



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Forests, Trees and  
Agroforestry



# Landscapes' dynamics through the lens of rural institutions

How feasible is the landscape  
approach?

Sandrine Fréguin-Gresh  
Pierre-Marie Aubert

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# Purpose of the research

- Better understand the socio-political and institutional drivers of changes in landscapes
- Obtain results that could be analyzed and compared across landscapes
- Better identify and characterize existing bottlenecks and rooms for manoeuver
  - Better understanding for better action designing

# Focus

## ■ Two main research objects

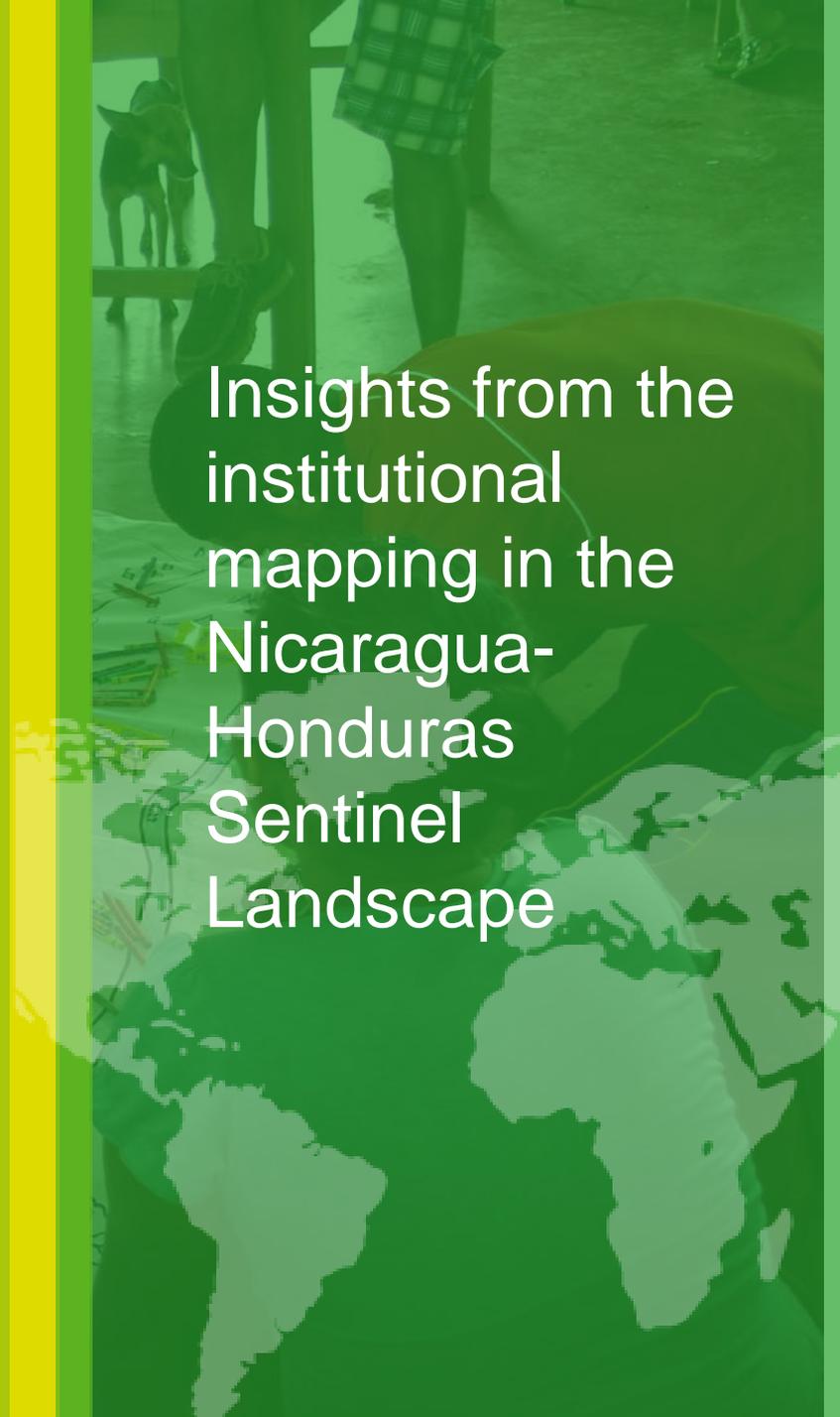
- *Institutions* that govern access, uses and exploitation of Natural Resources
  - Institutions can be defined as the “*humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions*” (North 1990)
- *Social and political mechanisms* relating to the use of the ecosystem, which participate in designing specific forms of NR governance
  - Among which, related to forestry, agriculture, cattle raising, firewood collection, nature conservation, mining, etc...

# Methodological choices

- Design of an original protocol
  - There is no 'one-fits-all' protocol for institutional mapping
  - From an epistemological standpoint, analyzing the same situation with 2 different objects and objectives is complex
- Mixed methods approach
  - Survey (at the landscape level)
    - Mapping institutions
    - Assessing NR governance from the stakeholders' perspective and based on the 'Good Governance Principles'
  - Case study (at the community level)
    - In-depth analyzing institutions and social and political processes that translate into specific practices related to NR



Insights from the  
institutional  
mapping in the  
Nicaragua-  
Honduras  
Sentinel  
Landscape



# The landscape

## ■ Location



## ■ Major characteristics

A bi-national territory around the centerpieces of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

- Including two Biosphere Reserves
- Home to various indigenous groups

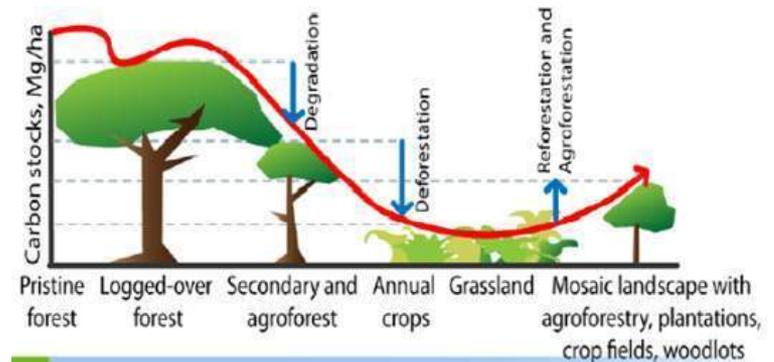
## Key land uses

- Closed primary and secondary forests
- Farmland with a large diversity of production systems
  - In particular, agroforestry based on coffee and cocoa, annual crops, and cattle-raising

# The landscape



The landscape was (mostly) defined, based on land-uses comprising all the states of the ‘forest curve transition’



NOT as a geographic object

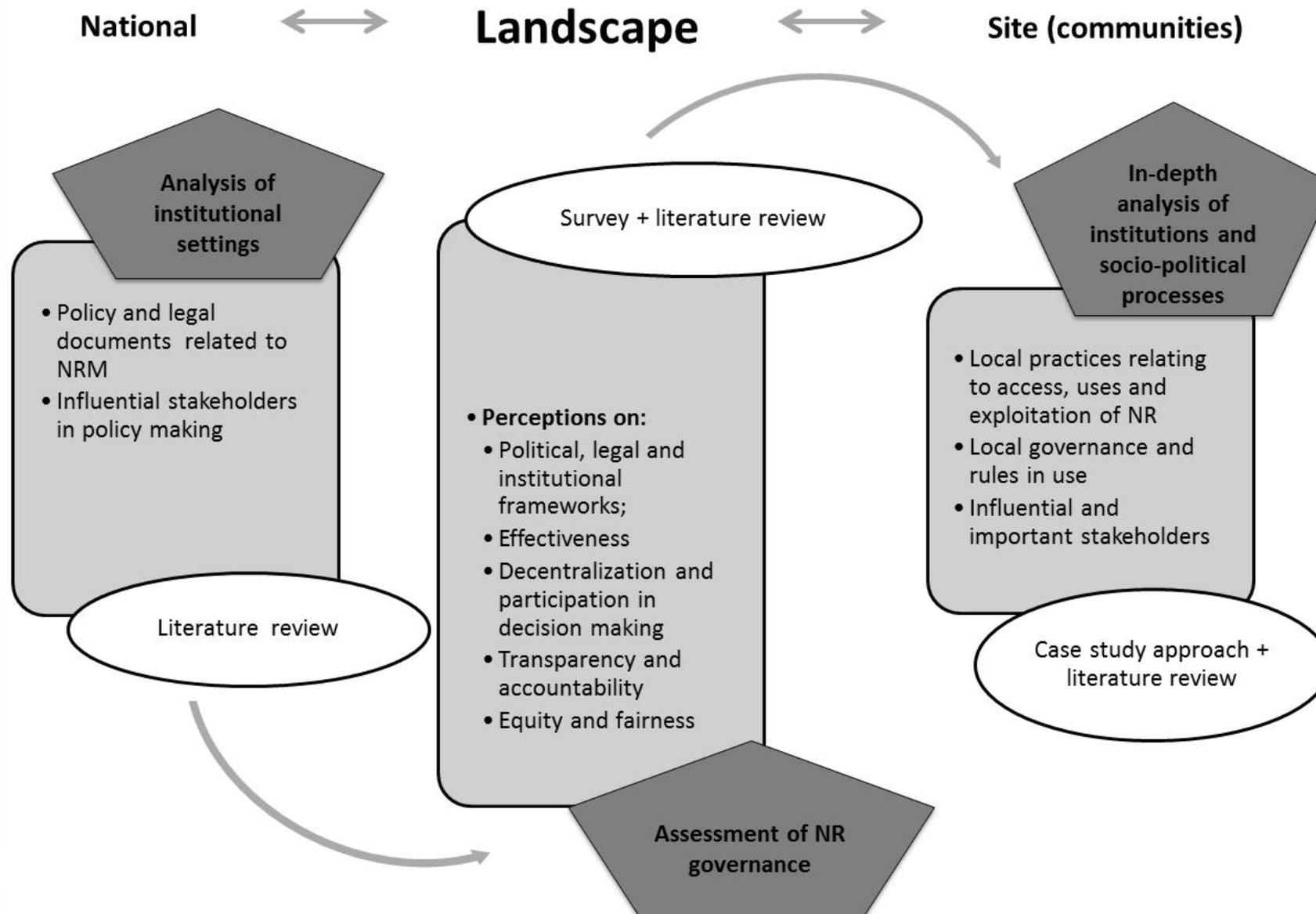
i.e. spatially, historically, politically and socially meaningful

# The methodological challenges

- Need to adopt a landscape approach, in particular in order to establish indicators of institutional change
  - Standardized instruments to collect and analyze data at the landscape level
- Need to understand institutions and social practices, which are often very locally 'understandable'
  - Multidimensional, multilevel, with multiple stakeholders



# A mixed methods approach



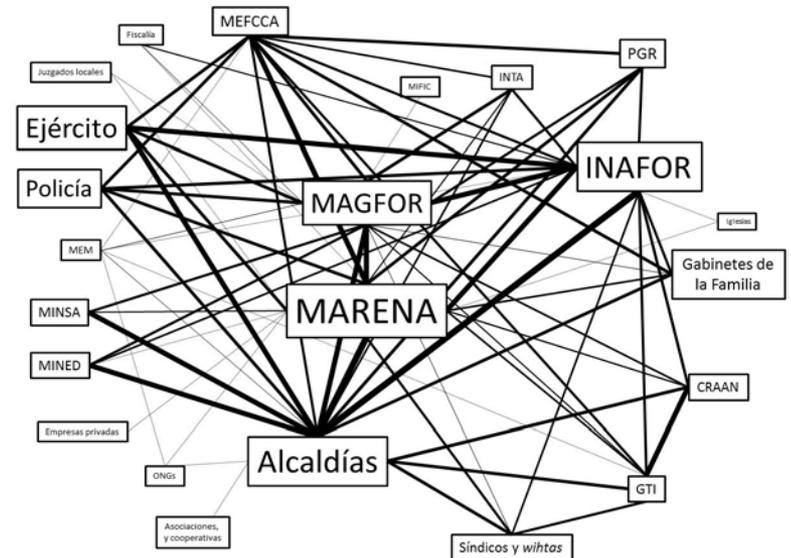


# Challenges encountered



# Institutional settings

- Two different political and legal systems
  - More than 30 formal laws and regulations relating to NRM
  - About 15-20 public agencies with mandates and responsibilities in NRM
- An heterogeneous NR governance within each country



*Example of a map of influential stakeholders in policy making in Nicaragua*

# Institutional settings

- Mapping 'legitimate' property rights
  - In the absence of Cadaster
  - When illegal land tenure is common
  - When limits of concessions are unclear and subject to serious conflicts, including with the State
- Assessing NR governance from the key stakeholders' perspective
  - Scoring perceptions is not an easy task
  - It cannot tell you about what's really going on at the community and individual level
- Linking an assessment of NR governance 'quality' with ecosystem health?

# Local institutional arrangements

- Institutions, rights over NR and governance systems are highly complex
- Many crucial issues are difficult to assess
  - Corruption, drug trafficking, political sensitiveness, etc.
- What locally govern NR mostly refer to individual agencies, including those of external actors
  - But how to up scale results to the landscape?





How relevant  
would it be for  
Western Ghâts?





For further information: [freguin@cirad.fr](mailto:freguin@cirad.fr) and [pm.aubert@agroparistech.fr](mailto:pm.aubert@agroparistech.fr)

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