



LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

A LANDSCAPE CONVENING METHOD FOR INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

“Integrated landscape management (ILM) approaches are on the rise. **This is good news for Africa.**”

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A course on forest product processing by PLAFFERCAM, the Platform of Rural Women, in a Cameroon Model Forest
Photo African Model Forest Network

Integrated landscape management (ILM) approaches are on the rise, and this is good news for Africa. Africa needs to make its economic and social transformation in ways that will be greener and significantly more inclusive and collaborative than previous models of industrialization or emergence; ILM approaches offer models of cross-sector, ecological and economic integration that are key to more sustainable transformation.

Publications, by the Landscape for People, Food and Nature (LPFN) alliance and others, have documented key issues of the Integrated Landscape Management approach, and highlight the fact that ILM presents an extremely wide diversity of models and entry points.

This policy note focuses on one aspect of the question, namely that of the delivery model for ILM. In other words, *what is the approach to the approach?*

What are the methods and means that can actually turn a landscape into an integrative social reality that effectively empowers and bring stakeholders closer together; identifies the

means to mediate trade-offs, to innovate, and to sustain the process beyond any single project or program?

The note acknowledges different possible answers to these questions, and in particular highlights the Model Forest Network's unique landscape convening method to facilitate understanding, adoption or improvement of its most empowering features by other landscapes actors and networks, as well as governments in Africa.

The note also highlights some perspectives and experiential lessons regarding how such an approach can contribute to inclusive landscape transformation in the context of an emergent Africa.

Africa Is Doing Good, but It Faces Unprecedented Challenges

Africa has never been in a better shape since the 1960s. Despite noticeable differences between countries and many daunting problems and future challenges, the continent has grown steadily over the past two decades, as have its investments in infrastructures, telecom, banking, agriculture, services and social programs.

Because it is not yet locked into a carbon industrial pathway, Africa has the option of engaging its structural transformation in ways that have never been done before on a significant scale. It has the potential to *leapfrog* into a new economy that will be greener, bluer, more inclusive and more collaborative than preceding models of industrialization or emergence.

African biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as the knowledge that indigenous people have of their diversity and potential, constitute a vastly untapped, often hidden, source of wealth and development solutions for African countries and communities.

But to unlock that potential and accelerate the journey to [The Africa we want](#) in 2063, major shifts in the way we do business at the local level, in concrete places and landscapes, must be made or strengthened, and eventually scaled up.

The Promise of ILM

ILM approaches aim at drawing multiple benefits from the landscape through cooperative solutions integrating all development sectors and actors, from big and small farms to forests, livestock, fisheries, watersheds and cities. They rely on collaborative, community-engaged practices and interventions designed to realize positive synergies for people, food and nature in the landscape.

As highlighted by the African Landscape Dialogue recently convened (March 6-9, 2017) in Addis Ababa, ILM as a means to integrate African transformation and emergence policies in concrete places is increasingly recognized.

In December 2015, the African Union New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) launched the [African Resilient Landscapes Initiative](#) (ARLI), which is to be implemented through

the [African Landscapes Action Plan](#) (ALAP), a roadmap for actions that embrace a whole landscape, all land actors and all sectors approach to sustainable development in Africa. In fact, many countries are already implementing the approach through various landscape restoration and sustainable land-water management programs and initiatives.



Waiting for the Landscape Convention to begin (Dimonika, Congo, 2014). Photo: African Model Forest Network.

The Diversity and Convergence of ILM Approaches

There are many approaches and entry points for integrated landscape management. Some are not ‘approaches’ as such, but more or less well-funded international programs with goals to realize across several landscapes.

The African Landscape Restoration Initiative or [AFR100](#), [the Great Green Wall](#), [the Bonn Challenge](#), the AU Land Degradation, Biodiversity and Adaptation to climate change, and REDD+ are examples of this. These programs have national ramifications and seek to use “the landscape approach” to implement their goals and policy objectives. This is the case, for instance, of jurisdictional REDD+ initiatives, such as the Mozambique’s Zambezi Integrated Landscape Management Program (supported by [FCPF](#)) and the Sustainable Landscapes in Eastern Madagascar (supported by [GCF](#)), and others.

In a generic sense, an approach is a way of doing, or dealing with, something. A few years ago, Scherr et al. (2013) made a quick count of 80 distinct landscape or integrated land management approaches. Each can be seen as a concept, a brand, a type or a model of landscape intervention; each is based on a key idea and promotes a specific type of ILM process and/or outcome.

Some, such as [evergreen agriculture](#), [evergreen revolution](#), [agroecological landscapes](#),

[community-based natural resource management](#), or [organic agriculture](#) promote specific production or management systems, which viability is framed within a broader landscape mosaic. In a way, they all could theoretically coexist within the same landscape.

By contrast, [forest landscape restoration](#), [écoagriculture](#) and [diversified farming systems](#), despite having different entry points, have a whole-landscape focus considering all landscape activities fitting in, or contributing to their underlying principles of restoration or integrated management. In this case as well, these approaches could easily coexist within a single landscape.

The same could be said of [Living landscapes](#), with its focus on ecosystem scale land management and corridors for wildlife and people; [Ecoregional planning](#), with similar focus (though a bit less on people); or [Working landscapes](#), which fosters mutually reinforcing practices and policies between the production of multiple ecosystem services and goods for the market.

[Satoyama](#) Landscapes, [Biocultural landscapes](#), [Landcare](#), and other landscape concepts are all marked by these elements of uniqueness and convergence. Satoyama and Landcare both defined themselves as “movements” fostering smart agro-ecological practices, while the former and Biocultural landscapes emphasize the rootedness of such practices in the local ecological knowledge of rural communities over long periods of time.

[Intelligent landscapes](#) may be the one to stand out in this list for its greater affinity with visual, esthetic landscaping traditions than with landscapes’ hard inner struggles for people, food and nature.

How About Methodology?

The ILM field is rich, indeed, with widely diverse features and entry points. A key take away from this limited set of examples is that most of these approaches are not mutually exclusive and could actually coexist, overlap or even blend into each other, if they rely on sound cooperative frameworks.

But there is also a blind spot: while all approaches insist on the centrality of local people in ILM, scant detail is available on the institutional arrangements and processes that can make it a reality.

The emphasis is largely on the architectural design or outcomes of ILM, less on the social and organizational requirements to ‘get there’. In fact, the universally recognized Ten Principles of the Landscape approach (Sayer et al. 2013), which emphasize adaptive management, stakeholder involvement, multiple objectives and other “software” conditions, well illustrate this focus on the theoretical features and desired outcomes of ILM.

There is, however, a whole hidden field of questions and issues, of lessons to learn and stories to share, when one considers the “how” question: how are stakeholders actually “brought

together” in ILM and how do they get to “negotiate” their values, interests and objectives and to “coordinate” their actions beyond one single project, program or initiative?

This is the “hardware” question in ILM. It addresses the local ownership and social structuring of the process, which is at the heart of the long-term resilience and sustainability of the landscape approach.

It starts with the means and method for mobilizing and convening landscape stakeholders and follows with the real-life processes through which landscape insiders gain or exercise ownership and coordination of landscape decisions and transformations.

This can rarely be done in isolation. NGOs, experts and volunteers, as well as external funds and projects, are needed and have crucial roles to play. But they are bound to leave or to close down their operations at a certain point. They cannot represent the landscape’s identity and its range of values and interests nor can they ensure the long-term sustainability of landscape communities in their place.

This is why the place and role of local stakeholders in ILM is such an important question to raise in relation with the approaches and methods that can help achieve a level playing field in landscape governance. This is particularly significant in Africa, where weak capabilities and conditions of poverty and inequality create a downward pressure on the exercise of leadership by local groups and communities.

Putting People in the Driver’s Seat of African Transformation

Putting people first is not just a matter of theory or principles. It is, in the African case, a key strategy for accessing hidden or underutilized sources of local knowledge and resources with direct impacts on the delivery of food, medicine, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, and a range of precious ecosystem services.

Unlocking the creative energies and capabilities of millions in generally poor rural and suburban landscapes is essential to realizing Africa’s “inclusive growth” agenda and to shaping the form and pace of socioeconomic and ecological transformations.

The numbers speak for themselves. By 2050, Africa’s population is expected to double, leading to one in every four people being an African. African labor force, which grew by 302 million people between 1980 and 2015, is expected to be larger, by 2035, than that of any individual nation on earth, including China and India (ECA 2016, United Nations, 2015, Roxburgh et al. 2015).

In the next 20 years, tens of millions of new jobs will need to emerge from all rural and urban corners of the African continent to sustain this population and its demand for a good life in an increasingly connected and interconnected planet.

These jobs will need to produce more food with better managed lands, water, forests, and energy, with more innovations and better use of people’s local knowledge and innovation. They

will have, in critical ways, to emerge from rather than replace the so-called “informal economy”, which absorbs between 62 and 70 per cent of the work force (ECA 2016). They will need to rely upon and support smallholder farmers - most of them women – who produce next to 80% of the food we eat by raising livestock, collecting food and medicine in the wild, and tending crops on less than a hectare of land per person (Karuku, 2014).

There is no doubt that ILM can help achieve the cross-sector ecological and economic integration that is needed for this transformative Africa agenda, particularly if it offers governance models that can complement large scale public and private developments and drive investments in the productivity, structural transformation and resilience of the smallholder and informal economy.

This means including indigenous people, small landholder farmers and small-business men and women at the decision-making table of landscape transformations, on par with governments, investors and other landscape stakeholders.

It means empowering them with new capabilities and means to transform their indigenous knowledge and creativity into real innovations – with access to finance and markets, manufacturing equipment, better seeds and bio-fertilizers, reliable rights to their land, effective extension services and supportive policies.

As pointed out by the Economic Commission on Africa (ECA 2016), “any ‘demographic dividend’ for Africa must be based on the right skill profile of its youth population to let them drive industrialization through green jobs in agriculture, manufacturing and clean energy”. The transformative agenda itself must also be rooted concretely on inclusive and democratic governance, in communities and landscapes.

This is the perspective from which we discuss the Model Forest organizing principles and landscape convening methods, as a stepping stone for wider landscape transformations.

What Is A Model Forests?

There are several ways and angles to describe a Model Forest. But basically, a Model Forest is a place, a partnership and a process. The place is a landscape or ecosystem scale area; the partnership is voluntary and inclusive, from local farmers, women’s groups and indigenous people to national policy-makers, enterprises and universities; the process is a journey of dialogue, experimentation and innovation designed to understand what “sustainability” means in a given landscape and then use the partnership to work toward it.

A Model Forest is also a network, itself nested into other networks of higher inclusivity at local, regional and international scales. Today, over 60 Model Forests in more than 30 countries are thus organized within the [International Model Forest Network \(IMFN\)](#).

As an international network, IMFN is a unique blend of inclusive, horizontal democratic structures and values expressed through very practical ways. This gives them substance and reality on the

ground in a wide diversity of contexts.

The IMFN is also very relevant to public policies politically and appreciated by the governments of all countries in which Model Forests have taken roots. Today, five regional networks have emerged over the years in Africa, Asia, Ibero-America, as well as the Baltic and Mediterranean regions, as a result of these unique dispositions.

The Model Forest Network is also a community of vision and a community of practice based on mutual learning, adaptive collaborative management, participation, transparency, training, goodwill and other widely shared principles within the broader ILM community.



International Model Forest Network



Revised March 2017

The Organizing Principles of Model Forests

All Model Forests everywhere share a core set of six principles, which together form the basic Model Forest concept. But each Model Forest is also unique, as it applies this unifying concept to its own conditions. These flexible and adaptive properties offer great potential for replication and scaling up.

The key principles of a Model Forest are as follows:

- 1. Partnership:** Each Model Forest is a neutral and open forum that is based on the voluntary

participation of all landscape actors, representing diverse sets of interests and values. Through facilitation, the stakeholders develop a common vision of the landscape, its issues and possible futures; they recognize what they have in common in order to work together in a genuine partnership.

The "Model Forest Partnership" is thus created and owned by local stakeholders to pursue their common interests and transformative vision. They jointly define and implement concrete actions that respond to the local challenges and priorities of the landscape.

The partnership is not project-based, in the sense that it is not structured around one single project or thematic interest. It is a process with a long-term vision. It comes as a new structure in the landscape, but with the aim of providing a long-term coordinating platform to preexisting organizations and social interests. The partnership is open, transparent and accountable.

2. **Landscape:** A Model Forest is a large ecosystem scale area, which overall size and configuration varies according to local conditions and history. It is a socialscape, large enough to encompass a wide range of social, ecological, cultural, and economic values and concerns, and sufficiently self-contained to have an identity and to be manageable.

All land uses and activities that together define the life of the land, from natural forests and plantations to watersheds, community managed and conservation areas, fisheries, farms, agroforests, mines, urban and suburban areas are part of the Model Forest.

3. **Sustainability:** Model Forests are living, working landscapes in which all actors commit to the conservation and long-term sustainability of the landscape and its resources.

They are also learning organizations that constantly explore and fashion new mechanisms and practical applications to the very concept of sustainability.

4. **Governance:** A Model Forest is representative, participative, transparent and accountable, and it promotes collaboration among stakeholders.

Its governance structure encourages equal and effective participation of all partners in (i) elaborating a vision for the Model Forest, (ii) discussing obstacles and opportunities for realizing that vision, and (iii) developing a program of work that supports progress toward that vision.

Model Forests have several levels of governance. Usually, they would include (a) a governing body (Board, General Assembly), representing all stakeholders and fulfilling key oversight and strategic functions; (b) stakeholder platforms or committees that

contribute to strategic thinking and operational decisions, as well as implementation; (c) Technical and advisory groups, or project-based task forces to provide expert input and guidance to the Model Forest. When they have the means to do so, Model Forests also hire staff to manage the partnership or to implement Model Forest projects.

Each Model Forest governs and administers itself, and its activities, according to the norms of its country and region. The new partnership generally seeks legal recognition under prevailing law and statutes but does not, in itself, create new tenure or land use rights.

The stakeholders keep their rights, traditions, titles and/or claims intact under this principle. They can address and negotiate right-based issues and conflicts through the partnership's work program.

Thus, at its core, the Model Forest approach is interest-based and participatory rather than right-based. This has been shown to be an effective conflict resolution approach in matters of land and tenure governance.

5. **Program of Activities:** This is a core and often-neglected aspect of effective landscape-wide governance: governance starts with strategic direction. To become a Model Forest, the partnership must not only establish its governance structure, it must also have developed and established a long-term strategic plan reflecting the common vision, as well as the diversity of needs, values and challenges of landscape stakeholders.

From this derive shorter-term, adaptable work programs taking full advantage of the opportunities and projects of the partnership. A vision for ILM can be effective only in so far as it translates into an active program of work and effective coordination and integration of stakeholders' initiatives and actions on the ground.

6. **Knowledge sharing, capacity building and networking:** In his work on Poverty and Famines (1981), Amartya Sen has shown that deprivation and poverty is not caused by food scarcity as such, but by lack of entitlement. They occur as a consequence of social actors lacking the *capability* to convert their endowments into *entitlements*, that is, bundles of goods and services over which they have effective and legitimate command (Sen, 1985).

The development of capabilities through knowledge sharing, training, joint action and networking is thus central to landscape transformations. Networking is critical as it allows for learning and the sharing of knowledge and know-how to happen at local, regional, and international scales of the Model Forest Network.

Through networking and the acquisition of new capabilities during the realization of their

work programs, the partner's common vision progressively transforms into a community of practice that can influence and impact changes in and beyond the landscape.

The Model Forests Landscape Convening Method

These core principles of the Model Forest Network form a bundle of tightly interacting and complementary tools for direct action in the landscape. They constitute the basis around which the landscape can “be convened” through representatives of key stakeholder groups.

However, the actual convening of landscape stakeholders takes place in diverse ways across the Network, generally under the direction and facilitation of the regional Model Forests network.

In the same way that each Model Forest is unique in the way it blends its unique socio-historical and ecological features to the generic principles of the IMFN, the regional networks have developed strategic directions and Model Forests development methods that espouse the general principles described while being tailored to the unique conditions, needs and priorities of their respective regions.

In return the lessons learned in each case are fed back to the broader community of practice, allowing for these methods, which are already a quarter-century old, to be verified, adapted and expanded in the process.

Sometimes, the landscape convening process starts with initial meetings of interested individuals, groups or institutions; in other cases, a workshop or a series of workshops and meetings where the stakeholders conduct planning exercises and reach consensus on strategic directions, boundaries, vision, objectives, roles, responsibilities and expected impacts are considered the point of inception.

In other cases yet, the convening takes place as a full launch in the form of a landscape convention.

In all cases, however, the convening process, which can take from several weeks or months to a couple years, ends only after the stakeholders have at least formalized the partnership, developed a strategic plan, and established a governance structure representative of the full range of landscape stakeholders.



Women, coming back from a working group to address the Convention (Mayombe Model Forest Convention, 2014). Photo: African Model Forest Network.

The African Convening Experience

In Africa, the convening process of the first Model Forest took place in 2004 in the form of a competition involving ten landscapes, each making its case to demonstrate the strength of its partnership and its suitability along the six Model Forest principles described.

Two landscapes were selected at the end of this process to become, with approval of the government of Cameroon, the first African Model Forests in 2005.

Over time, however, through experiential learning and finer understanding of how to best insert the development of Model Forests into existing African opportunities and policies, the African network refined its convening methodology to turn it into a set of adaptable approaches and tools that can be used in a wide range of contexts and situations.

As they stand today, these tools can be used to facilitate stakeholders convening in landscapes that do not necessarily seek to formally become a Model Forest. They have also started to be used to support projects, which may enter a landscape with limited sets of objectives but want to develop landscape-scale synergies and stakeholder buy-in in order to strengthen project impacts and post-project sustainability across the landscape.

Constructing Political Ownership

In the African experience, three levels of convening make up the overall landscape convening methodology; each with its approach, tools, and underlying theory of change.

Key/Illustrative Activities In Landscape Convening

- Obtain and maintain central and local governments support and attention;
- Convene landscape stakeholders
- Share cooperative concepts and ethics
- Establish local ownership through the voluntary partnership of stakeholders
- Stakeholders give structure, vision and direction to their partnership
- Establish active links with networks and policies at multiple scales

The very first level is *political entry*. It is conducted at the highest possible level of government authority (cabinet members, Prime Minister, or President) and is based on prior study and knowledge of the countries' experience and strategic documents. In particular, the country's growth/transformation strategies, sectoral priorities, decentralization plans and territorial development policies.

This combination of a political and a policy entry is first justified by two practical considerations: the actual demand from African policy makers of practical solutions for the local implementation of national policies, and the cross-sector nature of the landscape approach, which requires wide cabinet-level awareness of the ILM or Model Forest initiative and what it can contribute to their concerns and policies at the local level.

In one case, eight cabinet ministers were met in just two days under the direction of the Prime Minister to discuss the merit and potential use of the Model Forest for the country's sectoral and cross-sector policies.

This approach is also the implementation, in the African context, of the *theory of interactive policy feedback loops*, as first formulated within the framework of Adaptive Collaborative Management research (Mandondo et al., 2008, Diaw et al. 2009).

It starts with the idea that public policies must integrate the local experience to ensure their continued social relevance and to progressively make the adjustments and corrections necessary to their successful implementation.

In turn, local processes need influential levels of political decision-making to resolve some of their problems, conflicts and regulatory bottlenecks, and access certain types of resources. The construction of this interactive, open and transparent dialogue facilitates the scaling up of solutions resulting from local initiative and innovation.

This is an aspect of the Model Forest method that has been warmly received by governments and has been most successful in the African experience. It is facilitated in the Model Forests case by a rule of procedure that requires dual government and Network approval for membership into the regional and international networks.

Key Illustrative Activities For National-Level Convening And Ownership

1. Link the initiative to the most advanced/transformational central government policies and initiatives (through policy analyses and meetings)
2. Secure high level government endorsement and facilitation
3. Develop multi-actor national coordinating and advisory mechanisms
4. Embed the landscape program of work in local and national strategies/policies
5. Have the results of the Landscape Convention officially adopted at central level
6. Co-develop collaborative ILM projects with the government, aligned with national priorities and internationally accessible investment and funding opportunities

Organizing the Landscape Convention

There are two tightly connected meanings associated with a Landscape Convention. The term refers both to the singular event of organizing a large gathering of landscape leaders and stakeholder representatives and to the longer foundational process of establishing the Model Forest, as previously described.

This note primarily considers the former, even though it refers at times to the broader process of establishing and formalizing the partnership. For a successful landscape convention to take place, the full involvement of national, provincial and local government and of local “champions” with appropriate credibility, influence and « convening powers » is essential.

Representativeness is the first criteria of a successful convention. The second is the quality of its facilitation process, and the openness and transparency of the proceedings.

To ensure this, the African Network uses a family of tools at the center of which is FELA – Freely Explored Landscape Agreements – a methodology it has developed to enable stakeholder groups to freely explore the ins and outs of the Model Forest concept, both independently and in plenary.

This allows stakeholders to decide on the relevance of the concept and its capacity to respond to their key problems. In a sense, FELA is a form of multi-stakeholder FPIC – Free, Prior and Informed Consent – the internationally agreed standard for protecting the rights and interests of indigenous people with regard to projects taking place on their lands.

In the Model Forest experience, FELA is typically spread out across three Convention days. The first, essentially devoted to information sharing, participatory system analysis of landscape issues, and conceptual exploration of the Model Forest concept/ILM initiative; the second, to stakeholders assessments, decisions and commitments; and the third, to their choice of structures and representatives, and to deciding on the long-term confirmation process during which they will develop a common vision, a strategic plan and formal governance structures.

What is needed to make this happen?

Creating depth and width – time is a material factor in realizing and assessing transformations

1. Assess local/landscape-level initiatives and stakeholders problems and interests
2. Secure central and local government support
3. Find champions with appropriate mandates and local convening powers
4. Convene landscape stakeholders, including women and indigenous groups, and relevant officials and private actors
5. Facilitate Freely explored initial agreements and clear stakeholder commitments
6. Follow up the Landscape Convention with a multi-stage process that will formalize organizational agreements and develop a common vision and program orientations
7. Formalize the stakeholders commitment to working together toward the common vision
8. Implement common strategies, program of work and/or action plans; ensure fitness and complementarity with existing development & conservation plans (add value and transform positively)
9. Mobilize internal and external resources; develop projects and capacities actively connected to the local value chains through very small businesses and SMEs as well as responsible corporations
10. Network horizontally at all scales (local, national, regional, international)
11. Monitor change processes, projects and landscape impacts using a combination of external and self-monitoring methods
12. Use adaptive and corrective learning methods at all stages; it is a long process that can have peaks of success and opportunities for learning from mistakes.

This convention process is a powerful starting point for structuring landscapes with full stakeholder awareness, involvement and ownership. It gives strong political and social bases to ILM and has been a proven factor of resilience for African Model Forests.

Formalizing the Landscape Convention Agreements

The third stage in landscape convening has already been incidentally described, in relation to Model Forest principles and to the political and landscape aspects of the convening process. It refers mainly to the formalization of the landscape agreements, structures and strategic plans, and to the process of gaining government approval and peer approval for membership into the network.

It must be clarified that seeking government approval for Model Forest membership is not a legal condition under the law of most countries; rather, it is a deliberate, strategic choice to make the policymakers “co-owners” of the landscape convening process. The purpose is to strengthen the overall governance and democratic collaborative frameworks, and to enable countries to better address their challenges and national objectives by supporting the Model Forest. This is particularly relevant in the African context.

Similarly, membership into the Model Forest Network is not, in itself, a precondition to good landscape governance. However, as already described, the lateral solidarity expressed through networking at various national, regional and international levels is a tool for stakeholder learning and empowerment for which there are few effective substitutes.

Gaining Depth and Density

In the African experience, the landscape economy has unexpectedly been identified as a crucial fourth factor in the convening of landscape actors under the Model Forest approach. This is because, structurally, the landscape convention is a middle-level or supra-local platform. It is below the national level and above village and farm level actors and processes. As a result, most people in the landscape can become a full part of the landscape convening only if it is taken to their doorstep.

Some authors have argued that the landscape approach is difficult to define, because it is essentially 'muddling through'. Wide experience in Africa shows that this 'muddling through' is a consequence of, rather than a condition for establishing a systemic concept of landscape governance.

The methodology of convening and organizing a landscape platform is actually the easy part - barely a beginning in the greater scheme of landscape transformations. Time, practice, and hard-won struggles are needed for structural foundations to gain in depth and density, that is, in practical livelihood contents reaching far into the landscape and creative of identity.

Following their landscape conventions, African Model Forest communities have experienced abundance as well as financial scarcity; they have experienced conflicts over control of process or resource allocation, and have known times of communion and flamboyance; but they persist on the landscape.

The new landscape platform surpasses pre-existing organizations taken in isolation, without denying them, but rather integrating them more or less imperfectly into its collaborative matrix. This allows the emergence of an open identity that deconstructs formerly constituted divisions to strengthen the bonds of landscape solidarity.

It is the process of looking for solutions through uncertainty, contingency and complexity that makes this novel approach possible. With time and engagement, as more people participate into the collaborative initiatives, the process gains in social identity, depth, width, as well as integrative and transformative power.

African Model Forests are thus built in a retro-prospective logic where the actors recognize themselves as subjects of economic and social transformations. This transformative process is credible to them because they have in-depth knowledge of the potential of values and resources offered by the landscape and understand the need to mobilize this potential in favor of a shared vision of the future.

It is this common set of visions, collective experiences and their transformation into concrete results and impacts in the lives of people that gives density and credibility to the landscape convening method for ILM. It is a concrete process of multifaceted project implementation and problem solving that becomes an element of personal and collective identity.

All this allows the structure to retain its organizational foundations and its existential cohesion, and to transform itself into a “social infrastructure”. In that sense, landscape resilience is intrinsically linked to identity as a social construction and as a projection on the future. New critical connections are made that were unexpected before; a system shift in environmental governance and in green and blue transformation of the local economy becomes a plausible outcome.

Facilitating and accelerating this transformational system shift is within reach of African countries. Based on the experience of Model Forests, ILM is improved when delivered through a deliberate and active focus on investments and policy incentives for social enterprising, innovation and value chain development benefiting landscape smallholders.

An Agenda for Inclusive African Transformations

Model Forests have been built in Africa as learning organizations and open systems capable of transforming themselves. This has given them the ability to persist in the face of difficulties and to reinvent themselves at various times by integrating lessons from past experiences.

They have therefore been able to work the participatory paradigm from within, constantly questioning its sustainability from the viewpoint of communities.

It is this uneven and bumpy process, which has led them to realize that discarding old models in order to invest in the capabilities and social economy of landscape smallholders had become an African imperative.

This implies linking social business solutions and productive innovations to effective models of landscape governance equipped with the methodologies needed to bring these innovations to scale.

Our aim is to strengthen current and future ILM initiatives in Africa and their link to the African Landscapes Action Plan and, particularly, to African emergence and transformation policies.

Integrating stakeholder convening lessons learned from diverse organizations and networks will facilitate local ownership and long-term durability of ILM initiatives in Africa.

It will also foster learning, networking, and a convergence amongst African ILM initiatives, in order to contribute more meaningfully to African transformations.

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