The True Value of Forests

Global Synthesis Report

Sini Savilaakso, Sean Yeo, Patrick Waeber, Ida N.S. Djenontin, Sébastien Boillat and Claude Garcia

Authors' Affiliations

Sini Savilaakso[1,2*], Sean Yeo[3], Patrick Waeber[3], Ida N. S. Djenontin[4], Sébastien Boillat[3] and Claude Garcia[3]

1 Liljus Ltd, London, UK

2 Juno Evidence Alliance, CABI, Delémont, Switzerland

3 BFH-HAFL, Zollikofen, Switzerland

4 Penn State University, Department of Geography, USA

[*] Corresponding author: s.savilaakso@cabi.org

Conflict of interest

The authors declare they have no conflict of interests.

Disclaimer

The values and initiatives identified in this synthesis draft report come from the Wyss Academy Dialogues with Purpose and do not necessarily represent those of the authors. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their employers, of the Wyss Academy for Nature or of the funders of this work. The boundaries shown and the designations used on the maps in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the authors, their employers, the Wyss Academy for Nature or funders of this work concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Credits

Foreword

When we set out on the journey to explore the "*True Value of Forests*," we envisioned a global dialogue—a space where diverse voices could come together to reflect on the ecological, economic, social, and cultural importance of forests. What we found along the way was both humbling and inspiring: there is no single, universally accepted "true" value of forests. Instead, forests hold a multitude of meanings that differ across regions, communities, and individuals.

Over the course of 2024, the Wyss Academy Dialogues with Purpose brought together more than a hundred stakeholders across four continents—South America, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Europe—as well as two virtual global sessions. These Dialogues created space for open, respectful exchange, where participants shared perspectives rooted in deeply personal experiences, scientific inquiry, ancestral knowledge, and lived realities. The result was a profound tapestry of forest values: from biodiversity and carbon regulation to food security, cultural identity, spiritual connection, and social cohesion.

The Global Synthesis Report brings together the insights and initiatives that emerged from these Dialogues. It reflects a collective effort to better understand how different people relate to forests, and how this understanding can guide more just, inclusive, and sustainable forest governance. As the report shows, many of the solutions are already within reach: they lie in amplifying local voices, empowering community-led action, and acknowledging plural perspectives in shaping forest futures.

We are now supporting regional engagement processes that build on the ideas sparked during the Dialogues. In parallel, we are preparing to publish a scientific article on the methodology of the Wyss Academy Dialogues, with the aim of contributing to broader debates on participatory approaches and systems change. This work will be shared at the FLARE Conference in Lima/Peru, later this year.

On behalf of the Wyss Academy for Nature, I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in the Dialogues and supported their implementation. Your openness, commitment, and depth of reflection gave meaning to this process. We hope that the synthesis report not only honours your contributions but also helps sustain momentum for action—by continuing the conversation, translating values into strategies, and supporting forest-positive initiatives around the world.

Let us remember: forests do not need a single value to be protected. They need many voices, many truths, and a shared commitment to their future.

Tatjana von Steiger
Head of Global Policy Outreach and Synthesis Center

The Wyss Academy for Nature

at the University of Bern is a place of innovation, where researchers, business people, policymakers and communities come together to co-design solutions for sustainable futures.

The Wyss Academy's mission is to transform scientific knowledge into action. Combining ambitious, innovative goals with a transformative approach, it was founded to develop innovative long-term pathways that strengthen and reconcile biodiversity conservation, human well-being and the sustainable use of natural resources in a variety of landscapes throughout the world. We co-design and implement concrete projects across a swathe of regions and countries. This global structure facilitates the replication of successes and learnings. The Wyss Academy for Nature currently operates Hubs in Central Europe (Bern, Switzerland), Southeast Asia (Laos), East Africa (Kenya) and South America (Peru).

Photo by Haley Wiebel, October 2018

Wyss Academy Reports

Wyss Academy Reports contain research, analysis, findings and recommendations. They are circulated with the aim of sharing knowledge, initiating debate on emerging issues, and eliciting comments and critical feedback on our current focal topics and region

Contents

Executive Summary

Why is this topic important?

Forests are crucial for sustaining ecological stability, supporting biodiversity, and contributing to human well-being. Despite repeated commitments by the international community to slow down, stop and reverse the destruction and degradation of forests across the world, little evidence exists that these commitments are having an impact. Understanding that forests hold different meanings and significance for different people is fundamental to success in the search for a more sustainable and equitable future for environmental management and conservation.

Process: The Wyss Academy Dialogues with Purpose

Four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues with Purpose (in South America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and East Africa) and two virtual dialogues were conducted to explore the multifaceted values assigned to the forest. This report synthesizes findings from these dialogues.

Key Findings

1. **Diverse forest values:** The dialogues identified a spectrum of values assigned to the forest by various groups of people, which can be divided into four categories of ecosystem services—supporting, regulating, provisioning, and cultural. The spectrum ranges from conservation and cultural values, to food security and sustainable wood production.

2. **Cross-cutting themes:** Common themes included education, capacity building, governance, sustainable economic development, and the integration of cultural values. Recognising the pluralistic perspectives of stakeholders was emphasized as essential for forest management.

3. **Challenges and gaps:** While addressing the underlying drivers of deforestation, it was noted that that there are issues which needed to be better understood and / or addressed:

   - Limited focus on local-level drivers creates a knowledge gap that can hinder implementation.

   - The role of deeply entrenched beliefs that hinder change.

   - The need for better inclusion and equitable stakeholder representation.

   - Power and justice in decision-making.

- Growing challenges of climate change.

4. **Bottom-up engagement:** Unlike top-down approaches, these dialogues emphasized local stakeholder agency, fostering ownership and regional relevance in proposed initiatives.

Recommendations for policy

Inclusiveness: People have diverse and complex values in regard to the forests. To ensure the long term success of forest conservation and management initiatives, they need to be designed from the bottom up to accommodate different values in a holistic way.

Power structures: The successful implementation of forest policies and -management make it necessary to consider the different power structures of stakeholders and institutions. Consideration of who is excluded from decision making is as, if not more, important than the question of who is participating. Proper representation is reached when the perspectives and concerns of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those who might be marginalized or less powerful, are adequately reflected in the decision-making process.

Giving people agency: Representation needs to be turned into action. Empowering local actors through capacity building ensures that they can take meaningful roles in decision-making processes and manage forest resources sustainably.

Preparing for change: Landscapes are constantly changing under different environmental and socio-economic pressures. Climate change is going to exacerbate many of the pressures that forests face. Therefore, there is a need to have policies that are adaptable and agile.

Recommendations for Practice

Education: Awareness-raising and increased understanding of the ecological, economic, and social values of forests among forest-dependent and non-dependent people should be prioritised. By improving knowledge about sustainable practices and the importance of forests, people can make informed decisions that promote long-term forest conservation.

Economic models: The use of economic models that allow local communities to benefit from forests sustainably, without compromising biodiversity or ecological integrity should be increased. In addition to having sustainable funding models, funding mechanisms should be made more accessible and easier to understand, removing restrictive conditions and streamlining access.

Analysis of drivers for land use change: An analysis of the drivers in different landscapes is needed to ensure that all the relevant issues are

addressed when strategic actions, especially those stemming from the international level, are to be implemented locally.

Co-designing management strategies: Recognising and integrating cultural, spiritual, and traditional values into forest management through co-design is essential for creating strategies that are not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and culturally inclusive.

1 Introduction

Forests around the world are at a crossroads, facing significant challenges from climate breakdown and land-use changes. These factors, though interconnected, act on different timescales: while changes in temperature and rainfall unfold over decades to centuries, shifts such as agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, logging, and political changes can happen within years or even months (Garcia et al 2020).

Agriculture remains the primary driver of deforestation, with distinct regional dynamics: ranching and crop cultivation in Latin America, subsistence and commercial farming in Africa, and small-scale farming linked to industrial plantations in Asia. The scale of deforestation is staggering, with millions of hectares of tree cover lost annually, particularly in tropical regions where the impact is most pronounced (FAO 2024). In boreal forests, the spread of wildfires has multiplied, owing to the rise in global temperatures, and together with massive disease outbreaks, threaten the resilience of these critical ecosystems. All of this happens despite repeated commitments by the international community to slow down, stop and reverse the destruction and degradation of forests globally, such as the Glasgow Leaders' declaration to halt and reverse forest loss or the Bonn Challenge for restoration. To date, no evidence exists that these commitments are having an impact (Palomo et al 2024).

Beyond their role as vital carbon sinks and a repository of biodiversity, forests are also dynamic ecosystems that sustain life by providing ecological stability, socio-economic opportunities, cultural richness, and critical health benefits to communities worldwide (Djenontin et al., 2024).

Understanding that forests hold different meanings and significance for people across and even within diverse communities is fundamental in the search for a more sustainable and equitable future for environmental management and conservation. Through inclusive dialogues that explore and celebrate the many values of forests, we can amplify diverse voices and perspectives, empowering stakeholders and decision-makers to adopt a more holistic and socially conscious valuation—one that truly reflects a shared yet diverse connection between people and forests.

The Wyss Academy for Nature organised, in collaboration with local and regional partners, four regional dialogues called the *Wyss Academy Dialogues with Purpose* (WADs) in May and June 2024. These dialogues took place in four different continents (South America, Asia, Europe and

Africa) and focused on the topic "True Value of Forests". As no definition for 'true value' was given to the participants, they could interpret the theme from their own perspective. The WADs were designed to foster discussions that explore the connections between biodiversity, climate change and land use, with forests as an integral resource. The overarching goal was to amplify diverse voices and harness collective wisdom, thereby generating impactful solutions capable of (re)shaping global agendas.

Through different activities and engagement formats, the dialogues supported the creation of safe spaces to strengthen collaborative networks on the sustainable management of forests, and to identify innovative solutions for regional challenges to reflect upon supportive policies that consider different worldviews and knowledge systems.

This report synthesises the findings from the WADs while contextualising them within forest conservation and management[1]. Its aim is to highlight the overarching insights that emerged across all the dialogues, rather than delving into the specifics of any single WAD. This report also draws upon three online workshops: One where the initial findings were discussed with the Wyss Academy for Nature research community in August and two virtual global WADs in October. The rest of this report is divided into the following sections: 2. A short overview of each regional WAD and their key activities; 3. Values identified in the regional WADs; 4. Initiatives proposed from each WAD; 5. A gap analysis, where identified gaps in the strategies proposed by the WADs are highlighted, and 6. Discussion of the findings. The report concludes with a section on the added value of the WADs and provides recommendations for policy and practice.

---

[1] The authors of this report were not involved in designing and organising the WADs. They were present in the dialogues as observers and have had access to the regional reports to synthesise the findings.

2 Overview of the regional Wyss Academy Dialogues

The four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs) took place in May and June 2024. This section gives a short introduction to each of the WADs and to the key activities that took place. The WADs shared some similar elements in their respective processes, such as group discussions and field visits, but did not strictly conform to a single template. This allowed space for adaptation to local and/or regional conditions.

2.1 South America

The first Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD) was held on 14-16 May 2024. It focused on the Amazon rainforest and aimed to foster collaboration and innovation to address the pressing challenges facing the region. While hosted in Manaus, Brazil, it brought together representatives from Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. The purpose of this workshop was to create a safe and collaborative environment where participants could identify and develop sustainable frameworks that recognize the multidimensional values of the amazonian ecosystem and its vital role in systemic change.

Key themes discussed during the workshop included the creation and strengthening of collaborative networks to address shared challenges, and the development of innovative solutions and regional perspectives to promote sustainability in the Amazon region. Thirty participants from civil society, academia, private sector and government from the five Amazonian countries shared their insights in their personal capacity, contributing diverse views and experiences. However, a shared understanding emerged: The Amazonian ecosystems encompassing forests and water are critical for human well-being, especially for local communities who directly depend on these resources, and preventing their degradation is a critical priority.

The discussions centred on three essential questions:

- How to incorporate multiple systems of value in an approach to the amazonian ecosystems?

- How to shift the narrative to better communicate the social-ecological significance of the Amazon region?

- How to foster effective, long-term collaboration among key stakeholders?

The workshop concluded with the collective goal of developing a unified vision for the future of the Amazon region.

2.2 Southeast Asia

The second Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD) was held on 30-31 May 2024 in Thailand, in partnership with the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) and Impact Hub. A total of 51 participants from diverse sectors came from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam to participate in this two-day event.

The dialogue provided a space for participants to share perspectives on the value of forests, enabling conditions, and challenges, drawing from experience and empirical cases. It included a field visit to observe the RECOFTC Trees4All project in Nan, focusing on smallholder engagement in landscape restoration. In addition, participants were tasked with envisioning the future of forests in 10 years, focusing on realizing their true values, and identifying how stakeholders should collaborate to achieve these goals. This exercise led to the identification of five different initiatives and preliminary action plans to realise them.

Prior to the WAD held in Northern Thailand, several activities were undertaken. First, an online survey was conducted to gauge stakeholders' understanding of the true value of forests, challenges in materialising these values, and action to be taken to materialize them. In addition, there were discussions about the meaning of the word true in this process. The survey targeted stakeholders from various sectors whose work, professional interest, passion, commitment, and/or livelihoods are directly or indirectly linked to Southeast Asia's forests.

The online survey was followed by a more in-depth online consultation with selected stakeholders in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, aimed at:

- How to incorporate multiple systems of values in an approach to the amazonian ecosystems?

- How to shift the narrative to better communicate the social-ecological significance of the Amazon region?

- How to foster effective, long-term collaboration among key stakeholders?

Besides the online survey and consultation, a desk review was undertaken to analyse some fundamental concepts of forest values and valuation as well as identifying key stakeholder groups and their roles and interests in materialising forest values. Key concepts reviewed

include forest benefits and values, ecosystem services, total economic valuation, and instrumental and intrinsic values, drawing from the literature of countries of the lower Mekong region – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

2.3 Europe

The European Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD) was held in Switzerland on 4-5 June 2024, in partnership with the Canton of Bern's Office for Forests and Natural Hazards. It brought together various stakeholders, including from the private sector, NGOs, and government institutions, to discuss the evolving significance of forests beyond their traditional roles of timber production and protection against natural hazards.

The primary objective of the workshop was to facilitate a dialogue that identified both the conventional, tangible values of forests — such as their environmental, economic, and policy-related roles — and the more personal, expressive values that individuals attach to them. The workshop was attended by 32 participants and three main themes were at the centre of discussions:

- Integrated land use systems for renewable energies in forest environments.
- Sustainable use of wood in Switzerland for an even timber balance.
- Interests in public forest management.

The values assigned to the forest which emerged during the discussions included emotional and experiential connections such as inspiration, contentment, and a sense of place, highlighting the deep, intangible ties that many people have to forests. This workshop underscored the importance of recognising these classes of values in future forest management and policy development.

2.4 East Africa

The final Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD) was held in Maroantsetra, Madagascar on 13-14 June 2024. Before the WAD, a half-day pre-dialogue workshop about the "True Value of Forests" was conducted on 21st March 2024 in Antananarivo with participants of diverse backgrounds and influences, such as scientists, NGOs, private sectors, local communities, and public authorities. The purpose was to gather views on forests and human well-being, map the activities undertaken by these actors in relation to forest sustainability, sense various perspectives and understanding of the "True Value of Forests", identify skills and knowledge to capitalise on forest values, and emphasise challenges and barriers for a better recognition of the True Value of Forests. The pre-

dialogue was also used to select participants to the WAD according to their interest in the theme and their level of influence.

During the WAD, four themes were raised at the beginning to centre the discussions, which led to mapping a collective vision and to the co-creation of collaborative initiatives. The themes included:

- Forest tales and traditions, to demonstrate the importance of forests through cultures and rites.

- Valuing forests beyond timber and its economic meaning.

- Uniting around the vision of a thriving forest - to lead people to imagine and describe a life where both people and forests thrive together.

- Understanding the True Value of Forests - acknowledging and uniting multiple and diversevalues among stakeholders and across the region.

3 Identified values

In each Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD), stakeholders identified different values that forests hold. In this section, these values are presented, as well as results of the analysis of similarities and uniqueness of values across the WADs.

We classified the identified values under four broad ecosystem service categories: supporting, regulating, provisioning and cultural services (Table 1). This classification, while based on the ecosystem services (ES) categories in the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005), reflects the diverse intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values conveyed from the WADs and aligns with the inclusive value assessment of the nature's contribution to people (NCP) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services (IPBES) (Pascual et al. 2017).

Table 1. Values identitified across the four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues.

Type of ecosystem service	South America (Brazil)	Southeast Asia (Thailand)	Europe (Switzerland)	East Africa (Madagascar)
Supporting	- Ecological values	- Soil sedimentation - Pollination - Wildlife & biodiversity conservation	- Biodiversity	- Biodiversity
Regulating	- Carbon sequestration - Environmental protection - Water availability	- Climate change regulation & mitigation - Coastal protection - Air quality - Water quality - Erosion protection	- Carbon sequestration	- Air quality - Carbon sequestration - Climate regulation
Provisioning	- Food security & supply - Medicinal plants - Water security & supply - Bioeconomy	- Commercial products - Food security & supply - Household subsistence - Timber - Firewood	- Sustainable wood production	- Human subsistence - Food security - Medicinal plants - NTFPs - Sustainable wood production - Timber

Cultural	- Spiritual, ancestral, indigenous and cultural values - Tourism - Biocultural diversity	- Recreation & tourism - Spiritual, cultural and traditional values	- Immaterial values - Tourism & experiences in the forest	- Recreation & Tourism

The four WADs reflect similarities in the perceived values of forests (Table 2). Key values identified across the WADs related to economic sustainability, cultural preservation, ecological protection and human subsistence. Not all values under each category were mentioned in each WAD but the broad themes were clear. Unsurprisingly, values linked to provisioning services were at the forefront.

Table 2. Similarities in forest values identified across the four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues

Economic Contributions	Cultural Preservation	Ecological Protection	Human Subsistence
- Timber - Sustainable wood production - NTFPs - Carbon credits - Tourism	- Spiritual connection - Indigenous & ancestral connection - Traditional knowledge and practices	- Soil sedimentation & erosion reduction - Biodiversity and wildlife - Carbon sequestration - Climate change mitigation, adaptation and regulation - Oxygen production & source of clean air	- Food source and food security - Source of water and supply of clean water - Medicinal plants

However, despite similarities, there were also unique values that were raised in the WADs as illustrated in Table 3. These are presented for each regional WAD separately, with a mention of the ecosystem service class they belong to.

Table 3. Distinct values in the four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues.

South America (Brazil)	Southeast Asia (Thailand)	Europe (Switzerland)	East Africa (Madagascar)
- Environmental protection [Regulating ES] - Temperature regulation [Regulating ES]	- Poverty reduction [Provisioning ES] - Coastal protection [Regulating ES]	- Place for renewable energy [Provisioning ES]	- Beekeeping [Provisioning ES]

4 Initiatives proposed in the Wyss Academy Dialogues

Each Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD) produced a set of initiatives as part of their outcomes. This section provides a summary of these initiatives. This section also provides an overview of what cross-cutting themes emerged from the WADs. Further details of the initiatives and specific activities are provided in Annex 1.

4.1 Proposed initiatives

Five initiatives were proposed in the Southeast Asia Wyss Academy Dialogue (WAD): four country-based (Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia) and a regional initiative. They focused on reforestation, sustainable development and education. Although increasing forest cover was a key element, ways to achieve it ranged from tree planting to advocating for policy reforms and participatory land-use planning. Communities were at the centre of the initiatives, although the regional initiative focused also on broader education and capacity building campaigns to advance the protection of forest ecosystems. Most of the initiatives also included market-linked activities to improve local livelihoods.

The initiatives proposed in the South American WAD focused on the social-ecological significance of the Amazon and improving knowledge for decision making. They covered strengthening communication efforts at different scales, creating a knowledge-sharing platform, restoring degraded areas, a methodology for assessment of the Amazon Biome, and developing a model for sustainable local development.

The initiatives in the East Africa WAD focused on strengthening decision-making processes to improve resource management. They ranged from making available traditional and scientific knowledge to increasing understanding of various forest laws and co-creation of forest management strategies. One of the initiatives focused on raising honey production standards to improve current practices that can lead to forest degradation.

In the Europe WAD, three initiatives were proposed. Two of them focused on developing business models that incorporate a broad set of forest values, e.g. biodiversity credits. The third initiative aims to increase the knowledge of forest issues and the value of the forest through a social media campaign targeted at youths. This initiative was

proposed in response to a perceived lack of knowledge by youths on the value of forests and forestry to society.

4.2 Cross-cutting themes across the initiatives

Despite spanning across four regions (South America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and East Africa), with diverse landscapes and communities, the WADs translated a shared narrative that centred around six cross-cutting themes – five themes and one intersecting theme (Figure 1). These themes reflect core concerns and priorities across different geographical and cultural contexts and are crucial to understanding the challenges to forest protection, management and restoration. They are also at the heart of the initiatives proposed in the WADs.

Education – Education emerged as a central theme, emphasising the need to raise awareness and increase understanding of the ecological, economic, and social values of forests. By improving knowledge about sustainable practices and the importance of forests, stakeholders are better able to make informed decisions that promote long-term forest conservation. Yet, different constituents are targeted for such educational actions. In Madagascar for instance, local communities are the primary targets for envisioned educational actions, while in Southeast Asia various stakeholders would be considered. The authors of the global synthesis report want to highlight that education and awareness creation are two different components, with the first one focusing on knowledge and know-how, while the second one focuses on values.

Capacity Building – Building the skills and capabilities of local communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders was identified as essential for effective forest management and conservation. Empowering local actors through capacity building ensures that they can take on meaningful roles in the decision-making process and manage forest resources sustainably. Most of the capacity building actions mentioned in the dialogues related to training programs, which could be linked to the previous theme of education. It should be noted that capacity building can diverge into multiple directions, and that local and regional knowledge should be appropriately recognised by all actors, along with the opportunities created to learn from that knowledge.
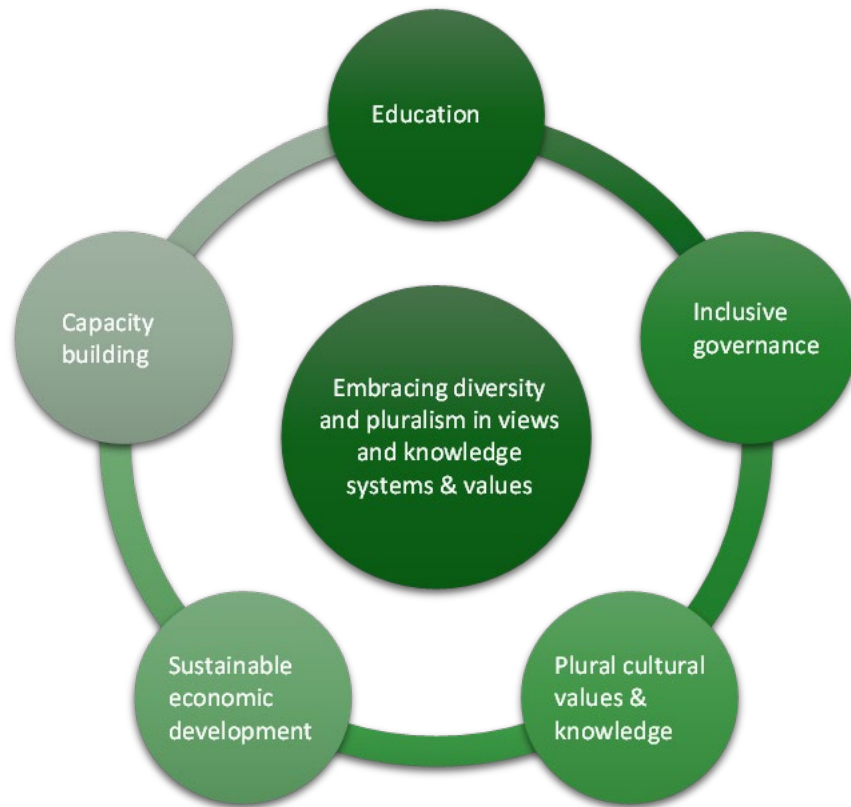
Figure 1. Cross-cutting themes from the four regional WADs.

Governance – Effective governance structures and processes were highlighted as a critical theme, focusing on the need for inclusivity and transparency in decision-making processes. It covers participation in collective decisions as well as the clarification and securing of rights under a variety of formal and customary-rights regimes. The participants also noted the role of technology in improving governance, for example through improved data collection and impact demonstration, as well as to enhance transparency and ease of financial transactions.

Local communities and local authorities' participation were well emphasised in both the Southeast Asia and East Africa WADs, with the insistence of bringing upon the decision tables the most marginalized groups. Good governance ensures that all stakeholders, from local communities to international organizations, are involved in shaping policies that support sustainable forest management. This theme echoes the necessity for centring governance to address both power and justice issues, along with other challenges and needs affecting forest-people relationships (Larson et al., 2021).

Sustainable Economic Development – The theme of balancing economic development with environmental conservation was prevalent across all regions. Poverty was an issue in three of the four geographies. Participants emphasised the need for economic models which allow local communities to benefit from forests sustainably, without compromising

biodiversity or ecological integrity. In addition to having sustainable funding models, funding mechanisms should be made more accessible and easier to understand, removing restrictive conditions and streamlining access, especially for smaller projects and local communities. Additionally, there is a need to invest in organizational capacity building and support for smaller groups to strengthen recipients' ability to handle funds, manage risks, and deliver impactful solutions.

Cultural Values and Knowledge – The WADs emphasised that forests hold significant cultural, spiritual, and traditional values for many communities. Furthermore, local communities are holders of regional and traditional knowledge. Recognising and integrating these plural dimensions into forest management through co-design is essential for creating strategies that are not only environmentally sustainable but also socially and culturally inclusive, echoing the NCP approach (Pascual et al., 2017).

Whose Values Count and How Are They Weighted? – This theme was repeatedly raised in discussions, focusing on the values that different stakeholders ascribe to forests. Whether the focus is on economic, environmental, or sociocultural values, the question of whose values are prioritized, and how they are balanced in decision-making, remains a crucial consideration (Savilaakso et al., 2023). The dialogues underscored the importance of recognising these differences and finding equitable ways to incorporate all values into forest management strategies.

Addressing these core cross-cutting themes in a cohesive manner is essential for developing comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable approaches to forest conservation that respect the diverse needs and priorities of all stakeholders. Together they cover some of the most frequent levers of action of development programmes – the relative lack of novelty of the proposed initiatives reflects the fact that the issues the participants want to address are deeply entrenched.

5 Gap analysis

Based on the current understanding of the drivers of forest change, it becomes possible to identify gaps in the strategies to achieve holistic forest management and conservation proposed by the participants in the Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs). We build on the framework[2] published by Garcia et al. (2022) derived from Geist and Lambin (2002) to identify where the actions arising from the WADs focused and highlight aspects not covered.

While the framework was not used to identify issues and plan the initiatives from the WADs, our observations indicate that the five of the six cross-cutting themes address major, known drivers of forest changes (figure 2), which represent one of the critical aspects in sustainable forest management and restoration efforts. For instance, the education and capacity building actions address the "Technology" dimension, yet this focus on technical skills and increased knowledge and awareness does not address the influences of technology development in terms of drivers of forest change. The governance actions fall under the "Governance" category. Cultural values and knowledge themes address elements considered under the "Culture" set. Finally, sustainable economic development targets align with the "Economic" factors.

---

[2] While the original model was designed to understand deforestation in tropical system, its more recent iteration can serve to categorize drivers also across temperate and boreal systems and no longer focuses exclusively on the loss and degradation of forests but explores the possibilities for landscape restoration and recovery.
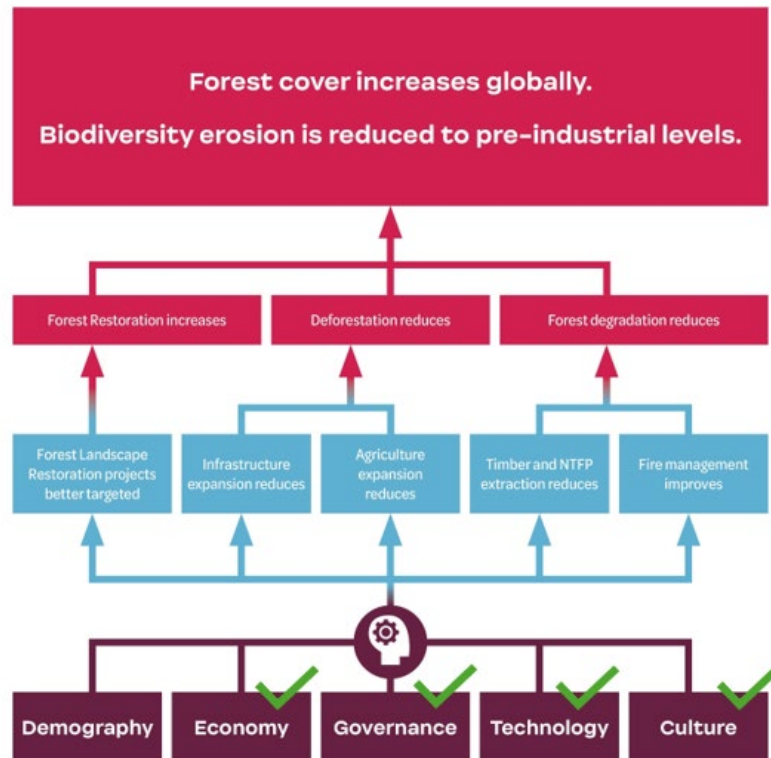
Figure 2. Drivers of Tropical Deforestation. The original set of direct and underlying drivers of change identified in their review of the literature is still valid today to understand the pressures in any given landscape. The green icons represent the processes that the different WAD initiatives propose to implement to protect, manage and restore forests in the landscapes (from Garcia et al 2022).

Overall, the cross-cutting themes suggest that the WAD co-created and envisioned strategic actions tend to address the underlying causes of deforestation – looking for the root of the problems instead of just focusing on the symptoms. Moreover, almost the entire spectrum of the drivers is covered, suggesting a global integrated strategy that is nevertheless considerate of some local specificities. Yet, a stronger analysis of the drivers in different local landscapes is needed to ensure that all the relevant issues are addressed if these strategic actions are to be implemented locally.

Also, there was no reference to the demography driver – despite the crucial role that population movements and fluctuations play in the different landscape dynamics of each of the landscapes. This is not to say that the link between population and forest degradation and loss is univocal – many documented examples challenge this old and colonial narrative. Nonetheless, demography, generational changes, and population movements remain crucial drivers of forest cover changes, and the WAD initiatives cannot ignore them without risks.

The emergence of the intersecting theme of engaging with diversity and pluralism in views, knowledge systems and values represents an interesting aspect to underscore. There is an increasing acknowledgement of diverse worldviews of nature-human relationships and differentiated relational values regarding nature that underlie traditionally sustainable practices nurtured by Indigenous People, local smallholders, and women (Brondizio et al., 2021; Reyes-Garcia et al., 2019. Garnett et al., 2018). The WADs show the ethical and moral needs of this, as well as the enhanced opportunities this approach would create, notably for issues of power and justice plaguing forest management to date (Ramcilovik- Suominen et al., 2024, forthcoming). Still, recognition of the challenges in doing so are not explicitly acknowledged and how to go about achieving such critical issues is not spelled out.

Nonetheless, the growing challenges of climate change is one of the main missing elements that we observe. Also, stakeholder engagement has been explicitly mentioned in only two out of the four WADs. Where this theme has not emerged, one may question how the inclusion evoked could be attained. Even where it has been alluded, care should be taken as to the processes of stakeholder engagement with regard to internal power asymmetries, while avoiding tokenistic approaches (Larson et al., 2022).

6 Discussion

6.1 The need for regional dialogues

The question of the need for the Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs) with such a stakeholder engagement process was raised during the regional workshops. This is a valid concern, especially when considering the limited success of previous international efforts in halting deforestation or achieving ambitious targets like zero net loss, or bending the curve of biodiversity loss (Leclère et al. 2020, Garcia et al. 2020, 2022). Many of these initiatives, while well-intentioned, have had mixed impacts. They often involve top-down approaches, where decision-making processes are controlled by higher authorities, and though some have incorporated stakeholder processes, these have often been ad hoc or merely consultative, failing to reach meaningful, participatory engagement. Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969) is frequently cited to describe such scenarios, where many international efforts have stalled at the lower rungs of the ladder, focusing on tokenistic stakeholder consultancy rather than genuine partnership or empowerment. Another blind spot is the inadequate representation of people's agency in the theories of change of said initiatives (Garcia et al 2020).

We observed that the WADs have been intentionally designed to be bottom-up, fostering a more collaborative engagement process. Unlike many top-down initiatives, which may include stakeholder participation as a formal requirement without allowing it to truly influence outcomes, the Wyss Academy for Nature's approach centres on local knowledge, needs, and values from the ground up. This strategy acknowledges the risk of arriving at similar initiatives that have already been proposed or tested either regionally or globally, but it also ensures that these initiatives are shaped by those most affected.

The emphasis is on creating ownership of the proposed strategies among local and regional stakeholders, which could foster long-term commitments and actions. The WADs thus represent a deliberate attempt to go beyond consultation, reaching higher rungs of Arnstein's ladder, where stakeholders not only have a voice but also share decision-making power. However, in doing so, the WADs should also ensure that locally driven statements are accurate and shared. This can be controlled by ensuring constructive participation between local knowledge holders

and scientists, where different world visions can be heard and understood.

6.2 Understanding forest values

The Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs) on "The True Value of Forests" emphasise the concept of personal "values", especially related to forests. We understand such forest values to be the underlying principles and beliefs that different stakeholders, of differing worldviews and knowledge systems and cultural background, attribute to forests, and which in turn influence their decisions and actions regarding forest use and forest appreciation. These values are shaped by the interactions between people and forests, and influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors, inter alia.

The Wyss Academy for Nature acknowledges that these values are varied and subjective. Forest values are defined as the contributions that individuals claim forests make to their well-being. These values include those inherent to the forests themselves, such as their flora and fauna, (intrinsic) as well as those ascribed by people based on their beliefs and perceptions (relational and instrumental).

But even the intrinsic value of forests requires human voices to be heard (Garcia et. al., 2021). This understanding of values recognizes that different stakeholders—such as representatives of local communities, conservation organizations (NGOs), and commercial entities (private sector)—may hold vastly different views on what is important about a forest. Understanding these differences in values is critical to identifying potential convergences or divergences among participants, enabling them to synergistically develop effective forest management and conservation strategies.

The concept of "True Value of Forests" also includes the term 'true'. As no definition was given to participants for the concept 'true value', it is highly likely that participants interpreted it differently. This in turn could have significantly influenced which values were identified. For example, the values identified would differ depending on if participants thought 'true' in a global or local scale (see section below) or if they approached identification of values from an individual vs communal perspective ('true' to whom?). This emphasises the importance of shared understanding. Making assumptions of others' understanding can lead to misconceptions, which can have implications on practical management and conservation decisions (Savilaakso et al. 2023).

Our categorization of values (see Section 3) helps us understand how different stakeholders prioritize various aspects of the forest. For instance, a conservation NGO might place a high value on biodiversity and regulating ecosystem services, whereas a local community might

prioritize the cultural and relation-based values of forests (cultural ecosystem services). We observe that the dialogues and the proposed initiatives underscore the importance of recognising and addressing these varied intrinsic, relational, and instrumental values, noting that doing so is crucial for effective and equitable forest management as it enables more informed and inclusive decision-making processes.

"Spirits of the forests from all four countries come alive through us. Forest has been here forever, even when we have a very human-centric view". [Participant Thailand WAD]

6.3 Influence of stakeholder diversity and spatial scale on values identification

Stakeholder diversity and spatial scale are deeply interconnected in the context of environmental governance and forest management (Wyborn and Bixler 2013). Stakeholders, ranging from local communities to global NGOs, interact with forests at various scales —local, regional, national, and even global. These different spatial scales influence the types of values, concerns, and interests that stakeholders prioritize.

The challenge in stakeholder dialogues is to ensure that the diversity of perspectives is represented and integrated across the various spatial scales involved in decision-making (Cuppen et al. 2013). Curşeu and Schruijer (2017) suggest that diversity in stakeholders can enhance decision quality through cognitive synergy, as diverse perspectives lead to a more comprehensive exploration of the issues at hand. However, this requires intentional facilitation to ensure constructive debate and prevent the dissolution of productive dialogue into relational conflicts.

We noted that the four Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs)—held across South America, Southeast Asia, Europe, and East Africa— reflected a great diversity in the stakeholders who participated, although it was not always clear (for some WADs) how the selection of stakeholders was approached. While they differed in scale and stakeholder composition, the WADs shared a common goal of bringing together a variety of actors, from local communities to global organizations, to discuss the values associated with forests. Each WAD ensured that participants from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous groups, policymakers, conservationists, and private sector representatives, were given a platform to share their perspectives.

But beyond just diversity, achieving meaningful representation in stakeholder dialogues is a complex process that requires balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders across different scales (White et al. 2018). Proper representation is reached when the perspectives and concerns of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those who might be

marginalized or less powerful, are adequately reflected in the decision-making process—who is sitting at the table, and particularly, who is not? This involves not only inviting a wide range of stakeholders to participate but also ensuring that their voices are heard and considered equally (Larson et al., 2022). According to Curşeu and Schruijer (2017), when task conflict is embraced and managed constructively, it can lead to better decision-making outcomes, but when diversity is suppressed and a false consensus is reached, decision comprehensiveness is compromised.

The representation must be justified by demonstrating that the dialogue process has incorporated diverse views and has allowed for the expression of concerns at different scales, ensuring that no single perspective dominates the discourse. Also, to justify proper representation in stakeholder dialogues, it is essential to employ tools and frameworks that allow for the visualization and understanding of cross-level dynamics (Verwoort et al. 2014). Our observations of the WAD implementations indicate that stakeholder representation was central to the facilitation processes, and in most cases, these were well-managed, using participatory tools that fostered deep engagement. However, we question whether, in the effort to create a safe space, some dominant discourses may have been overly suppressed, limiting opportunities for constructive conflict. We stipulate that the WAD processes and outcomes reflect the importance of equitable representation in forest dialogues and aim to create inclusive, actionable strategies to address both regional and global challenges related to forest conservation.

6.4 Understanding power and agency

Agency – understood as the capacity of a person to take control of her or his life – is a concept that transcends boundaries and is at the core of any process that aims at transforming society. A better understanding of the concept of agency is required to turn the tide of environmental degradation (Garcia et al 2022). Therefore, the Wyss Academy for Nature could improve the odds of success of the initiatives it chooses to back up if a shared understanding of the power and agency of the participants and of the targets of their actions is further conducted.

The theory of the four gates (figure 3) presents how people can bring about change in a system they are interacting with when they are able to address four very different challenges – (i) information needs to be discovered and shared, (ii) old beliefs need to be abandoned and new ones embraced, (iii) values and priorities need to be reorganised and discussed, and finally (iv) adequate means need to be mustered to apply sufficient force where it is required (Waeber et al 2021).
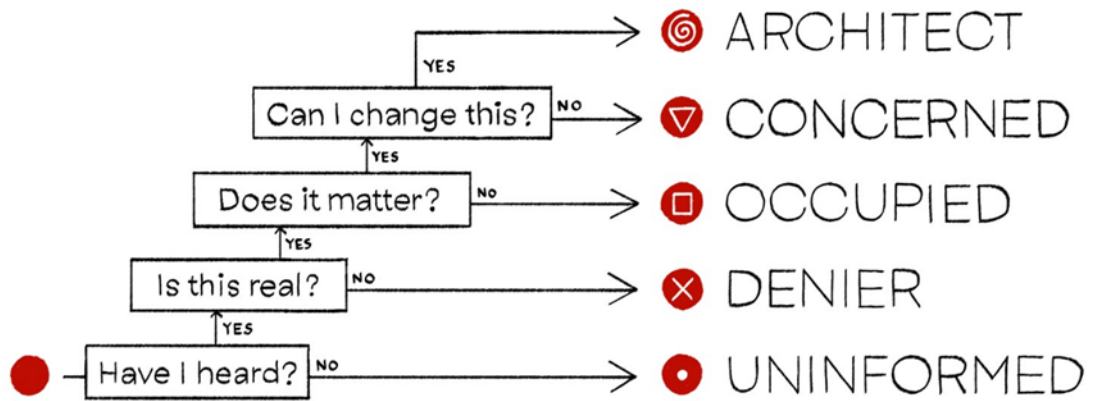
Figure 3. The four gates theory of change. For a person to bring about change, they need to be aware of the issue, believe the information they receive, care for the issue being discussed and organise the means at their disposal to have meaningful impact. A person navigates between these 5 archetypes based on their internal drives but also at the mercy of external forces. The WAD can decide to open or close doors for specific stakeholders in the landscapes it will focus. (Source: S. Mazas and C. Garcia 2023, adapted from Waeber et al 2021).

Our observations and analysis of the WADs processes and outcomes indicate that all the participants and the initiatives identified aim at becoming architects of change of the systems in which they are embedded. However, most of the activities we have seen mentioned only cover one or two of these gates – namely bringing information to uninformed people or creating awareness to move occupied stakeholders. Some of the activities focus on the means – helping concerned stakeholders become architects themselves. Yet, no activity has discussed the challenge posed by conflicting beliefs and the possibility of denial or other similar categories of individual (doubtful, dismissive, etc…). By analogy to climate change, considering the rising proportion of the global population that denies climate change, or the role of human activities play in the climate crisis, it becomes clear that not taking beliefs into account could be a weakness in the theory of change of the WADs (Obs'COP – EDF / IPSOS, 2023). Additionally, none of the co-created WAD initiatives has covered the totality of the 4 four gates, (information, beliefs, values and means), suggesting the possibility of failing to address the specific bottleneck that prevents change in their system.

7 Conclusion

The Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs) have provided insights into the complex and diverse values that different stakeholders attribute to forests. Through these dialogues, it has become evident that understanding the varied perceptions of forest values—shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors—is essential to developing effective and inclusive management strategies. What sets the WADs apart from many other initiatives is their bottom-up approach, which aims at ensuring that local voices are central to the conversations. This approach contrasts with the more top-down strategies that have often dominated international initiatives, which, while well-intentioned, have frequently fallen short of achieving meaningful, long-term results.

By fostering direct engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, the WADs sought to create ownership and responsibility among participants. This inclusive process empowers stakeholders to contribute to the decision-making and co-development of desired strategies that are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the regions they inhabit. Inclusion is not simply about having a seat at the table; it's about ensuring that diverse perspectives, especially those of historically marginalized groups, are heard and acted upon in the creation of strategies for forest conservation.

A key added value of the WADs is their ability to bridge the gap between local knowledge and global policy, ensuring that solutions are not only designed by those most affected, but are also scalable and impactful on a broader level. By integrating local values and knowledge into global frameworks, the Wyss Academy for Nature supports the development of more sustainable, context-sensitive strategies that respect both ecological and human dimensions.

This being said, our report also wishes to highlight what we see as shortcomings, as well as additional steps the Wyss Academy for Nature might further consider. There were limits and gaps identified in these dialogues. To ensure that the identified initiatives are feasible, a collaboration with the scientific community is encouraged. Scientists could analyse more rigorously the identified initiatives and their potential applications in terms of opportunities and risks, drawing on existing experiences, literature and predictive theories.

Additionally, the challenge of addressing conflicting beliefs—such as with the growing denial of climate change—remains largely underexplored. While many initiatives focus on awareness and resource mobilization,

few have addressed deeply entrenched ideologies that hinder progress. Moreover, ensuring long-term participation and ownership of solutions requires sustained support, both financially and institutionally, which has historically been a weakness in many international and regional initiatives.

In sum, the WADs exemplify a model of engagement that goes beyond consultation to foster true collaboration. Through this inclusive, bottom-up approach, the initiatives that the WAD will support in the future can advance forest conservation, management and restoration efforts that are not only equitable but also capable of addressing the root causes of environmental degradation. The challenge ahead lies in maintaining this commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that all stakeholders have the agency to shape the future of forests, and foster critical and constructive dialogues while simultaneously scaling solutions to meet the global urgency of environmental challenges.

8 Recommendations

Based on the synthesis of the findings, we offer recommendations for actionable steps to advance forest conservation and sustainable management. Focused on policy and practice, the recommendations emphasize inclusive governance, equitable resource use, and adaptive strategies to empower communities and address global challenges.

8.1 Recommendations for policy

Inclusiveness: People have diverse and complex values in regard to forests. To ensure the long-term success of forest conservation and management initiatives, they need to be designed from the bottom up to accommodate different values in a holistic way.

Power structures: Successful implementation of forest policies and management requires consideration of different power structures of stakeholders and institutions. Consideration of who is excluded from decision making is as, if not more, important than considering who is participating. Proper representation is reached when the perspectives and concerns of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those who might be marginalized or less powerful, are adequately reflected in the decision-making process.

Enabling and enhancing people agency: Representation needs to be turned into action. Empowering local actors through capacity building ensures that they can take meaningful roles in decision-making processes and manage forest resources sustainably.

Preparing for change: Landscape are constantly changing under different environmental and socio-economic pressures. Climate change is going to exacerbate many of the pressures forests face. Therefore, there is a need to have policies that are adaptable and agile.

8.2 Recommendations for practice

Education: Awareness raising and increased understanding of the ecological, economic, and social values of forests among forest dependent and non-dependent people should be prioritised. By improving knowledge about sustainable practices and the importance of forests, people can make informed decisions that promote long-term forest conservation.

Economic models: Use of economic models that allow local communities to benefit from forests sustainably, without compromising biodiversity or ecological integrity should be increased. In addition to having sustainable funding models, funding mechanisms should be made more accessible and easier to understand, removing restrictive conditions and streamlining access

Analysis of drivers for land use change: An analysis of the drivers in different landscapes is needed to ensure that all the relevant issues are addressed when strategic actions, especially those stemming from international level, are to be implemented locally.

Co-designing management strategies: Recognising and integrating cultural, spiritual, and traditional values into forest management through co-design is essential for creating strategies that are not only environmentally sustainable but also socially and culturally inclusive.

References

Börner, J., Schulz, D., Wunder, S. and Pfaff, A. 2020. The effectiveness of forest conservation policies and programs. Annual Review of Resource Economics 12(1): 45–64. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-110119-025703

Brondízio, E. S., Aumeeruddy-Thomas, Y., Bates, P., Carino, J., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Ferrari, M. F. 2021. Locally based, regionally manifested, and globally relevant: Indigenous and local knowledge, values, and practices for nature. Annual Review of Environment and Resources 46(1): 481–509. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-012220-012127

Cuppen, E. Diversity and constructive conflict in stakeholder dialogue: considerations for design and methods. Policy Sci 45, 23–46 (2012). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-011-9141-7

Curşeu, P. L. and Schruijer, S. G., 2017. Stakeholder diversity and the comprehensiveness of sustainability decisions: the role of collaboration and conflict. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 28: 114–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.09.007

Djenontin, I. N., Larson, A. M., & Miller, D. C. (2024). Trends in forest livelihoods research–Taking stock in 2024. *Forest Policy and Economics*, *169*, 103337. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2024.103337

FAO [Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations]. 2024. *The State of the World's Forests 2024 – Forest-sector innovations towards a more sustainable future*. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1211en

Garcia, C. A., Savilaakso, S., Verburg, R. W., Stoudmann, N., Fernbach, P., et al. 2022. Strategy games to improve environmental policymaking. Nature Sustainability 5(6): 464–471. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-022-00881-0

Garcia, C., Bastin, J-F., Bourey, M., Dray, A., Djenontin, I. N. et al. 2021. FSC Focus Forests Green-Paper. Research Gate. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29656.57600

Garcia, C. A., Savilaakso, S., Verburg, R. W., Gutierrez, V., Wilson, S. J., et al. 2020. The global forest transition as a human affair. One Earth 2(5): 417–428. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.05.002

Garnett, S. T., Burgess, N. D., Fa, J. E., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Molnár, Z., et al. 2018. A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. Nature Sustainability 1(7): 369–374. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-018-0100-6

Geist, H. J., and Lambin, E. F. 2002. Proximate causes and underlying driving forces of tropical deforestation: Tropical forests are disappearing as the result of many pressures, both local and regional, acting in various combinations in different geographical locations. BioScience 52(2): 143–150. https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2002)052[0143:PCAUDF]2.0.CO;2

Kim, H., Peterson, G. D., Cheung, W. W., Ferrier, S., Alkemade, R., et al. 2023. Towards a better future for biodiversity and people: Modelling Nature Futures. Global Environmental Change 82: 102681. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2023.102681

Larson, A. M., Mausch, K., Bourne, M., Luttrell, C., Schoneveld, G. 2021. Hot topics in governance for forests and trees: Towards a (just) transformative research agenda. Forest Policy and Economics, 131, 102567. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2021.102567

Larson, A. M., Sarmiento Barletti, J. P., Heise Vigil, N. 2022. A place at the table is not enough: Accountability for indigenous peoples and local communities in multi-stakeholder platforms. World Development 155: 105907. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105907

Leclère, D., Obersteiner, M., Barrett, M., Butchart, S. H., Chaudhary, A., 2020. Bending the curve of terrestrial biodiversity needs an integrated strategy. Nature 585(7826): 551–556. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2705-y

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis

Obs'COP – EDF / IPSOS – November 2023. https://www.edf.fr/en/the-edf-group/climate-and-public-opinions-international-observatory/downloads accessed 08.09.2024.

Pascual U, Balvanera P, Díaz S, Pataki G, Roth E, et al., 2017. Valuing nature's contributions to people: the IPBES approach. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 26–27: 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2016.12.006

Ramcilovik- Suominen S., Chomba S., Larson A. M., et al. 2024. Decolonial environmental justice in landscape restoration. In: Restoring Forests and Trees for Sustainable Development – Policies, Practices, Impacts and Ways Forward. Katila P., Colfer C. J. P., de Jong, W.., Galloway G., Pacheco, P., and Winkel G. (eds.). (forthcoming). Oxford University Press. Oxford, UK. https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197683958.003.0004

Reyes-García, V., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., McElwee, P., Molnár, Z., Öllerer, K., et al. 2019. The contributions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to ecological restoration. Restoration Ecology 27(1): 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec.12894

Savilaakso, S., Lausberg, N., Waeber, P. O., Hillgén, O., Isotalo, A., et al. 2023. Whose perspective counts? A critical look at definitions of terms used for natural and near-natural forests. One Earth. 6(11): 1477–1493. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.10.003

Vervoort, J. M., et al. 2014. Visualising stakeholder perspectives for reflection and dialogue on scale dynamics in social—ecological systems. Human Ecology Review 20(2): 157–181.

Waeber, P. O., Stoudmann, N., Langston, J. D., Ghazoul, J., Wilmé, L., et al. 2021. Choices we make in times of crisis. Sustainability 13(6): 3578. https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/6/3578#

White, R. M., Young, J., Marzano, M. and Leahy, S. 2018. Prioritising stakeholder engagement for forest health, across spatial, temporal and governance scales, in an era of austerity. Forest Ecology and Management 417: 313-322. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2018.01.050

Wyborn, C. and Bixler, R. P. 2013. Collaboration and nested environmental governance: scale dependency, scale framing, and cross-scale interactions in collaborative conservation. Journal of Environmental Management 123: 58–67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2013.03.014

Annex 1. Summary of the initiatives identified across the four regional Wyss Academy Dialogues (WADs).

The table below presents the initiatives participants identified in the four regional WADs. Unlike the other regions, the initiatives proposed in Southeast Asia are presented under their respective countries (Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Lao PDR) because during the WAD, discussions were held in country-based groups. In addition, a regional initiative was also proposed in the Southeast Asia WAD. The initiatives from South America (Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia), East Africa (Madagascar), and Europe (Switzerland) are clustered into their respective regions.

Location	Initiative	Description
Cambodia	Forest cover and human well-being development and behaviour change	This initiative aims to increase forest cover, reduce poverty, improve well-being and change public behaviour by advocating for policy reforms that prioritise environmental conservation, community empowerment and sustainable development. This may include implementing training programs, facilitating collaboration between communities, national and subnational authorities.
Vietnam	Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Project	This management project focuses on the Nam Xuan Commune, Quan Hoa District, in the Thanh Hoa province. The goal of this initiative is three-fold: (a) biodiversity conservation and sustainable forestry, (b) continuous improvement of livelihoods through ecotourism, and (c) fostering local empowerment. The plan is divided into three time periods spanning 10 years, from 2025 to 2035: (1) From 2025-2027: Planning and initial implementation, including creating a detailed proposal for forest management, obtaining endorsements, and collaborating with NGOs and private sectors. (2) Between 2028-2030, emphasis will be on capacity building, ecotourism development, training programs and infrastructure construction. (3) From 2030-2034, the focus is on forestry restoration to achieve ecological sustainability, with stakeholder involvement.

Thailand	Nan Happy Alliance	Focusing on Nan Province, this plan draws on specific initiatives relevant to the region's context and stakeholders. This action plan is planned for 5 years from 2024 to 2029, that specifically aims at scaling up and out, the Trees4All model. The expansion of the Trees4All model also aims to increase forest cover of 100,000 rai forest area in the five years, with a goal of improving biodiversity and help with climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Eventually the Nan Happy Alliance wants to increase the income for local communities to approximately 100 million Thai Baht (USD 2.8 million) annually. Some methods for doing so include diversifying agricultural activities, diversifying market access, creation of employment opportunities, building entrepreneurial skills and strengthening community resilience to climate change. Thailand hopes to engage stakeholders to diversify agricultural activities and support farmers in integrating beekeeping, poultry and other livestock production in the tree-planting areas. Furthermore, the market analysis will be conducted in Nan province and nearby urban areas to identify the demand for fruits, timber, honey, etc. and to also connect local farmers with consumers and the urban markets, ensuring a sustainable income generation.
Laos PDR	Forest 4 Life	This project is a 10-year action plan from 2025 to 2035 that aims to achieve sustainable forest management, community empowerment and biodiversity conservation. The country hopes to foster economic development with an income target of USD 2,000 to USD 5,000 per household per year whilst also preserving the country's natural resources. Some activities associated with the Forest4Life initiative include engaging communities in participatory forest land-use planning processes that empower NGOs, CSOs and local communities in the decision-making process to develop land-use plans that adhere to government policies. Furthermore, the initiative will focus efforts in improving local livelihoods with community-based ecotourism, promoting sustainable agriculture, marketing local products and facilitating market access. Like Thailand, this initiative also aims to expand forest cover through reforestation programs with the help of local communities, NGOs and international partners.
Joint regional SEA plan: RECOFTC & Wyss Academy for Nature	Stakeholder engagement and forest ecosystem protection	A regional action plan to be led by both RECOFTC and SEA's Wyss Academy for Nature, which focuses on stakeholder engagement and forest ecosystem protection through five main activities: (1) Education and awareness building campaigns to highlight the value of ecosystems and forests. Some of the activities include workshops, seminars and media campaigns to target a diverse set of stakeholders that include communities, businesses and government officials. (2) Capacity building for youth by collaborating with schools, universities and youth organisations. Both RECOFTC and Wyss Academy for Nature will establish training programs on biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management practices and integrate the training programs as part of the school curricula, providing mentorship and initiatives to empower young people to become forest advocates. (3) Strengthening stakeholder relationships through facilitation forums and roundtable discussions to enhance stakeholder collaboration. The aim of this activity is to foster partnerships between local communities, indigenous groups, NGOs, businesses and governmental agencies to implement improved and consistent communication and information-sharing mechanisms for inclusive decision-making.

		(4) Advocate for environmental, social and governance (ESG) assessments for its integration into governmental decision-making processes and developmental projects. Both RECOFTC and Wyss Academy for Nature will provide their technical expertise in developing guidelines and standards for ESG assessments to ensure consistency and efficacy. (5) Synergies will be identified throughout this initiative to ensure efficiency in the excecution of the aforementioned activities.
South America	Regenera Amazonia (temporary name)	Initiative aimed at restoring degraded areas of the Amazon in the hands of producers using concepts of Regenerative Economy.
	Acelera Amazonia	Initiative aimed at developing a replicable methodology that contributes to the development of new products with tourism and agricultural potential, creating viable and sustainable products, and establishing an organized and reliable space for investment.
	Amazonia Valorada (AMAVAL)	Initiative aimed at developing a replicable methodology to assess the Amazon Biome, so that public and private decision-makers can incorporate it into public policy instruments for the administration of justice
	Alliance for the Values of the Amazon	An initiative aimed at creating and strengthening communication efforts at different scales that convey the integrity of the Amazon, enhance the participation of local actors, facilitate the development of a model based on the Amazon, and disseminate alternatives for the use of the Amazon and its resources. Activities include: (a) Stakeholder mapping (e.g. Ancestral); (b) fund communication tools; (c) budget analysis; (d) mapping existing communication initiatives with similar objectives.
	Metarepositorio de conocimiento amazónico:	Initiative aimed at creating a virtual space where comprehensive knowledge from the Amazon can be shared in a user-friendly, timely, reliable, fair, and accessible manner.
East Africa (Madagascar)	MIRARI (Mitantana ara-dra_riny) Fair Management	This management strategy hopes to ensure a sustainable management of forest resources through negotiations with forest managers and users. The initiative emphasises that these negotiations be backed up by facts and necessary data to perform a cost-benefit assessment to support decision-making processes that are inclusive of each party's needs and are further accompanied with relevant responsibilities and compensations.
	Strengthening traditional and scientific knowledge	Tradition plays an important role in the daily life of communities, so it is important that the elements of these traditions are recorded, promoted and passed on, including traditions, rites, taboos and sacred sites, for a better understanding and appreciation of the forest. The initiative consists of reinforcing local traditions and knowledge as well as scientific results. It consists of setting up a database capitalising on this different knowledge, then analysing and disseminating it to target stakeholders.
	Sustainable beekeeping	This project hopes to lift honey production standards. The initiative consists of developing responsible beeping through the sustainable production of standard honey, thereby reducing the effects of the traditional practices which degrade forests. Furthermore, it aims to reconstitute bee colonies by considering the floral calendar of the region and to then introduce a label to improve

		pollination. This can be done through awareness raising, training, knowledge exchange, a Generalised System of Preferences (SPG), and legal and binding contracts between relevant parties/stakeholders.
	Lalàna	This initiative is centered on the understanding of various forest laws, and its effective application. Some requirements include advocacy campaigns, capacity building, enforcement and improvement of laws, as well as the introduction of dissuasive penalties, thereby encouraging the development of a legal clinic and mobile applications.
	Environmental / National Education and Development for All	The program focuses on the education and training of local people, such as those living in local communities with the hope that it will encourage respect for the environment. The presenters of the initiative suggest setting up competitions and incentives that reward and encourage small local communities to preserve the forest.
Europe (Switzerland)	Incubator for new business models	This proposal, derived from the dialogue in Bern, Switzerland plans to provide capital and other relevant support tools for new forestry business models.
	Forest and wood in social media	This idea aims to have a young, unconventional and "wild" approach to communicating forest issues and forest values via social media.
	Biodiversity credits	Sale of low-cost share certificates in certified nature conservation programs for ecological compensation and mitigation measures.

Creating a New Relationship with Nature
Für eine neue Beziehung zur Natur
Créer une nouvelle relation avec la nature
Creando una nueva relación con la naturaleza
ການສ້າງສາຍພົວພັນໃໝ່ ກັບ ທຳມະຊາດ
Kujenga uhusiano mpya na uasilia

**Partners &
Collaborators:**

Berner Fachhochschule
► Hochschule für Agrar-, Forst- und
  Lebensmittelwissenschaften HAFL