

Putting Transformational Change and Paradigm Shift into Context: An Integrated Landscape Approach to REDD+

A Thought Starter for Participants of the Expert Meeting to be held in Rome on 6 and 7 March 2017

By Hosny El Lakany¹ and Stephen Leonard²

Background

On 6 and 7 March 2017, an expert meeting will be held at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to exchange information and ideas related to the work of the FAO. The meeting will consider REDD+ transformational impact potential and approaches to land use and REDD+ implementation (in its widest scope), which includes agriculture, forestry and other land uses.

The meeting will form a part of a process to be undertaken by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) to provide strategic advice to the FAO over coming months on structuring the Paradigm-Shift / Transformational potential on policies and most importantly on the ground, of projects and programmes and their overall contribution to low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways. It is anticipated that an important outcome of the process can inform the FAO's engagement as an Accredited Entity to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

During 2017, the GCF will put in place several important measures to enable an increase in support for REDD+ implementation, including policy measures related to engagement with indigenous peoples, joint mitigation adaptation and non market approaches, participation of the private sector, and results based payments. When implementing projects and programmes, the GCF seeks to promote a 'paradigm shift' in the global response to climate change³ towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change⁴. However, it remains to be seen as to how this 'paradigm shift' is to be achieved, and more specifically and relevantly, how this is to be interpreted and implemented in forestry and other land uses.

A central part of this process, to support the FAO in understanding and achieving the paradigm shift, will be to identify what is required, what has worked, what has not and ensure projects and programmes are designed with this 'transformational' objective in mind and with the ultimate objective of contributing to the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to achieve the Paris Agreement.

Defining Paradigm Shift

Paradigm shift is historically understood in the context of science, whereby new and competing paradigms emerge when an existing paradigm, or set of interpretations of the world, fails to explain observed events – competing sets of knowledge will emerge that better explain the situation, and a paradigm shift will occur⁵. Beyond the sciences, in the context of social issues such as development,

¹ Adjunct Professor and Director of the International Forestry Program at the University of British Columbia in Canada and Distinguished Forestry Professor at Alexandria University in Egypt;

² International lawyer and UNFCCC climate policy expert;

³ <http://www.greenclimate.fund/-/gcf-paradigm-shift-revisited>

⁴ https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/56440/Governing_Instrument.pdf/caa6ce45-cd54-4ab0-9e37-fb637a9c6235

⁵ Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (50th Anniversary Edition: 2012). University of Chicago Press

sustainable development will require a different paradigm than unsustainable development. The ‘transformation’, or the ‘shift’ would be to impact on the direction of development, to ensure it is occurring within a sustainable manner⁶. The key task is to identify what is upholding the old paradigm, and what is needed for the new. The Cambridge Dictionary⁷ defines paradigm shift as “a time when the usual and accepted way of doing or thinking about something changes completely”, and the Webster Dictionary defines it more or less the same: “an important change that happens when the usual way of thinking about or doing something is replaced by a new and different way”.

Paradigm shift does not just “happen”, but rather, it is driven by agents of change, and through transformational change. It may be moving from the status quo of planning and implementing projects in silos, to a programmatic, integrated and result-based approach. It can be initiated through organizations leading development of a programme that then evolves to the locations and countries implementing it. And it would be unproductive, if not detrimental if paradigm shift, as is the case with transformational change, does not lead to measurable and accountable transformational impact. Having regard to the above, for the purpose of the present work, it may be useful to interpret paradigm shift as:

“A fundamental change in the current pattern of unfolding the complex REDD+ systems⁸ and frameworks, and the pattern in which organizations implementing projects and programs across the Landscape including REDD+ have been conducting “business”.

From Transformational Change to Paradigm Shift / Transformational Impact

In order to achieve ‘transformational impact’, it is important to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of its essential prerequisite, namely ‘transformational change’. There is no agreed definition of transformational change, however Brockhaus and Angelsen define it in the context of REDD+ as “a shift in discourse, attitudes, power relations and deliberate policy and protest action that leads policy formulation and implementation away from business as usual policy approaches⁹ that directly or indirectly support deforestation and forest degradation¹⁰”. Some ‘pillars’ may include:

A shift in attitude and discourse: For transformational change to occur, values, beliefs and attitudes must be altered in the early stages of planning the project and programme activities, because these provide the foundation for subsequent alterations in work patterns, structures and systems. Suffice to say that transformational change benefits from strong leadership that identifies new, sometimes risky and untested pathways; allied sectors and planning; and implementation staff to follow and build the momentum for change. An integrated landscape approach to REDD+ can build this in two ways: first, by empowering new participating partners; and second, by encouraging them to understand and eventually broaden their REDD+ perspective with regard to the nature of change and its purpose and benefits, for example, landscape objectives may include: improved livelihoods; sustained or improved ecosystem services; sufficient delivery of food and non-food products, and efficient use of resources¹¹.

⁶ Cho, Haein . (2014) Understanding the Transformational Impact of NAMAs (Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions). Masters project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Environmental Management degree in the Nicholas School of the Environment of Duke University.

⁷ www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/paradigm-shift

⁸ C.f. definition of REDD+

⁹ The GCF Transitional Committee used a ‘working definition’ of transformational change, which provides that it is: “Transforming production processes and consumption patterns, enhancing institutional capabilities and adopting planning processes to enable low-emission (mitigation) and climate resilient development (adaptation) pathways”.

¹⁰ Brockhaus, M., & Angelsen, A. (2012). Seeing REDD+ through 4Is: A political economy framework. In A. Angelsen, M. Brockhaus, W. D. Sunderlin, & L. V. Verchot (Eds.), *Analysing REDD+: (2012) Challenges and choices* (pp. 15–30), CIFOR, Bogor.

¹¹ <http://blog.cifor.org/19886/on-landscapes-part-3-defining-objectives-and-measuring-progress?fnl=en>

Enhancing Institutional Capabilities: Transformational change requires the creation of a vision, which stretches an organization or institution beyond its current limits and capabilities; a holistic perspective; an implementation process that is sustained by organizational learning and the creation of resources to support the change. For all levels of change, an external change agent (where employed) is regarded as a helper who “intervenes as a facilitator” (Schein, 1987)¹². With transformational change, such a role encompasses the design of processes “to get the whole system involved, knowledgeable, aligned around a set of goals, and moving in concerted action” (Bunker and Alban, 1997)¹³. It is important to unsettle narrow preoccupations with the immediate concerns of isolated or fragmented groups and to clarify ways in which the futures of different units are interlinked. This requires reframing so that participants can see their contributions, work processes and relationships in a new light and move beyond unconstructive behaviour patterns, parochial attitudes and conflicts. Useful strategies for reframing include the identification and involvement of all stakeholder groups and rights holders; the collection of diagnostic information and discussion material that reflects a wide range of ideas and perspectives; skilled facilitation of change processes to foster cooperation and commitment rather than polarisation; and appreciation of and respect for the efforts and feelings of individuals. This is especially true when planning and implementing large-scale multi- disciplinary programmes such as REDD+, which needs to be considered in the context of impacts on communities and other local stakeholders.

A shift in power relations: Power relations between State and non-State actors play a central role in policy reform. Influence over decision-making comes from multiple different avenues and is driven by multiple different agendas and incentives, raising the question of State autonomy. 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)¹⁴. There is however a lack of autonomy in many states as well as powerful economic incentives behind the drivers, usually acting in ‘tandem’ (Lambin et al. 2001; Angelson et al 2012)¹⁵. Collusion, corruption, illegal logging and unenforced laws continue to be a major challenge in many tropical forested countries. It is important to understand and address these relationships between powerful coalitions and the relevant ‘spheres of influence’ to achieve any paradigm shift.

Having regard to the above, for the purpose of the present work, it may be useful to interpret **transformational change** in the context of an integrated landscape approach to REDD+ 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 degradation¹⁶ and enable low-emission (mitigation) and climate resilient development (adaptation) pathways¹⁷”.

¹² Cited by: Chapman, Judith Ann. (2002).

¹³ Cited by: Chapman, Judith Ann. (2002).

¹⁴ Karsenty, A. and Ongolo, S. 2012 Can “fragile states” decide to reduce their deforestation? The inappropriate use of the theory of incentives with respect to the REDD mechanism. *Forest Policy and Economics* 18: 38-45.

¹⁵ Lambin, E.F., Turner, B.L., Geist, H.J., Agbola, S.B., Angelsen, A., Bruce, J.W., Coomes, O.T., Dirzo, R., Fischer, G., Folke, C. et al. 2001 The causes of land-use and land-cover change: moving beyond the myths. *Global Environmental Change* 11(4): 261-269.

¹⁶ Brockhaus (n. 9)

¹⁷

https://unfccc.int/files/cancun_agreements/green_climate_fund/application/pdf/presentation_on_the_transformational_role_of_the_gcf.pdf

Putting the Paradigm Shift into Practice

The following guidance may be useful for the discussion at the Rome meeting and to identify what is needed from science and research, policies, practices, partnerships and to develop guiding principles or characteristics that could guide efforts to achieving the paradigm shift:

1. Transformational Change requires, at least the following elements:
 - Strong leadership, including external change agents skilled in facilitation of change processes, to foster cooperation and commitment amongst stakeholders and move beyond unconstructive behaviour patterns within institutions and sectors;
 - Involvement of a new, broad range of organisations within networks of partners, stakeholders, regulatory bodies, civil society, state elites and competitors, prepared to engage in processes that may be innovative and who ensure a wide range of ideas and perspectives;
 - Consideration as to new ways of using skills and other resources;
 - An understanding and ways of addressing the influence of powerful coalitions over states.
2. Transformational change may give rise to a fundamental re-evaluation of organisational purpose, and challenge inter-personal and power-linked aspects of hierarchy within organisations and governments and influence on the behaviour, experience, and expectations of project leaders as well as staff.
3. A successful paradigm shift to an integrated landscape approach should fundamentally and seriously build strategic alliances with other natural resource sectors (agriculture, water, energy), realizing their mutual interdependencies, complementarities, and their mutual significance to the global climate change agenda¹⁸;
4. The desired transformational impact / paradigm shift should be considered in the early stages of planning programmes and related project activities;
5. Transformational change should lead to measurable and accountable transformational impact.

¹⁸ Noting that the Paris Agreement preamble states : Recognizing the importance of the engagements of all levels of government and various actors, in accordance with respective national legislations of Parties, in addressing climate change;