

## SaLaToc

### Advancing on the conceptualization of a theory of change for landscape approaches to biodiversity conservation, the case of Sabah in Malaysia.

#### ABSTRACT

Achieving reduction of tropical deforestation and enhance the conservation of biodiversity at scale requires cooperation between heterogeneous stakeholders with a stake in land-use at the sub-national scale. In this context, landscape approaches are gaining popularity amongst practitioners and policymakers. They are conceptualized as processes that formalize a consistent framework of incentives and regulations that incentivize cooperation and in fine coordinated actions for biodiversity conservation at the landscape level. An increasing number of so-called landscape and jurisdictional approaches are being piloted in various settings worldwide, including in Southeast Asia. Current research gap is primarily linked to the absence of a sound theory of change that would explain how these approaches are to be designed in order to bring about significant environmental outcomes in formerly dense forest landscapes.

The PhD thesis will aim to advance on the construction of a theoretically meaningful and evidence-based theory of change for effective landscape approaches in formerly dense forest landscape in the tropical world. Doing so, it will contribute to the literature on environmental governance, which poorly theorize collective action mechanisms and incentives at the subnational scale (landscape, jurisdictional). The PhD thesis will target three specific objectives: to determine the conceptual underpinning of landscape approaches; to determine how landscape approaches modify pre-existing multilevel governance of land-use; to unfold the processes that support a transformation structural conditions towards sustainable landscape management.

The PhD will be based on in-depth analysis of one case study of jurisdictional approach, the case of Sabah province in Malaysia. Sabah province was selected because it is one of the most advanced cases of jurisdictional approach in the world. Besides, it combines several incentives implemented at the provincial level, i.e. a jurisdictional REDD+ program and a jurisdictional certification of palm oil. The construction of the theory of change will build upon a diversity of sources, namely a broad stakeholders' consultation on the concept of landscape approach, an in-depth case study analysis based on a mix of qualitative participatory methods semi-structured interviews and quantitative surveys, and a thorough review of theoretical frameworks explaining collective action in the literature on environmental governance.

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**Project number :** 1803-003

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**Project type :** AAP

**Research units in the network :** F&S SENS

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**Flagship project :** no

**Project leader :** Alain Karsenty & Colas Chervier

**Project leader's institution :** Cirad

**Project leader's RU :** F&S SENS

**Budget allocated :** 21600 €

**Total budget allocated ( including co-financing ) :** 62787 €

**Funding :** Labex

## GOAL

We define three specific objectives :

To determine the conceptual underpinning of landscape approaches: the PhD thesis will aim at understanding the emergence of the concepts of landscape and jurisdictional approaches and the filiation with other integrated approaches to conservation. What stakeholders have been active in conceptualizing and disseminating the concept and why? Why is it more likely to be successful from a conceptual point of view? How different are these newest initiatives as compared to preexisting/similar approaches? This analysis will be instrumental in clarifying what constitutes a landscape approach and how it is supposed to bring about change.

To determine how landscape approaches modify pre-existing multilevel governance of land-use in Sabah: At the case study level, the PhD thesis will understand the way multilevel governance shape the sustainability of land-use change in Sabah province and analyze the way changes are linked to new interventions associated with the landscape approach. What will be particularly scrutinized is the way meaningful cooperation between heterogeneous actors with a stake in land-use is achieved or not. One key question will be to what extent market incentives such as jurisdictional REDD+ and RSPO certification influence propensity of local key actors to cooperate.

To identify policy process for sustainable landscape management in Sabah: the PhD thesis will aim at unfolding the processes that support a transformation of structural conditions that build the foundations for sustainable and adaptive landscape governance in the province of Sabah. How are policy goals agreed upon? How are specific interventions and changes in the incentive/regulation mix negotiated? We are particularly interested in analysing the politics involving different interest groups with competing claims over rights and resources and the different factors that shape these groups' positions, actions and power to influence decisions.

Importantly this project will be a means to strengthen collaboration between CIRAD and UPM in the field of economics and on topics related to the management of natural resources, especially forests. We will build on past collaboration between CIRAD and UPM and will diversify research units and key persons involved in order to develop a new stream of joint research on environmental governance and the evaluation of environmental policies and instruments at the meso scale.

## ACTION

WP 3. GWAS on calcareous soil and high temperature.