Reos Associate and a member of the SAFL steering group. She has also been part of the core SSCA team. Rebecca first became involved in the SSCA in 2010, and in mid-2012 was approached by Vanessa to ask whether she would be willing to take over the role that Vanessa had been playing in the SSCA. Since then, she was worked closely with Kenneth and Scott, as well as with the PLAAS team, to design and facilitate the social dialogue component of the SSCA. She provided oversight and support to this study.
Scott Drimie	Is the newly appointed head of the SAFL, having officially taken the reins from Milla at the end of 2013. Scott has been actively involved in the SAFL since it's inception. He was not very actively involved in the SSCA itself.
Tatjana von Bormann	Market Transformation Manager at WWF, focusing on the food economy. She has been involved in the SAFL since its inception in 2009 and is a member of the SAFL steering group. During 2010, she and Kenneth both championed innovations involving smallholder farmers. She also participated in one of the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Ulli Klins	Currently works for the Southern Africa Trust, which has co-funded components of the SSCA. He participated in the 2009 DBSA workshop as a representative of GTZ.
Vanessa Sayers	Was part of the Reos Partners leadership until 2011 and an Associate since then. She was brought in to help facilitate the first DBSA workshop in 2009 and went on to represent Reos Partners within SAFL until 2012. She was instrumental in keeping the conversation going with Ralph and Milla during 2011, when funding was very scarce. She handed over her responsibilities to Rebecca towards the end of 2012.

Table 10: List of key institutions mentioned in the report

African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN)	Was founded in 2008 to address the crisis of food insecurity in Africa's rapidly-growing towns and cities. Florian Kroll from AFSUN initiated an innovation on urban food security in 2010, which has not as yet gained full traction. AFSUN presented some of its research as part of the 2010 SAFL learning journeys.
Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA)	Is a development finance institution, primarily focusing on large infrastructure projects within the public and private sector. In 2008, it commissioned a series of research papers on various aspects of food security in Southern Africa. It was this work, together with the work commissioned by GTZ that was the catalyst for Ralph and Milla meeting, and their decision to host a social dialogue workshop in February 2009 on their research and food security in South Africa more generally. This workshop in turn seeded the SAFL. DBSA are no longer directly involved in the SAFL, although

	Christina Golino, who was with DBSA at the inception of the SAFL, and no longer works for them, is a member of the SAFL steering group.
Ford Foundation	Is a private foundation with the mission of advancing human welfare. It funded the first phase of the SSCA. It has also been an active participant of the social dialogue processes of the SSCA.
Generon consulting	Is the organisation that Adam Kahane worked in prior to co-founding Reos Partners in 2007.
GTZ (German Organisation for Technical Cooperation)/ GIZ (German Organisation for International Cooperation)	Is Germany's international development organisation, which changed its name from the GTZ to the GIZ in January 2011. In 2008, GTZ commissioned Ralph Hamann from UCT to undertake research on the role of business and cross-sector collaboration in food security in Southern Africa. It was his work, together with the work commissioned by the DBSA that was the catalyst for Ralph and Milla meeting, and their decision to host a social dialogue workshop in February 2009 on their research and food security in south Africa more generally. It was this workshop that seeded the SAFL. GTZ also funded the SAFL in 2010. It was not directly involved in the SSCA.
Lima Rural Development Foundation (Lima)	Is an NGO offering extension services and farmer support. Lima was a host on the SSCA's Market Access learning journey, and has been an active participant in the SSCA social dialogue processes.
Mopani Farmers' Union (MPU)	Operates across the Mopani District of Limpopo Province and has a membership that currently stands at 1700 members. They were one of the organisations that were consulted during the farmer consultations in May 2013. Two members of MFU, namely Adam Mabunda and Norah Mlondobozi, were hosts for the Farmer Support and Extension learning journey and have become active participants of the SSCA. In addition, Norah has become a member of the SAFL steering group.
Nkuzi Development Association (Nkuzi)	Is an NGO providing a range of support services to historically-disadvantaged communities wishing to improve their rights and access to land. It works throughout the Limpopo Province, northern parts of Mpumalanga Province and with farm residents in Gauteng Province. Nkuzi was a host for the Farmer Support and Extension learning journey and participated in the two innovation labs in August and October 2014.
Oxfam	Oxfam first gained exposure to the SAFL at the workshop held in 2010. In 2011, Canny Geyer became a member of the SAFL steering group and strongly began to advocate for bringing in smallholder farmer voices in the SAFL. Oxfam provided funding to the SSCA that enabled the third learning journey to occur in August 2011.
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS)	Undertakes research, policy engagement, teaching and training about the dynamics of chronic poverty and structural inequality in Southern Africa, with a particular emphasis on the key role of restructuring and contesting land holding and agro-food systems in the subcontinent and beyond. PLAAS was the academic partner in the SSCA project.
Reos Partners	Reos Partners is a social innovation consultancy that addresses complex, high-stakes challenges around the world. It was founded in 2007. Through Colleen and Vanessa, Reos has been a key partner

	of the SAFL since its inception in 2009, playing a range of roles over the years from convener and agitator, to facilitator and advisor.
Southern Africa Trust	Provides grants to civil society organisations representing the poor through policy development in the region. It co-funded the social dialogue component of the SSCA and has also participated in the social dialogue processes of the SSCA.
Sustainable Food Lab	Is a global network of more than 60 organisations established in to bring companies, farmers and civil society together to identify the most important sustainability issues in our food systems and develop credible, verifiable, approaches that make improvements and add value through the supply chain. It was the Sustainable Food Lab that first brought Milla into contact with Adam Kahane, one of its co-founders, and also provided significant inspiration for the establishment of the SAFL. In addition, it was through the Sustainable Food Lab that Paula Nimpuno from Ford became aware of and made contact with the SAFL.
Technoserve	Is a company that provides agricultural extension services and support. It has been actively involved in the entire SSCA project and hosted participants on both the Market Access and Farmer Support and Extension Services learning journey in April and June 2013.
University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (GSB)	Through Ralph Hamann, GSB has supported both the SAFL and the SSCA through hosting numerous of the SAFL steering group meetings.
University of Stellenbosch	Is the institution at which Milla McLachlan is based. It administered the majority of funds for the SSCA project.
The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)	Is a worldwide NGO. In South Africa is has a programme that focuses on sustainable agriculture. Through Tatjana von Bormann, WWF has been involved with the SAFL since its inception. It has over the years provided funding to the SAFL and Tatjana is a member of the SAFL steering group.

Appendix 2: Participants of the study

Name	Organisation	Relation to SSCA	Interviewed	Validation workshop	SG meeting	Informal discussions
Abigail Harper	Stellenbosch University			X	X	
Andries du Toit	PLAAS	Support	X	X		
Basheerah Mohammed	Oxfam			X		
Ben Cousins	PLAAS	Support		X		
Candice Kelly	Sustainability Institute	SG not directly involved in SSCA			X	
Canny Geyer	Oxfam	Support	X			
Christina Golino		SG not directly involved in SSCA			X	
Colleen Magner	Reos	Support		X		X
Davison Chikazunga	PLAAS	Support	X	X		
Dineo Ndlanzi	Reos	Support	X	X	X	
Florian Kroll	Wits University	SG not directly involved in SSCA			X	
Kenneth Carden	SAFL	Core	X	X	X	
Lawrence Mkhaliphi	Biowatch	SSCA Participant	X			
Milla McLachlan	SAFL	Support	X	X	X	X
Mnqobi Ngubane	PLAAS	Support		X		
Norah Mlondobozi	Mopani Farmers Union	SSCA Participant		X	X	
Paula Nimpuno	Ford Foundation	Support	X	X		
Ralph Hamann	UCT GSB	SG not directly involved in SSCA			X	
Rebecca Freeth	SAFL	Core	X	X	X	X
Scott Drimie	SAFL	Core	X		X	
Tatjana von Bormann	WWF	SG not directly involved in SSCA			X	
Vanessa Sayers	Reos	Support	X			

Appendix 3: Interview guide

These questions were used as a guideline for questions during the interviews.

1. When did you get involved in the Southern Africa Food Lab? What did you understand the purpose and methods to be when you first got involved? How has your thinking about the purpose and methods of the SAFL evolved over time?
2. What has changed for you at a personal level since you became involved in the SAFL/SSCA?
 - 2.1. What has changed in terms of the way you see and think about food security and small holder agriculture?
 - 2.2. What has changed in terms of the way you see your role in relation to food security?
 - 2.3. What has changed in terms of the way you are working in relation to food security?
3. What in your view has changed within your organization as a result of its engagement in the SAFL/SSCA?
4. What were your expectations of the SSCA project when you first became involved?
 - 4.1. In what ways is it realising or exceeding your expectations?
 - 4.2. In what ways is it falling short of your expectations?
 - 4.3. What factors contribute to the gaps between your expectations and what has transpired to date?
5. What is your perspective on the innovations emerging from SSCA?
 - 5.1. How would you rate their potential to support smallholder agriculture?
 - 5.2. How would you rate their potential to effect desired change in the food system?
6. How has your experience of the SSCA affected how you think about the future role and structure of the Food Lab?

Appendix 4: Participant Information Leaflet and Consent Form

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

A Learning History on the Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture Project

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof. Milla McLachlan

ADDRESS: Division of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 4579007

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the Principal Investigator or Co-investigator any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Ethical Guidelines for Research.

What is this research study all about?

- *This research is being conducted by the Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL), which was created in 2009 by a group of concerned role players who recognized that transformation in the food system to one that works for all, requires a shared understanding of the food security problem; fresh thinking about possible solutions; and joint action.. The Principal Investigator is Prof Milla McLachlan from the Division of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University and her two Co-facilitators, namely Karen Goldberg and Rebecca Freeth, both from Reos Partners, a social innovation consultancy closely involved in the SAFL. The research is being funded by the National Research Foundation and the Mellon Foundation.*
- *The aim of this research is to document what has been done over the course of the SSCA project, learn from it, inform the future work of the SAFL, and contribute to the global conversation on social change strategies.*
- *The research comprises a number of steps, starting with a desktop review of what has already been written about the SAFL and the SSCA project. This will be followed by a series of up to 10 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with people who have been closely associated with the SSCA project. With your permission, we intend to record and transcribe the interviews, which we will then send back to you for your comments and interviews. We will then analyse the interviews for themes as well as*

draw out quotes from the interviews that help produce a draft learning history, which will then be presented and workshopped at a collaborative workshop. All interview participants as well as additional members of the steering group will be invited to this workshop. The aim of this workshop is to validate and enrich the draft learning history by inviting and welcoming workshop participants to comment and add their perspectives.. After this a final learning history will be produced based on the inputs from the workshop.

- *We are requesting your participation in an in-depth face-to-face interview that will last 90 – 120 minutes at a location of your convenience, bearing in mind that we will need to conduct the interview somewhere quiet, in order to ensure privacy and to be able to record the interview properly. In addition we will be asking you to read through your transcript and provide any feedback and commentary to us before we begin our interview analysis. And finally, we request your participation in a half-day collaborative workshop.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been carefully selected to participate in this research because you hold valuable knowledge about the SSCA Project or have been involved in the SAFL steering group and have valuable insights on the SSCA from a more distanced perspective.*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You are expected to participate in an interview with the Karen Goldberg, the co-investigator. You will be required to answer certain questions about yourself and your involvement in the project, to the best of your ability, although you are welcome to abstain from answering specific questions if they make you uncomfortable or you do not know the answer. You will also be asked to commit a day to travel down to Cape Town (if this is not where you are resident) and participate in a collaborative workshop.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *There are no direct benefits offered to participants. A report on the project will be produced which will be sent to you.*
- *The intention of this report is to facilitate collective learning about ways to support smallholder farmers who are keen to enter commercial value chains. In addition, the research intends to support the development of SAFL, and to provide more general insights into social change processes that can benefit other organizations involved in such change processes.*

Are there in risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- *Some of the questions might make you feel uncomfortable. Please remember that you may choose not to answer any questions and you can withdraw from the study at any time.*
- *You will remain anonymous and will not be mentioned by name in the report. Regardless of the fact that your identity will be protected by a number of security features, because of the relatively small number of interviewees and projects being investigated, there is a slight possibility that certain opinions could be assumed to have come from you.*
- *To mitigate risks to you, you will be given a copy of your transcript and be given a chance to review it before anyone else aside from the Principal Investigator and co-*

researcher have seen it. You may choose to veto certain parts and these will be removed from the report. This should mitigate the risk of personal information that you do not wish to share with the public being published.

Who will have access to your records?

- *Only the Principal Investigator and co-investigator will have access to these recordings and their transcriptions. This recording and the transcription document will be destroyed at the end of the research process.*
- *If you grant permission for your interviews to be recorded, recordings will be kept on a computer which is password protected.*
- *Transcriptions of the recordings will be made by an external company, but your name will not be on the copy of the recording given to this company.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

- *No, you will not be paid to take part in the study but you will be reimbursed for travel and meal costs associated with the interview and workshop. There will be no costs involved for you, if you do take part.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *You can contact the Principal Investigator, Prof Milla McLachlan at millam@sun.ac.za or 072 457 9007 if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.*
- *You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee at 021-938 9207 if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the Principal Investigator or her research supervisor.*
- *You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.*

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled ***A Learning History on the Supporting Smallholders into Commercial Agriculture Project***

I declare that:

- I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the principle investigator feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 2013.

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by investigator

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use a interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 2013.

.....
Signature of investigator

.....
Signature of witness