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Exploring guiding elements of transformational change in integrated landscape management

Introduction

Great emphasis is currently being placed on achieving transformational change and paradigm shift through policies and measures to implement the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 development agenda, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF). There is a need to improve our understanding on how to enable, operationalize, measure and evaluate the intended, lasting outcomes. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) are partnering to elucidate the triggers and drivers of, and resistance to, transformational change across the landscape.

Understanding transformational change and paradigm shift

A paradigm shift occurs when an existing paradigm, or set of interpretations of the world, fails to explain observed events and is replaced by a competing set of knowledge that better explains the situation (Kuhn 1962). Transformational change requires enabling a State to operate with some autonomy from the sectors driving deforestation and forest degradation (Karsenty and Ongolo 2012; Angelson et al. 2012). However, many States lack autonomy, and powerful vested interests and economic incentives are behind the drivers, with both factors usually acting in 'tandem' (Lambin et al. 2001; Angelsen et al. 2012).

Transformational change for REDD+ has been defined as a "shift in discourse, attitudes, production and consumption patterns, power relations and deliberate policy and protest action that leads policy formulation and implementation away from business as usual policy approaches that directly or indirectly support deforestation and forest degradation" (Brockhaus et al. 2016).

The World Bank Independent Evaluation Group refers to what they call 'transformational engagements' as: "individual or series of interventions that support deep, systemic, and sustainable change with the potential for large-scale impact in an area of a major development challenge. Such engagements help clients to remove critical constraints to development; cause or support fundamental change in a system; have large-scale impact at the national or global level; and are economically, financially, and environmentally sustainable." (World Bank 2016).

For the GCF, in the context of REDD+, proponents of projects or programs must demonstrate "the degree to which the proposed activity can catalyze impact beyond one-off project or programme investment. In

promoting paradigm shift in the context of REDD-plus, GCF investments aim to address drivers of deforestation to deliver REDD-plus results, looking beyond the forest sector considering forests as a part of the wider landscapes" (Green Climate Fund 2016).

Implementing transformational changes in the landscape: initial thoughts on guiding elements

Two expert workshops with around 40 representatives from academia, civil society, indigenous peoples groups, UN agencies, government and the private sector were held in 2017 to identify five central guiding elements that can assist in gaining the necessary understanding and move towards implementation, and which will be further explored over the current year in the context of the FAO-CIFOR partnership. These guiding elements are:

1. **Climate actions in the landscape should be equitable, rights-based, and implemented in the context of sustainable development.** The current paradigm in place to achieve sustainable development and to implement the Paris Agreement is fragmented, largely project-based, and often ignores rights and equity. A change in paradigm requires a shift to more equitable, rights-based and holistic programmatic approaches becoming the norm, with priority placed on achieving or surpassing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. **Enhanced cross-sectoral coordination can improve the contribution that can be made through actions in the land use sector, including REDD+, at local, provincial, jurisdictional and national scales.** The increasing threat of climate change raises the need for stronger and more meaningful cross-sectoral coordination and multilevel governance structures (Sayer et al. 2012). Land use projects need to be scaled up to the programmatic level and aligned with national strategies, which requires considerable efforts in successfully navigating complex, multilevel governance and cross-sectoral harmonization challenges (Ravikumar et al. 2015).
3. **The inclusion and contributions of all actors should be embraced.** Although the role of government remains central, Non-State Actors (NSAs) are playing an increasingly important role in the implementation of climate actions. The Paris Agreement welcomes these efforts and the UNFCCC has launched the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) platform to contribute to them. There is a need for enhanced systems of accountability and

transparency (for transparency principles cf. de Sy et al. 2016) to enable self-regulation driven by a sense of global responsibility, as well as appropriate government regulations to track, measure, monitor and evaluate the progress of private sector companies and other non-state actors towards sustainability.

- 4. The diversity of local priorities and solutions should be embraced.** Many conservation and development interventions are often overly complex and not understood by communities. This has been a major challenge for REDD+ (Sills et al. 2014). A paradigm shift in the way in which local priorities are acknowledged and supported by subnational and national government priorities could help ensure that land use programs promote local rights and livelihoods.
- 5. Investments in sustainable development, technologies and innovations in the land use sector at all levels should promote multiple win-win solutions that prioritize local solutions to achieve financial and non-financial benefits.** Sustainable investment to achieve food security and halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss has not been achieved. Further, lack of recognition of rights is currently impeding the implementation of benefit-sharing mechanisms (Pham et al. 2013). The needs and demands of communities should be taken into consideration when determining allocations of international public finance through integrated landscape approaches.

Conclusions

Through this process, FAO and CIFOR, in collaboration with a broad set of partners, seek to enhance understanding of the complexity of transformational change in the land use sector, as well as to determine whether the current understanding of common approaches needs to be reconfigured, and how to do this. To achieve a paradigm shift to low-emissions development and climate resilience, many important transformational changes need to happen in multiple systems and in parallel – there is no ‘silver bullet’. These changes will need to occur at many scales, including within communities, organizations, companies and institutions, and within subnational and national governments, as well as at the international level.

Transformational change in land use sectors requires a new vision and strong leadership to foster cooperation and commitment among stakeholders, and to move beyond unconstructive behavior patterns within institutions, governments and sectors. It should involve new, diverse networks of partners, regulatory bodies, civil society, and competitors, who are prepared to engage in challenging processes, through addressing the influence of power structures (Brockhaus et al. 2016). A successful paradigm shift to an integrated landscape approach must build strategic alliances between the natural resource sectors, acknowledging their mutual interdependencies, complementarities, and significance to achieving sustainable development.

Contact: Christopher Martius, CIFOR at C.Martius@cgiar.org or Tiina Vahanen, FAO at Tiina.Vahanen@fao.org

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