



# *Wayfinder: a resilience guide for navigating toward sustainable futures*



Photo by: Azote/Robert Kautsky, Nils Kautsky, Erik Mork, Andie Maslennikov



# What is Wayfinder?

Wayfinder is about doing development practice differently. It represents a new generation of resilience assessment that focuses on the challenge of transformations towards sustainability in the 21st century.

**IN AN ERA OF RAPID CHANGE** and increasing complexity, Wayfinder draws on resilience thinking and social-ecological systems approaches to help its users assess the situation, strategically plan, and act for sustainable development.

Wayfinder is a practical guide to design, facilitate and lead collaborative change processes in social-ecological systems. It is available on an interactive and dynamic web platform. This platform will function as both a guide and a knowledge resource that will drive learning and advance resilience practice.

## Who is it for?

Wayfinder is free and open for all to use, but it has been designed specifically for development practitioners, planners, managers and other change makers who are concerned with a sustainable development challenge, and want to facilitate change at local to global levels. It is a generic approach that can be tailored to a wide range of

contexts, allowing it to be used all over the world, in various types of social-ecological systems.

## How will Wayfinder help you?

- Wayfinder will build an effective coalition for change – a strategic team of people with legitimacy to lead the change process, and with the systems knowledge required to do so.
- Wayfinder will create a well-informed model of social-ecological systems dynamics – a model that summarizes social-ecological dilemmas at the root of the sustainable development challenge.
- Wayfinder will develop a plausible change narrative – a set of innovative and robust strategies for achieving change. These strategies spell out systemic levers that target the root causes of the sustainable development challenge, and address the agency and enabling conditions needed to make change happen.

## Using the guide

Wayfinder is a collaborative process in five steps for assessment, planning and action.

**IT INVOLVES A COMBINATION** of desktop and analytical work with fieldwork to engage a range of different stakeholders in different ways. It draws on many different types of data, information, knowledge and requires both iteration and reflection.

At the core of the Wayfinder process is the understanding that to make change happen, the quality of the process is of equal importance as the quality of the data, information, and knowledge elicited through the process. Wayfinder is therefore set up in a way that enables a balance between the quality of the process and the content that leads to a heightened capacity for change.

### How does Wayfinder work?

Wayfinder is organized into five iterative phases that are accompanied by a set of annotated tools, methods, examples and additional resources to help the user. Each phase guides the users through a number of operational steps that are embedded in a learning framework with continuous evaluation, reflection and sense-making.

Wayfinder is an iterative process in five phases that builds capacity to navigate toward sustainable development. The process is embedded in a learning framework that includes evaluation, reflection and deeper sense-making. It gives equal attention to the quality of the process and the quality of the content.



#### Phase 1

##### Building a coalition for change

Getting started. Assembling a team to drive the process, agreeing on a process and principles for engagement with different stakeholder groups. Activities involve building capacity for systems thinking and tailoring the process to local conditions.



#### Phase 2

##### Creating a shared understanding of system identity

Framing the process. Describing aspirations and social-ecological system dilemmas, key social and ecological components and relevant scales of analysis and action.



#### Phase 3

##### Exploring system dynamics

Assessing the system. Creating a model of social-ecological system dynamics, analyzing cross-scale interactions, feedbacks, traps, thresholds and plausible futures.



#### Phase 4

##### Designing innovative strategies for change

Planning for the future. Making a strategic plan, in the form of a plausible change narrative, by analyzing systemic leverage points, agency to influence those points and opportunities for making change happen.



#### Phase 5

##### Learning your way forward

Moving into action. Using a reflexive 'learning-by-doing' approach to test your strategic plan in reality, and gradually refining your systems model and change narrative.

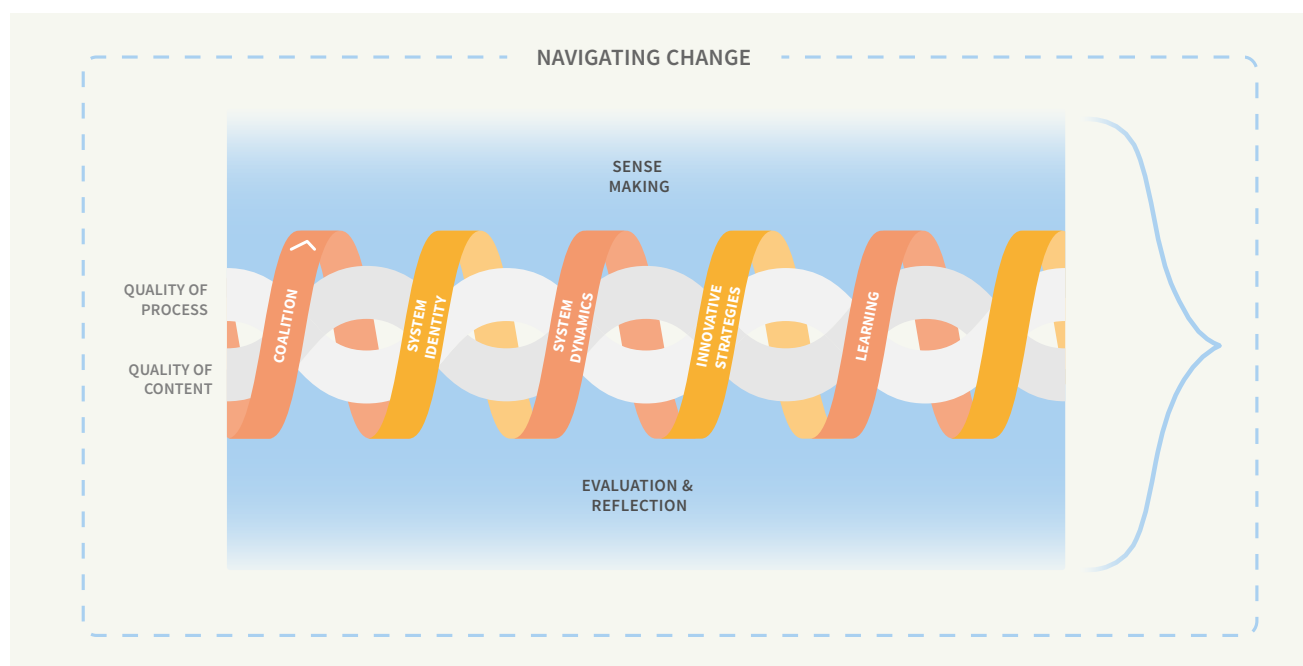






Photo by: Hugo Mazero

Participatory mapping exercise to localize important benefits from ecosystems in the surroundings of Ranérou, Senegal where Wayfinder is being piloted in a research and development project tied to the Great Green Wall of Sahel.

## Navigating towards sustainable futures

**CREATING DEEP CHANGE** towards sustainability is a multi-faceted challenge, but one that is crucial for our future. Wayfinder provides a state-of-the-art overview of how to understand and analyze the development challenge we face today, along with concrete advice on how to navigate towards more sustainable futures.

Program teams, planners and managers across the globe will therefore find Wayfinder useful to advance their work.

Wayfinder will also be a valuable resource for researchers to explore real-world applications of resilience thinking to further advance the field of resilience thinking in development practice.

As the experience with Wayfinder grows, so will a growing community of practice that can make use of the online platform to share experiences and learn from each other, and contribute to the further improvement of the guide itself.

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