Geert Engelsman & Philippe de Leener

Authors:

Geert Engelsman
JaLogisch Consulting GmbH
Grazer Strasse 23B
8045 Graz, Austria
T. +43 664 1410 417
E-Mail: gengelsman@jalogisch.com

Philippe De Leener
Inter-Mondes Belgique (operational office)
Rue Alexandre De Craene 21
B-1030 Schaerbeek, Belgium
T. +32 22 42 3432
E-Mail: philippe.deleener@uclouvain.be

Client:
Daniel Maselli
Senior Policy Advisor and Focal Point
SDC Water Network
c/o Global Programme Water GPW
Corporate Domain Global Cooperation
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Freiburgstrasse 130
CH-3003 Bern, Switzerland
T: +41 58 463 51 30
Email: daniel.maselli@eda.admin.ch

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## Textboxes

# Acronyms

In this Working Paper, the acronym

## Acknowledgement

## Note from SDC

This Review evolved into a pure formative evaluation: one that serves the purpose of improving the development

## Executive summary

– Sustainable development is

tailor its nature conservation and development programs to the interests, incentives, and capacity of its boundary partners and the needs and opportunities for nature conservation *and* transformational change;

explicitly address the systemic

(especially with the Convention on Biodiversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the promotion of nature-based solutions). (See Chapter 11)

—  The Review also acknowledges the positive steps that are being taken by the Chief Economist (who is working on national environmental and economic accounts and environmental foot printing[3]

– The Review thus recognizes that IUCN does not have to imagine or bring about the societal transformation on its own – which it would not be able to do anyway, just like no other individual organization could bring about such a change alone - instead, IUCN can offer a gentle push in the direction of societal transformation, that is, raise the interest and help generate a genuine will for transformative change.

– We recommend SDC to support above endeavors by (See Chapter 17):

1. working with IUCN to raise its core funding from (a broader set of) Framework Partners – at first, to build the capacity of the network on transformational change processes at the global and country level; and subsequently to ensure a continued mission-impact.

# Main Report

## 1. Introduction

This report documents the External Review of IUCN's Development Relevancy. This part (volume 1) evaluates to what extent IUCN contributes to, or can contribute in the future to, societal transformation which conserves nature and

key informant interviews with international experts from SDC, IUCN, conservation and development organizations, and academia.

– IUCN has an extensive geographical and thematical reach. This Review cannot possibly do justice to all its work. Through a purposeful selection of country-level work and global thematic engagements (see Volume 2, appendix C), the Review sought to get an indication of IUCN's deliberate contribution to sustainable de

## 4. The benchmark: SDC's view on sustainable development

− The Review was triggered and guided by one overarching question: *'How does IUCN contribute in a systemic way to sustainable development in its three dimensions: environmental, social and economic development?'[6]* To answer this question, the meaning for SDC of the key words  or combination of key words  in this question need to be known.  The discussion with SDC made this clear:

Sustainable development concerns  the *'evolution or transformation of a society or societies that offers economic opportunities to people, is socially equitable, environmentally sound and gender and climate change responsive'.[7]* Transformation is thereby understood  as a marked chan

## 5. An analytical framework for judging IUCN's contribution to societal transformation

– Judging transformational change is difficult and not an exact science. Transformations occur with fits and bursts, simmering below the surface before they suddenly pop up and come into full view, letting one wonder why one didn't see it coming. IUCN may thus well be contributing to societal transformations without this being visible to the casual observer.

– The Review made use of the following analytical framework to assess IUCN's deliberate contribution to societal transformation:

1. The Review differentiated between different depths of societal change as shown in Table 1. The matrix distinguishes between a *first and second order societal change*. The first order change refers to new outcomes within a basically unchanged societal functioning: it resolves problems and negative (harmful) outcomes but leaves the basic system intact. This is what we referred to in Textbox 2 as *'mere change'*: things remain the same albeit in a different way. This Review refers to this as a type A change.

   The second order change refers to the reshaping, redesigning and restructuring of the *grand societal machinery*. It refers to *something fundamentally else* by transforming the very functioning of society. The Review thereby differentiates between two types of transformation: (i) *repairing society's current dysfunction* by addressing the root causes and processes responsible for the dysfunction a so-called Type B1 change; and (ii) creating a better future making a positive choice for *'the future we want'*[10] a so-called B2 change.

   In judging IUCN's development impact, the Review sought to establish whether and to what extent the underlying, dynamic, causes of unsustainable development have been addressed and a new perspective, rationale, and structure of society is emerging.

*Table 1. A classification of societal transformation*

| Depth of transformational change |
|---|

2. This Review sought to assess how and to what extent IUCN *most probably contributes* to transformational change by judging the potential and progress of change created. Here, the Review differentiates between three levels   as shown in Table 2.

*Table 2. The potential and progress of change*

Level 1

*how to get there, the first task of transformation management is to convince people to leave home, i.e. to let go of the old ways and habits'.*[14]

These challenges also show one way that societal transformations can be invoked, namely through niche initiatives by what the Dutch professor Jan Rotmans[15] and the popular author Malcolm Gladwell[16] call frontrunners, out-of-the-box thinkers, innovators which jointly create new ways to live and work, which are subsequently picked up by early adopters and through mavens, connectors and salespersons are (slowly) brought to wide-scale application and use, and can eventually alter the dominant economic and political models. This pathway of emerging transformation is shown graphically below. (As we will see later in this report, IUCN seeks in part to play the role of innovator and disrupter, but that it is not so easy and self-evident to have its innovations adopted at scale).

The graph also acknowledges that transformations take time for ideas and innovations to be picked up by early adopters, overcome inevitable resistance from vested interests, take hold and change the general perspective, rational and structure of society.

*Figure 1. One pathway to societal transformation*

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[14] William Bridges (1991) Managing Transitions. Da Capo Press
[15] Jan Rotmans (2012) In het oog van de orkaan. Nederland in transitie (In the eye of the storm. The Netherlands in transition). Aeneas: Boxtel, Netherlands
[16] Malcolm Gladwell (2000). The Tipping Point. Little

## 6. IUCN's view on and approach to sustainable development

— Conceptually, IUCN presents its development relevancy in two distinct, albeit related ways:

1.  Nature conservation is a prerequisite, foundational, to human well-being, so IUCN's contribution to nature conservation serves sustainable development. Textbox 4 captures some typical IUCN statements in that regard. This view arguably has its origins in the World Conservation Strategy, published in 1980, which *'emphasized the need to maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems, to preserve genetic diversity, and to ensure the sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems'*[17].

2.  IUCN's contributes     directly or indirectly     to attaining the SDGs, namely the following twelve: 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable cities); 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships).[18]

*Textbox 4*

- IUCN's practical approach rests on the long-time recognition that *people matter*, principally and as agents of nature conservation. The 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress, in 1952, already *'sought to link the human and environmental agendas more effectively'*[25] and IUCN's current mission statement also puts society center stage: *'Influence, encourage and assist <u>societies</u> to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable'* (emphasis added).[26]

- Consistent with this recognition that *people matter*, IUCN's entry point in nature conservation and sustainable development is the *governance* of the planet's natural resources. IUCN basically views the conservation of nature as a collective action problem. By raising the awareness and knowledge of individuals, communities and societies about the intrinsic, cultural and economic value of nature, IUCN seeks to induce collective action to protect and sustainable manage nature's ecosystems and resources.

- Figure 2 depicts the Review team's interpretation of IUCN's view on and approach to nature conservation and sustainable development graphically: by motivating, capacitating and incentivizing communities to sustainable manage the planet's natural resources, IUCN simultaneously seeks to protect the integrity of the natural ecosystems and contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs.

- The Review found a consensus within IUCN on this view on and approach to nature conservation and sustainable development. The impression was given that this view and approach to nature conservation and sustainable development is self-evident and neither requires elaboration nor active management steering   a topic, the Review returns to later in this Repor95.2 841.6 reW*nBT0 g0 G/F1 9.6 Tf440.6 415.6 Td( )]TJETQq0.000008800008800rns e m 841

## 7. IUCN's developmental outcomes in the case studies

– Table 3 lists and classifies the development outcomes of IUCN's work in the case studies. As shown in the table and further discussed in this Chapter, IUCN invokes mostly type A changes. The table also offers entry points for IUCN to contribute to type B changes, i.e. for moving from mere change whilst leaving the *grand machinery of society* intact towards societal transformations based on a new perspective, rationale and societal structure. These entry points *point* towards some of the underlying (root) causes of the environmental degradation, inequity and impoverishment experienced in the countries. As will be argued later in this Report, these root causes can not necessarily be addressed head-on. They require a deep understanding of the political economy of the country, as well as tact to identify and work with the right boundary partners to affect change. Moreover, these are not necessarily the only entry points and should by no means be construed as such, i.e. limit IUCN's views on other avenues and pathways of change. Finally, the entry-point column recognizes elements within IUCN's current work which are complementary and/or supportive to any transformation process and which IUCN should continue to work on.

– IUCN's participatory and inclusive approach to the governance of natural resources offers a unique platform for dialogue and    collectively with a diversity of stakeholders questioning the current and dominant social narr841.6 595.2 reW2TJETQq0.0016(a)-8(l)-16( )34(n)28(a)-8(rr) Tf( )312T15(h)33(es)-11(e )33(a)-8aaad avenu calnCN tndnsformatorys vcocoforma

| Program(s) | Main development outcomes | Type and level of change* | Reason for the classification | Entry points for a type B transformation |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | products into domestic and international value |

| Program(s) | Main development outcomes | Type and level of change* | Reason for the classification | Entry points for a type B transformation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (encompassing 43 women groups in total) | | | – Help women to better manage household income and address gender-related intra-household economic challenges (all the more necessary as economic imbalance within households is at the root of local environmental and economic imbalance |
| | – IUCN helped establish two community-led forests in Sine Saloum and helped inspire the collective management of an irrigation scheme and agriculture infrastructure, as well as joint marketing activities. The protected forests and collective management structures face considerable outside pressure now. | | | |

| Program(s) | Main development outcomes | Type and level of change* | Reason for the classification | Entry points for a type B transformation |
|---|---|---|---|---|

– Table 3 indicates that IUCN generally invokes:

Type A change – addressing the harm done to nature and local communities whilst leaving the system and processes producing these harmful outcomes intact.

The potential of a Type B1 change by contributing to a chance in perspective amongst its boundary partners. For a Type B1 change to materialize, this would need to be deliberately activated, creatively boosted and rigorously sustained over time.

Level 1 change at a district, national or regional level – creating the potential (through awareness raising,

1.  IUCN's boundary partners respond to IUCN's diagnostics work, i.e. that revealing in an objective, scientifically-sound manner the dismal state of nature and the missed value of nature based solutions and ecosystem services will open-up the boundary partners and make them receptive to (i) alternative approaches to conserve, govern and manage nature; (ii) multi-stakeholder, multi-scale dialogue; and (iii) capacity development.

2.  information, dialogue and capacity building can nudge IUCN's boundary partners into collective action and pilot-test new approaches.

3.  the successful demonstration of alternative approaches to conserve, govern, manage and sustainable use nature will

the nature conservation projects are not or insufficiently connected to development projects[29] which offer direct benefits (local) boundary partners

- The UNDP commissioned progress report (2019) on the New York Declaration on Forests found that: *'deforestation will not be eliminated from the production of agricultural commodities by 2020 ... the company commitments are too weak to be effective.'*[33]

- These are not new insights. In 2006, the IUCN leadership convened a meeting with 20 senior IUCN staff and societal leaders to discuss the *'The Future of Sustainability'*. Professor Adams of Cambridge University captured the main findings and further developed key arguments in a paper with the same title as the workshop. It concludes, amongst others, that:

    *'the twenty-*

## 10. Why is it so difficult to follow-up the 2006 discussion?

– The 2006 discussion at IUCN reached another revealing conclusion, namely that the concept and conventional interpretation of *sustainable development* is inherently vague and flawed.[35]

> *'Sustainable development covers a complex range of ideas and meanings ... [and] can be used to cover very divergent ideas. ... [the concept] is holistic, attractive,*

*Figure 4. An enlarged view on IUCN's role in fostering sustainable development*

– The Review found a consensus within IUCN that *development matters,* embodied in the slogan *'people in nature'* IUCN's (implicit) view of nature conservation as principally a governance or collective action problem, and the recognition that livelihoods must be secured before people can be expected to conserve their natural environment. The case studies revealed however a narrow interpretation of what economic development means, namely livelihood improvements through the increase in household incomes   there appear no reflection on the two other main dimensions of any economy, i.e. capital accumulation and redistribution. At the corporate level, IUCN's contribution to sustainable development is put in terms of the relevancy of its work for achieving twelve SDGs.

– Neither the term sustainable development nor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide however an adequate and sufficient lodestar. For IUCN to effectively address environmental conservation, it needs its own interpretation, its own conception, of what sustainable development means and how IUCN can best contribute to sustainable development and nature conservation. The Review did not identify active management guidance and steering on what sustainable development means to IUCN, how the dominant economic systems are affecting the environment, how development interventions can contribute to nature conservations, how to affect systemic change, how to decouple economic growth from resource depletion, or how to measure IUCN's contribution to the SDGs.

– It appears that the 2006 discussion and conclusions have not been followed up with reflection, conceptualization, strategy formulation and active management steering on the nexus nature conservation and development. Why not?

– IUCN has a track-record in scientific research, rigorous methodology development and evidence-based nature conservation approaches. The same appears missing on what sustainable development is, on what the processes are leading to impoverishment and environmental degradation, and on how IUCN can contribute to systemic change that addresses sustainable development and secure environmental integrity. The orange lines, boxes and text in Figure 4 do not receive the same analytical rigor from IUCN as the green lines, boxes and text.

– One possible reason lies in the staff composition of the IUCN Secretariat and Commissions which historically consists mostly of environmental scientists and professionals. Tellingly, the current Community of Practice of economists within the Secretariat entails 14 staff. The Review was told that the o0 g1.6 reee4(o)33t

- The Commission recognizes that society's culture — the norms and values that guide us — is not well-captured in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development whilst critical to achieve the SDGs. They reckon it important to understand how cultural norms and values contribute to policies, structures and our dominant economic models

- The case studies confirmed IUCN's dependency on project-funding. All projects in the case studies were funded from either bilateral donors or multilateral finance institutions.

- The case studies offer two important insights in this regard:

    1. IUCN remains engaged with a topic (in-country and/or globally) even if project funding ends. IUCN continues to inform, advise and to the extent possible work with its boundary partners. Moreover, IUCN pro-actively seeks to mobilize follow-up funding. At present, IUCN especially targets the Global Environmental Fund and the Green Climate Fund to mobilize funds at scale (for example for its Global Dryland Program or The Restoration Initiative), but also seizes smaller bilateral donor funds (for example from DANIDA to assist Myanmar in developing an Integrated Coastal Management Program that offers a follow-up to the IUCN implemented, SIDA-funded Mangroves for the Future Program).

    2. Reliance on project-funding creates discontinuity in program implementation. For example, there is a four-year gap between the EU-funded, IUCN implemented support to Jordan on sustainable rangeland management (which ended in 2015) and the GEF-funded program (which started operations in 2019).

## 12.2    IUCN's governance

- In 2019, an External Review of IUCN's Governance rated IUCN's governance risk as *'business critical ... the organization's governance weaknesses significantly raise the possibility of a critical failure occurring with dire consequences to the organization's mission'*.[39] Most weaknesses pertain to the functioning of IUCN's Council and do not have a direct bearing on this Review. Two weaknesses do however appear relevant for this Review's findings:

    1. Lack of ownership of strategic thinking, which according to the Review *'leads to a lack of strategic clarity, with no clear vision for the future, little focus on strategy thinking and design at council level and management and little collaboration between council and management in this regard'*.[39]

    2. *'A relationship between IUCN's council and its management both at the individual and group level characterized by a high degree of tension and mistrust ... a major risk is ... that management does not feel safe to alert the council to potential areas of concern it sees for the organization'*.[39]

- This lack of ownership and trust may offer another explanation why IUCN leaderships' 2006 discussion on *'The Future of Sustainability'* was not followed up conceptually and operationally.

## 13.   Where is IUCN's evaluation practice?

- Based on the case studies, IUCN lacks a robust and deep evaluation practice.[40] The Review received / found three external evaluations of the programs under review.[41] The relevant IUCN staff did not have the findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of these evaluations present. Although all three were indeed older evaluations, they did not appear to have left a mark. IUCN's database for evaluations contains 3 to 10 evaluations per year for the last 5 years (including corporate level evaluations like on IUCN's governance), which is a limited amount relative to the size of IUCN's operations.[42]

- IUCN does produce project briefs, case studies, and thematic reports of its work. These generally are descriptive reports without in-dept and objective analysis of what works, what doesn't and why. In the case study and thematic reports, it is often difficult to entangle beliefs from evidence-based (proven) approaches. IUCN does not initiate and conduct regular and rigorous evaluations of its own programs. This is a surprising finding for an organization which credits itself on its scientifically sound and evidence-based work practice.

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[39] SGA (2019). Governance Review for IUCN Report. 23 March 2019.
[40] IUCN does submit its quadrennial Work Programme to an external evaluation.
[41] A 2012 external evaluation of Phase 1 of the the Mangroves for the Future Program, a, EU-commissioned 2015 final evaluation of the Securing Rights and Restoring Lands for Improved Livelihoods program (Jordan) and an SDC commissioned 2015 external review of SDC's Water Diplomacy and Governance in Key Transboundary Hot Spots Program (which included the IUCN implemented Bridge program).
[42] https://www.iucn.org/resources/monitoring-and-evaluation/evaluations-database

systemic forces at play _'the forces influencing economic development and growth_ are multiplying pressures on the environment and exacerbating climate change' (emphasis added)  the Programs advocate for action strikingly similar to IUCN, including: concerted effort at different scales, meaningful multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue,

nature conservation approaches do not lead IUCN Members (and others) to adopt these approaches at scale and generate development impact at scale.

- IUCN as an organization is insufficiently attuned to (i) the political-economic context in which it operates; (ii) the interests, incentives, capacity and tenacity of its boundary partners; and (iii) and the systemic societal

2. undertake explicit political-economy analysis in its global and in-country engagements with the same depth and rigor of its environmental and gender assessments to uncover IUCN's potential and best strategy to affect societal transformations alongside its conservation work.

Reason.

This explicit political-economy analysis cannot be delegated to external consultants or other development organizations. IUCN itself needs to be acutely aware of the political-economic context in which it operates, to be able to identify its boundary partners and devise a strategy to deliberately affect transformational change.

With IUCN's in-country Members and the Secretariat's staff often long-term presence in a country, there is also no need to delegate (nor does this require a significant additional effort). IUCN Members and staff are sensitive to the political economy in which they operate and respond to the opportunities and limitations that this political economy provides. The concomitant context analysis is however only done tacitly by individuals and within small teams. It is therefore more a matter of *consciously assessing and working with* its in-depth knowledge of the political-economic context.

Whilst it is good to capture the political-economic analysis in writing (as this helps to consciously and regularly evaluate, reassess and update the analysis), it should in many ways be a continuous assessment (and thus a living document) to take into account current and emerging developments.

Target audience:
IUCN Secretariat and Regional Offices (lead), together with the IUCN Members

3. based on this Theory of Change and political-economy analysis to act more strategic, more political (without engaging in politics) by influencing and working with those partners with the power and interests to affect change.

Reason.

IUCN is a small radar in a very large system. It cannot invoke change in and by itself. It needs to work with boundary partners with the incentive, interest, capacity, power and tenacity to invoke change. The power of change sometimes lies in the multitude, but sometimes also in the few. In the latter case, IUCN should not shy away from working with the few to instigate transformation processes which will be to the benefit of the many.
The IUCN Secretariat implements projects and programs with IUCN Members. The latter (and others) are not adopting at scale the approaches and models emerging from these projects. What strategic partnerships can IUCN enter to change this and invoke adoption at scale?
IUCN Asia for example does not shy away from practicing real politics and is able to do so without losing its neutrality. The same real politics can and should be applied when targeting transformation change.
From this perspective, it probably makes more sense to improve the quality of IUCN's work, then to increase quantity of projects (through an increase in the volume of earmarked funding).

Target audience:
IUCN Secretariat and Regional Offices (lead), together with the IUCN Members

4. to establish a Societal Transformation Group[49] on par with the Nature-Based Solutions and Biodiversity Groups staffed with anthropologists, economists, political scientists, system thinkers, agronomists, foresters, advocacy and communication specialists, etc., to identify, develop and implement approaches to societal transformations which change the current dominant values and economic models and through

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[49] This is just one name that can be given to such a new group. Others are: Sustainable Development and Innovation Group, Behavioral Change Group, Nudging Group, etc.

advocacy and communication campaigns, and targeted (demonstration) projects, and in line with its own mission statement    help instigate the transformation of today's unsustainable social-environmental-economic systems.

Reason.

To mobilize alternative perspectives (behavioral sciences, systems thinking, etc.) within IUCN on how to approach nature conservations (through societal transformation).

To reinvigorate / restore the power of IUCN's voice, position it as an advocate for sustainable development, and influence the dominant social narratives.

To address in-depth (i) how and why our societies are building natural catastrophes in such a sustainable way, (ii) how to neutralize society's dysfunction, (iii) what alternatives can be proposed, tested and generalized to achieve development impact at scale and in perpetuity; and (iv) how to overcome / deal with societal trends of fragmentation, state disintegration, disconnection and youth disillusionment in the process.

To target various groups of boundary partners with targeted advocacy campaigns or transformation programs, including business and investors (which can build on and expand IUCN's current with the private sector).

Target audience:

IUCN Secretariat (lead)

5. to develop a rigorous evaluation practice and, in support, establish an independent evaluation group reporting directly to the IUCN Council. This can be small group of evaluation managers which commission and manage external evaluations or a larger group of evaluation experts which undertake the evaluations themselves[50].

Reason.

To increase IUCN's development effectiveness, it needs to analyze and come to understand why the last part of its Theory of Change does not work: why are IUCN Members (and others) not picking up IUCN's approaches and models at scale.

Given the systemic (market) forces at play, evaluations should go beyond evaluating the conservation-oriented outcomes and (especially) rigorously assess how IUCN can contribute to societal transformation which offers economic opportunity *and* secures nature's integrity.

Target audience:

IUCN Secretariat (lead)

## 17.2    For SDC

– We recommend SDC's Global Programs to support above endeavors by:

1. working with IUCN to raise its core funding from a broader set of Framework Partners    at first, to build the capacity within IUCN to work on transformation change processes at the global and country level; and subsequently to ensure a long-term senior-level expert presence within IUCN's countries-of-operation to ensure in-depth knowledge on the political-economy of the countries and enable IUCN to partner in the societal transformation processes. In parallel, SDC can assist IUCN to raise funds for establishing an independent and capacitated evaluation group. For all three purposes, SDC can (i) lead by example by earmarking part of its contribution under the next Framework Contract for these purposes; and (ii) engage with other (potential) framework partners to mobilize further support;

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[50] To prevent a potential conflict of interest, these evaluation experts must be term-limited without the possibility to transfer to other parts

2. to continue its funding of long-running (i.e. 12-years, three-phases) global and in-country programs and reshape these programs to include deliberate efforts to invoke transformational change based onrias

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