Transforming Governance

Key objective: To advance new insights into governance for sustainable development.

Overall goal
The overall goal of the theme Transforming Governance is to support the widespread improvement of governance for sustainable development through the facilitation of learning and collective action within civil society, markets and the public sphere.

Strategic objective
The strategic objective of this theme is to advance new insights into governance for sustainable development and resource use in the context of social and ecological change. The theme addresses complex and controversial problems by mediating knowledge and learning in ways that are accessible to both policymakers and the public; developing frameworks and knowledge to help understand how these conditions can be established; and promoting good practice at local, regional and national scales by enabling partnerships with the public and the private sector, civil society and international NGOs. Researchers are involved in a wide range of projects and activities, often in close collaboration with the three other themes. To achieve our objective, we:

• Advance knowledge on livelihoods improvement and social change with particular emphasis on governance and institutional dynamics.
• Develop approaches and tools that explore livelihoods, adaptation, vulnerability, risk, gender, equity and economics for improved analysis of the potential impacts of social, economic and environmental change on communities.
• Facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue to review and analyse the effectiveness of policy processes. The aim is to support social learning, adaptation, resilience, livelihood development, and the transformation of communities towards sustainable development pathways.

• Develop evidence and methodologies to stimulate the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives and the generation of a more complete understanding of the consequences of different policy choices for livelihoods improvement and sustainable development.
• Evaluate and disseminate knowledge to key stakeholders and policymakers on the impact of action plans, governance arrangements, and practices for sustainable development.

Our work
There are numerous projects supported by the Transforming Governance theme. Some examples of key projects are listed below.

Baltic compass
This programme is financed by the European Union as a strategic project. The 23 partners represent national authorities, interest organizations, scientific institutes and innovation centres from nine countries in the Baltic region. SEI leads the work package Governance and Policy Adaptation. A key innovation is the...
use of agro-environmental mediating issues and practices to promote collective action and policy adaptation in the highly controversial and uncertain field of nutrient governance.

**Ecosystems, development and climate adaptation**
A study in Belize, Nepal and Tanzania with WWF-UK has explored integrating ecosystem-based approaches to climate adaptation with national policies and plans, focusing on the links between ecosystems, climate adaptation and poverty alleviation, and the governance arrangements needed to support such integration.

**Flooding in Cape Town under climate risk**
Working in partnership with the African Centre for Cities, the Centre for Criminology at the University of Cape Town, and the City of Cape Town municipality, this project researches the potential for collaborative governance and knowledge sharing in managing urban risks associated with flooding and sea-level rise in Cape Town. This is explored in the context of competing perceptions of risk and vulnerability by both state and non-state actors and its impact on the choice of adaptation measures.

**Agricultural water management solutions**
Improved access to reliable water could lift smallholder farmers out of poverty. As part of this project, SEI collaborated with local partners to explore the dependency of rural livelihoods on water at the basin scale for sites in Tanzania, Burkina Faso and India. Spatial participatory scenarios were developed to understand the impacts (both positive and negative) of new water management technologies on people’s lives and local ecosystem services.

**Vulnerability, reliance on ecosystem services and livelihoods**
This study, financed by Sida, undertook household surveys in a semi-arid area inhabited by Masai pastoralists in Tanzania. The research looked at how households rely on ecosystem services, including both blue water flows (for watering livestock, irrigation and domestic use) and green water flows (fodder, items collected from the commons) to consider policies to build resilience for these drought-affected livelihoods.

**Processes for adaptation to climate change**
This project is part of Mistra-SWECIA (the Mistra-Swedish Research Programme on Climate, Impacts and Adaptation). The project aims to understand what factors determine the success of adaptation and what stakeholders can do to overcome barriers to effective adaptation. The project explores stakeholder perspectives, social learning and policy integration in the Swedish context.

**Whole decision network analysis for coastal ecosystems**
This project explores the relationship between governance, power and knowledge structures and how these influence behaviour, actions and decision-making for sustainable social-ecological ecosystems. The aim is to understand the drivers of resource use patterns. This understanding can then be targeted towards creating locally-validated knowledge about poverty reduction focusing on resource use and management in coastal zones in Kenya and Bangladesh.

**Land use changes in the Greater Mekong region**
The increasing demand for energy and food represent some of the key challenges facing the Greater Mekong Region. This project and its partners have explored the transformation of the agricultural sector in the region and identified the expansion of biofuels as a main driver of land use changes. SEI has now begun a follow-up project that will use a multi-disciplinary approach to investigate major land use changes linked to producing feedstock for biofuels, and the associated impacts on ecosystem goods and services and local livelihoods.

**Summary**
Sustainable development is essentially about giving people the opportunity to build resilience by providing them with more options in their lives and livelihoods. We advance new insights into governance for sustainable development in the context of social and ecological change.

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