



# SHIFTING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST-RELATED DEVELOPMENT (FRD)?

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# Overview

1. Primary sources of information
2. Definition of “discourse”
3. From production/emergence of discourses to their influence on practice: implications for FRD
4. Other relevant considerations
5. Final conclusions

## Primary sources of information

12 papers in the IUFRO-WFSE SI in International Forestry Review:  
***Shifting Global Development Discourses*** (today's presentations - 5)

Poudel, D.P., Aase, T.H. 2015. Discourse analysis as a means to scrutinize REDD+: An issue of current forest management debate of Nepal. *Journal of Forest and Livelihood* 13(1): 44-55.

Pülzl, H., Kleinschmit, D., Arts, B. 2014. Bioeconomy – an emerging meta-discourse affecting forest discourses? *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 29:4, 386-393.

## *What is meant by discourse (one of many definitions)?*

**Foucault:** Refers to ways of **constituting knowledge**, together with the **social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations** which inhere in such knowledge and relations between them.

**Discourses** are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning.

## ***Three sequential elements of discursive practice***

Drawing on Poudel and Aase (2015)

1. How and by whom texts/discourses have been produced?

**“Emergence” of discourses**

2. How are discourses communicated, interpreted and consumed by receivers or practitioners?

**Communication & interpretation of discourses**

3. How receivers have applied these texts/discourses in practice?

***Challenges associated with the influence of discourse on practice***

## *Emergence of discourses*

- Emergence of discourse can be viewed as an ***exercise of power*** (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000)
- Why? Because proponents of a discourse exercise power by ***seeking to influence meaning and social practices***
- Discourses do not appear on the political agenda like a blank paper - Constrained by context of already existing political discourse (Kleinschmit et al. 2017). Rather than “constrained” one could say “build on” existing discourse

## *Communication & interpretation of discourses*

- When discourses emerge top down (from “outside”) gives rise to enormous communication challenges – how to reach groups where FRD actually plays out
- Broad, meaningful participation implies being informed/knowledgeable, requires input (education) and output (wealth) redistribution. Concept of Free, Prior, Informed Consent
- Different groups interpret discourses from their perspectives, interests and context

*These aspects are discussed in several papers in the SI*

## *Communication & interpretation of discourses*

- More than one discourse exists at a time in a particular socio-ecological context
  - Issue of counter discourses (climate change in the United States: climate change discourse and its implications seen as a threat to growth)
- Thuy et. al. (2017) indicate how Green Growth and REDD+, not integrated into the Socio-economic Development Strategy of Vietnam



## *Challenges associated with the influence of discourse on practice*

- Time demands of the communication / interpretation step
- Regulatory failures, market failures, fragmented and contradictory policies
- Common constraints and barriers and associated **non-linear interactions:** lack of tenure &/or use rights; bureaucratic hurdles; illegality; conflict; etc.

*These aspects can greatly impact the influence of discourse on practice*

## *Challenges associated with the influence of discourse on practice*

- Funding mechanisms breakdown or failure to materialize (REDD+)
- Quality issues and the importance of caring for hard earned credibility
  - Use of best information available, role of research
  - Financial limitations for research and training

*These aspects will be further explored in the following slides*

## *Additional considerations & reflections*

- A risky tendency when seeking to promote a discourse is to “over promise” or exaggerate potential benefits
- This is highly relevant when considering the implications of shifting discourses on FRD
- Systems thinkers have recognized – embraced complexity and associated implications

## *Additional considerations & reflections*

- Donella Meadows -well known systems thinker - ranked what she termed leverage points for influencing reality
- Her second most important leverage point related to changing societal paradigms or systems of beliefs
- As already noted, discourses are exercises in power that seek to win over people's "hearts and minds" and influence what they do, in other words they do seek to change paradigms and systems of beliefs

## *Additional considerations & reflections*

- Shifting discourses have had implications for FRD: social forestry discourse, governance, biodiversity conservation, sustainability, civic participation and collaboration, governance
- Gradually a more complex, holistic picture of FRD has emerged. The gradual nature of this emergence should not be viewed in a negative light, since they have resulted in meaningful institutional changes over time
- Time to fully embrace this complexity as a growing number of authors are pointing out in the literature and in this Congress

## *Additional considerations & reflections*

- Being complex systems, efforts to further FRD will undergo shocks and fluctuations; will not track in an uninterrupted fashion toward targets and goals – important when we consider implications of shifting discourses on FRD
- Also important to recognize that each organization's and person's efforts only touch upon a part of these systems
- Disciplinary work continues to be relevant and important, but effort should be made to understand where it fits into the overall picture

## *Primary conclusions*

- The implications for FRD of shifting, global development discourses depends on how they are created and communicated and also how they are framed to influence practice
- Over time FRD initiatives have integrated elements from a number of different discourses that have emerged over time, reflecting, in part, a more holistic understanding of this realm of endeavor
- The expression of these integrated discourses in practice will require a continual process of adjustments (AM) to respond to contextual changes and emerging challenges



Thank you



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