

FORESIGHT FRAMING – MAPPING THE R4D LANDSCAPE

Contents

The specific objective of the foresight framing process was to create a map of current ‘issues’ across the R4D landscape – including key opportunities, challenges, debates, ideas and emerging practice. In line with the overall project goals, the R4D issues selected for the foresight framing were all connected to perspectives on what sort of change needs to happen, and on how change happens.

For the purposes of this exercise, ‘change’ in R4D systems was framed in terms of the sort of transformations required within R4D systems in order to support transformational development pathways that will meet societal needs. The underlying premise was that R4D has delivered development gains, but is associated with several areas of concern and has failed to reach its potential in supporting widespread sustainable transformative change.

The intention was not to comprehensively cover all aspects of change in the R4D system, but rather to provide input into foresight workshops involving scenarios, implications analysis and systemic change frameworks; providing a prompt for discussion, debate and questioning.

Outputs from the Mapping Process

1) Perspectives on the needs and priorities for change in R4D systems.

This included an overview of imperatives for change in terms of long-standing persistent challenges that need to be addressed, alongside the need to be able to be responsive and agile in the face of new emergent challenges and opportunities.

Categories of long term persistent problems included the following:

- Exclusion in terms of problem framing, research process, mobilisation of knowledge, evaluation and accountability
- Lack of delivery against global and national development targets:
- Lack of understanding of enabling conditions for transformative change – including capabilities:.
- Anti-evidence/misinformation/disinformation.
- Fragmented and inequitable access to digital technologies
- Inequitable funding flows/political economy of funding flows:
- Traditional modes of R4D research programming outmoded and constricting:.

- Tensions across temporal, geographic and organisational scales:
- Research career incentives misaligned with transdisciplinary approaches and impact focus

2) New ways of thinking and doing that may underpin transformative change.

The following categories are examples of issues explored (shown in Figure 1 – as 'requirements')

- The need to challenge assumptions and established orthodoxy such as
 - Move beyond ideas of catch-up convergence in the role of research for development.
 - Explore what counts as development research and for whom.
- Make visible and explore the politics of knowledge in the framing, producing, mobilising and quality assuring in R4D.
- Challenge inequalities and surface the power dynamics that shape knowledge production agendas.
- Recognise and engage with critical tensions in R4D, eg tensions across spatial, temporal and institutional scales and between excellence and impact agendas.
- Be creative
- Be reflexive – feedback loops for learning in practice
- Explore system dynamics, engaging with the need for radical and systemic change in policies, practice, mindsets and behaviour and the co-evolution of incremental and systemic change.

3) Emerging promising initiatives and trends.

For example:

- Increase focus and appreciation of novel/diverse R4D partnerships and alliances – indigenous knowledge, grassroots innovation, knowledge brokering etc. and on equitable partnerships and process
- Increased attention to contextually relevant initiatives.
- Support for science systems in and across African nations (e.g. [SGCI](#), [DELTA](#)S programmes).
- Decolonising development movements and funder initiatives (e.g. [IDRC Decolonising Knowledge Systems](#)).
- Objectives and partnerships focussed on system wide change (e.g., education, infrastructure).
- Increased focus on research demand – building capacity to use research and evidence in policy (e.g. [FCDO BCURE](#)).
- Expanding metrics and tools for evaluation – relevance and legitimacy, rigour, process and positioning for impact (e.g., IDRC RQ+).

4) Attributes of a transformative R4D system.

The analysis of ideas concerning how transformative change could be nurtured was structured around four key attributes of R4D systems: Open (open science in terms of production and use), Equitable, Capable and Connected (see Figure 1).

Summary

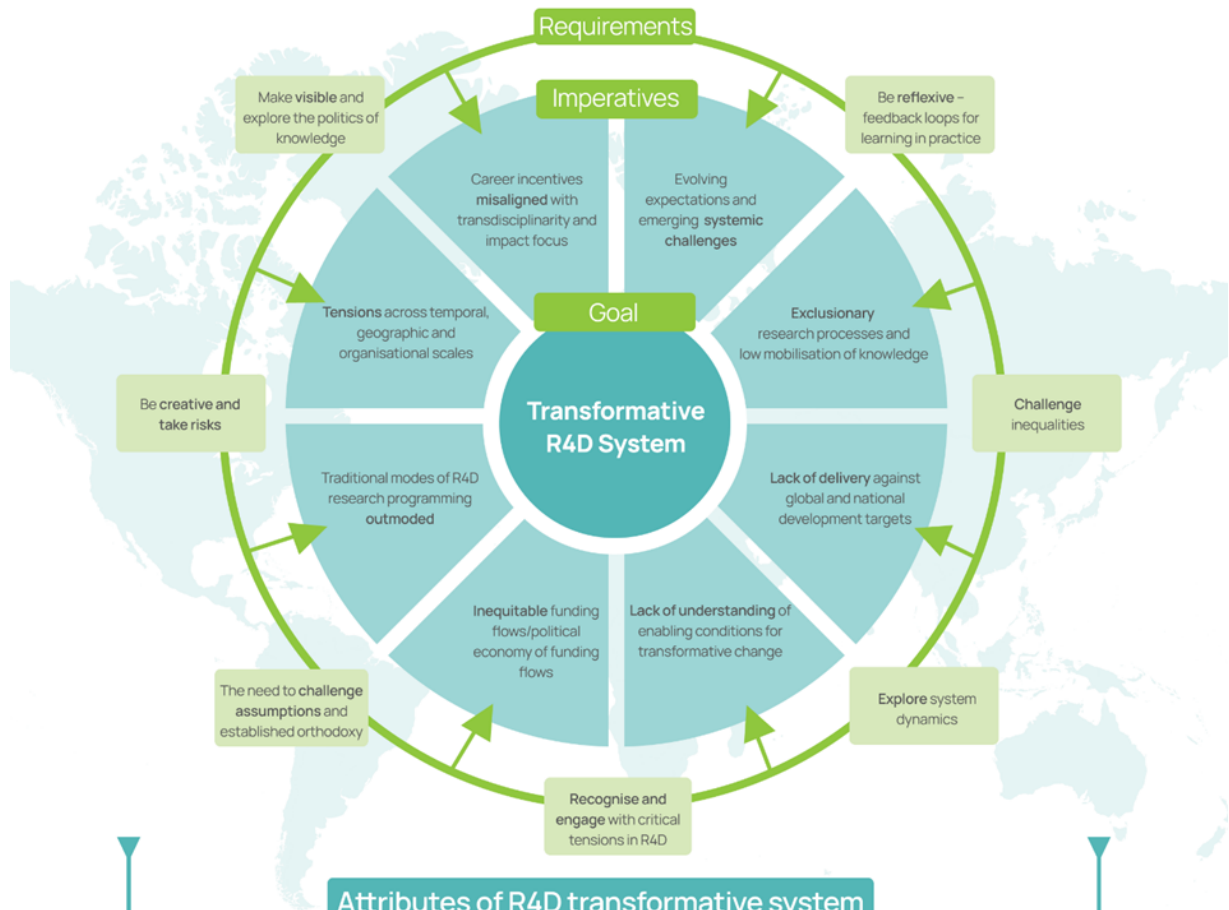
Whilst there are initiatives and emerging trends which show promise, there appears to be limited progress in addressing many core issues of concern, and there is arguably still insufficient vision, ambition and/or coordination to meet the transformative potential of R4D.

Attention tends to be focused on success in particular projects and tools in R4D. These are indeed to be celebrated and may lead to incremental improvements in components of the system. The issues raised in this foresight framing exercise, however, point to the urgent need to consider these incremental improvements in terms of strategies for deeper systemic change. They point to the need to work collectively to challenge assumptions that reinforce inequalities, lock in outmoded ways of doing things, accept path dependencies and leave little space for creativity. They also point to ways of building capabilities and deploying resources for more open, connected and equitable R4D; addressing infrastructural needs and supporting innovations in policy and institutional contexts and social innovations to enable transformative change initiatives to flourish.

Figure 1: Selected insights from the foresight framing/R4D landscape mapping exercise

Foresight framing: R4D in support of transformative development pathways

Perspectives of R4D transformative change



Attributes of R4D transformative system

