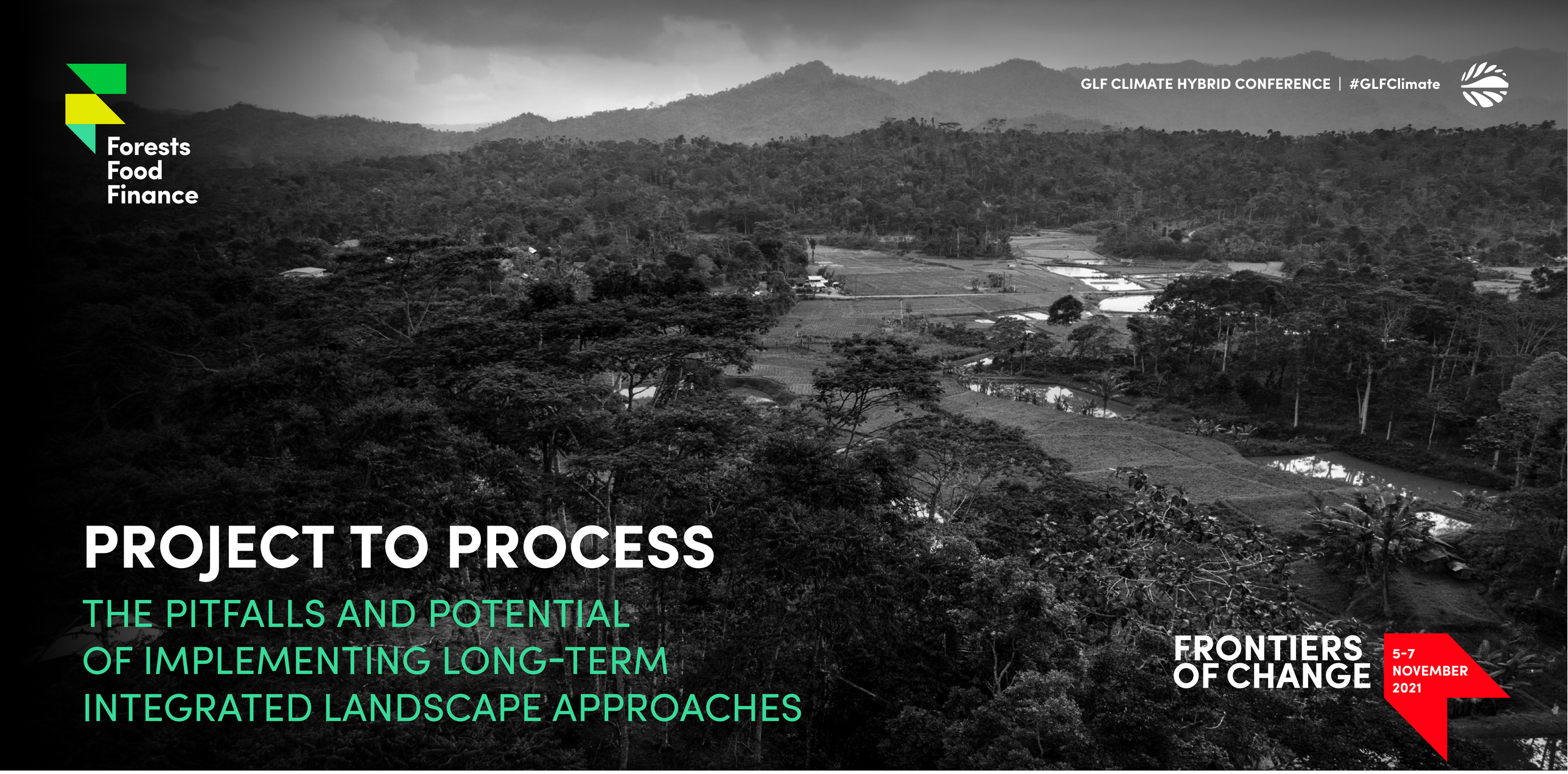

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PROJECT TO PROCESS

THE PITFALLS AND POTENTIAL OF IMPLEMENTING LONG-TERM INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE APPROACHES

FRONTIERS OF CHANGE

5-7 NOVEMBER 2021

COLANDS
Collaborating to Operationalize Landscape Approaches for Nature, Development and Sustainability

WHITE PAPER

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Despite lacking a universally agreed definition or implementing framework, integrated landscape approaches are now widely considered viable landscape governance strategies to satisfy human needs while mitigating environmental harm. In recent decades, integrated landscape approaches have been embraced and endorsed by international conservation and development agencies, national governments, and multinational private sector organizations. Such approaches seek to reconcile biodiversity conservation objectives with local socioeconomic and national development demands. In doing so, they emphasize the need for cross-scale and multi-sector negotiation that places local people at the centre of environmental and land-use decision-making processes.

Integrated landscape approaches are borne out of the conservation literature and build upon lessons learned from previous 'integrated' conservation endeavours. However, they are distinct in acknowledging that conservation-development 'win-wins' remain elusive, and rather encourage careful consideration of inevitable trade-offs and iterative consultation that seeks to identify synergies such that adaptive management could generate outcomes that result in 'more winners and fewer losers'.

This line of thinking has generated widespread support, and yet the evidence for the sustainability and particularly the effectiveness of integrated landscape approaches remains limited. Recent reviews have shown that while implementation is widespread, indeed spanning the globe, evidence of impact is either lacking, restricted to a narrow set of metrics, or determined by a select group or individual actors.

Landscapes are complex dynamic systems and highly contextualized, therefore making evaluation of progress subjective. They are 'seen in the eye of the beholder', and an optimal outcome for one, will likely not be so for another. Therefore, even seemingly well-intended objectives such as 'ecosystem restoration' or 'biodiversity conservation' could illicit resistance, or worse fail to recognize or incorporate the knowledge and needs of local people who have lived in, managed and conserved the landscapes in question.

As ILAs tend to be long-term, large-scale, encompass a broad range of actors and objectives, and are highly context specific, it follows that a concise definition is hard to achieve and perhaps even undesirable. A certain ambiguity might be necessary in order to ensure the approach can be adequately contextualized, remains sufficiently adaptive, and to enable a transition away from a focus on near-term project-driven outcome objectives and rather towards a long-term initiative that is reliant upon regular evaluation of process indicators.

However, a lack of clear definition also implies a lack of basic rules and norms to follow, which can inevitably create further challenges. For example, this lack of clarity could lead to conceptually weak and poorly designed implementation efforts, inhibit the ability to provide clear guidance to policy or the private sector, and risk the approach being co-opted by higher level or influential actors or organizations to maintain the status quo and potentially perpetuate existing inequalities. Last but by no means least, it also makes the effectiveness of ILAs difficult to evaluate and compare.

Towards better evaluation and effectiveness?

Evaluating impacts of integrated landscape approaches is challenging, in part due to the above, but also because traditional evaluation methods are largely maladapted to the task. Due to their size and complexity, appropriate 'landscape' counterfactuals are lacking, which precludes traditional impact assessment. Meanwhile, traditional performance monitoring tools are often not very useful in determining how or why values change. The axiom 'what gets measured, gets managed' is alluring but again not entirely appropriate for diverse landscape systems. While quantification of key indicators can of course be useful and is necessary, a mathematical reduction of reality alone inadequately captures the spectrum of interests, beliefs and values of concern. That is to say, many of the things that really matter, i.e., social relationships, social distance, and sociocultural, relational and spiritual values and norms etc. are often very difficult to measure, or as the academic V.F. Ridgway famously said, "not everything that matters can be measured, not everything that we can measure, matters."

In moving from project to process then, integrated landscape approaches need to confront the typical donor driven project narrative of delivering tightly packaged outcomes within tightly bound timeframes. To better engage with the realities of complex tropical landscapes, integrated landscape approaches need to be long-term, transdisciplinary in nature, and employ more holistic and dynamic (evaluation) methods.

Recent methodological developments are useful; for example, recognizing the value of using stakeholder perceptions as evidence, the expansion of multidimensional human well-being indicators, and the importance of adequately and equitably monitoring governance processes. Theory-based evaluation approaches – that is engaging

stakeholders to build theory of change models that assess change at each stage of the process – also offer potential. Certainly, integrated landscape approaches need to better capture social values and perceptions, address power asymmetries, support community action, evaluate governance performance, and assess and manage trade-offs.

Moving away from the dichotomous language of success and failure, and rather adopting a systems approach that prioritizes process and adaptation to determine enabling conditions and lessons learned, will likely be more constructive to the long-term sustainability of integrated landscape approaches. Research that measures the things that count as well as counting what can be measured is therefore fundamental to building the evidence base and helping understand under what conditions ILAs are workable, and crucially who benefits and how, and who doesn't.

COLANDS: gathering evidence and addressing knowledge gaps

This session of the GLF Climate Conference will address some of the gaps in knowledge and understanding by showcasing the initiative Collaborating to Operationalise Landscape Approaches for Nature, Development and Sustainability (COLANDS). This initiative has so far been focused on multistakeholder consultation, building capacity to implement and evaluate integrated approaches to landscape governance, pilot testing of ILAs, and formulating global and national policy recommendations based on lessons learned. The COLANDS initiative is implementing ILAs in Ghana, Zambia and Indonesia with the aim of achieving integrated landscape governance. Insights and findings from recent COLANDS activities will be shared at the GLF Climate Conference, where speakers will present their research and experiences related to evaluating ILAs, including resolving conflicts, improving the functioning of multistakeholder platforms, addressing power imbalances, and incorporating gender and multidimensional well-being concerns amongst others.

COLANDS is supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and is a CIFOR-led consortium of partners consisting of the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), and local and political partners in the countries of implementation. These are: Ghana (University of Development Studies and the Forestry Commission); Zambia (Zambia CBNRM Forum, Forestry Department, and the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources) and Indonesia (the indigenous NGO Riak Bumi, CIFOR researchers with a long history of working at the site, and the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Indonesia).

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The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, Ecoagriculture Partners, The European Forest Institute, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, The International Livestock Research Institute, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative, SAN, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation part of Wageningen Research, World Farmer Organization, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, World Resources Institute, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)

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