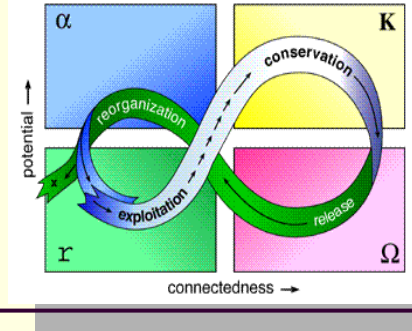


# The Adaptive Cycle Model Adds Value

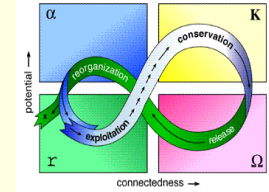
Mark Dalgety  
Wellington Evaluation Group Seminar  
30 October 2008

# Outline



1. Introduction
2. Key Proposition
3. The Adaptive Cycle Model
4. Questions
5. Applying the Model
6. Conclusion

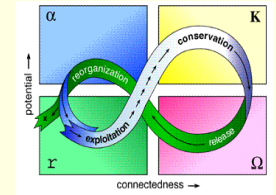
# Introduction



- WEG /AES Scholarship
- Locating myself
- My background, passion, orientation, work experience
- A working definition of evaluation

*Evaluation is a systematic enquiry process to determine the value of something to promote development.*

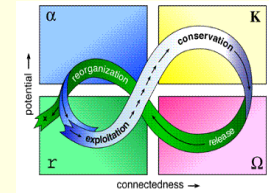
# Key Proposition



The Adaptive Cycle model enriches evaluation theory and practice by;

- locating the evaluand
- offering guidance when selecting an evaluation approach
- providing a powerful tool for evaluative capacity building
- linking evaluation to a sustainability framework

# Quote



*In all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity*  
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

# The Adaptive Cycle Model

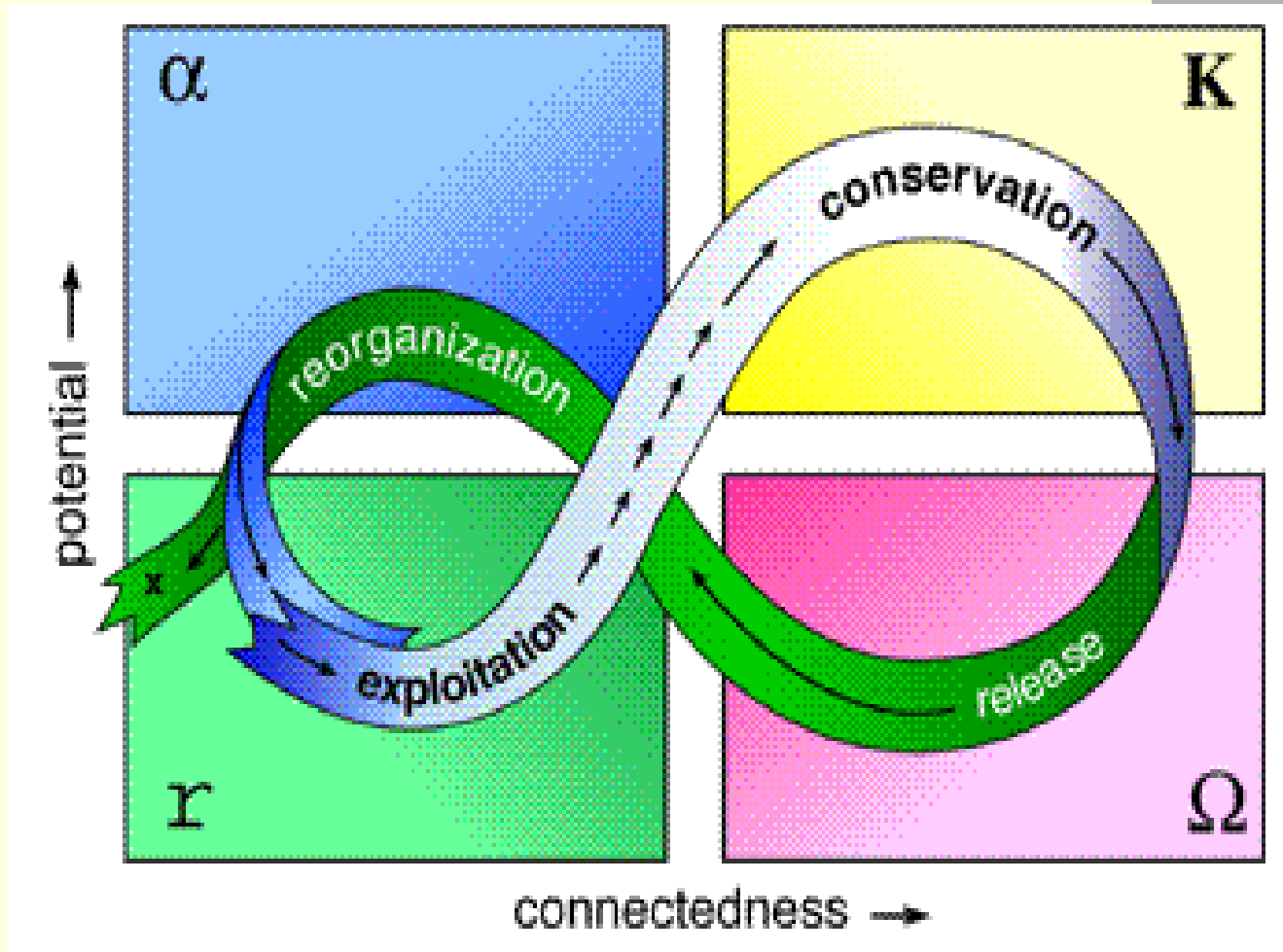
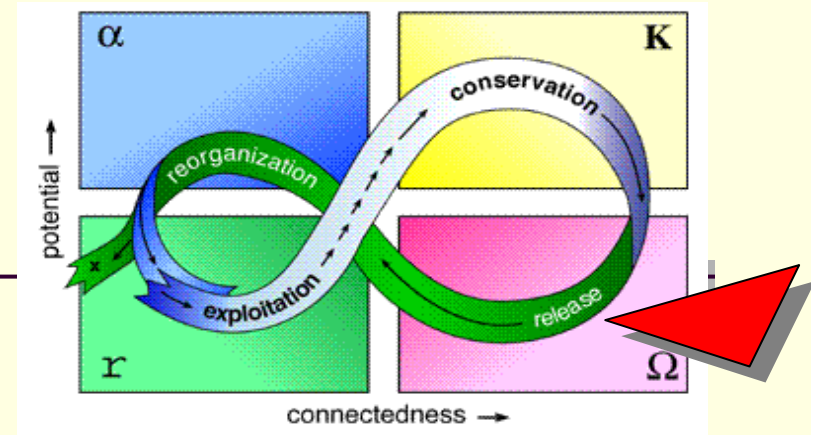


Figure 1.1 The Adaptive Cycle (Holling et al., 2002, pp. 32-34)

# Phase 1

## Release or Collapse



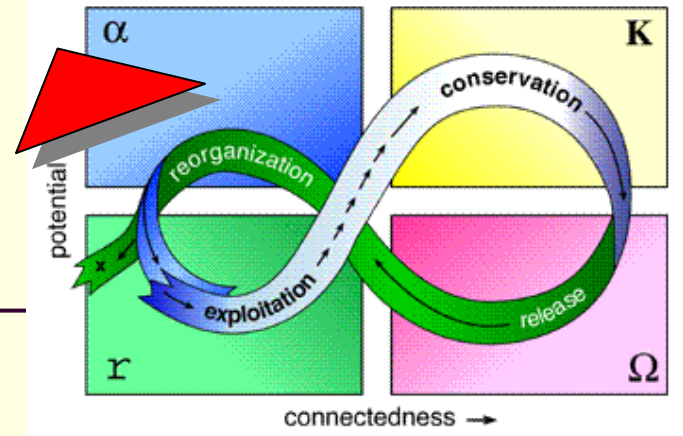
In this *release* or *collapse* phase the system is rapidly breaking down. The collapse releases resources for new forms of growth.

Examples:

- a forest fire
- the fall of the Berlin Wall triggered the collapse of Eastern European communist regimes
- a programme ends freeing resources
- death of someone close brings a reassessment of life choices

# Phase 2

## Re-organization



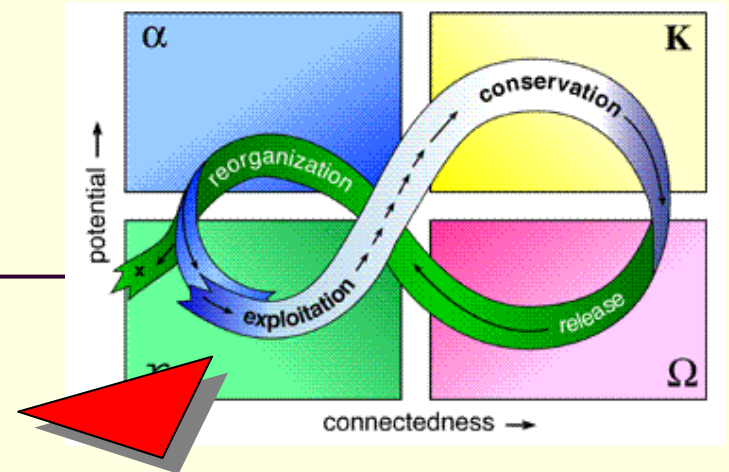
In the *re-organization* phase, a blanket of seedlings grows after a forest fire or a new organisation develops a wide range of new programmes. An individual explores variety of options after major crisis.

Yet if some of these options do not mature, the system will not become **resilient**.

**Resilience** is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance, undergo change and still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks ([www.resalliance.org](http://www.resalliance.org)).

# Phase 3

## Exploitation



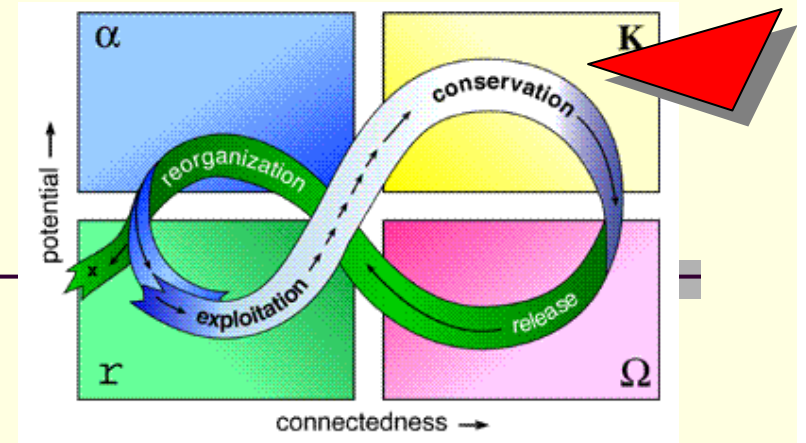
Particular species of trees start to prevail in a forest, whilst others wither in the *exploitation* phase. Specific programmes are developed and others come to an end,...

if the management are ***adaptive***.

***Adaptability*** is the *capacity of actors to influence or manage resilience*.

# Phase 4

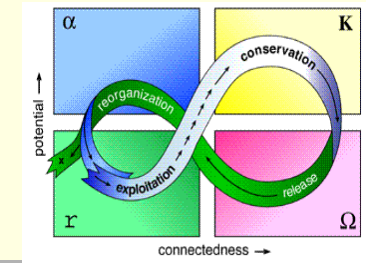
## Conservation or Maturity



Specific trees or programmes are now mature, consuming all the resources for extended periods & providing returns on investment.

However, there is a need to free up significant system resources for the next *release* phase or rigidity can result in a move to a significantly lower level of functioning.

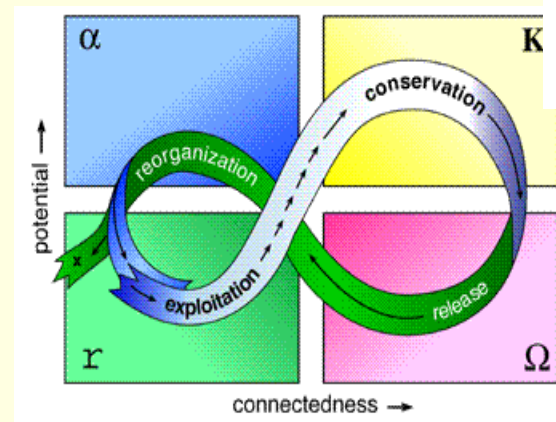
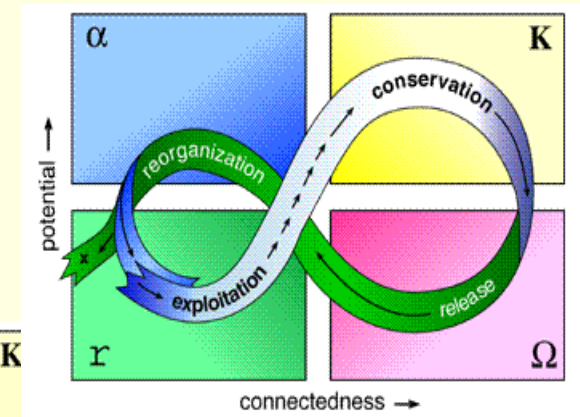
# Lower or Higher Functioning



The tail indicates that systems can move to lower and higher levels of functioning

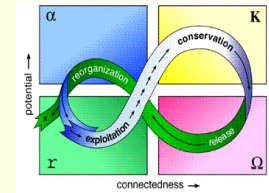
Example:

Eastern European systems in 1990s





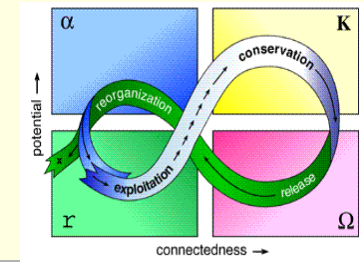
# Clarification Questions



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Any questions about the content of the model

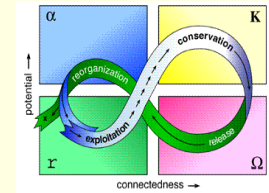
# Applications of the Model



There are at least four applications of the model for evaluation practice.

- Locate the Evaluand
- Selection an Evaluation Approach
- An Evaluative Capacity Building Tool
- Links Evaluation Practice to a Sustainability Framework

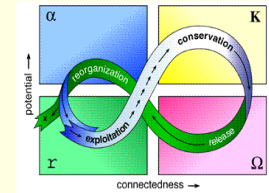
# Locating the Evaluand



- A programme is an expression of an organisation's **context**, which Bezzi (2006) defines as 'the belief set of a community'.
- Identifying the context is therefore critical for an effective evaluation
- This model enriches the description of this context by locating the evaluand when asking;  
Which phase of the Adaptive Cycle reflects the evaluand's current location?

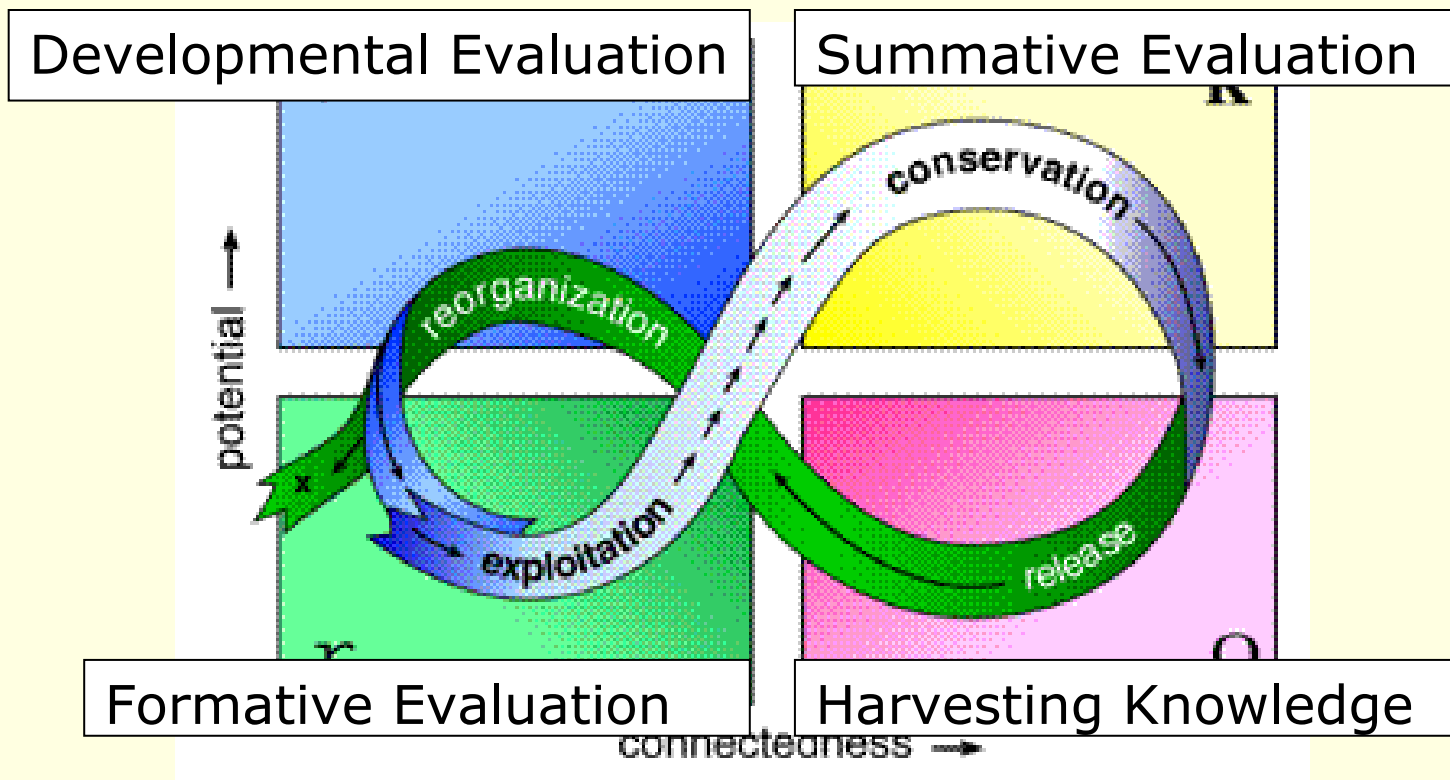
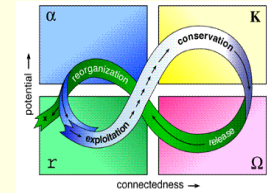
Example: Wellington ChangeMakers Refugee Forum

# Selecting an Evaluation Approach

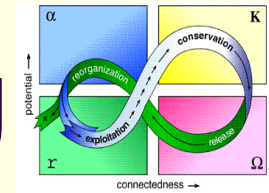


- An organisation will have different evaluation needs at each of the four different phases.
- An inappropriate approach could harm the evaluand's evolution.
- According to (Gamble 2008), these approaches are; formative, summative, developmental evaluation and harvesting knowledge.

# Selecting an Evaluation Approach



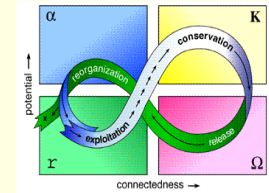
# Evaluative Capacity Building



An evaluative capacity building tool which supports reflective evaluative inquiry by;

- Providing a powerful metaphor for the organisation to reflect on which phase a programme/organisation is currently within and to explore possible implications.
- Introducing a non linear, systems way of perceiving the world where entities have life cycles and are part of a weave of complex interrelated systems.
- Offering linkages to some non-Western knowledge systems which are more congruent with this cyclical world view.

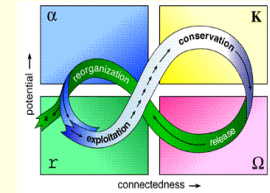
# Links Evaluation Practice to a Sustainability Framework



- Evaluation practice currently focuses on a predominately socio-political framework.
- Climate change, peak oil and sustainability have a growing political, social and economical influence on society and therefore government.
- This model provides some *common language* for an evaluation approach that connects to these broader social/ecological concerns.

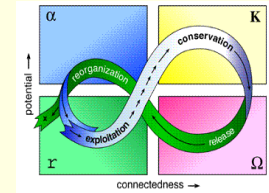
Example: Evaluation supports 'adaptive management' to build 'resilient' organisations, societies and systems.

# Apply the Model



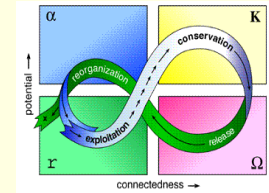
- Identify a programme or organisation
- Which phase best describes its current location? What are the implications for the organisation of this assessment.
- Which evaluation approach best suits this phase. What are the implications for design, analysis, reporting given this assessment?
- What are the wider systems in which the evaluand is located? Which phase describes them?

# Key References



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# Conclusion



## The Adaptive Cycle model

- locates the evaluand
- offers guidance when selecting an evaluation approach
- provides a powerful tool for evaluative capacity building
- links evaluation to a sustainability framework

## Contact Details

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