

Session 2: Understanding Change Models – Lewin, Kotter, Satir (10:45–12:00)

Objective

Introduce participants to foundational **phase models of change** that describe how change unfolds over time. By learning these models, advisors gain a structured lens to plan and navigate change processes instead of feeling lost in chaos. We will cover Kurt Lewin’s simple three-stage model, John Kotter’s eight-step model for leading change, and introduce the concept of change “curves” (Satir’s model) to foreshadow dealing with emotions. Participants will apply these models to agroforestry scenarios, seeing how theory translates to practice (e.g., “unfreezing” a community’s old habits before introducing a new silvopasture system). By the end of the session, participants should be familiar with change frameworks and able to identify which stage a change initiative is in, and what actions are needed next. These models will be referenced throughout the training.

Key Topics

Lewin’s 3-Stage Change Model

Present Kurt Lewin’s classic framework of **Unfreeze – Change – Refreeze** forms.appportal.ct.gov. Use a simple metaphor: “Think of a frozen block of ground (current practice) – to plant a tree, you must first thaw (unfreeze) the soil, then make the change (dig hole and plant), and finally let it set and stabilize (refreeze) so the tree takes root.” Explain each stage in plain terms:

- **Unfreeze:** Preparing for change by creating awareness that the status quo isn’t working or won’t suffice for future. In agroforestry, unfreezing might mean helping farmers question pure monocropping – e.g., showing evidence of soil erosion or declining yields to create openness to new ideas. It often involves **building motivation and urgency** for a change (e.g., “Without trees, our soil will degrade further in 10 years”). It also means **reducing resistance** by building trust and addressing initial concerns *before* pushing new practices.
- **Change (Transition):** The period where new ideas or behaviours are introduced and implemented. Here farmers might start a pilot agroforestry plot, or a community begins training sessions on tree planting. This stage can be **uncomfortable** and **chaotic** – old habits are being replaced. Advisors should provide a lot of support, guidance, and encouragement during this phase. It helps to have a clear vision and plan to follow (we will see Kotter’s steps for this).
- **Refreeze:** Establishing stability after the change, so the new practice becomes “the new normal.” In our context, this means ensuring the agroforestry practice is **integrated** and **sustained**. For Example: after initial planting, continue follow-ups, help incorporate the new system into routine farm management, and celebrate successes so that the farmer internalizes the benefits and does not slip back to old ways. Refreezing could involve formalizing new norms (for example, a cooperative adds tree management to its regular extension checklist, or a farmer secures a long-term subsidy for maintaining trees, anchoring the change financially).
- Lewin’s model is simple but powerful: it reminds us **not to skip the preparation (unfreezing) and to consolidate gains (refreezing)**. Many initiatives fail because they either rush in without readiness or move on too soon before new habits stick.



EXAMPLE: Applying Lewin

Scenario: In a village, fields are suffering from wind erosion. An advisor wants to introduce windbreak hedgerows (lines of trees) as a solution.



Unfreeze: The advisor organizes a community meeting showing before-and-after data from a nearby village that planted windbreaks and saw 30% less soil loss. Farmers discuss their challenges; the advisor listens and emphasizes shared concerns about soil fertility. Farmers begin to agree something must change.

Change: The community agrees to plant a 500m stretch of windbreak on a trial basis. The advisor provides training on planting and maintenance; farmers plant the trees (new practice) over a weekend with advisor's guidance.

Refreeze: Over the next year, the advisor sets up a schedule where villagers take turns watering and monitoring the hedgerow. The group establishes a "Hedgerow Committee" to integrate tree care into normal farming activities. By the second year, seeing reduced wind damage, farmers view the hedgerow as an indispensable part of their farming system (new status quo).

This example shows the stages in action and reinforces how preparing people and following through are as important as the change event itself.

Kotter's 8 Steps for Leading Change:

Introduce John Kotter's more detailed roadmap, which expands on Lewin's model with specific actionable steps. Kotter's 8 Steps (from his book "*Leading Change*" portal.ct.gov) are:

- 1. Create a Sense of Urgency** – Help others see the need for change through compelling evidence or experiences; e.g., highlight urgent issues (soil degradation, climate impacts) and opportunities (premium markets for agroforestry products) so stakeholders feel "*we must act now.*" In practice, an advisor might start by showing dramatic drone footage of erosion gullies to spark urgency, or noting a new grant that has a deadline, pushing timely action.
- 2. Form a Powerful Guiding Coalition** – Assemble a group with influence and enthusiasm to lead the change. For advisors, this means **identify change champions:** progressive farmers, supportive local officials, cooperative leaders, or NGO partners who will work together to promote agroforestry. A diverse team (farmers, extension agents, community leaders) can spread the message and support peers.
- 3. Develop a Vision and Strategy for Change** – Craft a clear vision of what the change will achieve and a basic strategy of how to get there. In agroforestry, the vision could be "*Our community's farms will have productive trees integrated on 30% of land, boosting incomes and ecosystem health in 5 years.*" The strategy outlines how (training, demo plots, phased planting, etc.). Advisors should involve stakeholders in shaping this vision so it resonates.
- 4. Communicate the Vision** – Continually communicate the change vision through multiple channels and voices. Advisors and coalition members should talk about the agroforestry vision at every opportunity – at community meetings, informal gatherings, on local radio – linking it to people's values (e.g., "*planting trees will ensure our children inherit fertile land*"). Communication must be clear and consistent, addressing concerns honestly and reinforcing optimism.
- 5. Remove Obstacles / Enable Action** – Identify and tackle barriers so people can act on the change (Kotter calls it removing obstacles and empowering others). For example, if lack of seedlings is a barrier, the advisor helps set up a tree nursery or connects to a tree supplier. If bureaucratic rules hinder agroforestry (like a policy against trees on farmland), work with authorities to get exceptions or inform farmers of proper procedures. This step often involves training to build skills and confidence and adjusting structures or incentives to encourage participation.
- 6. Create Short-Term Wins** – Plan for quick, visible successes to build momentum. In an agroforestry project, a "short-term win" might be a successful pilot plot in the first season, or the first 10 farmers signed up and

satisfied. Celebrating these early wins (field days to show off a thriving silvopasture, publicizing a farmer's increase in income from fruit trees after one year) helps convince skeptics, reward participants, and justify continuing the effort.

- 7. Consolidate Gains and Broaden the Change** – Do not let up after initial wins; use the credibility from early successes to drive deeper and broader change. For advisors, this means once a few farmers adopt, recruit more farmers in the next season, or extend agroforestry to other practices (e.g., add beekeeping with the new trees). It may involve iterating: refining techniques based on feedback, providing advanced training, and maintaining enthusiasm. Essentially, avoid declaring victory too early – keep pushing until agroforestry is widespread and the benefits firmly outweigh any remaining doubts.
- 8. Anchor the Change in the Culture** – Ensure the new ways are firmly rooted. In a village context, this could mean agroforestry becomes a proud part of the local identity or routine – e.g., an annual “Tree Planting Day” is established, schools start agroforestry clubs, local bylaws protect on-farm trees. For advisors in institutions, it might mean the extension service formally includes agroforestry in its advisory programs and budgets going forward. The idea is to make agroforestry the new normal so the change sticks for the long term.

Present these steps in a relatable way, perhaps visualizing them on a flipchart “staircase” climbing to the goal. Stress that **Kotter’s model is not strictly linear** in community practice (steps can overlap), but it provides a comprehensive checklist to guide change efforts. It is especially useful for larger scale or group changes (community or organizational changes), while Lewin’s works for both individual and group. Borrow ideas from Kotter: for instance, always remember to build a coalition (do not work alone) and celebrate small wins (keep morale up).

Satir’s Change Curve (Human Response to Change)

While Lewin and Kotter describe external phases and actions, **individuals also go through an internal emotional journey** during change. Virginia Satir’s model (originally from family therapy) and the “change curve” concept (often illustrated similarly to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s grief curve) show emotional stages: from status quo through resistance/chaos to a new status quo. We explore this on Day 2 when focusing on emotions and resistance. It is normal for people to experience anxiety or a drop in confidence at the start of a change (a “valley of chaos”), before things improve. An advisor should be aware of these human factors: logical plans (Lewin/Kotter) must be paired with empathy for what people feel at each stage.

Tool Highlight: Force Field Analysis (Lewin’s tool) – As a bridge between theory and action, introduce **Force Field Analysis**, developed by Lewin [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net). It’s a simple method to list and weigh “**driving forces**” vs. “**restraining forces**” for a change. An advisor can use this with a farmer or group to diagnose what factors will help the change and what factors hinder it. For example, driving forces for adopting agroforestry might include: available subsidy, a model farmer in the area, climate benefits, curiosity/interest from youth. Restraining forces might include: lack of know-how, upfront costs, fear of lower short-term yield, cultural preference for open fields. By making these forces explicit, one can discuss strategies to strengthen the drivers and reduce the restraints – essentially tipping the balance towards successful change. Force Field Analysis can be done on paper or a board, and it encourages participation (people enjoy contributing factors and seeing them mapped out).



Activity – Force Field Analysis (20 min)

Break the participants into small groups (3-5 people each). Give each group an agroforestry change scenario to analyse (or let them propose one relevant to their work). For instance: “Convincing dairy farmers to plant trees for silvopasture”, or “Introducing a new fruit tree alley cropping system in a grain farming region.” Each group draws



a T-chart: left side “Driving Forces (Why change will succeed)”, right side “Restraining Forces (Why change might fail)”. In 10 minutes, they brainstorm as many forces as possible.

Then have them discuss: **How could we increase or leverage one driving force? How could we minimize one key restraining force?** (5 minutes). After, invite two groups to quickly share one interesting force they identified and their idea to address it. The trainer can enrich the discussion, e.g., if one group mentions “tradition” as a restraining force, suggest ways to respect tradition while introducing innovation (perhaps involving respected community figures in the project to give it legitimacy).

Outcome: Participants practice using a change model tool and realize that every change has opposing forces – but by being strategic, they can influence those forces. This sets the mindset of proactively managing factors around a change, rather than ignoring barriers.



CASE STUDY: Building Urgency and Coalition- Hedgerow & Landscape Restoration (Belgium/Netherlands)

Hallez, T. (2025). Restoring Traditional Arable Practices like 'Bolle Akkers': The Role of Agroforestry in Revitalizing Heritage Farming Systems. *AF4EU*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18504029>

AF4EU practice abstracts highlight landscape-scale restoration initiatives, including hedgerow systems and traditional agroforestry practices. In these cases, advisors worked with farmers and local stakeholders to address soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and declining ecosystem services. Urgency was created by linking these issues to tangible farm risks (e.g., yield loss, erosion damage), while coalitions were formed between farmers, local authorities, and environmental organisations. Demonstration areas and shared planning helped align interests and build trust across stakeholders.

Key takeaway

Change gains momentum when advisors combine **clear, locally relevant urgency with strong stakeholder coalitions**, ensuring that farmers are supported both socially and institutionally. Following a structured approach (urgency + coalition + vision) kick-started broad change. Advisors didn't just push information – they built a team and a narrative that caught on. This exemplifies Kotter's early steps and shows the importance of local champions in agroforestry change.

Tip for Success: “*Plan the change and change the plan (when needed).*” – Use models like Lewin's or Kotter's to **plan a pathway for change** but stay flexible. Real life may not follow the model exactly – be ready to adapt. For instance, if you encounter unexpected resistance, you might loop back to creating more urgency or revising the vision with stakeholder input. A model is a guide, not a rigid prescription. Combined with your on-the-ground insight, it helps ensure no critical element of change (like stakeholder buy-in or clear vision) is overlooked.