



## *Indigenous futures thinking*

Changing the narrative and re-building based on re-rooting

**Cover image**

Community exchanges as part of the Indigenous futures thinking workshop. Women vegetable farmers in Kotan-Segbe, Sado-Akrankou, Benin - along with other community members - reflect on the impacts of Covid-19 on their lives and agricultural activities. The Covid-19 pandemic illustrates communities' approach to overcome challenges and uncertainties: they come together and embrace their knowledge, identity and culture.

**Citation**

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# Summary

Indigenous and local knowledge, practices and customary governance systems are dynamic and changing, through learning based on accumulated experience and reflection. They are thus central for communities to deal with everyday realities as well as unforeseen events and disruptions. Coming together to engage with the future to make better informed decisions in the present is an embedded component of these governance systems. This process of “re-building based on re-rooting” also applies to addressing shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and all its consequences. In this report, we present the first phase of a dialogue process of sharing and learning about Indigenous perspectives on futures thinking, held during autumn 2020.

Futures thinking, including visioning, scenarios and story-telling, is a powerful tool to better understand and navigate an uncertain future – including the need for transformative change towards more inclusive and sustainable pathways. In global science-policy platforms such as the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), there is a growing need for pluralism in futures thinking for sustainability, and for scenario tools and approaches that can engage with different people’s worldviews, ways of knowing and diverse values. We see great potential and need to continue an open process for mobilising and strengthening Indigenous futures thinking, and inviting and making relevant connections with national, regional, and international science-policy-practice platforms.

The Indigenous futures thinking dialogue process is a collaboration between the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) and its partner organisations Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Ethiopia; Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), Kenya; and Groupe De Recherche et d’Action pour le Bien-être au Bénin (GRABE-Benin), Benin and SwedBio at Stockholm Resilience Centre. The aspiration in this dialogue process was to address futures thinking through a Multiple Evidence Base approach, to maintain the integrity of Indigenous and African futures thinking; that connects with and leverages the aspirations, needs, and rights of local communities; and that allows for reciprocity and mutual learning.

The process aimed to support the local communities involved in Benin, Kenya and Ethiopia, in strengthening their plans and visions for their futures, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars. At the same time, we jointly learned about how to connect local

and global scenario perspectives, in order to nurture new spaces in the global science-policy agenda for better engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) and their values, cultures and rights. In addition, we learned together about virtual methods to connect walking workshops and community dialogues. An innovative hybrid in person/online dialogue format was piloted: walking workshops led by communities in the three countries were held, and complemented by online meetings to share experiences and learning across communities and partners.

Eco-cultural mapping and calendars are examples of tools for Indigenous futures thinking that connect past, present and future. Based on their previous experiences with these tools, the communities discussed during walking workshops what they wanted to keep (re-rooting), what needs to change, and innovations and pathways forward to realise change (re-building). At the core of the discussions in the three communities was the revitalisation of customary governance and the potential for strengthening customary law, conflict resolution mechanisms and ceremonies to address some of the challenges they are experiencing. The importance of different forms of agroecology practices, sacred natural sites, and community rituals were highlighted. Story-telling, cultural practices, ceremonies and rituals are embedded components of enacting visions of the future. The experiences shared included many examples of partnership and collaboration with local authorities and actors.

Many of the challenges that the three communities face are related and come from similar underlying drivers. Central concerns across the discussions were about the erosion of Indigenous and local knowledge, and along with the loss of knowledge, weakened customary governance and culture, disconnect between the youth and the elders and between people and their places and histories.

The experiences from the dialogue process suggest that the more uncertain the future, the more communities need their knowledge, identity and culture to navigate and adapt to sudden shocks and changes. Our conclusion is that their way of knowing, of envisioning futures, and of acting on them carries critical methods and insights for sustainability at local to global. Indigenous futures thinking is hence highly relevant to share between communities, but also beyond their local spheres. Thus, the dialogue on Indigenous futures thinking will continue and engage additional communities and actors.

# Indigenous futures thinking: Setting the scene for the dialogue

Indigenous futures thinking is about re-connecting and re-rooting, while heading forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with highly sophisticated Indigenous and local knowledge on ecosystems, land governance and practice, evolving and innovating over time. It is about sustaining resilience to shocks and disruptive events, based on restoring the relationship with Nature. In the global discourse, the term “futures thinking” encompasses a broad and inclusive range of ways of thinking about and acting on potential futures from different knowledge systems, including scenario planning, storytelling, and visioning. Futures thinking enables people and groups to use the future to help make informed and better decisions in the present. This way, they can recognise their own agency in crafting future trajectories and how they unfold.

Change has always been happening in peoples’ lives. Over time, local cultures have shed light on and informed emerging critical dimensions for resilience and sustainable development, as well as the relationship between nature, human health and the economy. Since the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic, while the world’s attention is elsewhere, environmental destruction such as illegal logging is increasing, and the threats to environmental and human rights defenders have multiplied. Moreover, Covid-19 has revealed how the destruction of nature and biodiversity loss are rooted in inequality: local communities are facing even more challenges due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Covid-19 has added to the challenges already faced, such as food insecurity, rise of conflict, climate change, unequal access to land and resources and encroachment of natural habitat. It has also reminded us all of the importance of community, solidarity and self-reliance to meet the basic needs and establish socio-political equity – during the Covid-19 pandemic, and beyond. The Covid-19 crisis might have helped illustrate the vulnerability of the current global social-ecological system, in a way that the climate crisis has yet failed to do. It brings to light how much humanity depends on a healthy planet, and raises existential questions regarding how we should interact with the environment in order to live in a safe and sustainable way. The ongoing crisis

also leads to questioning the conventional development paradigm. However, Covid-19 is showing us that we can transform our pathways and overcome challenges and uncertainties together when we see urgency. After this, we should not go back to “business as usual”, but rather be rebuilding based on re-rooting – and doing it green: to reassess humans’ relationship with nature, as well as to find new collaborations in favour of a more sustainable planet.

## **Box 1. A key message from the IPBES Global Assessment, emphasising the conditions for IPLC and the lack of consideration of their views on future development**

C3. Areas of the world projected to experience significant negative effects from global changes in climate, biodiversity, ecosystem functions and nature’s contributions to people are also home to large concentrations of Indigenous peoples and many of the world’s poorest communities. Because of their strong dependency on nature and its contributions for subsistence, livelihoods and health, those communities will be disproportionately hard-hit by those negative changes. Those negative effects also influence the ability of Indigenous peoples and local communities to manage and conserve wild and domesticated biodiversity and nature’s contributions to people. Indigenous peoples and local communities have been proactively confronting such challenges in partnership with each other and with an array of other stakeholders, through co-management systems and local and regional monitoring networks and by revitalizing and adapting local management systems. Regional and global scenarios lack an explicit consideration of the views, perspectives and rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, their knowledge and understanding of large regions and ecosystems, and their desired future development pathways.

*Reference: IPBES, 2019.*

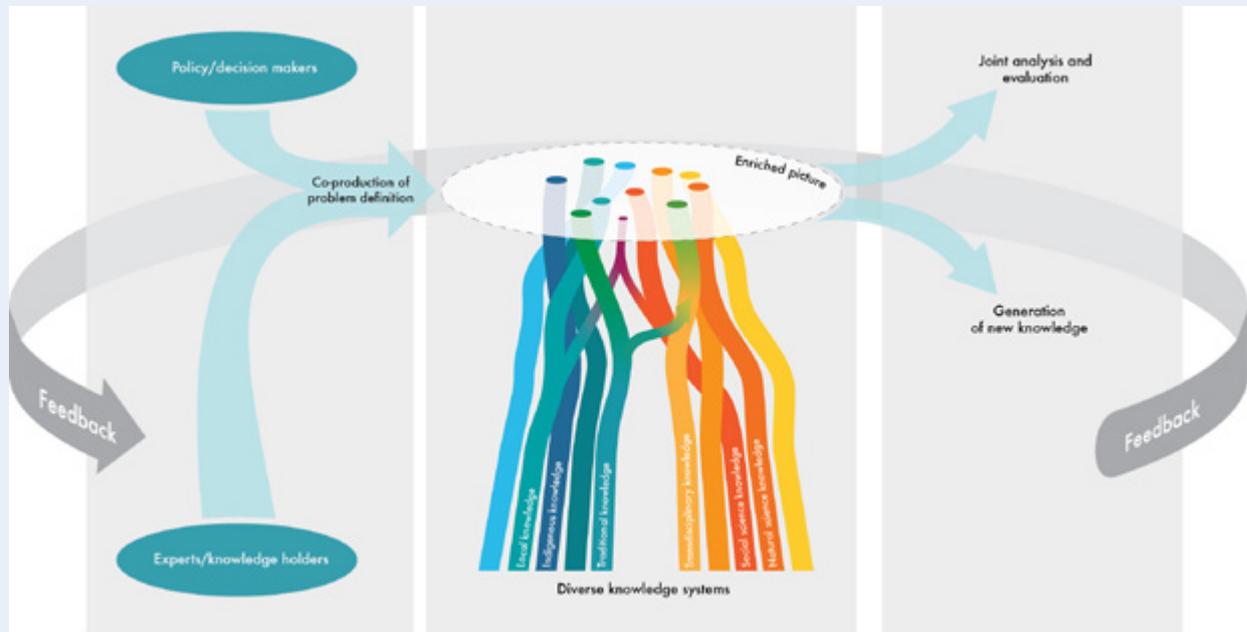
This call for transformations is also highlighted by the recent report on the conditions of the world's biodiversity and ecosystem services, the Global Assessment report of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (IPBES 2019). The report presented evidence of the critical role of Indigenous peoples and local communities in safeguarding and governing biodiversity along with local livelihoods based on customary sustainable use. The report also showed that strong interconnected drivers lead to biodiversity loss, and that fundamental societal changes, or transformations, are needed to turn this around. Co-management and co-production of knowledge with Indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as respect and enforcement of their rights, are shown to be a critical part of future sustainable pathways, but are often not part of envisioning the future (Box 1).

To connect the realities and lived experiences at the local level to aggregated scenarios at regional or global level is a critical challenge, which is recognised in the IPBES. In such science-policy platforms, the focus has often been on global and regional overviews, at the expense of national and local questions, challenges, and aspirations. Furthermore, the dominant mode of thinking about the future in these settings follows a western way of thinking and has often rendered non-western cultures invisible. Thus, there are now calls for pluralism in futures thinking for sustainability, and for scenario tools and approaches that can engage with different people's worldviews, ways of knowing, and diverse values. There is a need to reconnect with what is considered a good quality of life in different cultures, and to recognise the role of human-nature relationships, not least the spiritual aspects of nature and well-being.

**Box 2. A Multiple Evidence Base approach for equity across knowledge systems**

The Multiple Evidence Base approach (MEB) has been shaped in a collaborative process involving a network of SwedBio's partners constituted of Indigenous peoples and their organisations who come from a diversity of experiences and knowledge systems. A MEB approach views Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems as generating different and equally valid manifestations of knowledge. When combined, these can generate new insights and innovations for

sustainable governance of biodiversity. Equity, reciprocity and usefulness for all involved are key in the application. A MEB approach on a particular issue creates an enriched picture of understanding as a base for policy decisions or as a starting point for joint problem formulation and further co-production of knowledge. In an inclusive and iterative process, a MEB approach can enhance the legitimacy and relevance of the outcomes for a wide range of actors.



The three phases of a Multiple Evidence Base approach: joint problem definition, generating an enriched picture with contributions from multiple sources of evidence, and joint analysis and evaluation of knowledge.

Source: Tengö et.al., 2014.

A central principle for our dialogue is that of “usefulness for all involved”. Our thinking was guided by the Multiple Evidence Base (MEB) (Box 2) approach that also emphasises complementarity and respect between different knowledge systems. We paid particular attention to creating conditions for usefulness for all involved across the actors. This included an open understanding of futures thinking without a pre-determined framework or notion of futures thinking that could influence our process. We landed on the following overarching objectives, which are elaborated in more detail for different actors under “Approach and specific objectives of the dialogue” on page 12.

- 1) To support communities in strengthening their plans and visions for their futures, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars.
- 2) To jointly learn about how to connect local and global scenario perspectives, in order to open new spaces in the global science-policy agenda for better engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities’ values, cultures and rights.
- 3) To jointly learn more about virtual methods to conduct walking workshops and community dialogues.

In collaboration, we developed a plan for a dialogue process with three initial steps (see Figure 1):

- Step 1:** Preparation and planning among facilitators from the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE) and Groupe De Recherche et d’Action pour le Bien-être au Bénin (GRABE-Benin) and with communities
- Step 2:** ‘Futures thinking’ community-led walking workshops in three communities
- Step 3:** Online meetings to share experience and learning across communities and partners

Initially, several virtual meetings were held to share perspectives and interests among the dialogue partners, jointly develop the objectives, and plan the community-led walking workshops and possibilities for sharing the experiences. In each community, a three-day walking workshop was held; the design of each one developed in collaboration with the respective community to ensure relevance for them and the situation and priorities for the community at the time.

Following the walking workshops, several online meetings were held among the dialogue partners, where video clips from the walking workshops were shared and discussed. This whole process and its outcomes are described in more detail under the section “The futures thinking community dialogue process” on page 15.

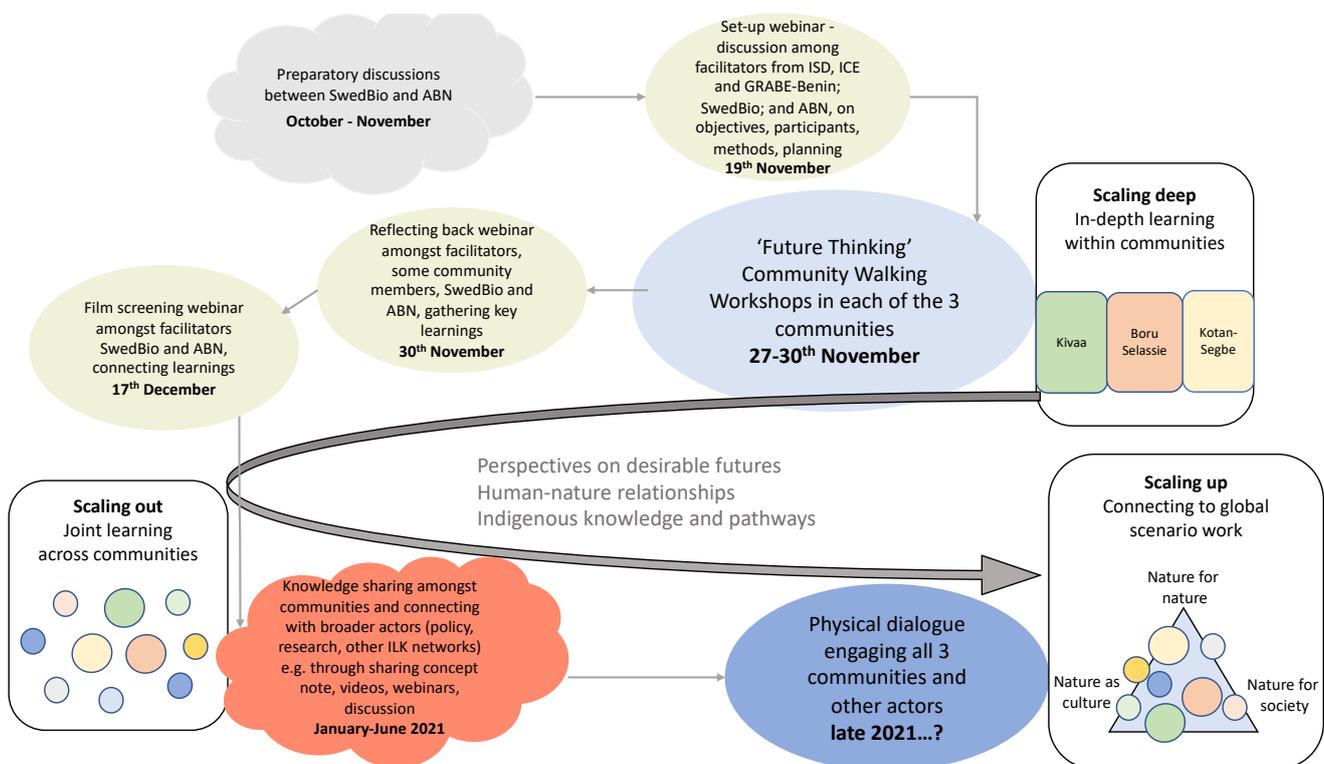


Figure 1. ABN – SwedBio Indigenous futures thinking dialogue process roadmap  
Source: ABN and SwedBio

# African Biodiversity Network: community dialogues, eco-cultural maps and calendars

The African Biodiversity Network (ABN) (Box 3) has, together with its partner organisations and local communities in different African countries, developed and piloted tools and methodologies for collaboration that are founded on communities' identity, cultural values and heritage. Such tools include telling communities' story of origin, community dialogues, eco-cultural maps and eco-cultural calendars. These tools enable communities to reflect on and map out where they came from (the past) and where they are (the present) and to collectively forge a future based on threats and opportunities presented in both situations. During the pandemic, ABN has been engaging with communities and supporting rituals to address the impacts of Covid-19 in ways that create solidarity and trust. Based on earlier experiences from accompanying community dialogues, it is clear that when communities face complex crises, rituals are critical to gather experiences, dreams and knowledge. They activate collective and creative thinking, and are a powerful way to mobilise traditional knowledge by asking for spiritual and ancestral support. These rituals are not only tightly linked to these communities' relationship with nature and knowledge about ecosystems and nature's cycles, but also fundamentally embedded in their worldviews. Thus, they guide futures thinking and form a basis for finding solutions in challenging times.

Tools such as eco-cultural maps and calendars (Box 4) are uniquely applied as per the context of each community – they cannot be cut and pasted from one community to another – although the basic foundational framework is the same. The process is driven by each community's cultural knowledge and can unfold in many different ways depending on the priorities and context for the community at the time. In spite of these differences, communities across Africa working with ABN have shared their respective experiences and learned from each other.

### Box 3. The African Biodiversity Network (ABN)

ABN is a regional network working with partner organisations and communities to develop culturally-centred approaches to social and ecological problems in Africa through sharing experiences, co-developing methodologies and creating a united African voice on the continent on these issues.

First conceived in 1996, ABN now has 35 partners across 12 African countries, and a Secretariat based in Thika, Kenya. ABN envisions “vibrant and resilient African communities rooted in their own biological, cultural, and spiritual diversity, governing their own lives and livelihoods, in harmony with healthy ecosystems”. ABN works with three interrelated thematic areas: *Community Seed and Knowledge (CSK)*, *Community Ecological Governance (CEG)* and *Youth, Culture and Biodiversity (YCB)*.

In a context of declining biodiversity, pressures from climate change, and global paradigms, laws and policies which support and perpetuate exploitation of the environment, the diverse cultural values, traditions and governance systems of African communities are being compromised. In response, ABN is committed to changing behaviours and nurturing collective action towards a more sustainable future, based on reclaiming and using traditional and Indigenous knowledge and methods.

With extensive experience from developing as well as implementing the MEB, ABN has been driven by the principles of equity, reciprocity and usefulness for all involved across their work. The application of the MEB aims to revive Indigenous knowledge, practices and values that have been undermined and suppressed, to revalue and use them to strengthen the community and ecosystem resilience. For further information: <https://africanbiodiversity.org>

#### Box 4: ABN methods: Community dialogues, eco-cultural mapping and eco-cultural calendars

**Community dialogues** are an important aspect for local governance and consensus building, as most community processes require broad-based agreement for their effective implementation. Dialogues can take different forms and participation – either the whole community or a specific sector of the community. They provide the community with a good opportunity for joint reflection, analysis and consensus building on priority actions.

**Eco-cultural mapping** is a participatory process which aims to reveal the deep geography, the cultural vision and meaning of the territory. It develops a collective vision which can help in the reconnection with the past and the understanding of the present and the visioning of the future. The preparation stages before beginning mapping are important for the success of the mapping exercise. The deeper the reflections before the exercise, the clearer the elaboration of the maps and the easier it gets to develop eco-cultural calendars. The maps are critical in helping the wider community to hold a collectively agreed vision of the relations of different elements that interact in the territory over time.

– **Map of the ancestral past:** it helps to bring back the original knowledge and the ancestral order. It shows the way the ancestors used to live according to customary laws, distilling their culture from interactions with the territory. It provides inspiration when drawing the map of the desired future.

– **Map of the present:** it facilitates the analysis of the impacts, transformations and changes that the territory has suffered over time. It included the modern state and the new structures and foreign ways of governing which have been brought to the territory.

– **Map of the future:** it depicts the desired state of the territory which the community envisions and agrees to move towards. It is accompanied by envisioned actions, processes, restoration initiatives, ways for recreation and resurgence. Its development presents an opportunity to examine strengths, weaknesses and potentials in the light of the maps of the past and of the present. The conclusion of the map of the future consolidates future plans or community ecological governance plans. The map also helps to move forward towards a local, collectively agreed and connected future. ▶



The Kivaa community reflecting on their eco-cultural map during the walking workshop event. Photo credit: ICE Kenya.

► **Cont. Box 4: ABN methods: Community dialogues, eco-cultural mapping and eco-cultural calendars**

**Eco-cultural calendars:** The world’s original cultures relate to the reality of time and space in a natural way. Over time, they learnt how to read the cycles and protect nature by evolving appropriate ways of satisfying their human needs while enhancing the source of life. Since ancestral times, the sky and the movement of the celestial bodies have inspired humans to understand the dynamics in nature. This way, they evolved ways of understanding life so that they could weave relationships with time in a cyclical way, and recognise how territory encompasses sacred places and elements. It is therefore very important in processes of cultural resurgence, for the calendars to capture this holistic worldview which sees the relationship between all elements. Cyclical time marks social practices, rituals and celebrations, leadership roles and the dynamic relationship between territory and culture. In this case, any eco-cultural calendar (past, present and future), encompasses the “whole universe”. This translates as follows:

- Outer circle shows what is happening in the cosmos, with the celestial bodies (stars and the moon etc);
- Next layer is what is happening in the ecosystem;
- The following layer of the circle shows what is going on with the domesticated crops and livestock in each season;

- The next layer is the human rituals and ceremonies.
- There may be more layers the community wants to include, but the emphasis is to try to include the whole territory – including the cosmos and the humans.

The development of calendars is a continuous process which stimulates community analysis and research. However, any processes leading to the development of an eco-cultural calendar should ensure that just as in the development of eco-cultural maps, there is a strong and inclusive process with communities where they collectively elaborate the calendars so that a deep understanding of the dynamics of the territory (past and present, with the vision of the future) is achieved before calendars are done. From the whole “universe”, it is possible to zoom in to specific aspects such as doing a calendar for Indigenous crops. This would facilitate more detailed research, analysis and planning by the community themselves.

*Reference: Mburu, 2016.*



The biocultural calendar for Tharaka Nithi, Kenya. Photo credit: P. Malmer.

Until now, most of the interventions relating to communities and enabling learning across communities and with other actors, have encouraged face to face interaction as they strengthen relationship building, connectedness and knowledge sharing through dialogue. However, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, a need to think innovatively about how to maintain these attributes using virtual interactive methods in support of physical meetings emerged. For example, in many places bringing together community participants physically remained possible, which provided an opportunity to keep life experiences at the core of the processes. However, the walking workshops, festivals and network gatherings, where communities and other actors meet to celebrate and join forces beyond the local, were not possible at the time of the dialogue.

ABN and SwedBio saw an opportunity to take cognizance of the challenge brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic which limited travel or public meetings across communities and countries. We jointly created new ways to engage in dialogues using virtual tools and techniques which are already present in communities, e.g., using mobile phones and social media platforms. There are lessons to be learned from community monitoring, which has been explored and practiced through similar approaches. While they cannot match the value of coming together in nature, these approaches carry potential to open up for and engage with many more people.

## ABN and partners contributions to futures thinking

In times of global uncertainty, currently manifested through the unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic and large-scale climate destabilisation, futures thinking is recognised as a key approach to build capacity to deal with complexity and change. Our discussions on the need for futures thinking and

convening spaces for mutual learning connect with other ongoing discussions on uncertainty in different fora nationally and globally, such as in the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). IPBES uses scenarios to engage with possible futures and alternative policy or management options for protecting biodiversity and human wellbeing. In this report, we use ‘futures thinking’ as an umbrella term that includes many different approaches for engaging with the future. For communities this relates to how they are dealing with their own complex challenges; envisioning futures that are sustainable, inclusive and just, and articulating pathways to achieve these futures. This is as critical to them as it is for the world as a whole.

Indigenous and local knowledge is locally based, regionally manifested and globally relevant. The holders and practitioners of Indigenous and local knowledge, such as the communities ABN and its partners are working with, are critical parts of the puzzle for future sustainability. They are governing and managing ecosystems and nurturing nature’s contributions to people on more than a quarter of the Earth’s land surface. Further, Indigenous peoples and local communities maintain diverse and unique values, ways of understanding and visions for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, that are critical to include in practice and policy from local to global scales. Indigenous and local knowledge systems that exist across the world have in common a strong emphasis on responsibility in human-nature relationships, on values and spirituality, and connectedness and relationships with nature, collectivity and communality. Story-telling, cultural practices, ceremonies and rituals are embedded components of enacting visions of the future. Here, ABN experiences and practices represent a unique bridging ground between the Indigenous and local cultures and worldviews and practices, and the science-policy sphere searching for new ways of understanding the complexity of the world.

# Approach and specific objectives of the dialogue

As explained in the previous section, the dialogue process is embedded in, building on and further developing a MEB approach (Box 2). In ABN's work, the MEB aims to revive Indigenous knowledge, practices and values that have been undermined or suppressed, and to revalue and use them to strengthen community and ecosystem resilience today. It promotes respect and collaboration between different knowledge systems in conservation. Every knowledge base needs to be valued and respected for it to be useful. Our

aspiration in the dialogue process was to address futures thinking through a MEB approach, to maintain the integrity of Indigenous and African futures thinking in a way that connects with and leverages the aspirations, needs, and rights of local communities, and that allows for reciprocity and mutual learning. We also built strongly on the work of ABN and partners, based on community dialogues, strong partnership with communities, and applying methods such as eco-cultural mapping and calendars (Box 4).

## Box 5. The 3-horizons approach to future thinking

'Three Horizons thinking' is a method for making sense of and exploring the current situation, innovation and strategic action in the face of uncertainty and not-knowing (Sharpe 2013; Sharpe et al. 2016; see also <https://www.h3uni.org/>). It describes three patterns or ways of doing things and how their relative prevalence and interactions evolve over time.

In the Indigenous futures thinking dialogue, we were inspired by questions used in the 3-horizons approach:

1. What are we worried about in the current situation of "business as usual"?
  2. What are futures that we aspire to?
  3. What is inspirational practice that we see today? What are its roots?
  4. What are innovations in play? Things going on that may contribute to the desired futures?
  5. What are essential features of the current situation that we want to keep?
- (Sharpe et al 2016)

The first question refers to the first horizon – "business as usual" that needs to change. The second question refers to desired futures, a viable world, i.e., the third horizon. The following three questions (3–5) are about the second horizon – "the world in transitions" and concerns what is going on today that can enable transitions towards desired futures. The understanding of the 3-horizon approach says that the change from the established pattern of the first horizon to the emergence of fundamentally new patterns in the third occurs via the transition activity of the second horizon. Thus, the approach helps to think about interacting patterns of change, and that all three are existing in the present time. This means that "there is evidence about the future in how people (including ourselves) are behaving now" (Sharpe, 2013: 2).

The 3-horizons approach is applied in a variety of different contexts. The seeds of the good Anthropocene project (Bennett et al. 2016; <https://goodanthropocenes.net/>) is building on the 3-horizons approach and explicitly targeting "pockets of the future in today's world". In the seeds project, a particular emphasis is put on identifying multiple desirable and plausible futures, and to specifically address and engage with agency for transformative change, i.e., who needs to act and what are the barriers for change. In collaboration with Indigenous communities in the Arctic, the following questions were used in the discussion with elders and with broader community groups:

- What elements present in the system today need to shrink or decrease to be able to achieve the described future?
  - What needs to grow to reach the future?
  - Which actors will contribute to making change happen, what enabling conditions are necessary to support change, what are the barriers to change, and how can we overcome these barriers?
- (Falardeau et al 2019)

Both sets of questions were used in the walking workshop discussions, to different degrees. In the facilitators discussions we also talked about the three horizons, and shared the following short film clip where Kate Raworth explains the approach with a sustainability focus: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_5KfRQjqpPU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5KfRQjqpPU)

Futures thinking can be seen as an umbrella for diverse tools, perspectives and ideas to build preparedness for an uncertain future. In this dialogue process it was important not to use a predefined framework that would constrain or stand in the way of an open and inclusive discussion about Indigenous futures thinking. However, we did find that the 3-horizons approach to futures thinking included guiding questions that were helpful for the communities in re-connecting with the eco-cultural mapping and calendars that had been done before, and to discuss current challenges (Sharpe 2013, Sharpe et al. 2016). Box 5 further presents the 3-horizon approach and the guiding questions used in the community dialogues.

Central in our discussions about Indigenous futures thinking was to connect with the communities and their current realities. The Covid-19 pandemic strongly highlighted the need to be prepared for highly disruptive events – and even though the pandemic has global implications, the impact on peoples' lives played out very differently in different parts of the world. At the time of the walking workshops, the communities were more affected by strict regulations in their respective countries, than by the disease itself. Curfews, lockdowns and restrictions on free movement were also interacting with other stresses such as the locust swarms in East Africa.

In previous dialogues, we have found that that walking workshops have been a constructive and appreciated way to connect high level policy discussions on biodiversity and sustainability with local realities and stakes (e.g., Malmer et al. 2019 Pollination report). Walking together in the landscape is a natural and intuitive way of engaging and thinking jointly about what we can see and what may be done. It facilitates mutual respect and understanding, and creates thinking that can be real and concrete.

## Specific objectives for the partnering communities:

*To strengthen and mobilise Indigenous and local knowledge; support alliance building, resilience and advocacy and intergenerational learning.* The dialogue events are first and foremost for communities to come together in an energising manner, to bring forth their visions and aspirations for the future, and solutions for re-connecting and re-rooting after the last years' challenging experiences of Covid-19 and other sudden shocks, and to connect their experiences with one another.

*To exchange and learn from inspiring and captivating stories to strengthen themselves and motivate others.* With the consent of communities, the stories can be documented while communities are engaging in dialogue activities, walking and conversations, and explaining their maps and calendars.

*To connect with and strengthen a process of re-rooting people's connectedness to their culture and to nature for healing of their land and wellbeing, and for biodiversity conservation and restoration.*

*Through virtual dialogues and walking workshops, to provide opportunities for experiential learning and further exchange through e.g., ABN partner communities and others from the network of Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and local knowledge (COD-ILK). When communities wish, they can also invite researchers, policymakers and other actors, to connect and learn with them in different contexts where they trust that their knowledge, experiences and arguments are listened to.*

## Objectives for ABN and partner organisations:

*To share experiences in additional community dialogues, walking workshops, stories of origin, eco-maps, eco-calendars, and build further on gained experiences of virtual community dialogues.* Dialogues are a foundation of ABN's work. ABN are facilitating dialogues in support of communities to understand how their cultures and knowledge better serve them ecologically and to better connect with local organisations and potential partners that have common interests.

*To support communities in futures thinking and scenario building based on ABN methods for eco-cultural mapping.* To build on the advantage of their maps of their past and present which will inspire them to creatively come up with maps of the future which demonstrates their 'life plan'.

*To test and develop new methods for community dialogues, especially around innovative ways to accompany communities using various digital meeting formats, which can also facilitate connectedness and interactions between communities.*

Further, the futures thinking dialogue process creates new opportunities for ABN, partner organisations and communities to link their experiences of futures thinking and scenario building through their own methods, such as eco-cultural mapping, eco-cultural calendars and community dialogues. It thus contributes to futures thinking beyond the community and network level. In the long term, opportunities may arise for impacts on policy and decision making in favour of the biocultural governance systems practiced locally.

## Objectives for the local – global linking of futures thinking:

*To provide critical insights on transformative pathways for the future, building on Indigenous and local knowledge perspectives through a ‘bottom-up’ scenario process, and on how such futures can be actively supported, strengthened and secured.*

*To broaden the understanding of futures thinking tools and approaches including story-telling, cultural practices, ceremonies and rituals as important embedded components of enacting visions and building agency to move forward.*

*To deepen the understanding of diverse worldviews, values and ways of knowing for sustainable futures, including reconnecting with what is considered a good quality of life in different cultures, the role of human-nature relationships, and not least the spiritual aspects of nature and well-being.*

*To allow for shared learning in dialogues based on equity, reciprocity and usefulness for all involved, about ways to engage with diverse lived experiences in scenarios aggregated at regional and global level.*

Here, ABN and partner organisations’ experiences and practices represent a unique bridging ground between the Indigenous and local cultures and worldviews and practices, and the science-policy sphere searching for new ways of understanding the complexity of the world.



The landscape of Kivaa hill, Kenya. Walking together in the landscape among different kinds of actors is a natural and intuitive way of engaging and thinking jointly about challenges and how to address them. Photo credit: P. Malmer.

# The futures thinking community dialogue process

The idea of a dialogue around Indigenous future thinking emerged through discussions between ABN, their partner organisations ICE, ISD and GRABE-Benin, and SwedBio at the end of 2019. In conversation, the ambition to bring communities from various countries together to exchange knowledge via walking workshops, as part of broader objectives of strengthening the voice of Indigenous peoples and local communities in future thinking and global scenarios, emerged. In the beginning of 2020, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, with its consequences, brought on a challenge for this planned dialogue. But the working group at the time decided to pursue the plans for a dialogue process in some form, and to adapt the dialogue format to include virtual interactions.

From ABN's communication with local partner organisations, communities across the African continent expressed that now, in these challenging and uncertain times, it is crucial to come together, to practice rituals, and to find solutions and ways forward. They welcomed the opportunity to meet and reflect together, while respecting social distancing and hygiene rules. It became clear that maintaining dialogues at community level would not only be useful and appropriate, but also energising for the communities. While the dialogue concept was refined, ABN and partners ICE in Kenya, ISD in Ethiopia, and GRABE-Benin in Benin invited communities with which they were

already in collaboration with to the dialogue process. The communities were identified based on their experience with the methods of eco-cultural mapping and calendars, but also based on the relevance and usefulness for them to engage in dialogue. Engagement with the communities is built on principles of equal sharing and joint learning across knowledge systems and cultures, on ABN methods, experiences and trust from working with these communities over time. The facilitators of the community dialogues were familiar with both the process and the community from previous engagement.

Box 6, 7 and 8 present the three communities, their setting and interests for engaging in the dialogue. In collaboration, we developed a plan for a dialogue process with three initial steps (see figure 1): Preparation and planning among facilitators and with communities; followed by futures thinking' walking workshops in three communities; and finally online meetings arranged to share experiences and learning across communities and project partners.

These three steps were implemented from November 2020 to January 2021 and are presented below. From the beginning, it was also agreed that the process would continue and the following steps would include interactions with other actors, including from IPBES assessments and its bodies, and other relevant science-policy-practice platforms. Appendix I includes a detailed timeline of the different activities so far.



Women from Kotan-Segbe community in Sado-Avrankou, Benin, in the initial mapping exercise (map of the present). Eco-cultural mapping was a starting point for reflection on the future in the three communities. Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.

### Box 6. Kivaa community in Eastern Kenya

Kivaa forested Hill serves as an important rangeland watershed in the semi-arid area in Eastern Kenya and makes immense economic, social and ecological contributions to the local community's wellbeing. However, despite its crucial role, Kivaa watershed has been degraded due to uncontrolled use (the tragedy of commons) and unsustainable practices that threaten the existing natural resource base by compromising its capacity to provide ecosystem goods and services, especially forage and water resources. Kivaa is located in Machakos County in the lower eastern Kenya, which has an altitude ranging from 600 to 1100 m above sea level and annual rainfall in the range from 600 to 1150 mm. Mean annual temperature is around 28°C.

Kivaa is occupied largely by the Kamba ethnic community which is dominant in the lower eastern Kenya. The Kamba community are a constituent tribe of the Eastern Bantu in Kenya and their ethnic language is Kikamba. Their territory as a whole is termed as Ukambani. They occupy the lower eastern part of Kenya and are distributed among three counties, namely, Machakos, Kitui and Makueni. They comprise of many clans which are dispersed over the territory including the *Aombe, Akitutu, Auani, Atangwa, Atwii, Akitondo and Ethanga* clans. Since the beginning of time, Kamba ancestors depended on sacred natural sites for their spiritual, social, ecological and other forms of governance for the greater good of the community. In other words, sacred natural sites are the bedrock of the symbiotic relationship between Kambas, their ancestors and their Creator. Due to their agropastoral way of life the Kamba community tends to keep livestock and engage in arable farming as well. Due to frequent droughts in the area surrounding Kivaa Hill, there has been some degree of encroachment into the forested watershed and some parts had at some point been cleared for settlement thereby putting this rich ecosystem at risk of further deterioration.

From the year 2008 Kivaa community approached the Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), to support their conservation efforts. With support from ICE and the African Biodiversity Network (ABN), Kivaa community led by elders started engaging in dialogues on how to protect and conserve Kivaa Hill which had suffered a lot of degradation. They also brought along younger people in what they called intergenerational dialogues. These dialogues culminated in the development of eco-cultural calendars and maps as tools to guide in ecological reconstruction which was done in partnership with ICE and with support from the ABN among other partners. Over the years, the community has come to appreciate Kivaa Hill as a critical watershed. Elders have been leading the rehabilitation process using Kamba traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

Thus from 2008, ICE has been partnering with the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) and the Kivaa (and Tharaka) communities in the process of conserving critical ecosystems such as sacred natural sites and water catchments as well as restoring disappearing Indigenous and traditional seed varieties. These communities are more seed and food secure at the moment. The communities remain focused on reclaiming harmony with nature through intergenerational dialogues and the performance of rituals geared towards remediation of the environment or the earth whenever it is hurt by unsustainable livelihood activities. Through these rituals, practices and initiatives, the ecological integrity of the earth/local environment and critical ecosystems such as forests, sacred natural sites, and riverine, have been restored. Cases of encroachment and destruction of these ecosystems have been reduced and the communities are enjoying more ecosystem services such as increased water availability, fresh air and the return of animals like primates in the restored ecosystems.

#### Community-led walking workshop

ICE spearheaded a three-day workshop in Kivaa in Masinga subcounty of Machakos County in Eastern Kenya. The participants included the elders from the Akamba Custom which are locally considered as custodians of community culture and traditions. The community-led walking workshop was divided into three aspects/activities namely;

- Day 1 – Pre-workshop – review of previous eco-cultural maps and calendars and seed work
- Day 2 – Revisiting the eco-cultural mapping and calendar journey and the implementation of action plans. Community dialogues revolving around or focusing on the journey of restoration (recuperation and multiplication) of Indigenous and traditional seed varieties
- Day 3 – The elder-led dialogues focusing on intergenerational knowledge transfer and its application in restoration of critical ecosystems like the Kivaa Sacred Hill.

The activities undertaken during the walking workshop were geared towards achieving a number of specific objectives namely:

1. Deepen local communities' relationship with nature and reconnect their culture and history with their landscape;
2. Support communities in strengthening their plans and visions for their future, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars;
3. Position and empower the communities to reorient and refocus their thinking towards coping with emerging issues and challenges such as Covid-19, locust outbreaks and climate change among others.

**Cont. Box 6. Kivaa community in Eastern Kenya**



Kivaa sacred Hill. Photo credit: ICE, Kenya.



Discussion amongst Kivaa community women during the community-led walking workshop. Photo credit: ICE, Kenya.

### Box 7. Kotan-Segbe community in Sado – Avrankou, Benin

Today, protected areas are the cornerstones of national and international biodiversity and cultural conservation strategies. They act as refuges for species and ecological processes that cannot survive in intensively used land and seascapes. They also provide space for ecological restoration. Humans benefit from the genetic potential of wild species, the environmental benefits derived from natural ecosystems, the recreational opportunities they provide and the refuge they provide for traditional and vulnerable societies. They also hold a symbolic significance for the heritage of a country and its people.

In Benin there are nearly 3000 sacred forests that do not fall under designated protected areas. They are of varying sizes, ranging from a few acres to hundreds of hectares (Sinsin et al. 2010). Communities commonly have several sacred sites where rituals in honour of the spirits and ancestors take place for the well-being of the population.

Because of the many functions that forests and sacred sites play in the life of communities through the ancestral Vodou religion, they have been considered for many years as an important tool for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ancestral knowledge of God through the four elements: Air-Water-Fire-Earth. Indeed, they are examples of local traditions that contribute to the safeguarding of endangered flora and fauna as well as the well-being of the humans. However, several factors are currently contributing to their decline, including population growth, land clearance and bush fires, uncontrolled expansion of settlements, erosion of traditional religious beliefs and weakened power of religious leaders. The future of wild flora and fauna is linked to the implementation of sustainable development policies, rational use of resources and ecosystem conservation policies, and continued secured governance and rights of Indigenous peoples over their lands, territories and resources.

The site is located in the village of Kotan in the arrondissement of Sado, Commune of Avrankou. The Orozoun Kotan-Segbe forest is located in the village of Katé-Kliko, which is also in the arrondissement of Sado, Commune of Avrankou. The sacred Oro forest is rich in biodiversity, including rare endemic plant and animal species, a few of which are threatened by extinction. The forest is particular in that it is bordered by wetlands and rivers, which have not only provided water to support the community's agricultural activities, but also led

them to develop a sacred relationship with water and a sense of protection granted by this water, with knowledge that has been transmitted through generations. The forest has become an education site for the youth, other communities and various other actors. Unfortunately, over the years the forest has progressively losing its extent area, along with the loss of biodiversity and of sacred places, due to Indigenous communities being dispossessed from their lands, and lack of conservation efforts in the region. Deforestation has led to a disconnection of communities with their ancestral traditions. To restore and safeguard this forest and revive people's connection to the forest, the organisation GRABE-Benin started listening to and holding dialogues with the community. An inventory of the sacred forest's plant and animal biodiversity was made. Several conflicts around this forest have been settled and a map was made to fully grasp the extent of the forest and its virtues. Based on the law on the official recognition of forests in Benin, GRABE-Benin accompanied the community to ask the local government to recognise their sacred forest as a protected area. This is an ongoing process, and once this forest is recognised, GRABE-Benin will accompany the community in organising annual rituals to revive the sacred spaces of this forest, so that the elders can transmit the ancestral knowledge and pass it on to the next generations. During such rituals, people pray for rain and peace in the community. At the centre of community led processes for conservation of the forest, is the conservation of the sacred relation that people have with nature. The forest heals, protects, feeds, shelters, and educates, should also do so for future generations.

The community-led walking workshop provided an opportunity to exchange experiences and identify community needs. The three-day walking workshop is a first introduction but has allowed the realities of the rural world to be understood in terms of agriculture, culture, worship and natural resource management. Along with the continued Indigenous futures thinking process, the community mapping of Kotan and Katé will be carried out to plan the development of these localities in the short, medium and long term, with a particular focus on future generations.

Cont. Box 7. Kotan-Segbe community in Sado – Avrankou, Benin



Exchange visit to a field in Kotan-Segbe with other communities, showcasing the map of the present prepared by the community.  
Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.



Exchange visit to a field in Kotan-Segbe with other communities, showcasing the map of the present prepared by the community.  
Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.

**Box 8: Boru Selassie community in Dessie, Ethiopia**

The Boru Selassie community is located in Dessie town in the Masale Kebele, Wollo province, which is situated in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, some 400 km North East of Addis Ababa. The community of Boru Selassie predominantly consists of small-scale farmers, and communities' livelihoods and food security are sustained by agricultural activities. The community have a rich culture and traditions, particularly around seeds, soils, herbs, seasons, farming, social cohesion, and local governance systems. The role of Indigenous, locally-adapted seed and traditional knowledge, especially women's knowledge, is as important to their identity as it is to their food sovereignty. The community also maintains its traditional institutions and hence has high social cohesion. Some institutions such as *edir/kire*, *shengo*, *debo*, *dua*, etc remain important for the community to uphold their values. They are also relevant to ensure peace, stability, responsibility and accountability for one another.

The community of Boru Selassie has been facing challenges. In the Amhara region as a whole seed insecurity is widespread, primarily because of the promotion and supply of improved varieties of seeds and commercial fertilizer by the government extension system. This is posing a threat to Indigenous varieties of seeds protected and preserved by the community for centuries. The landscape around Boru Selassie has been facing degradation, and in the most recent years, accelerating deforestation has also been a problem. The most significant land cover change in the past 50 years has been the increase of tree farming of Eucalyptus trees around farm plots. The community has also seen the impacts of climate change first hand. Swarms of locusts have devastated food crops and production systems in recent years. Moreover, the Indigenous knowledge and deep wisdom of elders, especially around food and seed, is disappearing.

Despite these challenges, the lives of the people of Boru Selassie are stories of innovation, adaptation and adjustment. They have been highly dedicated to modifying and developing their production systems, and have engaged in rehabilitation of hillsides and hilltops and soil and water conservation closely with local government. Revival of local wheat and barley varieties, which communities have used in dishes and drinks for many generations, has also been a focus of the community.

In the past 3–4 years, ISD has been working with the Boru Selassie community on implementation of agroecological farming and restoration and preservation of Indigenous seed systems. While most of the focus has been on community seed governance, local seed system revival, towards more

nutritious, resilient and culturally rooted varieties, ISD have also been supporting the revival of local knowledge and traditional practices, re-connecting the youth to their traditions, values and culture, and community ecological governance and advocacy. Due to its rich culture, sustainable farming techniques and resilience, Boru Selassie has the potential to be a model for many communities around the area.

**The community-led walking workshop**

Participants brought many different knowledge systems to the workshop, coming from local communities, academia, government, community-based organisations, and women and youth groups. Prior to the workshop, they had been oriented about the importance of collaboration between Indigenous knowledge systems and scientific knowledge, to be prepared in the workshop to learn from observations of nature, cultural practices and interaction with elders in the field. Welcoming participants to the workshop, Ato Mohammed was dressed in an attire reflecting the culture of the community as a show of respect to the guests. The workshop began with a coffee ceremony and blessings from senior elders.

Ato Mohammed and Ato Awol presented the eco-cultural maps of the past, present, and future of the community which had been done through extensive community dialogue processes over the last two years. They explained the territorial landscape and its social, cultural and natural features since ancestral time. While presenting the maps, elders revealed their deep knowledge about community ecological governance including a step-by-step process and the array of agronomic, cultural and spiritual practices that have sustained community life for centuries.

Challenges facing the community emerged during the walking workshop. Workshop participants were put into three groups, each guided by elders who took them deep into the Boru Selassie community. Elders and young farmers explained to scientists, development practitioners and other professionals their various perspectives of the landscape and described elements of living close to nature. Elders who led the walking workshop re-affirmed the fact that their knowledge about farming, livestock management, natural medicine, food culture, and other socio-cultural practices has come through inter-generational learning, inherited from their ancestors.

**Cont. Box 8: Boru Selassie community in Dessie, Ethiopia**

One of the walking workshop groups discussing their past, present and futures while walking in their environment and reflecting on nature and resources. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia



With the use of the community's eco-cultural maps, an elder of the community explains and discusses the past and the present of their natural environment, the impact of humans upon the vegetation cover, the soil and water, what the community lost and how to recover what has been lost. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia.

## Step 1: Preparation and planning among facilitators and with communities

Several virtual meetings were held to share perspectives and interests among the dialogue partners, jointly develop the objectives, and plan the community-led walking workshops and possibilities for sharing the experiences. How could it be possible to enable those who are far away to be virtually present in the community dialogues (i.e., ABN and SwedBio teams, ABN partner communities, and international partners)? The facilitators had the ambition to livestream some of the sessions and discussions happening in the communities through social media platforms (such as Facebook), or to use an online meeting platform (such as Zoom) so people could join in real time.

However, due to unreliable internet connection in communities, as well as the fact that language barriers would have been difficult to address when live streaming, the facilitators decided to document the dialogue sessions by video recording. Then video clips could be prepared and shared in virtual sessions instead. It was also discussed that this could in fact enable the participation of more actors. It was seen as a better way to share community knowledge and dialogue outcomes with other communities, since it meant that the recordings could be edited and that translation via voice-over, narration or subtitles, could be added before sharing with others.

The three partner organisations ICE in Kenya, GRABE-Benin in Benin, and ISD in Ethiopia were in charge of logistics and technology. The options for documentation and sharing largely differed between the communities. Deciding the best way to document the community dialogues was a process in each organisation and community based on the available tools and conditions. This was part of the exploration and sharing of experiences and contributed to ABN further building capacity in this regard.

Pre-dialogues or preparatory discussions were held in all three communities to secure mutual interest and benefits, and jointly agree on how to run the dialogue. A critical component here was the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) conversation with the community.

An important part of the preparation was the development of the Commitment of Conduct, which guides in particular the participation beyond the community, and the travelling of knowledge shared in the dialogue. (see Appendix II).

## Step 2: 'Futures thinking' community-led walking workshops in three communities

The community-led walking workshops were held over two or three days. Each walking workshop was developed in collaboration with the respective community to ensure relevance for them and their situation and priorities at the time. This meant that the focus and type of participants were somewhat different in the three communities, as can be seen in Box 6–8. Selection of participants was based on connecting different knowledge systems in relation to dealing with future challenges.

In addition to community members, participants included local and regional government representatives and external experts related to topics in focus in the respective settings (such as tourism in Ethiopia and medicine in Benin). In each workshop, walking together in the landscape was a key component for sharing knowledge, probing, discussing and learning. The sets of questions in Box 5 were guiding the discussions.

Workshops in the communities were held in local languages, and at times in a mix of local languages and official country languages. As Benin is a French-speaking country and because a large portion of the population is illiterate, the exchanges during this workshop took place in the local languages of the communities or in French for the resource persons who shared their knowledge, but always translated into the local languages. Interventions in the field or interviews were conducted either in the local languages or in French.

As discussed beforehand, parts of the workshops were filmed and documented by the facilitators. Along with the community, they decided which partners could be shared with others and brought to the online meetings. The video clips were combined into a video about each workshop, and narrated in English or translated.

### Step 3: Online meetings to share experience and learning across communities and project partners

Following the walking workshops, the facilitators convened and discussed the outcomes and planned the online meetings. When possible, community members took part in these meetings. The prepared videos were shared so that it was possible for all participants to watch them prior to the meeting. Instable internet connections were a challenge, particularly for Benin who struggled to upload the video in

time for the meeting, but for most participants it was possible to watch the videos and participate in the discussions, despite some delays.

In an online meeting, all the project partners, including elders and other community members, watched the video clips together and opened up for discussion about the experiences in the different communities. In the online meeting – as well as in the community interactions – translation by culturally confident interpreters was key. The facilitators, who have experience of working in the communities, fulfilled this role during the online sharing meeting.



Before the walking workshop begins, the Boru Selassie community reflects based on their eco-cultural maps. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia.

# Some outcomes and insights from the community dialogues

Here we present some of the experiences from the community dialogues that emerged from connecting and revisiting the eco-cultural mapping and calendars within the current situation, inspired by the questions in Box 5. First, we discussed the aspect of re-rooting, core aspects of the life and culture that the community wants to keep. We then reflected on what needs to change, to be challenged and transformed, in the current system. Lastly, we present discussions on pathways forward – what needs to grow to reach desired futures and how this could happen.

## What communities want to keep – re-rooting

Core discussions in the three communities were: the revitalisation of customary governance and the potential for strengthening customary law; conflict resolution mechanisms; and ceremonies and rituals to address some of the challenges they are experiencing. The eco-cultural mapping and other previous community dialogues were important to reconnect with the knowledge, practices, rules and structures that constitute governance. The following text describes key aspects of customary governance that were brought up in the walking workshops as important to nurture and keep for the future.

Sacred forests and other sacred sites were a prominent part of re-rooting in all three communities. They featured strongly in the mapping and previous community dialogues. Sacred natural sites are critical places within ecosystems. They can be forests, mountains, rivers and source of water that hold an ecological, cultural and spiritual importance, and exist as a network embedded within a territory (ICE, ABN and the Gaia Foundation, 2012). The sacred nature and meaning of an ecosystem or place will differ among communities, but generally involves the spiritual connections between people, nature and territory. Different rituals and practices may be associated with different sites.

In Kivaa, the community came together at one *Mathembo*, which is the local term for the sacred natural sites, during the walking workshop. They have done an extensive mapping of their network of sacred sites as part of the ecocultural mapping. During the workshop they discussed restoration of sites and what challenges the custodians of the sacred sites (elders) are facing, especially in relation to neighbouring communities and critical ecosystems such as catchments and springs.

In Kotan-Segbe, the workshop walked to a 1-ha sacred forest and elaborated on the importance of the forest for protecting the land and the biodiversity. GRABE-Benin has a long history of working for the recognition and support of



Dialogue and exchange at the entrance to the Kotan-Segbe sacred forest. Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.

the networks of sacred sites across Benin. Aware of the fact that most of the forest cover is degraded and fragmented and that Benin has experienced significant deforestation over the last thirty years, the communities, who have been adequately informed, have seen the urgent need to ensure that the provisions of the Interministerial Order No. 0121, setting out the conditions for the sustainable management of the sacred forests in Benin are applied. The law, passed in 2012, recognised sacred forests and the communities as the custodians who protect them. It was also a good opportunity for them to speed up the process of legal recognition of their forest, integration into the system of protected areas in Benin and to set up sustainable forest management bodies in accordance with the decree. The reforestation of forests and sacred sites with the organisation of traditional rituals, and its relation to community welfare, was discussed by participants.

In Boru Selassie, the participants shared that burial grounds and shrines are covered with Indigenous trees and contain a variety of species. In the Ethiopian context, even though sacred sites hold different meanings and definitions depending on the local context, they are places where spiritual activities and rituals happen. All beliefs and religions are respected in such spaces.

In Kivaa and Boru Selassie, mapping and strengthening of customary law was part of the ecocultural mapping. Ceremonies, rituals and prayers are ways to re-root and reconnect with the landscape and history, and are

expressions of adherence to the law. If laws have been broken, rituals can restore balance, coexistence and harmony in the community. In Kivaa, the communities have started to revitalise tri-annual and annual rituals at sacred sites and rivers, which are also connected to customary laws and practices. Ad hoc rituals are held in response to challenges such as pest attacks. Rituals play an important role when facing new challenges and understanding how to deal with them. One current example is the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges brought by the restrictions to prevent the spread of the disease. The pandemic shows that the order of things has been broken, that the ancestors are upset, and rituals are needed to appease the ancestors and receive wisdom about how to deal with the situation.

Customary governance also includes social values and norms, such as hospitality, intergenerational learning and respect, as well as oral traditions and practices for preserving knowledge. This was explained in detail in the Boru Selassie dialogue. The community expressed a desire to preserve their social norms and customary practices, including procedures and customary regulations of Indigenous social institutions such as *edir*, a communal financial support system based on solidarity and trust. They also highlighted the important role of ceremonies and related prayers in conflict resolution as well as intergenerational learning. During the walking workshop, the elder Ato Mohammed explained: *“Through our traditional institutions such as edir/kire, we maintained our culture of supporting one another. Our*



Customary governance reflected in the landscape during the walking workshop in Boru Selassie. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia.

*communal life is significantly intertwined with one another and nature. For example, we have a mechanism to provide support for those who might lose their loved ones and wedding times. Our debo institution helps us to offer labour support to harvest one's crop in the field. Shengo is a traditional court system in which any level of conflict between individuals will be solved through an established system that addresses people's physical and psychological problems. In our dua cultural institution, we conduct prayers and rituals of different kinds. For example, we conduct rituals during harvesting, weddings, mourning, and when we seek rains. We conducted rituals when Covid-19 pandemic emerged and you can see that the pandemic hasn't harmed us so far."*

The Kamba community in Kivaa has ecological laws and practices that have been followed and practiced by their ancestors since the creation of the universe (*Mwambiio*). In every generation, certain individuals were chosen on spiritual grounds by the elders to be trained and taught on the cultural and spiritual practices of our community. *"The Kamba Laws of Origin flow from and are centred around Mathembo, the sacred natural sites."* remarked Munguti Kabibya, lead elder in Kivaa. *"These laws ensure continued protection of the natural ecosystems which were and still are our sources of livelihoods and for maintenance of the well-*



Display of Akamba Indigenous seeds in Kivaa. Photo credit: ICE Kenya.

*being of our human and other communities of the living"* he adds. Since colonial times, all these laws and practices were demonised after adoption of the Western culture. Following the threats to sacred natural sites and neglect of ecological laws, the elders of Kivaa came together in order to revive, validate and regenerate the Kamba Indigenous laws. With support from ICE and the National Museums of Kenya, a series of meetings were held over several years to document these laws for the current and future generations.



Akamba custom of different usages of herbs explained by an elder in the Kivaa community-led walking workshop participants, including the village administrator (right). Photo credit: ICE Kenya.

The communities also talked about agroecology practices and other practices based on their knowledge that are important for the future. There are many examples from the three dialogues. In Kivaa, the revitalisation of the Indigenous seeds is closely connected to rituals and sacred sites. Taking care of the farm is connected to taking care of the forest. Also, the Boru Selassie community wants to continue the work to recover lost seeds of barley, wheat, and rye, and the knowledge systems associated with them. Water challenges were a key concern and they discussed the acts to restore natural resources including springs and biodiversity, including planting Indigenous trees that can help conserve water. The multiple values of Indigenous plants, for water, medicines, rituals, and household uses were brought forward - in contrast to the problematic eucalyptus. In Kotan-Segbe, the walking workshop participants walked through agricultural fields and visited farmers and women's market gardening groups. This trip helped to understand the difficulties of communities to promote agroecology in an environment where others adopt chemical fertilizers. The difficulties of post-harvest losses and the protection of ancestral vegetables and their values were discussed. Knowledge of local medicinal plants that could strengthen the immune system was also discussed with participating health practitioners. Seed recovery and the development of community seed banks were also discussed.

## What needs to be challenged and transformed

The participants in Boru Selassie had a detailed discussion of things that need to change. Land scarcity, population growth and water shortages are major problems in the community. They are concerned with inappropriate land use and farming practices, such as the expansion of Eucalyptus tree plantations also on farm land, with implications for water scarcity, the ploughing of sloping fields and open grazing. Youth migration is undermining farming livelihoods. Young women being sent to Arab countries to look for income needs to stop. They were also discussing changing values, demonstrated through for example: the disrespect of elders, nature and sacred sites; personal greed at the expense of community interest; and the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge in formal education. Barriers to change are demography of the community, youth unemployment and migration, natural resources depletion and the impact of climate change.

In Kotan-Segbe, an urgent concern was the challenges faced by the Covid-19 restrictions, which have caused challenges for farming and loss of opportunities to connect with markets. Strong pressure on land and soil degradation were key concerns. The recognition of women's roles is important for the conservation of natural resources, endogenous knowledge and rituals to be sustained.



Community exchanges with market gardening women in Kotan-Segbe in a vegetable field. Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.



Women market-gardening farmers from the Kotan farm-school taking part in the walking workshop. Photo credit: GRABE-Benin ONG.

The Kivaa community want to continue protecting and conserving the sacred Hill because of its ecological benefits. However, with amendments in the Kenyan forest Act to allow for non-extractive use of such ecosystems, the community faces the challenge of some community members routing for engagement in ecotourism to bring income to the local community. The elders face an uphill task of giving

guidance on the future of community members' interaction with the Hill. There is a need to connect with the government law, so that it can support the community, rather than counteracting their plans. Organisations such as ICE will also be required to give wise guidance on how to marry ecological and economic benefits which is not an easy task.



(from left to right): Kaya forests chairman sharing experiences in rehabilitating forests; Akamba Custom chair giving the chronology of the Kivaa Hill restoration journey; Showing reappeared wild fruit important in healing the stomach in Kivaa Hill. Photo credit: ICE Kenya.

## Pathways forward – what needs to grow and how

In Kotan-Segbe, the communities expressed their desire to continue promoting agroecology, valuing ancestral vegetables and conserving traditional seeds. The participants engaged with different innovations and agroecological practices, including the diverse uses of cacao, local vegetables and soap making. The exchanges around medicines and strengthening health was greatly appreciated.

In Boru Selassie, the workshop participants identified that to reach the futures they want, they want to grow and expand the revival of the local seed system and cultivate perishing crops, and they want to maintain and plant Indigenous trees and forest to provide multiple benefits to humans and the environment. Juniperus and other Indigenous species could reverse the dependence on eucalyptus. They want to improve the land use system for agriculture and forestry - they see that government extension is not working well. Building awareness of locally rooted solutions and continuing community dialogue for the revival of useful traditions and practices is a way forward, and workshop participants specifically mentioned the importance of respect for women, elderly and children in this work. Important enabling conditions for change are the community traditions and

practices, sustainable farming practices, a community of wise elders, the possibility of partnerships among different actors and a motivated community. The walking workshop provided opportunities to connect with local authorities and find ways forward to implement these plans.

In view of the challenges facing critical ecosystems due to climate change and increase in demand for more land for food production that accompanies the increase in population, local communities need to scale up their efforts to protect their critical ecosystems such as forests and water catchments, among others. The community-led walking workshops with invited external actors supported the identification on concrete actions. In Kivaa, it was considered that the performance of earth-centred conservation rituals to potentiate the sacred ecosystems should be enhanced, and that more sensitisation campaigns were needed. The traditional institutions of governance need to be strengthened to continue to play their role in environmental governance and to act as custodians of culture and Indigenous knowledge. This is a way for the critical ecosystems to be safeguarded from the capitalistic push that is characteristic of the current world economic order. In addition, local communities need to brace themselves to deal with upcoming shocks from pandemics, economic meltdown and climate change among others through resilience building.



Elders reflecting on the challenges and future opportunities with farming land in the community of Boru Selassie. The impact of human activities on the vegetation cover, the soil and water, what the community lost and how to recover what has been lost was discussed. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia.



Participants discuss the future opportunities regarding seed revival and restoration and the role of community-led initiatives. Photo credit: ISD Ethiopia.

## *Futures thinking as a way to connect re-rooting with the challenges of today and build understanding across scales and generations*

In the online sharing and discussions after the community dialogues, the value of walking together in the landscape was highlighted. It was a good way of connecting experiences from different actors and speak freely and openly about key concerns. In Kivaa and Boru Selassie, the maps and calendars created by the communities in previous dialogues were found to be very useful for formulating future visions and walking in the landscape was a way to connect the maps with the situation and challenges that the communities are facing in the present moment. Intensive community dialogues can support the community in realising and articulating their situation and find solutions together. Walking in the landscape enables co-creation of knowledge among different kinds of actors and experts, but led and guided by the community to secure relevance for their situation. Ecocultural mapping and calendars entail that such co-creation of knowledge and action is influenced by, and connecting, the past, present and future.

We found that the Covid-19 pandemic created incentives to think about future uncertainties and how things may evolve and develop. But it was also clear that the communities were, before Covid-19, already dealing with many different challenges which are affecting their future now – it is a lot about making decisions in the present, responding to many uncertainties and concerns. Re-rooting is a way to mobilise existing knowledge and practices and the landscape itself, and bring it into the discussions on navigating into the future. The communities saw great potential in futures thinking as an opportunity to address current challenges. They also appreciated that their insights and reflections can be of value for others, and contribute to greater sustainability beyond the communities. Starting with the reality of their own communities helped secure usefulness for all involved, i.e., that the process created direct relevance for the communities.

Another reflection is about bringing in external actors. The walking workshops were held by and for the communities. They invited actors that could support them in addressing key challenges, such as local governments, medical doctors, journalists, and knowledgeable people outside of the community itself. This became a way of connecting local with global actors that are important for communities' agendas - so that communities could voice their concerns and solutions. Local governments and decision

makers often learn from communities' approach to going back to the root of the problems to find solutions. Walking workshops also present an opportunity for customary governance actors and national or local governance actors to come together. Moreover, the mapping exercises that had been done before within the communities were an essential platform for them to collectively mobilise their knowledge as a community, articulate their concerns and identify ways forward that made sense to them. This means that they are interacting with decision makers from a strengthened position, building on their own entry points, understanding and world views. Walking workshops for approaching the future benefits from earlier mobilisation of Indigenous and local knowledge, and involving local governments and other key actors can actually support the communities and their pathway forward right away.

The role and importance of ceremonies and rituals became clear in the three communities. As part of the workshop practice, ceremonies brought people together and built legitimacy and strength to the dialogues. But revitalising rituals is also essential for re-rooting. As responses to crises, such as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and locust outbreaks, rituals are a way to handle stress in communities. They are a foundation for collective actions and provides energy to imagine the future together. They represent existing ways to coming together to find solutions to problems that are part of customary governance. A central reflection and source of discussion between the communities was about the importance of bringing in the youth, connecting the youth and the elders, ways to do so and creating spaces for the

intergenerational learning essential for maintaining customary governance and dynamic knowledge systems.

Live participation and interactions are of course superior to filming and interactions online, with all the challenges this entails. However, it was discussed that the documentation and filming of the workshop can be part of building identity and developing a shared story, and to enable interactivity across communities in an easy way. Video clips from a process act as a snap-shot and a summary – a lot of information is lost but it is also an opportunity to process and think together about what to share and how. Watching film clips together online created a shared experience and good foundation for enriched discussions about local realities and conditions. ABN has a long history of using movies for documenting and sharing their methods and practices. The technology needed is no longer strange or foreign to the communities, and many use mobile phones and can benefit from live streaming using Facebook or other platforms – even if internet access in many cases is a real challenge. Technology for communities to connect with others has in many cases been advancing and innovated due to the necessity to stay in touch during the pandemic, and is here to stay with communities. It is evolving with their capacities to use it for their own purposes, including revitalisation and recognition of Indigenous and local knowledge and Indigenous peoples and local communities' rights. However, process documentation raises new questions about FPIC and sharing. The notion of commitment of conduct can be developed further to accompany FPIC agreements.



The cultivated landscape of the Kivaa community, who are working to revive traditional seeds and crops. In Kivaa, the revitalisation of the Indigenous seeds and crops is closely connected to the management of their sacred sites, forests and other ecosystems. Photo credit: P. Malmer

# Forward looking – what are next steps in imagining Indigenous futures?

Indigenous and local knowledge, practices and customary governance systems are dynamic and changing in nature. They are central for communities to deal with everyday realities and challenges. Coming together to address the future to make better informed decisions in the present is an embedded component of these governance systems. We see great potential and need to continue an open process for mobilising and strengthening Indigenous futures thinking and inviting and making relevant connections with national, regional, and international science-policy-practice platforms. We see this process as including three interdependent and important steps (see Figure 2) that can lead to joint capacity building among different kinds of actors.

The first is ‘scaling deep’<sup>1</sup> - in-depth mobilisation and learning by and with communities. Indigenous futures thinking includes tools and approaches, such as eco-cultural mapping and calendars, as well as on-going practices, ways of knowing and doing, rituals, and storytelling in Indigenous and local communities across the world. For communities, the walking workshops were seen as a very useful way to probe and articulate concerns and ways forward in their own way.

The second step is ‘scaling out’ – sharing and learning among communities to enable and facilitate interactions between communities to represent their stories and ways of approaching different potential futures, as well as learn from and be strengthened through interactions with each other. In our dialogue, these interactions happened online, which implied considerable challenges including unreliable internet access. In spite of this, community members participating in the online discussions greatly appreciated watching the videos from each other’s walking workshops and had many questions, for example around ways to engage the youth. It was clearly meaningful for the communities to connect and learn from each other.

The third step involves ‘scaling up’ – connecting with global level scenarios and science-policy processes. Building

better capacity to navigate future challenges involves technical needs, predictions and scenarios, but it is also about storytelling as a way to unify communities (horizontally and vertically) and to reach out and connect with others to create alliances and partnerships for desired transformative change. However, it is important that dialogues and meetings for connecting the local and the global allow for Indigenous peoples and local communities to be represented on their own terms. Here, the first two steps are critical to support Indigenous peoples and local communities in articulating and presenting their futures thinking so that connecting to the global becomes useful and valuable for them. Walking workshops can play an important role in policy discussions. They create a space where the issue at hand is informed by on-the-ground knowledge and interactions, and where the community members are the guides and the experts. In this way, the community realities can be experienced and discussed in their context. Thus, these experiences remain closely connected with and at the forefront in policy discussions, and the knowledge, practices, and experiences of the community experts are visible and tangible, and can serve as the base for their policy comments and proposals.

What are desired changes and visions for sustainability transformations from Indigenous peoples and local communities’ perspectives? Indigenous-led processes provide entry points for discussion and dialogue about what communities want to keep, what needs to change, and innovations and pathways forward to realise change.

An example of an effort in that direction is the Local Biodiversity Outlooks (LBO) 2<sup>2</sup>. It is a comprehensive collaborative report which presents the contributions of Indigenous peoples and local communities from all over the world to achieving the 20 Aichi targets that were set up by the Convention on Biological Diversity to save the world’s biodiversity by 2020. The LBO 2 was created by more than 50 Indigenous and community authors, and is based on their

1 We acknowledge the concept of “scaling deep, out and up” which has helped us to visualize what we envision to transformation scholars Michele-Lee Moore and colleagues.

2 Published in 2020. Available at: <https://localbiodiversityoutlooks.net>.

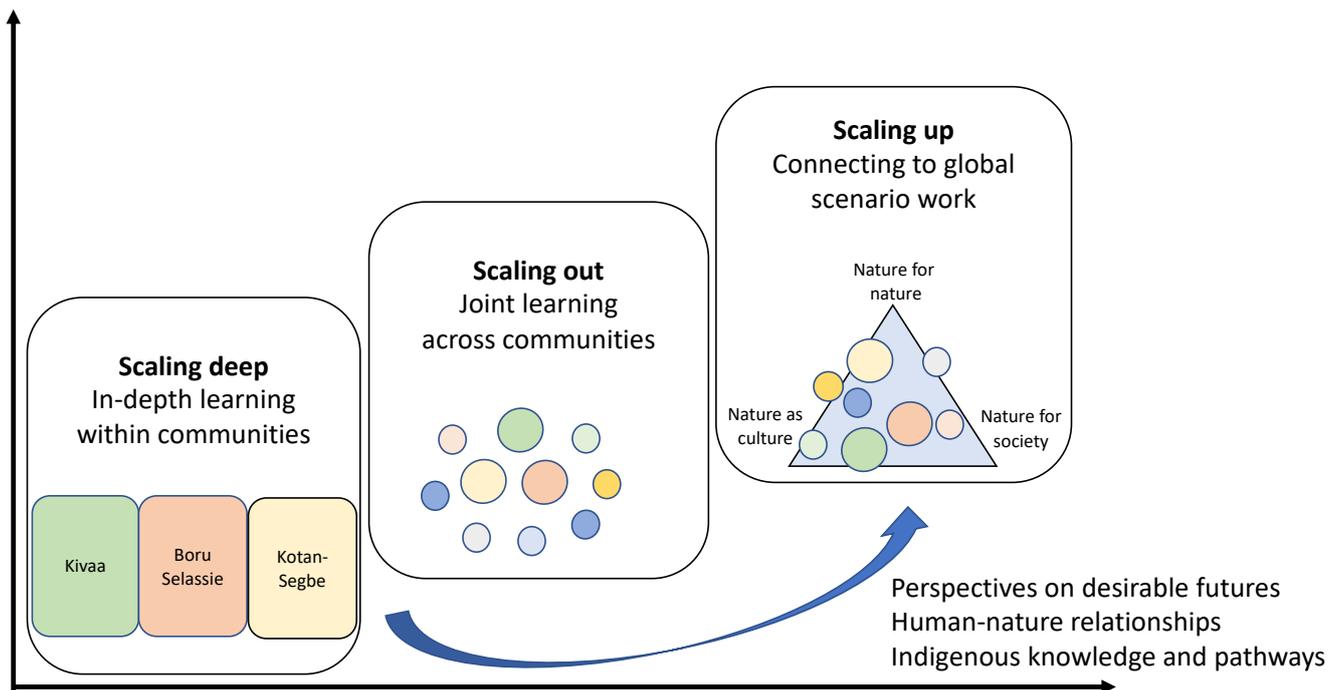


Figure 2. Illustration of the different steps in scaling deep, out, and up for connecting the local with the global, while securing the usefulness for the communities as well as the global level policy processes.

experiences in customary sustainable use of biodiversity, with their community-based monitoring as evidence. It was officially launched in parallel to the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5, which compiles the official reports from world governments' efforts towards the Aichi targets. LBO 2 concludes that the disregard of the vital contributions of Indigenous peoples and local communities to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use constitutes a major missed opportunity. To address this, LBO 2 identifies six transitions needed to live in harmony with nature (LBO 2 2020):

1. Cultural transitions towards diverse ways of knowing and being
2. Land transitions towards securing customary land tenure of IPLCs
3. Governance transitions towards inclusive decision-making and self-determined development
4. Incentives and financial transitions towards rewarding effective culture-based solutions
5. Economic transitions towards sustainable use and diverse local economies
6. Food transitions towards revitalising Indigenous and local food systems.

There are strong connections between these six identified transitions in LBO 2 and the outcome of the discussions in the three communities of Boru Selassie in Ethiopia, Kivaa in

Kenya and Kotan-Segbe in Benin, despite the fact that each community has its unique setting in terms of culture, history, landscapes, and current challenges. Many of the challenges that the communities face are similar, related, or come from the same underlying drivers. Across the discussions, central concerns for all were about the erosion of Indigenous and local knowledge. Along with the loss of knowledge, the weakened customary governance and culture and the disconnect between the youth and the elders, and between people and their places and histories, were brought forward. The six transitions proposed in the LBO 2 address these shared concerns.

As stated by the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IIFBES) during the IPBES 8 opening plenary in June 2021, Indigenous peoples and local communities have wherever possible contributed to IPBES assessment processes, highlighting the close connections between knowledge and values, and the strength of the holistic approach of Indigenous and local knowledge, linking past, present and plausible futures, and all parts of landscapes and seascapes in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.<sup>3</sup> In the IPBES assessments on values, to be finalised in 2021, and the assessments on transformational

<sup>3</sup> IIFBES opening statement at IPBES 8 Plenary session, 14 June 2021

change and the nexus assessment agreed upon at IPBES 8, Indigenous peoples and local communities will provide input and play many important roles, but they will contribute on their own terms. There is great value in continuing the ‘capacity building of each other’ between Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems, and in finding ways for Indigenous and local knowledge to be visible and included in ways that also support Indigenous peoples and local communities’ agency for change, their rights to continue their customary sustainable practices, and their right to self-determination. Organisations such as ABN and the broader COD-ILK network are key counterparts in IPBES that can play a greater role in spearheading the work, in collaborations with different IPBES units, such as the task forces and technical support units on scenarios and modelling, on ILK and on capacity building. Supporting the Indigenous networks and organisations which work towards securing inclusiveness and the usefulness for all involved in these science-policy-practices processes is a critical task that needs to be taken seriously.

Engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities, and their Indigenous and local knowledge, values and aspirations is a great opportunity for IPBES and other knowledge platforms to broaden the scope, to embrace a diversity of perspectives and ways of futures thinking, and to stay close to what matters for local realities and biodiversity. For Indigenous peoples and local communities and their organisations, the meaning and usefulness of connecting with IPBES is to a large extent about their desire to increase the respect and recognition of their Indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices. That way they can strengthen their agency and capacity to deal with the realities in the communities, while IPBES - as policy relevant but not policy prescriptive – can provide well-informed guidance for global, regional and national level policy and decision making, in line with the kind of transformations Indigenous peoples envision.

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Timeline of the dialogue process 2020–2021

Item	Description/Objectives/Activities	Organisations involved	Format/technology
<b>Pre-dialogue</b>			
<b>Joint preparation sessions among ABN, ABN partners and SwedBio October – November 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Framing the discussion: dialogue process, objectives, jointly prepare the three community dialogues.</li> <li>– Facilitators presenting the communities and their reality today, as experienced from Covid19 and other no foreseen chocks.</li> <li>– Introducing future thinking and MEB approach, links to IPBES and other processes, to enable facilitators to go out to the field with the necessary background information</li> <li>– Planning the walking workshops in the communities: identify how to lead discussions and collective thinking amongst the communities.</li> <li>– Documentation and follow-up: think about how it could be used by others, how knowledge can be shared, how community experiences and methods could be brought forward.</li> </ul>	ABN Secretariat, SwedBio ISD, ICE and GRABE community dialogue facilitators	Zoom; translation
<b>Preparation in the communities November 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For each community, clarify the purpose, context, invite to sharing about their reality within the context, community expectations, presenting interests and perspectives from different angles.</li> <li>– Collect information on background of what communities have experienced over this time, situation on the ground.</li> <li>– Opportunities to share with other communities engaged in the dialogue process.</li> <li>– Agree how to best document and share, and who is responsible for the documentation.</li> <li>– Pilot the method and technology.</li> </ul>	Partner organisation facilitators, community members and possible other actors	In person in the communities; translation
<b>Community dialogues/Walking workshops</b>			
<b>Community dialogues/ walking workshops in each of the 3 communities 27–30 November 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communities elaborate their own future scenarios through revisiting their eco-cultural mapping and calendars.</li> <li>– In each community, participants held their own designed activities, walking workshops in the landscape and discussions over the few days.</li> <li>– FPIC along with principles applied in the resp. organisation, complemented with Code of Commitment (Annex III) for those who take part beyond the community.</li> </ul>	Community members; elders, women, men, youth, seed custodians. Possible also invite local government, local NGOs, media, scientists	Livestream via Facebook Watch party; and recording for later transmission
<b>Reflecting back session after the Community dialogues 30 November 2020</b>	Directly after the community futures thinking dialogues, share experiences across the three communities. The facilitators and community members shared some of the captured learning from the community dialogues, which they chose to document and present in various ways.	ABN, SwedBio, and dialogue facilitators from ISD Ethiopia, GRABE Benin, ICE Kenya, and community members, including elders and women	Virtual via zoom
<b>Reconvening between communities 17 December 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Film screening webinar and discussion after the communities have seen each others' films.</li> <li>– Sharing and reflecting jointly on experiences.</li> </ul>	ABN, SwedBio, and dialogue facilitators from ISD Ethiopia, GRABE Benin, ICE Kenya, and community members, including elders and women	Virtual via zoom; translation

Item	Description/Objectives/Activities	Organisations involved	Format/technology
<b>Continued dialogue process</b>			
<b>Post-dialogue joint sessions and knowledge sharing</b> December 2020 – June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Learn from the three community dialogues. Bringing dialogue experiences together. What have we learnt, what can we learn from one another, what would we like to share onwards?</li> <li>– Bringing together communities experiences and connecting them to broader practice, policy and research objectives.</li> <li>– Discuss how the gained experiences can connect to other initiatives, such as among the Centres of Distinctions on Indigenous and Local Knowledge (COD-ILK), IPBES TSU / ILK Task Force, BesNET etc.</li> </ul>	Community members/ leaders, facilitators, ISD, ICE, GRABE, ABN, SwedBio	Zoom
<b>Connect with global scenario. Futures thinking processes</b> June – end of 2021	After the community dialogues, the knowledge from the dialogue may feed into policy through the IPBES, the COD-ILK and other entry points.	Various other actors including IPBES and the COD-ILK	Zoom, translation

## Appendix II: Documentation and Commitment of Conduct

The way to ground the dialogues in the communities is to bring together women, men, youth and knowledgeable elders in face-to-face meetings and walking workshops in the landscapes. The dialogues were documented, in order to make the intended connections from local to global futures thinking possible. Documentation could be notes, videos, or photos. However, usefulness for communities goes beyond documentation and knowledge sharing; it is about recognising that people are insightful about their future, and that communities themselves have the solutions. It is about empowerment and taking control. The process of re-rooting and re-connecting is continuous, evolving.

In our dialogue, a process for the communities to give Free Prior and Informed Consent to sharing their knowledge and experiences was held in each community, and a Commitment of Conduct for the external participants was agreed upon. In all three communities, this process relied and build upon the trust based on the partner organisations’ previous and ongoing work and relationship with the communities.

In terms of knowledge, there might be aspects of knowledge the community can easily share with others, and other aspects that they want to keep as their own. When knowledge is generously shared with outsiders, it is important to discuss together and make sure that communities have a clear understanding about where and how the learning and information shared during the

community dialogues may travel in interactions such as the virtual dialogues. It is critical with a process for free, prior informed consent (FPIC) from the communities. In such a process, it is important to agree on how what is shared will be documented, without distorting information. As the community dialogues or parts of them are documented by video and shared virtually, it is critical that communities are fully aware and consent to that the videos, or selected parts of them, are shared with other communities and also more broadly (policy, research).

However, respecting the integrity and ownership of ILK is also the responsibility of the actors external to the communities. Therefore, we developed a Commitment of Conduct to be signed by those invited to take part in the futures thinking dialogue process. In this document the participants commit to support the communities in strengthening their plans and visions for their futures, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars, and to principles of equal sharing and joint learning across knowledge systems and cultures. They further commit to the agreement on reporting and documentation of all activities, sharing of experiences, and that all other use of knowledge or other material needs to be approved by the communities, via the organisations ICE, ISD and GRABE-Benin which continuously stay in touch with them.

## Commitment of conduct

**Commitment of conduct for community visitors, for the dialogue process “Indigenous Futures Thinking: Changing the narrative and re-building based on re-rooting” engaging SwedBio, ABN and partners ISD, Ethiopia, ICE, Kenya and GRABE, Benin, November – December 2020.**

The process, in which ABN coordination, ABN partners ISD, ICE and GRABE, and elders, women, men and youth from the communities of Kivaa in Eastern Kenya, Boru Selassie community in Dessie, Ethiopia and Kotan-Segbe in Sado – Avrankou, as well as SwedBio are actively engaged, aims at support the communities in strengthening their plans and visions for their futures, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars. At the same time, we will jointly learn about how to connect local and global scenario perspectives, in order to open new spaces in the global science policy agenda for better engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities’ values, culture and rights. In addition, we will jointly learn more about virtual methods to conduct walking workshops and community dialogues. The engagement with the communities is built on the principles of equal sharing and joint learning across knowledge systems and cultures. It builds on ABN methods, experiences and trust from working with these communities over time.

The dialogues will be documented, in order to make the intended connections from local to global futures thinking. Documentation may mean notes, videos, photos, interviews, or similar. Everyone engaging and learning in the dialogue process will not be present in the community dialogue, but will mutually engage in the documentation and further reporting from the dialogues. It is important to discuss where and how the learning and information shared during the community dialogues may travel after the community visits. For example, knowledge, or information, shared through the documentation, might be used in other reports and contexts, in order to connect to the global scenario work in assessments, science and policy as intended.

It is important that no information from the community visit is used or interpreted in a way that is different from what it was aimed at when shared or discussed in the dialogue. There may be information shared during the dialogue which the holders of shared knowledge or the community overall considers sensitive, private, or holding value for themselves and which they do not want to share into the public domain. The participants from the communities have the right to “Free Prior and Informed Consent” in the full dialogue process. Thus, at any point during the meeting and the process afterwards, anyone can decide that they do not want particular information to be documented or shared outside of the community. The three

ABN partner organisations ISD, Ethiopia, ICE, Kenya and GRABE, Benin all have established procedures and practices for FPIC with their work in the communities, and this Commitment of Conduct aims at complement these, ensuring actors engaged in the dialogue are aware of, and committed to align with these in this specific dialogue and meeting across knowledge systems.

We, who are visiting or getting access to documentation from the dialogues (videos, notes, quotes, photos, etc) are committed to respect the above in the following ways:

- **The report and other documentation.** There will be a report compiled from the community dialogues of Indigenous Futures thinking, and that will include photos. Everyone is invited to contribute to the report. A draft of the report will be circulated in English for review, comment and approval. The photos in the report will also be circulated for approval of those who are visible. Before the report is published, ABN will seek approval from the communities, for the report as a whole and in particular for any part of the report (text, photos, potential quotes) that concerns them directly. Once approved, the report will be published on line with Open Access. This means that other people will be able to use parts or all of the report for non-commercial purposes provided they acknowledge the source.
- **Other sharing of information.** In case there might be other kind of sharing of information and outcomes after the dialogue, such as through social media, blog posts etc., no photos will be shared without the consent of the persons occurring in these photos. In the same way, any naming or direct quotation of people will always be approved before being distributed.
- **For any other use of the outcomes of the workshop that concerns the communities will be, approval is needed from the respective community.** ICE, ISD and GRABE will be in charge of the contact with the communities.

## Appendix III: Literature

### African Biodiversity Network recent articles related to Covid-19 and re-rooting, with relevance for the futures thinking dialogue process

*Embracing values in nature and culture.* Fassil Gebeyehu. ABN. 2020 <https://africanbiodiversity.org/embracing-values-in-nature-and-culture-an-alternative-way-out-from-the-pandemic-and-building-resilient-life-ways/>

*In pursuit of disappearing foods.* ABN. 2020. <https://africanbiodiversity.org/in-pursuit-of-disappearing-foods-2/>

*How Covid-19 has taken us down an unplanned route.* Zachary Lager, ABN partner Usiko Stellenbosch. 2020. <https://africanbiodiversity.org/springing-into-action-how-covid-19-has-taken-us-down-an-unplanned-route/>

*Walking the ancestral path: a traditional response to Covid-19.* Simon Mitambo, ABN. 2020. <https://africanbiodiversity.org/walking-the-ancestral-path-a-traditional-response-to-covid-19/>

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### Earlier ABN – SwedBio piloting of dialogues, walking workshops and the Multiple Evidence Base

Belay, Million. 2016. *Participatory mapping as a tool for mobilisation of indigenous and local knowledge and enhanced ecosystem governance in Ginderberet, Oroma region, Ethiopia. A contribution to the Piloting of the Multiple Evidence Base Approach.* SwedBio at Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm, Sweden. <https://swed.bio/reports/report/participatory-mapping-as-a-tool-for-mobilisation-of-indigenous-and-local-knowledge-and-enhanced-ecosystem-governance-in-ginderberet-oroma-region-ethiopia/>

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# Indigenous futures thinking

Changing the narrative and re-building based on re-rooting

## About the report

In this report, we present the first phase of a process for sharing and learning about re-building through re-rooting and Indigenous perspectives on Futures thinking.

Involved are the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) coordination, ABN partners Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Ethiopia; Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), Kenya; and Groupe De Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien-être au Bénin (GRABE-Benin), Benin, and SwedBio. Elders, women, men and youth from the communities of Boru Selassie community in Dessie, Ethiopia; Kivaa in Eastern Kenya; and Kotan-Segbe in Sado – Avrankou, Benin are actively engaged in the local dialogue, together with representatives of the organisations involved.

The process aims to support the communities in strengthening their plans and visions for their futures, based on their earlier experiences in eco-cultural mapping and calendars. At the same time, we jointly learn about how to connect local and global scenario perspectives, in order to open new spaces in the global science-policy agenda for better engagement with Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) and their values, cultures and rights. In addition, we jointly learn more about virtual methods to conduct walking workshops and community dialogues.

What are desired changes and visions for sustainability transformations from Indigenous peoples and local communities' perspectives? Insights revealed that indigenous-led processes provide entry points and critical insights for discussion and dialogue about what communities wants to keep, what needs to change, and innovations and pathways forward to realise change, informed by co-generation of knowledge on tools, perspectives and ideas to build preparedness for an uncertain future.

## SwedBio

SwedBio is a programme based at the Stockholm Resilience Centre working to advance sustainable and equitable governance of biodiversity knowledge and policy. SwedBio

enables knowledge generation, dialogues and exchange between local communities, policy makers and scientists; for development and implementation of policies and methods at multiple scales, and for connecting across knowledge systems.

## The African Biodiversity Network

ABN is a regional network coordinated from Thika, Kenya, working with partner organisations and communities all over Africa to develop culturally-centred approaches to socio-ecological challenges through sharing experiences and co-developing methodologies, such as community research and dialogues. ABN has 35 partners across 12 African countries.

## Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien-être au Bénin

GRABE-Benin is working to regenerate and safeguard Benin's natural ecosystems, in close partnership with Indigenous peoples and local communities. It uses Indigenous knowledge for the protection of natural resources, especially sacred sites; with intergenerational exchange and education on culture, nature and sustainable agriculture at its core.

## Institute for Culture and Ecology

ICE works with communities in Kenya to promote the role of culture and traditional knowledge in environmental management and livelihood improvement. It facilitates culture-based learning that leads to social and ecological well-being of the earth community.

## Institute for Sustainable Development

ISD works to raise the importance of using sustainable knowledge, practices and innovations in order to support and improve the livelihoods of local communities in Ethiopia. With a focus on biocultural diversity, it incorporates the best of traditional and other knowledge systems through sharing experiences, dialogue, research and training, based on genuine participation.



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