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Special Session: 7.33. Transformational change, REDD+ and synergies between climate change mitigation and adaptation in forest and agriculture

Analyzing REDD+ as “a pilot” of transformative climate governance

Summary

This paper will analyze REDD+ as “a pilot” of transformative climate governance. The study is a part of Global Comparative Study in REDD), underway in 13 REDD+ countries, from where the empirical evidence is drawn. We ask what are the policy innovations, REDD+ has induced in domestic policy arenas, and what is the transformative power of these innovations? We draw loosely from transition theory to better understand the possibilities and barriers of REDD+ for transformative shift in climate governance. Preliminary results indicate that there are several policy innovations indicating transformative potential of REDD+ and it seems that REDD has a potential to be a catalyst for a transformational change. However, the slow progress in REDD+, indicates strong resistance to move away from business as usual practices.

Extended Abstract

Reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) has emerged as a promising climate change mitigation mechanism in developing countries. Since the beginning, it was realised that REDD+ requires wide policy changes and governance reforms, not only in forestry but also in other sectors. However, until today, REDD+ is still very much in the making. A number of countries are now at different stages in the process of realising REDD+, from policy design and technical readiness activities to actual implementation of policies and measures, with an anticipated final stage in which results based payments occur.

Since its inception, REDD+ has emphasized a national approach to manage emissions leakage, encourage permanence, and provide consistent national MRV as part of an international market-based system. The aim is to achieve a shift from project-based conservation to more integrated, nationally led policy reforms that lead to forest conservation and climate mitigation. Such policy reforms in and beyond the forestry sector could be considered as transformational change since they affect not only a narrow set of regulations, but also a broad range of institutional patterns and aim at changing behaviour of actors across sectors and levels.

‘Transformational change’ is understood here as a shift ‘in discourse, attitudes, power relations, and deliberate policy and protest action that leads policy formulation and implementation away from business as usual policy approaches that directly or indirectly support deforestation and forest degradation’ (Brockhaus & Angelsen, 2012, pp. 16–17). This definition is aligned with Scott’s (1995) institutional theory on regulative, normative, and cognitive rules. For transformational change, changes are needed in *regulative* rules such as regulations, standards, laws and *normative* rules such as relationships, values, behavioral norms as well as in *cognitive* rules such as belief systems, innovation agendas, problem definitions, and guiding principles.

Our aim in this paper is to analyse REDD+ as “a pilot” of transformative climate governance, and present the empirical evidence from selected REDD+ countries to better understand the transformative elements of

REDD+. We ask what are the policy innovations REDD+ has induced in domestic policy arenas, and what kind of new governance arrangements REDD+ has initiated in countries? What is the transformative power of those arrangements? What is the potential role of REDD in initiating regime shift for a new climate governance? We also look at the potential links in policy arena between the forestry and agriculture. We draw loosely from transition theory (Geels and Schot 2007) to better understand the possibilities and barriers of REDD+ for transformative shift in climate governance. Geels and Schot (2007) see transitions as outcomes of alignments between developments at multiple levels where transitions are seen as changes from one regime to another. Transitions can be induced through rational action, as well as through changing interpretations or power struggles involving conflicts, contestations, power struggles or dedicated translations.

Currently, REDD+ has not yet fully realized the shift towards transformational change for various reasons, including delays and obstacles in global climate negotiations, difficulties in establishing sustainable finance options, e.g. carbon markets, complications in creating unified technical standards, and governance challenges in formulating and implementing national policies for REDD+ (Pedroni et al. 2009). However, there are several policy innovations indicating transformative potential of REDD+, for example nationally driven forest moratoria in Indonesia. It seems that REDD has a potential to be a catalyst for a transformational change but the slow progress indicates strong resistance to move away from business as usual.

Methods and material

The study is a part of Global Comparative Study in REDD+ (GCS-REDD), underway in 13 REDD+ countries. We aim to analyze the policies in the selected countries that hinder or enable the implementation of REDD+, and also more specifically the policies and governance arrangements that REDD+ has initiated that has transformational elements. We have a database of the policy documents from 10 countries which will be analyzed by using the computer assisted qualitative software (NVIVO) . The content analysis of the policies will be complemented with the information from the country expert interviews.

References

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