



External Review of IUCN's Development Relevancy

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Main Report

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Acronyms

In this Working Paper, the acronym *IUCN* refers to the Union as a whole: its Members, the Council, the Commissions, and the Secretariat (both headquarters and Regional Offices). The Working Paper specifies whenever referring to a component part of IUCN, i.e. IUCN Members, IUCN Council, the Commissions, IUCN Secretariat and IUCN Regional Offices.

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBO	Community-based organization
CEESP	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of Parties
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EBA	Ecosystem-based Approach
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FLR	Forest Landscape and Restoration Approach
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic product
GEF	Global Environmental Fund
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GMBH
Ha	Hectare
ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JOD	Jordanian dollar
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NLD	National League for Democracy
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NBS	Nature-based solutions
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
ROAM	Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology
SDC	Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
tCO ₂ eq	Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-REDD	UN Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Note from SDC

This Review evolved into a pure formative evaluation: one that serves the purpose of improving the development relevancy of IUCN and the cooperation between IUCN and SDC. It does not render an overall judgment on the effectiveness of IUCN, nor attempts to generalize the findings beyond IUCN.¹ The Review looked through a different and somewhat new lens at a sample of IUCN's work to assess IUCN's past performance in and future potential for contributing to societal transformation. As such, the Review served as a stepping-stone to redefine and reorganize the collaboration between SDC and IUCN. The Review's and SDC's interest thus lie squarely in the (near) future: how can IUCN – by contributing to societal transformation – even better conserve nature, foster human progress, and be more effective in both.

¹ Based on the definition of a formative evaluation by Patton, M.Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Executive summary

- Sustainable development is not a clearly defined concept and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are mere signposts. The SDGs do not reveal *how* they are met and whether they are likely to continue to be met. (See Chapter 10)
- SDC views sustainable development as *the transformation of society* – as a profound change in the way a society functions – offering economic opportunities to people and being socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and gender and climate change responsive. (See Chapter 4)
- SDC commissioned this Review to learn to what extent and how IUCN *deliberately* contributes to such societal transformations. The Review serves as a stepping-stone to redefine and reorganize the collaboration between SDC and IUCN. (See Chapter 2)
- The Review rests on IUCN work in Jordan, Myanmar and Senegal, as well as on agrobiodiversity, forestry and transboundary water management. The case studies concentrated on IUCN's work on ecosystem and landscape restoration, nature-based solutions to societal challenges, and the sustainable management and governance of natural resources. (See Chapter 3)
- The Review confirms IUCN's:
 - global intellectual leadership in developing comprehensive approaches to nature conservation – such as nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based conservation – with the potential to also address societal challenges (See Volume II: case studies);
 - long-time recognition that *people matter*: principally and as agents of nature conservation (See Chapter 6);
 - potential, embedded in its current work, globally and in-country, for deliberately contributing to societal transformations (See further below and Chapter 7).
- The case studies reveal a limited developmental impact (confined to modest geographic areas and number of households) and (only) one example of an emerging transformational change (where communities, regions or countries adopt a new perspective and rationale on nature conservation and sustainable development and organize themselves profoundly different). IUCN offers countries novel concepts which can help ameliorate societal dysfunctioning but generally does not address the underlying norms, rules and processes which cause environmental degradation, social inequity, and impoverishment. (See Chapter 7)
- IUCN is successful in demonstrating the validity of its (community-led) nature conservation approaches in small-scale demonstration projects. Its assumptions that its diagnostics work and the successful demonstration and communication of its approaches will lead to the *adoption at scale* of these approaches by other communities, government agencies, NGOs and international development agencies and thus generate *development impact at scale* is *not* confirmed by the case studies. (See Chapter 7 and 8)
- The one example of an emerging transformational change – in Integrated Land Use Planning in Vietnam – shows how IUCN – through scientifically-sound diagnostics, the tactful choice of boundary partners (amongst others the regional communist party and local scientists), the facilitation of a participatory and inclusive dialogue, and sheer grit can affect systemic change (See Chapter 7 and Volume 2: appendix H).
- The Review identified a number of missing links in IUCN's Theory of Change. IUCN does not consistently, explicitly, in a structured, scientifically-sound and evidence-based manner (see Chapter 8):
 - conduct a political-economic contextual analysis to understand the interests, incentives, capacity and tenacity of its boundary partners²;

² The International Development Research Center defines boundary partners as '*individuals, groups or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence*'. Earl, S., Carden, F., & Smutylo, T. (2001). Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs. Ottawa: International Development Research Center.

- 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 societal (market) forces which are responsible for environmental degradation, inequity and impoverishment and hinder the adoption of IUCN's model approaches to nature conservation and addressing key societal challenges like climate change.
- The Review's analysis of IUCN's development impact and Theory of Change principally suggests that IUCN operates: (i) *too rationally in an inherently irrational world*, and (ii) *within the rules of the game rather than changing the rules of the game*. (Chapter 7, 8 and 9)
- In its country-level programs, IUCN stresses the enhanced ecosystem services that arise from nature conservation, but underplays (i) nature's limited carrying capacity – its inability to serve the full and often growing local populations, (ii) the difficulty to utilize enhanced ecosystem services in a socially equitable way and overcome the inherent free-rider problem, and (iii) the need to adopt new values and economic models to reduce society's pressure on nature and safeguard nature's integrity and ability to continue providing ecosystem services. (See Chapter 8 and 9)
- The Review further found that IUCN lacks:
- a clear concept of and approach to sustainable development thereby effectively foregoing on a lodestar which could guide IUCN's contribution to sustainable development and, more importantly, the requisite societal transformation to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development *in perpetuity*. (See Chapter 10)
 - an active management steering on how IUCN can *deliberately* contribute to societal transformation. (See Chapter 10)
 - a robust and deep evaluation practice and culture of its programs and projects, in which it rigorously and regularly evaluates the validity of its own (tacit) Theories of Change. (See Chapter 13)
- The Review however also found that IUCN's set-up and work offers *plenty of opportunities* to raise its game and *deliberately contribute* to societal transformation:
- The scientific rigor and normative standard-setting which IUCN applies to environmental assessments and nature conservation approaches can also be mobilized to defining the requisite societal transformations and analyzing and evaluating how IUCN (can) contribute(s) to bringing such societal transformations about, i.e. for formulating IUCN's own conception of, approach to and theory of change on societal transformation. (See Chapter 8, 10 and 11)
 - The long-term presence in-country of individual IUCN experts and their concomitant knowledge of these countries allow IUCN to easily conduct (and regularly reassess and update) rigorous and explicit political-economic context-analysis and identify the underlying forces at play leading to environmental degradation, social inequity and impoverishment. (See Chapter 11 and 12)
 - Being a union with a large membership base offers it the *power of the network*. The case studies reveal that the IUCN Secretariat works with IUCN Members in projects and programs, but is unable to leverage the network to identify, shape and invoke societal transformation. The potential nonetheless remains. (See Chapter 11)
 - The multi-stakeholder, multi-scale governance structures that are set up to sustainably govern natural resources – which are mostly *complementary* to existing political-economy structures – offer a platform for an in-depth reflection by local stakeholders on society's (dys-)functioning and thereby the potential to change perspectives, rationales and behavior and deliberately steer on and invoke societal transformations (See Chapter 4 and 7).
 - IUCN's international standing, broad membership and high-level political engagements – both at the country and global level – offer it the opportunity to influence the social narrative – *the power of voice* – and thereby (again) the perspective, rationales and behavior of societal leaders and the people at large. The Review understands that IUCN has, historically, been successful in this regard in the realm of nature conservation

(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 printing³) and the Commission on Ecosystem Management (which is addressing the influence of culture on environmental degradation through a new working group on Resilience and Transformational Change) to incorporate systems, behavioral science, and transformation thinking into IUCN's work.
- For IUCN to fulfill its potential in *contributing to societal transformations and affect development impact at scale*, the Review recommends IUCN to (see Chapter 17):
 1. develop its own clear concept on sustainable development and societal transformation and spell-out a Theory of Change on how to deliberately contribute to such sustainable development and societal transformation, including defining IUCN's boundary partners and how IUCN can affect their behavior;
 2. undertake explicit and regular political-economy analyses 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;
 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 interest to affect change;
 4. to establish a Societal Transformation Group – 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 and detrimental social narratives, cultural values, and economic models and – through 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.
 5. to develop a rigorous evaluation practice and, in support, establish an Independent Evaluation Group reporting directly to the IUCN Council and the Director-General. Through critical self-reflection IUCN can then learn what works, what doesn't and why in instigating societal transformation and conserving nature in parallel.
- Implementation of the above recommendations requires more than change management on the part of IUCN. For the changes to take hold, IUCN Staff and Members require a *change in perspective*. That it is not enough to focus on nature conservation. That to save nature, it is necessary to save society first from its unsustainable way of living. That to be successful, IUCN needs to be a societal transformer as much as a nature conservator.
- 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 narratives, cultural values and economic consumption and production models, jointly envisioning alternative rationales and ways to organize society, and identifying alternative entry points and different pathways to bring those alternatives about. The challenge for IUCN is to approach the governance of natural resources less technically and more visionary, seeing it as an opportunity – a privileged entry point – to address the root causes and societal mechanisms of environmental degradation, inequity and impoverishment processes (and endless renewing dynamics). Through such an orientation, IUCN can innovate in two inseparable fields of action: nature conservation and society's functioning.

³ For now, this work concentrates on better economic monitoring and measurement and does not (yet) focus on incorporating economic thinking (based on behavioral and institutional economics) in the IUCN's projects and programs – the latter is another avenue for IUCN to improve the effectiveness of its Theory of Change.

- 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 within IUCN to work on transformational 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;
 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 on local leadership, a proper political-economy context analysis, alignment with the interest, incentives and capacity of IUCN's boundary partners, and addressing the root causes and processes of societal dysfunctioning and environmental degradation.
 3. to be a pro-active development partner to IUCN – a sparring partner and a catalyst for new, innovative, approaches and to purposefully and strategically deploy its diplomatic channels to influence individual boundary partners and help IUCN give a push to societal transformations.
- In 2006, IUCN's leadership sat down with leading academics and societal leaders to discuss '*the future of sustainability*'. The group concluded that the term sustainable development is too vague to be able to effectively guide an organization's strategy and operations. IUCN did not follow up with the elaboration of the concept. (See Chapter 9 and 10). With the benefit of hindsight, this probably was a missed opportunity. Anno 2020, with environmental protection and climate action gaining public support and momentum, there appears no better time for IUCN to rise to the challenge, define the concept of sustainable development, and start contributing to societal transformations which will secure nature's integrity. As the English proverb goes: *if not now, when; if not the IUCN, who?*

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 serves human progress. This main report briefly lays down the background, purpose, use and data sources of the Review. It then introduces SDC's evolving view on sustainable development and presents an analytical framework to evaluate IUCN's contribution to societal transformation.

The report subsequently reviews IUCN's view on sustainable development, its development impact (as observed in the case studies) and the extent to which IUCN's Theory of Change holds up in practice. It then offers a critical assessment of the findings, IUCN's value-added in the development cooperation landscape, and some of IUCN's institutional strengths and constraints. This is followed by a brief discussion of SDC's mandate, global programs and potential for a strategic partnership with IUCN, as well as some global societal trends which will influence IUCN's future work. The report then draws a conclusion and offers recommendations to both IUCN and SDC for enhancing IUCN's contribution to societal transformations.

A separate (second) volume offers additional background information. It provides an answer to the original four review questions, gives an example of the potential and limits of IUCN's governance of natural resources approach, elaborates on the evaluation methodology, lists the Review's key informants and document sources, shares the findings from the individual case studies, and includes the original Terms of Reference and Inception Report.

2. Purpose and use

- SDC supports IUCN with core contributions since 1997. Over time, these four-yearly contributions were reconfirmed without in-depth evaluation and intra- and inter-institutional dialogue and engagement. This led to an administrative type of partnership in which neither IUCN nor SDC made good use of the other. SDC wants to break out of this mold and make the relationship with IUCN again more substantive and purposeful.
- SDC commissioned this Review to better understand to what extent IUCN – through its nature conservation and governance of natural resources' work – *deliberately* contributes to sustainable development. It serves as a stepping-stone to redefine and reorganize the collaboration between SDC and IUCN. The primary intended use of the Review is therefore *strategic decision-making*; the primary intended users of the Review are *SDC* and *IUCN*.
- In 2020, SDC and IUCN's other Framework Partners⁴ will negotiate a new four-year Framework Agreement. IUCN will also organize its 26th (quadrennial) World Conservation Congress between 11 and 19 June 2020 in Marseille, France. IUCN's contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implementation of the Paris Agreement are expected to feature prominently in these proceedings. SDC expects the Review to be relevant for these discussions as well. The secondary intended users of this Review are therefore IUCN's Framework Partners and the participants to the World Conservation Congress.

3. Method and limitations

- This Review is based on multiple datasets, including:
 - an in-country assessment of a selection of IUCN programs in Jordan, Myanmar and Senegal;
 - a desk-study of IUCN's global engagements in agrobiodiversity, forestry, transboundary water management and the UNFCCC.
 - a document review of SDC's and IUCN's strategy documents;
 - a literature review on the nexus nature conservation, sustainable development and transformational change; and,

⁴ For the 2017-2020 Work Programme, these are: Finland, France, South-Korea, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

- key informant interviews with international experts from SDC, IUCN, conservation and development organizations, and academia.
- IUCN has an extensive geographical and thematic 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 development. The findings should be treated as such: as an indication and not the whole story, as directional and not the absolute truth.
- The Review focused on IUCN's work on ecosystem and landscape restoration, nature-based solutions to societal challenges, and the sustainable management and governance of natural resources. Textbox 1 introduces the country-level programs and global thematic engagements which informed this Review. Detailed descriptions of these programs and engagements are included in Volume 2: appendices G to M.

Textbox 1. A brief overview of the IUCN programs and engagements which informed this Review

In Jordan, three programs on *sustainable rangeland management* were reviewed, running – intermittently – from 2006 to the present.⁵ The objective was (and is) to combat land degradation and biodiversity loss, as well as to restore ecosystem services in support of rural livelihoods. The programs sought to reintroduce an ancient practice of sustainable land management. This so-called Al-Hima System refers to the traditional practice of setting land aside to prevent overgrazing or overcultivation of the land and allow for its regeneration.

In Myanmar, the Review looked into IUCN's institutional support and field work on *ecosystem and landscape restoration*, as well as *climate change adaptation and mitigation*, in coastal areas and forests. Whilst IUCN is only engaged in Myanmar since 2012, it built on extensive experience in these areas elsewhere. The objective of these programs was to protect and restore biodiversity, enhance nature's provision of ecosystem services, and strengthen the resilience of local communities.

In Senegal, four different programs were studied which empowered national stakeholders (parliamentarians, government agencies) and local actors (community leaders and groups, NGOs) to address *land degradation, food shortages, and climate change risks*. These programs ran for different periods within the last decade. Their objective was diagnostics of environmental and climate risks, awareness raising on the communities' vulnerabilities to climate change and land degradation, empowerment of local actors to take (climate) action and enhancing the country's and communities' resilience to climate change.

Transboundary water management: the Bridge program – This is an SDC funded program, running since 2011 and currently in its fourth phase, which promotes stakeholder dialogue and good governance in 14 river basins around the world. The program's objective is to restore river-basin ecosystems, reduce water related conflicts and thus secure access to water for all. The program operates at different scales (from local to international) and promotes the development and implementation of (informal and formal) governance systems for the *sustainable and peaceful management of water ecosystems*.

Forestry – Within IUCN's wide-ranging forestry work, the Review zoomed in on IUCN's work on *Forest Landscape Restoration* under IUCN's co-initiated Bonn Challenge and the GEF-funded The Restoration Initiative. The objective of this work is to contribute to the restoration and maintenance of critical (agro-)forestry landscapes, to support the livelihoods of the local populace, improve local biodiversity and generate global environmental benefits (e.g. carbon sequestration).

Agro-biodiversity – This is a topic recently picked up by IUCN and concerns the biodiversity within agricultural landscapes (both above and below the surface). IUCN is currently developing a strategy and program to address agro-biodiversity which it sees increasingly under threat. The objective is to promote sustainable agriculture and whilst maintaining or enhancing the biodiversity in the agricultural landscapes.

UNFCCC – IUCN operates both at the local, national and international level. It has, and continues to, contribute(d) to – amongst others – the Convention on Biodiversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Review looked into IUCN's recent engagements with UNFCCC.

⁵ IUCN was a technical partner in the first IFAD-GEF funded program and lead implementing agency in the subsequent two programs funded by the EU and GEF.

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 change in the way a society functions and performs – see Textbox 2.
 - **In a systemic way.** This refers to the ambition that development is not confined to a few people or locality but concerns development *'at scale ... encompassing a whole system at the subnational, national, regional or global level'*. It also refers to the notion that IUCN makes *'a real difference and a lasting contribution'*.
 - **Contribute.** SDC expects that development is invoked *'deliberately'*, i.e. the actions of IUCN are designed to contribute to sustainable development.
- SDC's reading of sustainable development is in line with the key message of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report, namely that the world is *not* on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and an urgent and intentional transformation of socioenvironmental-economic systems is needed:

'The world is not on track for achieving most of the 169 targets that comprise the Goals. ... Much more needs to happen – and quickly – to bring about the transformative changes that are required. ... no country is yet convincingly able to meet a set of basic human needs at a globally sustainable level of resource use. All are distant to varying degrees from the overarching target of balancing human wellbeing with a healthy environment. Each country must respond to its own conditions and priorities, while breaking away from current practices of growing first and cleaning up later. ... Adding to the concern is the fact that recent trends along several dimensions ... are not even moving in the right direction, [in particular for] rising inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing amounts of waste from human activity that are overwhelming capacities to process them. Critically, recent analysis suggests that some of those negative trends presage a move towards the crossing of negative tipping points, which would lead to dramatic changes in the conditions of the Earth system in ways that are irreversible on time scales meaningful for society. ... Advancing the 2030 Agenda must involve an urgent and intentional transformation of socioenvironmental-economic systems ... a profound and intentional departure from business as usual'. (emphasis added)⁸

Textbox 2. The meaning of transformation

The meaning of transformation lets itself best be explained by opposing it to mere change. Change means that a system or institution is organized differently. Its functioning and underlining rationale remain the same. Transformation is not a matter of a change in form, but of substance. It concerns the emergence of a new system based on a new rationale. A transformation is disruptive and refers to a fundamental and irreversible change in societal systems. In other words, *'change is situational: the move to a new sight, the reorganization of a team, the revision of a plan. [Transformation] is psychological ... a collective process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world'*.⁹

⁶ SDC (2019) Terms of Reference for the External Review of IUCN's Development Relevancy

⁷ As defined by SDC during the kick-off meeting of this Review and confirmed in the Inception Report.

⁸ United Nations (2019) Global Sustainable Development Report. The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development.

⁹ William Bridges (1991) Managing Transitions. Da Capo Press

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			
<p>First order change: <i>the same but different</i></p> <p>Working on outcomes within a basically unchanged societal functioning</p> <p>Help the same system perpetuate but in a less harmful way</p> <p>Address states of affairs / symptoms / here and now situations</p> <p>Making the unbearable more bearable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SOLVE PROBLEMS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">= Type A Change</p>	<p>Second order change: <i>something fundamentally else</i></p> <p>Working on reshaping, redesigning and restructuring <i>the grand machinery of society</i></p> <p>Eradicate or substitute mechanisms generating the '<i>unbearable</i>'</p> <p>Change the perspective, rationale and structure of the system</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TRANSFORM SOCIETY</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Type B1 Transformation</p> <p>Action targeting the root mechanisms causing societal dysfunctioning – impairing or injuring the 'living together'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FIGHT AGAINST 'THAT'</p> </td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Type B2 Transformation</p> <p>Action aiming at building alternatives or innovations leading to a desired society</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FIGHT FOR 'THAT'</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Type B1 Transformation</p> <p>Action targeting the root mechanisms causing societal dysfunctioning – impairing or injuring the 'living together'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FIGHT AGAINST 'THAT'</p>	<p>Type B2 Transformation</p> <p>Action aiming at building alternatives or innovations leading to a desired society</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FIGHT FOR 'THAT'</p>
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Source: De Leener, P. & Totte, M. (2018). Transitions Economiques. En finir avec les alternatives dérisoires. Vulaines-Sur-Seine: Editions Le Croquant.

¹⁰ The name of the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

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 – potential of change created	IUCN's boundary partners ¹¹ are aware of the challenges, and capacitated and organized to act.
Level 2 – observable change in behavior and actions of IUCN's boundary partners	IUCN's boundary partners change their behavior and actions to address the challenges at hand.
Level 3 – observable, evidence-based, changes realized	The actions of IUCN's boundary partners result in better outcomes (Type A change) or functioning of society (Type B transformation).

Source: adapted from De Leener, P. & Totte, M. (2018). *Transitions Economiques. En finir avec les alternatives dérisoires.* Vulaines-Sur-Seine: Editions Le Croquant.

Textbox 3. An example of a potential B1-type of societal transformation and its challenges

Based on an initial working paper, SDC asked the Review team to offer some examples of societal transformation and how such societal transformations can be triggered. On the one hand, such examples can give hand and feet to an otherwise rather abstract concept. As such, they can illuminate. On the other hand, examples carry the risk of (unintentionally) constraining the readers' imagination, restricting their view on the full pallet of possibilities. The Review team members are no prophets either. The following example should thus be treated with care and is merely illustrative. The subsequent sections discuss the transformational impact and/or potential of some of IUCN's current work and offering further examples of possible entry points for IUCN's contribution to societal transformation. IUCN's staff and boundary partners can however open many more and different avenues to societal transformation than offered through these examples.

The most current example to work with, one IUCN is deeply engaged with, and is so well-known that it requires few words is the need to reduce society's carbon footprint. This challenge permeates all levels of society, concerning the individual and the local community, small business and large multinationals, national politics and international governance. Reducing our carbon footprint, first of all, requires a deep realization that (i) our well-being is intricately linked with the earth's climate (something IUCN does not fail to reiterate in its major publications on the topic); and (ii) because we pretty much created our carbon footprint within a single lifetime, it also falls within our responsibility and ability to reduce it again.¹² For large swath of people, this constitutes a radical change of perspective – one in which one can no longer decouple human well-being from nature and climate.

This change in perspective should then inform or lead to a change in life and business rationale: one less based on ever increasing material well-being and mass consumption. This change in rationale should subsequently lead to a change in institutions and behavior: from carbon pricing (to capture the negative externalities of carbon consumption) to sourcing food from the region (requiring less transport), from changing food patterns (less meat-based which has a high carbon footprint) to a massive transition to renewable energy use, amongst many others.

This example of a required societal transformation also carries the ingredients of why it is so challenging to bring about societal transformations. First, whilst we can all contribute, not one of us, nor any organization or country, can resolve the challenge on its own (presenting an almost unfathomable collective action problem). As succinctly stated by Michael Quinn Patton – an eminent evaluation specialist – *'no one, not one organization, no entity, and no network is in charge of, controls, or manages transformation, but synergistic interactions can propel and accelerate transformation'*¹³. Second, the societal transformation requires and rests on a change in individual behavior. To paraphrase the transition management specialist William Bridges: *'as people have a deep personal connection to how they work and their daily habits, there is just no way to make transformations impersonal ... whereas the first task of change management is to understand the desired outcome and*

¹¹ The International Development Research Center defines boundary partners as *'individuals, groups or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence'*. Earl, S., Carden, F., & Smutylo, T. (2001). *Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs.* Ottawa: International Development Research Center.

¹² According to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, we have emitted 1578 gigatons of CO₂ from fossil fuels since 1751; since 1989 the total is 820 gigatons (or 52% of the total emissions since 1751); and since 1946 the total is 1376 gigatons (or 87%). Source: Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 'Global, Regional, and National Fossil-Fuel CO₂ Emissions', in David Wallace-Wells. *The Uninhabitable Earth. A Story of the Future.* Penguin Random House: UK.

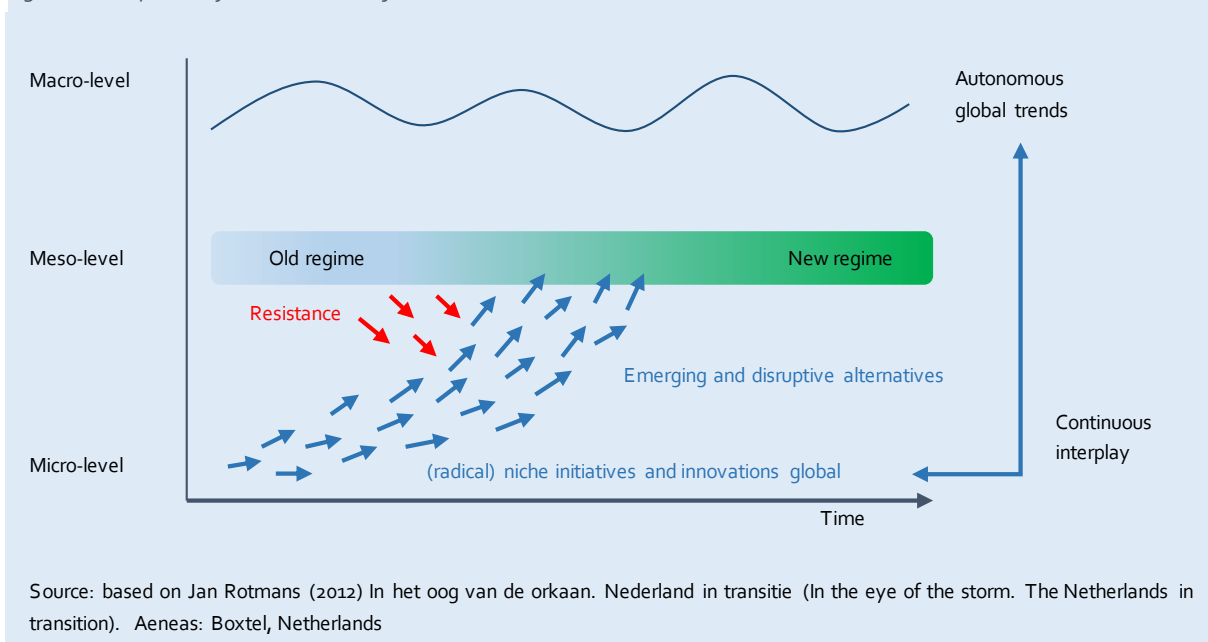
¹³ Patton, M.Q. (2020) *Blue Marble Evaluation. Premises and Principles.* New York: The Guilford Press.

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 Rotmans¹⁵ and the popular author Malcolm Gladwell¹⁶ 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



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 Brown and Company: New York

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 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 statements on the value of nature to society

*'Conserving nature is a non-negotiable prerequisite for achieving a more prosperous, healthy and equitable world. If the world does not reverse the loss of nature, it will undermine any prospect of achieving the SDGs by 2030.'*¹⁹

*'Water security ... is needed to ensure sustainable access to adequate quantities of water for sustainable livelihoods, human well-being and socio-economic development.'*²⁰

*'A long-term and holistic view on maintaining a healthy coastal environment for the health, security, economy and general well-being of coastal dwellers ... [and] recognized that ecosystem conservation and livelihood security are essential to securing sustainable economic growth in coastal areas.'*²¹

*'Healthy and productive landscapes, from forests and wetlands to pastures and farms, are the building blocks of livelihoods and economies.'*²²

- The case studies reveal how IUCN seeks to contribute to development in practical terms, namely through:
 1. A direct contribution to the SDGs 6, 15 and 16 – see Textbox 5.
 2. By safeguarding, restoring and enhancing nature's ecosystem services, i.e. *'the benefits people derive from ecosystems.'*²³ *'Ecosystem services include provisioning services such as wood, fisheries, and raw material; regulating services such as climate regulation, regulation of water flow and water purification, and cultural services such as recreation, scenic values and spiritual or cultural values.'*²⁴
 3. By complementing nature conservation work with alternative livelihood programs to enable and entice local communities to sustainably manage the community's natural environment.

¹⁷ Adams, W.M. (2006) *The Future of Sustainability Re-thinking Environment and Development in the 21st Century*. UK: University of Cambridge.

¹⁸ IUCN (2017). *IUCN and the Sustainable Development Goals*

¹⁹ IUCN (2019). *The IUCN Programme 2021-2024. One Nature, one future. Draft for consultation.*

²⁰ IUCN (2018) *Bridge: Building River Dialogue and Governance. Phase 4: 2019-2021*

²¹ IUCN (2014). *MFF Regional Programme Support for Phase 3. Proposal.*

²² <https://www.iucn.org/theme/forests/projects/restoration-initiative-tri>

²³ <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/commission-ecosystem-management/our-work/cems-thematic-groups/ecosystem-services>

²⁴ IUCN (2018) *Tools for measuring, modelling, and valuing ecosystem services. Guidance for Key Biodiversity Areas, Natural World Heritage sites, and Protected Areas.*

Textbox 5. IUCN direct contribution to SDGs

Through the SDC-funded Bridge-program on transboundary water management, IUCN seeks to contribute to:

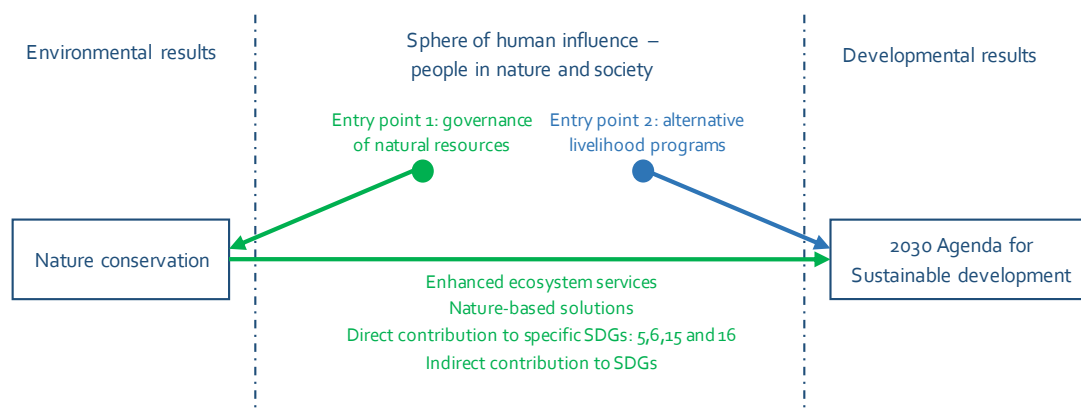
- *SDG 6.5*: By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
- *SDG 6.6*: By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
- *SDG 16*: ... build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Through its global rangeland and forestry programs, IUCN helps attain:

- *SDG 15.3*: by 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

- 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 societies 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 Report.

Figure 2. IUCN's approach to nature conservation and sustainable development



Source: authors

²⁵ Adams, W.M. (2006) *The Future of Sustainability Re-thinking Environment and Development in the 21st Century*. UK: University of Cambridge.

²⁶ <https://www.iucn.org/about>

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 narratives, cultural values and economic consumption and production models, jointly envisioning alternative rationales and ways to organize society, and identifying alternative entry points and different pathways to bring those alternatives about. The challenge for IUCN is to approach the governance of natural resources less technically and more visionary, seeing it as an opportunity – a privileged entry point – to address the root causes and societal mechanisms of environmental degradation, inequity and impoverishment processes (and endless renewing dynamics). Through such an orientation, IUCN can innovate in two inseparable fields of action: nature conservation and society's functioning. (Note: 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.)

Table 3. Summary of results of IUCN's work in the case studies

Program(s)	Main development outcomes	Type and level of change*	Reason for the classification	Entry points for a type B transformation
Jordan				
Sustainable rangeland management programs (See vol II, annex G)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A total of 137 ha of rangeland (in three villages) managed sustainably by local communities with biodiversity restored – A few dozen women and men with improved incomes through improved grazing and ecosystem services 	A 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The 137 ha of rangeland are better managed and some households with improved incomes (= Level 3 change) – The development impact is small-scale, and no changes made to the processes causing the land degradation and impoverishment (= type A Change) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote a change in and bringing clarity to the country's land tenure regime: e.g. devolve land ownership to the governates and assign land use rights to municipalities or tribes, thus allowing and incentivizing sustainable land management at scale. – Promote the inclusion of the rural population and migrants into Jordan's main economic activities, reducing their reliance on natural resources and bringing the use of natural resources in line with nature's carrying capacity. – Continue IUCN's efforts to monetize the improved ecosystem services stemming from sustainable land management and include the associated agricultural

Program(s)	Main development outcomes	Type and level of change*	Reason for the classification	Entry points for a type B transformation
				<p>products into domestic and international value chains.</p> <p>– Continue to document and communicate the extent of land degradation and biodiversity loss and the societal risks this bears.</p>
Myanmar				
Mangroves for the Future / Gulf of Mottama (See vol II, annex H)	– Coastal Resource Management Committees (with participation of a broad range of government agencies) established at the national, regional and district level. Committees nominally function but still in the process of establishing their position, role and influence in the political system.	A 1	– The Coastal Resource Management Committees complement the existing structures – they have not yet fundamentally changed the perspective, rationale and structure of the dominant political economic system for coastal management (= Type A change). Even though its capacity is limited and sustainability unclear, it carries the potential to influence the domestic narrative and invoke changes in perspective and actions (= level 1 change)	– To work with for example UNDP in promoting National Commodity Platforms, mobilizing the government and the (international) private sector, to pursue economic development with a sustainable use of natural resources, i.e. to counteract current vested (national and international) economic interests which rests on the unsustainable harvesting of the country's natural resources.
	– In a few communities, community and locally managed marine areas established and households supported in building alternative livelihoods.	A 3	– Local communities have established new protected and sustainable managed areas within the current norms and societal functioning (= level 3 and Type A change)	– Promote the inclusion of the coastal and rural population into Myanmar's main economic activities, reducing their reliance on natural resources and bringing the use of natural resources in line with nature's carrying capacity.
	– From the regional twelve-year program: a proven analytical tool, 7 proven approaches to mangrove conservation, and many case studies of successful mangrove restoration.	- 1	– IUCN's tools, methods and case studies offers its boundary partners the material to enact / jumpstart nature conservation projects. (= a steppingstone to a level 1 change)	– To continue deepening the capacity of and dialogue within the established Coastal Resource Management Committees to bring about a change of perspective on the value of, and implications of the current degradation of, the country's coastal resources and making these Committees effective boundary partners and agents of change. – To continue offering IUCN's analytical tools, case studies and proven approaches to mangrove and landscape restoration as means to promote nature conservation and support (to the extent possible) economic development.
Senegal				
(See vol II, annex I)	– IUCN's support to the creation of women groups to undertake various income generating activities led to new women groups in next-door villages and a regional federation of women groups	A 3	– Women, within and without the project area, have been empowered (a level 3 change). – Contributes to SDG 5. – The mechanisms at the root of women poverty and exclusion have not been addressed (a type A change).	– As women continue to work towards the best sustainable use of mangrove resources, help them decipher and act on the basic impoverishment mechanisms that structure the local economy and markets.

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)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	A 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IUCN helped establish complementary governance structures and protected areas (a level 3 change). The projects did not address the dysfunctional leadership selection for the management of the forests, nor address the root causes of forest degradation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Have all social categories and actors involved in the governance of natural resources analysis and take stock of the decision-making and resource management systems in order to identify the basic mechanisms in society that are responsible for the environmental degradation and dysfunctional leadership selection. Contribute to research and experimentation on the best ways to neutralize the weaknesses and root causes of the environmental degradation and dysfunctional leadership selection, help set up and experiment new regulatory systems, new practices, new frameworks, new organizations that can effectively combat these fundamental and harmful mechanisms (in a spirit of action research).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With support from IUCN, national parliamentarians learned to adopt a pro-active stance and represent their constituencies (rather than the national government). 	- 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National parliamentarians adopted a new perspective which could be a prelude to a Type B change. The new perspective led to a change in behavior and the pro-active development of new laws and initiatives (a level 2 change). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seize the opportunity of this change of behavior to take stock of the parliamentarians' work, role, and challenges in playing the role of change drivers. How could they better assume such a role, in particular in all what concerns nature conservation at national and international level?
Vietnam²⁷				
Integrated Land Use Planning (See vol II, annex G)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cultivation of flood-resistant and high-value crops in the Mekong Delta instead of a third rice crop. 	B1 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Vietnam Communist Party and local farmers recognized the value of the Mekong Delta flood plains for absorbing seasonal floods (a change in perspective) and, consequently, changed government policy (through a new national rice policy) and land use (through the cultivation of flood- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This example shows how the experiences in one workstream (getting rid of the third rice crops in the Mekong floodplains) triggered a change in perspective and rationale and thereby a more systemic change, namely a new approach to land use planning. The challenge now is to solidify this new land use planning process and, through practice,

²⁷ This example rests on discussions with IUCN Asia Regional Office staff. The Review team did not verify this example in the field.

Program(s)	Main development outcomes	Type and level of change*	Reason for the classification	Entry points for a type B transformation	
			<p>resistant crops in the flood plains to conserve the function of the flood plains).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Importantly, according to IUCN, the decentralized and inter-sectoral considerations and decision-making that undergirded the above decisions and actions (and offer a new rationale) informed a new (transformed) Vietnamese land use planning process that moved away from sectoral planning to integrated land use planning (a structural change). 	<p>extend the transformational impact beyond the introduction of flood-resistant crops in the Mekong floodplains to other agricultural and land use areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The example also shows how IUCN – through scientifically-sound diagnostics, the tactful choice of boundary partners (amongst others the regional communist party and local scientists), the facilitation of a participatory and inclusive dialogue, and sheer grit can affect transformational change. 	
Transboundary water management					
Bridge (See vol II, annex J)	– Formal and informal governing institutions – at the basin, national and transboundary level – created, capacitated and functioning in many basins where the program is active.	A	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The institutions are complementary to existing structures. Whilst they carry the potential for invoking transformational change based on changing perspectives and collaborations (level 1 change), no evidence yet of on-the-ground development impact in terms of improved access to water, reduced conflicts, and restored basin-level ecosystems (= type A change) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To deliberately use the created institutions and platforms for an in-depth dialogue and reflection on the root causes of the unsustainable and inequitable use of the river basin ecosystems, collectively devise pathways to address these root causes, and thus mobilize the participants in these dialogues and institutions as boundary partners, as agents of change, and empower these players to take concrete on-the-ground action to address these root causes.
Forestry					
The Bonn Challenge and The Restoration Initiative (See vol II, annex K)	– Globally 43.7 million ha of land under restoration in 2018 under the Bonn Challenge (=29% of the 2020 target). –	A	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Degraded land has been under restoration (= level 3 change). – The actual global rate of gross cover loss increased by 43% on average to 26.1 million ha per year since the Bonn Challenge signaling that the root causes and processes leading to deforestation and degradation have not been addressed. This makes for a Type A change for the restored lands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To expand and deepen IUCN's engagements with the root causes of deforestation and land degradation (e.g. expansion of agricultural land for meeting the basic nutritional needs of local populations or serving international agricultural commodity value chains) and thus seek to change the tide (i.e. limit deforestation and land degradation) rather than continue to swim against the tide (through reforestation and restoration). See also above suggestions under the country case studies.
Rwanda – Forest restoration (See vol II, annex K)	– 18088 ha of (agro-)forestry land restored under IUCN implemented program. Upwards from 700,000 ha restored in total between 2011 and 2019.	A - B1	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – IUCN contributed to actual landscape restoration (= a level 3 change). – The Rwanda government '<i>saw a healthy future for its people and the environment</i>' impaired and took a people-focused approach to land restoration (emphasizing agroforestry). Falls between a Type A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To continue its Forest Landscape Restoration work and use this as a vehicle to raise awareness of the negative impact of land degradation and the efforts involved in restoration to help change the perspective of potential boundary partners, invoke a change in rationale and behavior among them, and

Program(s)	Main development outcomes	Type and level of change*	Reason for the classification	Entry points for a type B transformation
			change (change in land management and agriculture policy, addressing the negative outcomes of the current system) and a Type B change (a change in perspective, focusing on combining nature and livelihoods). ²⁸	mobilize these players as agents of change so that over time no restoration is necessary anymore.
Agrobiodiversity				
(See vol II, annex L)	– IUCN is advocating a more agriculture-focused Convention on Biodiversity	- 1	– IUCN's proposals offer Parties to the Convention the potential to effectively mitigate biodiversity depletion in agriculture (= a steppingstone to a level 1 change).	– Help agrobiodiversity become a springboard for transforming productive agriculture, reconstructing landscapes and natural balances, and promote equity.
UNFCCC				
(See vol II, annex M)	– Mainstreaming the inclusion of Nature-based solutions into the Nationally determined Contributions	- 1	– Offers countries the potential to effectively adapt to and mitigate the effects from climate change (= level 1 change) without addressing the root causes and processes of climate change.	– To continue its promotion of nature-based solutions to climate change, but at the same time expand IUCN's diagnostics to come to understand the impediments to the wide-scale adoption (and actual implementation) of nature-based solutions to climate change, and to subsequently devise ways with partners to address these impediments.

* See Chapter 4 for explanation of the classification.

²⁸ The Rwanda information is based on a limited set of secondary data. A proper assessment of the type of change requires field work.

- 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 change 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, capacity building and institutional development) for changes in behavior and development outcomes based on new perspectives, rationales and structures.
 - Level 3 change at a local level – where communities successfully manage small areas of forests and rangelands in a sustainable manner and where parts of these communities generate additional income through improved ecosystem services.
- In the case studies, IUCN is able to bring about change within the current parameters of the political economy. IUCN operates within the system – it does not transform the system.
- The positive exception is IUCN's work in Vietnam on Integrated Land Use Planning where it could translate the positive experiences in one specific workstream (namely getting rid of the third rice crop in the Mekong floodplains) into a more general change in perspective and rationale (namely to take a more integrated, cross-sectoral approach to land use) and thereby led to an (emerging) structural and systemic change (namely the introduction and application of a new land use planning process). The example shows how IUCN – through scientifically-sound diagnostics, the tactful choice of boundary partners (a.o. the regional communist party and local scientists), the facilitation of a participatory and inclusive dialogue, and sheer grit can affect a B1 type transformational change.
- The Vietnam example thus shows that – through its diagnostics work, awareness raising, capacity building, and institutional development, through the creation of new (complementary) governance structures, and by offering new perspectives on the state and value of nature – IUCN can create the potential for and contribute to transformational change based on its boundary partners changing perspectives on nature and society and capacity to act. The Vietnam example appears nonetheless the exception rather than the rule.
- The case studies proper neither indicated nor offered evidence that this potential for societal transformation is deliberately seized and societal transformations are emerging. Why not? The Review offers two potential and probably related answers:
 1. IUCN's boundary partners are not picking up the ball; and,
 2. The economic model undergirding modern society remains dominant and unquestioned.
- The next two sections reflect on both potential answers.

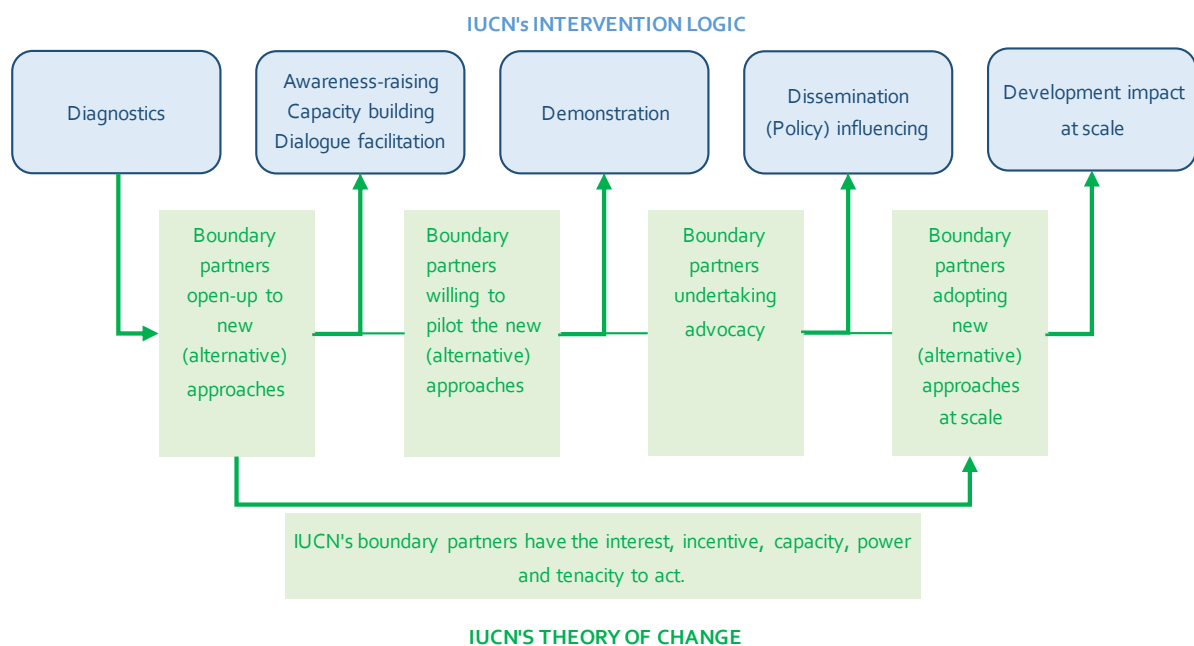
Textbox 6. Further reflections on IUCN's livelihood support work.

- IUCN does not analyze to what extent its community- and regionally-focused livelihood support – whether through improved ecosystem services or the promotion of alternative (non-nature-based) livelihoods – leads to the exclusion or impoverishment of other communities and regions. The success of some communities may easily come at the detriment of communities and regions elsewhere.
- IUCN's livelihood support programs focus on individual(s) (households). The individual / household standard of living is improved and not necessarily the standard of living of the whole local community concerned. Improving the condition of individual members of a given community, even if they are organized in groups or federations, never spontaneously leads to significant progress at the society they live in. The collective level, that is, the local society level, which is the most relevant as far as societal transformation is concerned, is not prioritized and left untouched by IUCN.

8. Why does the last part in IUCN's Theory of Change not work?

- IUCN operates with a clear intervention logic in mind – see the blue boxes in Figure 3. IUCN's intervention logic runs as follows:
 1. IUCN conducts **in-depth diagnostics** – as exemplified by the Restoration Opportunity Assessment Methodology (ROAM) or the Benefit Opportunity Assessment Tool (BOAT) – in which IUCN reveals the dismal state of nature, the potential value of nature through nature-based solutions or ecosystem services, and how the degraded nature can be restored and its value seized.
 2. IUCN subsequently shares this information with its boundary partners at community, district, national and/or international level **to raise awareness** on the dismal state of nature, **engages in a participatory, multi-stakeholder and multi-scale dialogue** on how to revert nature degradation and seize the environmental, economic and social opportunities it offers, and **build the capacity** of its boundary partners to organize themselves, govern nature in a sustainable manner and make use of enhanced ecosystem services.
 3. IUCN then implements **a pilot program to demonstrate** (show the proof of concept of) local community or multi-stakeholder governance of natural resources.
 4. Based on the successful demonstration of its approach to the governance of natural resources, IUCN produces knowledge products and **disseminates the success story** among a wider set of potential boundary partners, including local and national government agencies, NGOs and international development organizations.
 5. The information dissemination serves both **to influence policy setting** (for example on sustainable rangeland or coastal management) which would improve the framework conditions for the sustainable and local stakeholder based governance of natural resources, as well as to raise further funds **to replicate the pilot projects and build a body of evidence** showcasing the applicability and effectiveness of IUCN's approach to nature conservation and the sustainable governance of natural resources.
 6. IUCN expects that either the demonstration projects or the wider body of evidence will induce local and national government, NGOs and international development partners (many of them member of the IUCN) **to bring IUCN's approach to scale and achieve development impact at scale**.

Figure 3. IUCN's Intervention Logic and Theory of Change



Source: authors

- IUCN's intervention logic is based on several (implicit) assumptions, including that:

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 [induce a wider set of boundary partners to replicate](#) the approach successfully.
- The assumption that IUCN's boundary partners will respond to IUCN's clarion call, capacity building and demonstration projects rests on the further (implicit) assumption that:
 - IUCN's [boundary partners have the interest, incentive, authority and tenacity](#) to pick up the ball and run with it.
 - It is the above intervention logic, together with the underlying assumptions, which make up IUCN's Theory of Change – see the green boxes and arrows in Figure 3. With some variations in wording and presentation, it is this Theory of Change that appears to undergird IUCN's work in the case studies. See Volume 2: Appendices G to M for project specific examples and reviews of IUCN's Theory of Change.
 - The previous section evidenced that IUCN is able to induce and capacitate its project-level boundary partners (whether local communities or national governments) to set-up new governance structures (complementary to existing institutions) and introduce the sustainable management of natural resources in geographically small areas of nature. This first part of IUCN's Theory of Change appears to hold.
 - The previous section also makes clear that the subsequent step in IUCN's Theory of Change is more problematic. IUCN's approaches to mangrove / forest / rangeland restoration are picked up by international organizations like UNEP, UNDP, and FAO and funded by the Global Environment Fund (GEF). At present, several global programs are underway (in forestry and on rangeland) which need to evidence IUCN's Theory of Change and the ability of its propagated approaches to deliver development impact at scale.
 - The Review found however a limited uptake of IUCN's approaches and work in-country. The case studies point out numerous potential reasons (see volume 2: appendix G to M for further details):
 - the advocated approaches (integrated coastal resource management, forest landscape restoration, payment for ecosystem services) are novel concepts for IUCN's in-country boundary partners;
 - despite IUCN's participatory approaches, there is a limited and truly joint diagnostics and effort to build on the boundary partners' interests, incentives, capacity, views and ideas and develop a local will to do something – IUCN is possibly constrained by its own clear views on how best to proceed and insufficiently engages local boundary partners in the context and problem analysis and identification of solutions;
 - the national governments in Jordan, Myanmar and Senegal lacked the resources – in staff and money – to replicate IUCN's approaches in any serious form;
 - unclear or insecure land tenure prevents the replication of the IUCN's models at scale;
 - the economic benefits of nature-based solutions and ecosystem services are to a large extent indirect and cannot be monetized by IUCN's boundary partners (leaving little or no direct income benefits) – the concept of Payment for ecosystem services still needs to prove itself in practice and at scale (and overcome political opposition);

- the nature conservation projects are not or insufficiently connected to development projects²⁹ which offer direct benefits (local) boundary partners;³⁰
 - there is no evident pathway how small-scale, community-led solutions can be replicated and scaled up and convincingly address the environmental challenges at the level of a country or region;
 - political conflict and distrust between boundary partners (unrelated to IUCN's work) prevent collective action;
 - the perseverance of vested interests hinders political buy-in;
 - government agencies partake in initiatives out of their functional obligation, not their genuine interests;
 - regional political instability, forced migration and economic crises diverge attention from environmental challenges;
 - economic growth and international value-chains require access to natural resources;
 - development partners and donors shift their strategic focus due to new political priorities (e.g. migration in Jordan) or end their support after multiple-phases of support.
- The above reasons may explain why none of the case studies evidence the replication of IUCN's models and development impact *at scale*. The argument may be made that it is too early to tell. For individual cases this may be true. On the other hand, IUCN's Theory of Change appears deeply embedded in the organization's DNA and one would expect, being 70 years of age, that it could evidence its Theory of Change at any point in time with concrete and multiple examples. Moreover, the case studies focused on programs and thematic areas which ran for a considerable amount of time³¹ (with or without the IUCN). One would thus expect that one could at least see the beginning of a widespread adoption of IUCN's approaches and models even if large scale development impact remains outstanding.
- The Review observes that IUCN does not appear to analyze explicitly and rigorously *why* for example nature-based solutions are not already applied even when their potential is widely acknowledged (see also Chapter 13). IUCN's limited development outcomes in the case studies evidence that it is not enough to show, evidence, and disseminate the *good answers*. If IUCN's would evaluate and come to understand the reasons for IUCN Members (and others) not to pick up IUCN's approaches and models at scale, then it can devise a strategy to rectify this.

9. To save nature, is it necessary to save society first?

- Another reason for IUCN's Theory of Change not holding up in practice is that boundary partners are guided – wittingly and unwittingly – by forces larger than themselves.
- The 2019 Global Sustainability Report concludes that:

'Recent assessments show that, under current trends, the world's social and natural biophysical systems cannot support the aspirations for universal human well-being embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. ... Perpetuating current modes of production and consumption ... threaten the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda. Urgent transitioning away from patterns of economic growth, production and consumption that ... deplete the global environmental commons and threaten irreversible damage is needed. Transitioning towards long-term decarbonized and sustainable development that maximizes positive human impacts, equalizes opportunities among social groups and women and men, and minimizes environmental degradation is essential' (emphasis added).³²

²⁹ For example: in water supply, irrigation, hydropower, storm water drainage etc.

³⁰ IUCN does advocate in the Mekong a nexus approach to the transboundary water management in the Seking, Seran and Sripok basin, advocating for multi-purpose dams, large scale groundwater recharge infrastructure and nature-based solutions that offer environmental protection and development opportunities.

³¹ Jordan's sustainable rangeland management program started in 2006, IUCN's Mangrove for the Future program as well, IUCN's forest restoration work dates back from the early 2000s, the Bonn Challenge was initiated in 2011, the SDC-funded Bridge program started in 2011.

³² United Nations (2019) Global Sustainable Development Report. The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development.

– 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-first century is widely heralded as the era of sustainability, with a rainbow alliance of government, civil society and business devising novel strategies for increasing human welfare within planetary limits. ... the evidence is that the global human enterprise [is] rapidly becoming less sustainable and not more. ... Humanity is burning through natural assets and their capacity to support life and quality of human life without thought to the future and the rights and needs of today's people. ... The dominant development model based on the unlimited meeting of consumer wants leads inexorably to over-consumption. Yet continued physical expansion in the global reach of commodity supply systems means that consumers in developed countries continue to perceive resource flows as bountiful and develop no sense of limits to consumption. Whether as consumers or citizens, people in industrialized economies show no awareness that production systems are ecologically flawed or constrained. Yet this model is itself disseminated internationally by global media and advertising as unproblematic, uniformly good and desirable. Belief in the opportunity to consume without limits in an ecologically limited world is a powerful driving force increasing global risk. ... The need at the start of the twenty first century is clearly for systemic change. The experience of the last 30 years shows that this cannot be brought about using the metaphors, slogans and ideas that are currently available. The scale of transformation needed demands new concepts, new ideas, new ways of engaging citizens and opinion leaders in the search for solutions. ... Failure to understand and live within limits is the main reason why current patterns of development are not sustainable (emphasis added).'*³⁴

– The above passages illustrate that one of the major causes of the destruction of nature is the prevalence of the mass consumption society: increasing the bulk of products, goods and services marketed, increases the exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, a mass consumption society – the progressive and unstoppable commoditization of all the components of the life in society – means that the economic system needs the participation of the multitude in order to thrive and flourish. To sustain economic growth, the development of the current global economic system demands the inclusion of all the poor in the process of mass consumption This is one of the (unsaid) reasons why the challenge of eradication poverty is so crucial.

– The 2006 discussion at IUCN illustrates that IUCN was and is well-aware of the fact that to save nature, society needs to save itself from its collective appetite for unsustainable consumption. Based on this realization, one would expect IUCN to analyze how exactly the current economy depletes nature and contributes to natural (climatic, biodiversity, water) disasters.

³³ <https://forestdeclaration.org/goals>

³⁴ Adams, W.M. (2006) *The Future of Sustainability Re-thinking Environment and Development in the 21st Century*. UK: University of Cambridge.

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, elastic but imprecise. ... The conventional understanding ... based on the three pillar model is flawed because it implies that trade-offs can always be made between environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability ... [even though] the resources available on earth and the solar system effectively present a finite limit on human activity.'*³⁶

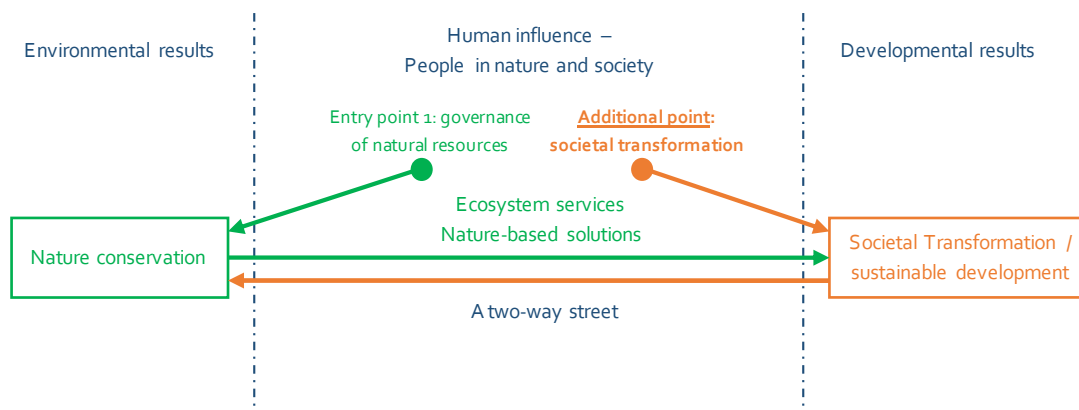
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development fills in the gaps only to a limited extent. The strength of the Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lies in their '*universal, indivisible and integrated nature*': only if all goals are achieved in all geographies has the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development been achieved.³⁷ The implicit assumption is that if the SDGs are reached, a sustainable future is secured. That is not necessarily the case. The SDGs offer mere *signposts*—showing whether a country or the world is on the right track. Only if the SDGs continue to be met or improved upon can one truly speak of sustainable development. This means that *how* the SDGs are met – i.e. the quality of the underlying change or transformation processes – is equally, if not more, important: they will determine whether a country or the world can continue to meet the SDGs. In other words, are the societal processes causing impoverishment, inequity or environmental degradation addressed in a structural and lasting way. Only if this is achieved, will a sustainable future be secured. (This is why the idea of transformation is also relevant).
- In Section 6 and Figure 2 (page 8), the Review showed IUCN's entry point to conserve nature and contribute to sustainable development, namely the governance of natural resources. The above reflections – on the limits of IUCN's current Theory of Change, on the systemic forces at play and on the vagueness of the term sustainable development – suggest another, additional, entry point for IUCN – at the other side of the spectrum, namely sustainable development: What is it? What are the dominant forces undermining its achievement? How can IUCN contribute to addressing impoverishment and environmental degradation processes? This additional entry point is shown graphically in Figure 4. It purveys the idea that the nexus nature conservation and sustainable development is a two-way (rather than a one-way) street: nature conservation contributes to sustainable development, but societal transformation can secure nature conservation.

³⁵ The vagueness lies in the noun *development*. The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th edition) defines it as '*the act, process or result of developing*' which the 2008 OECD publication on sustainable development interpreting the term 'developing' as meaning growth or progress'. The OECD there upon concluded that the concept of sustainable development simultaneously constitutes an end-goal, an analytical framework and a process. Source: Tracey Strange and Anne Bayley. 2008. Sustainable Development: Linking economy, society, environment. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

³⁶ Adams, W.M. (2006) *The Future of Sustainability Re-thinking Environment and Development in the 21st Century*. UK: University of Cambridge.

³⁷ United Nations (2019) *Global Sustainable Development Report. The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*.

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



Source: authors

- 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 number of active economists in the Commissions is probably not more than 20. (Of course, it is not only the number of economists but also the target of their investigations that matter.)
- The Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) is well-aware of these missing links and recently instituted a working group on Ecosystem Resilience and Transformational Change. This working group is to work out what transformational change means, how to bring it about, and insert ideas on how IUCN can effectively contribute to transformational change which conserves nature into the development of the next quadrennial work programme.

- 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 and that it is necessary to transform these values to stand a change of effectively addressing climate change and safeguarding the integrity of nature. This perspective was brought into the Commission by anthropologists.

11. The value-added of IUCN

- Table 4 lists – structured, but unfiltered – IUCN's value-added to and strength within the international development community as perceived by the Review's key informants. The table includes the Review team's own judgment, based on a combination of field observations and our professional experience, whether individual features are unique to IUCN or shared with other conservation or development organizations.
- For IUCN to contribute to societal transformations, the Review team considers three features of IUCN especially important and which, as argued in the previous sections, are not yet fully utilized by IUCN. In the jargon of the Review questions and in the view of the Review team, IUCN's *unique selling points* are:
 1. being a *union* of governmental, non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well individual academics and experts. This offers IUCN the opportunity to engage a multiplicity of stakeholders into a dialogue, co-create new ideas and approaches, influence boundary partners through engagement and with ideas, and disseminate information what works, what doesn't and why in nature conservation and sustainable development. Whilst the IUCN Secretariat implements programs and projects with IUCN members, the case studies reveal that *the power of IUCN's network and voice* are not (yet) deliberately used to identify, shape and invoke societal transformation and that the automatism with which IUCN's members are expected to pick up and run with IUCN's conservation and development models is not so automatic at all and, in the case studies, is not happening to the degree needed.
 2. having a *global network of scientists*. This offers IUCN the opportunity to develop state-of-the-art assessments of and approaches to nature conservation and development. This Review confirms that this power of collective thinking is used for environmental assessments and nature-/ecosystem-based approaches, but not to think through rigorously how society's dysfunction causes environmental degradation and how to revert or transform these underlying societal processes, as well as what the success factors and processes are for IUCN's nature-/ecosystem-based approaches to be taken up at scale. In other words, *the power of IUCN's brains* is not fully utilized
 3. its *grit and staying power*, both on topic and in-country. IUCN sticks longer to thematic areas – like forest landscape restoration, transboundary water management, and nature-based solutions to societal challenges – than many donors and other development organizations. Moreover, its ability to keep high-quality staff in position – whether in global programs or in regional / country offices and enable these staff to gain deep knowledge of the inner-working of programs / societies and build up a network / rapport with government and civil society leaders sets IUCN apart from other international organizations and offers IUCN entry points for instigating change that is aligned with the interest, incentives, and capacity of its boundary partners. IUCN staff are of course – like any other organizations – financially constrained (see next section). The challenge within these constraints is how to make best use of this asset – the *power of staff* – to contribute to societal transformations.
- The 2019 Sustainable Development Report identifies four levers for societal transformations: (i) governance; (ii) economy and finance; (iii) individual and collective action; and (iv) science and technology.³⁸ Through its unique selling points, IUCN can foster and disseminate knowledge (lever 4) and instigate individual and collective action (lever 3) leading to better governance (lever 1) based on new economic and investment models (lever 2).

Table 4. IUCN's value added in the international development architecture according to key informants

³⁸ United Nations (2019) Global Sustainable Development Report. The Future is Now. Science for Achieving Sustainable Development.

IUCN's value-added	Unique to IUCN: Yes/No?*	Comment
Being a union of governments, NGOs, academia, the international conservation and development community, indigenous groups, business, etc.	Yes	The union of such a diverse range of stakeholders within a single institution is unique to IUCN.
Having convening power	No	Most (if not all) UN agencies and multilateral institutions have convening power.
Neutrality	No	Most (if not all) UN agencies and multilateral institutions play the role of honest broker and stay out of politics.
Being able to forge and work in strategic partnerships	No	IUCN works with governments, UN agencies, development organizations, (international) NGOs and individual experts to implement its agenda.
Being responsive & flexible	No	Although IUCN has its methods and approaches, it is flexible in process and timelines and willing to adapt programs and plans in light of partners' capacity, needs, and interests.
Being a consequent advocate for nature	No	IUCN's international standing and rapport with governments allows it to influence its boundary partners and have them 'keep the eye on the ball'.
Practicing participation	No	IUCN is considered inclusive, consequent and professional in its participatory approach and willing and able to reach across scales.
Nature conservation	No	International NGOs – like the Nature Conservancy or Conservation International – also have a conservation mandate. The international environmental conventions address specific aspects of nature.
Regional operations	No	IUCN is able to implement transboundary programs.
Setting standards & operationalizing global commitments	No	Within its core field of nature conservation, IUCN sets normative standards for behavior and approaches, and helps operationalize global commitments such as for achieving land degradation neutrality in 2030 (SDG 15.3).
Being a knowledge (generation) and innovation hub	No	IUCN undertakes / commissions high quality and influential environmental assessments; identifies, adopts, conceptualizes, develops, and disseminates new ideas / innovations and practical tools & methodologies (bridging the science-policy divide); and promotes peer learning by bringing stakeholders together and sharing experiences.
Broad technical expertise	No	IUCN is able to provide policy support, institutional capacity development, dialogue facilitation, program support/implementation
Huge network of scientists organized in 6 global commissions	No	The Nature Conservancy equally has a network of scientists. The UN (Conventions) also mobilize academics for specific workstreams and publications.
Long-term on-the-ground presence of individual expert staff	Yes	Most (if not all) other international organizations regularly rotate staff between headquarters and field or between field offices.

* Yes implies that the feature at hand is unique to IUCN. No means that other organizations – UN agencies, multilateral organizations or (international) NGOs – have (more or less) a similar ability and record.

12. IUCN's constraints, weaknesses and grit

12.1 IUCN's reliance on project funding

- The Review did not evaluate IUCN's funding structure. According to IUCN, it is funded from membership fees (circa 10%), Framework Partners' contributions (circa 10%) and project-tied Official Development Assistance (circa 80%).

- 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.

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>

- The reason for this lack of evaluation practice may be IUCN's funding structure – most (if not all) of IUCN's programs and projects are funded by donors – and the belief that it is the responsibility of the donor to initiate and fund program and project evaluations.⁴³ This view would be short-sighted for two related reasons:
 1. IUCN displays a longer staying power – it stays longer on topic and in-country – than many of its donors;
 2. IUCN misses the opportunity to learn from its own experience and improving its advocacy, advisory and implementation practice over time.
- The value of regular external evaluations is that it offers IUCN the opportunity to step back from its day-to-day work and reflect on whether its assumptions on how to affect (transformational) change are working out as anticipated or need to be revisited (either because they do not work or external circumstances have changed). It simply offers an opportunity for reflection and deep learning.
- IUCN stands out (negatively) in its evaluation practice from UN organizations like FAO, UNEP or UNESCO (with which it regularly works together) and large implementation agencies like GIZ. The latter for example subjects 40% of all its projects and programs to an independent mid-term or ex-post evaluation.

14. SDC's mandate, global programs and the potential for a strategic partnership with IUCN

- SDC is one of the arms of the Swiss Government responsible for its international development cooperation. SDC's mandate stems from article 54 of the Swiss Constitution which states that Switzerland 'shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources'. Article 73 on 'sustainable development' adds: Switzerland 'shall endeavor to achieve a balanced and sustainable relationship between nature and its capacity to renew itself and the demands placed on it by the population' (emphasis added).⁴⁴ The need to combine and balance human well-being and nature conservation is thus enshrined in the Swiss Constitution and enables SDC to promote both simultaneously.⁴⁵
- In the explanatory note on Switzerland's upcoming quadrennial Message on International Cooperation, it is explicitly recognized that political change and new coalitions of governmental and private actors needs to drive change forward: 'In recent decades, a fundamental shift took place within international development cooperation. Whereas direct technical assistance used to be at the forefront, current programmes aim to bring about political changes at national and international level, strengthen institutions and involve coalitions of public and private actors' (emphasis added).⁴⁶
- Switzerland's upcoming quadrennial Message on International Cooperation identifies four overarching goals (emphasis added)⁴⁶:
 1. to contribute to sustainable economic growth, the opening up of markets and job creation (economic development)
 2. combating climate change and its effects and the sustainable management of natural resources (Environment)
 3. saving lives, ensuring high-quality basic services and reducing the causes of forced and irregular migration (human development)
 4. promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality (peace and governance).
- The three Global Programs of SDC (involved in this Review) recognize that the sustainable management of natural resources is vital for human's food security, health and well-being. And whilst they acknowledge the

⁴³ IUCN's 2015 Monitoring and Evaluation Policy merely states that '*project evaluations are undertaken as agreed with the project donor(s)*'. Moreover, the Policy only requires a mid-term review '*to be added to the [the project's] monitoring and evaluation plan*' for projects over USD 2 million.

⁴⁴ Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, 18 April 1999 (Status as of 23 September 2018)

⁴⁵ This dual mandate is reconfirmed in Article 5 of the Federal Law on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid.

⁴⁶ EDA (2019) Erläuternder Bericht zur internationalen Zusammenarbeit 2021–2024

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, capacity building and institutional development, good governance, international and national policy improvements and standard-setting, forging strategic partnerships, advancing ecosystem-based approaches, and promoting innovative technological and financial solutions. The Strategic Frameworks of the Global Programs do not explicate and offer pathways to address the underlying values and processes driving impoverishment, inequality and environmental degradation.⁴⁷

- SDC is a modestly sized player in international development cooperation. Like IUCN, SDC however has strengths that it can leverage. These are its *willingness* and *ability* to:
 - commit to specific development programs for three consecutive four-year framework credits (circa 12 years in total);
 - serve as a catalyst and development partner for new approaches (and the dissemination of their results);
 - use its diplomatic channels to influence individual boundary partners and invoke a change in perspective and behavior.

15. The world will not make it easy for IUCN

- IUCN is in many ways a large organization (in membership, turnover, staff numbers, thematic work areas and geographic spread). On a global scale, it is nonetheless but one player. IUCN cannot be expected to change society and safe nature in and by itself. It can contribute, but not invoke such changes and results alone.
- Moreover, there are a number of major global trends that will make it all the harder for IUCN to instigate and invoke transformational change. These are, amongst others:
 - the process of *society fragmentation*, i.e. the transition from organic societies (historically structured by collective and common social, economic, and political arrangements) to societies made up of individuals. This global process of fragmentation paves the way for a culture of competition at three levels: inter-individual, inter-group, and inter-society.
 - the progressive and pervading *decomposition of the State* – the pervasive questioning of the State and State institutions as legitimate organizing principle.
 - the *process of disconnection*: people being more and more disconnected from nature, the economy and politics, the economy more and more disconnected from finance, consumers more and more disconnected from producers, the rich more and more disconnected from the poor, young people more and more disconnected from elders, workers more and more disconnected from their own activity.

16. Conclusions

- This Review concludes that IUCN has limited on-the-ground development impact and operates within the current political, economic and environmental systems rather than changing it. Whilst it acknowledges the role of humans as agents of nature conservations and the need for humans to meet their basic livelihood requirements to fulfil this role, IUCN – in its projects and programs – focuses too much on *what people want*, not on *why they do not have what they want*.
- The Review recognizes the potential of IUCN's work on diagnostics, nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches, and the governance of natural resources to affect individuals', communities', political leaders', and societies' perspectives and rationale and invoke behavioral changes. The Review observes however that the last part in IUCN's Theory of Change does not hold true: the successful demonstration of IUCN's (multiple-benefit)

⁴⁷ SDC (2016) Global Programme Climate Change and Environment Strategic Framework 2017–2020; SDC (2016) Global Programme Water Strategic Framework 2017 – 2020; SDC (2016) Global Programme Food Security Strategic Framework 2017 – 2020.

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 (market) forces responsible for the environmental degradation, social inequity and impoverishment. Individual IUCN staff are well aware of these critical elements but, at present, are not empowered to work with and on them.
- In the end, this Review's findings can be summarized in two bullet-points and one common, in terms of nature conservation somewhat impertinent, English expression – IUCN can:
 - use nature conservation and biodiversity challenges to *better decipher* how contemporary societies manufacture, so promptly and so sustainably, natural disasters – environmental degradations of all types are societal symptoms under which economic, social, and political mechanisms are at work; and,
 - use nature conservation and biodiversity projects and programs *as steppingstones* and testbeds to work on and help transform these basic societal mechanisms; thereby:
 - *'killing two birds with one stone'*: saving nature and society.

17. Recommendations

17.1 For IUCN

- For IUCN to fulfill its potential in contributing to societal transformations and affect impact at scale, the Review recommends IUCN to:

1. develop its own clear concept on sustainable development and spell-out a Theory of Change on how to *deliberately* contribute to such sustainable development, including defining IUCN's boundary partners⁴⁸ and how IUCN can affect their perspective, rationale and behavior.

Reason.

- This Review followed *SDC's interpretation* of what sustainable development entails (elaborated by the Review team).
- IUCN itself follows a *conventional interpretation* of sustainable development (embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and takes a narrow view on what the economy entails.
- The SDGs however offer mere signposts, signaling whether a country the global community is on the right track; they do not reveal *how* the changes are brought about and whether the processes leading to (sustainable) impoverishment and environmental degradation have been structurally addressed.
- The intellectual and scientific rigor of IUCN's nature conservation work is not applied to IUCN's potential for *deliberately* invoking development impact and transformational change *alongside* its nature conservation work.
- Any conservation action offers the opportunity to reflect on how society does things, how it negatively impacts on nature (bringing about the need for conservation action), and what can be done to change these dynamics and processes, as well as the potential to affect these underlying processes and dynamics. For now, IUCN appears to shy away from addressing these fundamental questions.
- To improve IUCN's development relevancy, the starting point should be a clear, common and, above all, its own view on what sustainable development entails and *how* IUCN can deliberately and consciously contribute to such development.

Target audience:

- IUCN Secretariat (lead), together with the IUCN Commissions

⁴⁸ The International Development Research Center in Ottawa, Canada, defines boundary partners as *'individuals, groups or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence'*. Source: Earl, Sarah, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo. 2001. Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs. Ottawa: International Development Research Center.

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 Group⁴⁹ – 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

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 themselves⁵⁰.

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 ForSDC

- 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;

⁵⁰ To prevent a potential conflict of interest, these evaluation experts must be term-limited without the possibility to transfer to other parts of the IUCN Secretariat. The staff of the Evaluation Office of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs are limited to a 7-year term.

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 on local leadership, a proper political-economy context analysis, alignment with the interest, incentives and capacity of IUCN's boundary partners, and addressing the root causes and processes of societal dysfunctioning and environmental degradation.
3. to be a pro-active development partner to IUCN – a sparring partner and a catalyst for new, innovative, approaches and to purposefully and strategically deploy its diplomatic channels to influence individual boundary partners and help IUCN give a push to societal transformations.

