



A Systemic Development Theory Revisited: A farmer's son reflects

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What we actually 'do' in this world – our behaviours and practices – are essentially expressions of the way that we 'view' the world about us. Such worldviews, or epistemes, reflect deeply held cognitive beliefs and value assumptions about such matters as the nature of nature, the nature of knowing, and the nature of human nature. They are the source of our prejudices and our ethics as well as of the conceptual frameworks that we use to make sense of our everyday experiences. Our personal worldviews are both shaped by and, in turn, influenced by the prevailing culture of the societies of which we are part. Surprisingly, given the significance of worldviews to the way that we live our everyday lives, we remain remarkably ignorant of the actual epistemic characteristics of our worldviews and are thus unaware of the cognitive challenges that we face when we are confronted by unfamiliar situations where the perspectives that we hold are inadequate to cope with these new demands. It is the need to increase the appreciation and transformation of prevailing societal worldviews that represents the single most significant impediment to *facilitating information and innovations for empowering family farmers*. Naturally the need for such epistemic transformation is as relevant to farmers themselves and to the whole range of those who provide agricultural services - from policymakers and regulators, researchers and traders through to extension agents and farm advisors – to the citizenry at large. The argument presented here is that from time to time, and under particular circumstances, epistemic transformations do occur in agriculture which have very significant impacts, both negative as well as positive, on all stakeholders. Drawing on both personal lifetime and professional experiences and on ideas and concepts from a broad literature, the author re-visits A Wave Theory of Agricultural Development, which he first generated two decades ago, to illustrate this argument. He will discuss implications of this theory for extension, education, research, policy and most significantly, for social discourse which is set within a context of the quest for the sustainable well-being of farming families.

Key words: empowerment, epistemic transformation, wave theory, worldviews