

SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON THE USE AND CONSERVATION OF WATER FOR FOOD PRODUCTION



Understanding our
farming as an
Activity System



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What is an Activity System



The idea of an Activity System recognizes that people do not work alone. They do things, such as **working and learning, with other people (the subjects)**, and they use different **resources and tools** to achieve what they are aiming for; the **object** of their activity. The way different people contribute in different ways to this process, is recognized as **division of labour**.

How people work and learn together in an activity system is **mediated or guided** by different influences which include cultural norms, formal **laws** and informal **rules**, and the relationships within the particular **community of connected people** working together.



The Basis of an Activity System



Figure1: *The basis of an Activity System*

An activity system recognizes that individuals act (usually with others) on their environment to satisfy a need (or achieve an object). In the case of an agricultural activity system the environment can include land, soil, water, seed, livestock, and the need (or object) is often food production and income generation.



Farming as an Activity System



It is important to realize that farmers also operate within communities working in activity systems.

Within an agricultural activity system many people (subjects) do different things; some are farmers, others are part of agribusiness or are involved in extension work (division of labour).

People learn as they develop understandings of their environment and make sense of the tasks that they are trying to achieve. This learning is sometime enabled by other people within their activity system community (lecturers, extension workers, NGOs).

The resources and tools used in farming activity systems can include information, experience, networks, labour, seeds, technology (i.e. apps), and the usual farming tools from spades to tractors.



Farming as an Activity System

People use different resources and tools in activity systems to get information about or change their environment to satisfy their needs

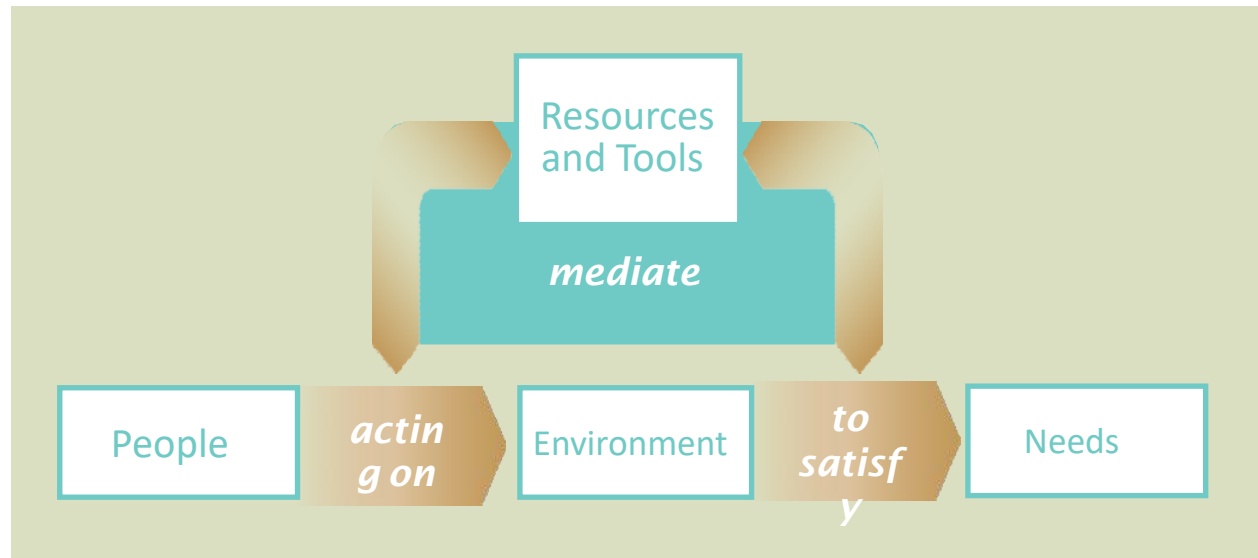


Figure 2: *Illustration of the interaction of people with tools on their environment.*



Farming as an Activity System



The farming activity system is based on learning as a social and cultural process where people interact and use their tools within an environment. The tools, people and environment contributes to the shaping of individual knowledge.

There are often rules that affect how an activity is conducted (national laws, local regulations, or cultural practices on how to use water).

The social, cultural and organizational contexts within which farmers work greatly effects farming activities and their outcomes.



An Example of Farming as an Activity System



The Mxumbu Youth Co-operative:

The Mxumbu Youth Group is a farming co-operative in the Raymond Mhlaba DM in the Eastern Cape. The co-operative comprises approximately 10 farmers within the Mxumbu community. The aim of the co-operative is to grow organic produce following agro-ecological principals to sell through local markets. The group has access to limited municipal water and is using their own homesteads and have access to some community land to grow their crops. The members of the co-operative have different roles, such as financial manager and marketing manager. Members of the Mxumbu youth have been part of the Amanzi for Food Training of Trainers course and therefore have been introduced to the WRC materials. They have also partnered with a number of other projects that have taken place in the area (such as the Food for Us marketing app). The Mxumbu youth are supported by a strong network of NGOs, government extension officers, and Fort Cox AFTI who help them achieve their object of farming organically to make a living.





Mxumbu Youth Activity System



Tools: Skills gained from Amanzi for Food Training of Trainers, WRC materials, Irrigation equipment, Ground preparation and harvesting equipment, Food for Us application, IBLN WhatsApp group

Subject: Mxumbu Youth Co-operative



Object: Farming organically to produce fresh vegetables to sell

Rules: Community owned land, market related price, market related demanded produce

Community: Imvotho Bubomi Learning Network
Middeldrift Extension Officer
Mxumbu community, Fort Cox AFTI

Roles: The co-operative consists of several members, with some working on tending to the vegetables, others looking for markets for the produce, and others exploring potential funding and partnership options. Their partners provide support in different ways.

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THANK YOU!

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