



FOCUS FORESTS LANDSCAPE DIALOGUES

The Focus Forests project explores solutions for stewardship in forests with special social and environmental values. Through this project, FSC will look for ways to address biodiversity loss and climate change, while continuing to enable the provision of responsibly produced goods and services from leading forest management practices. The Focus Forests project uses new methods for multi-stakeholder dialogue, to address biodiversity loss, climate change and the provision of responsibly produced goods and services from forests with special social and environmental values. These include Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) but can also be found under names such as primary forests, old growth forests, Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, and other names, depending on their geography.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOME

Focus Forests involves the organization of multi-stakeholder dialogues in collaboration with a Research Consortium led by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH). The method rests on the multi-stakeholder analysis of scenarios for landscape change and the use of strategy games designed to discuss constraints that may exist in the landscape. The Focus Forest dialogues bring social, environmental, and economic stakeholders together, including government representatives, to develop a landscape analysis, gain insight in the different perspectives of landscape use and understand how actions from one individual or organization impacts other actions. The collaborative design of potential scenarios helps participants to explore options that resolve resource management issues and to agree on management strategies supporting social, economic, and environmental stewardship in landscapes.

The project methods and outcomes will also be presented at FSC's General Assembly in October 2022 and will serve as the basis for further discussion in the FSC membership on landscape approaches and stewardship in FSC certified IFLs for FSC strategies and standards. They will also be evaluated and shared with relevant national and/or international actors including the research community.

PLANNING THE LANDSCAPE DIALOGUES

Landscape dialogues are being planned in 2022 in tropical and boreal forest landscapes. a first dialogue is planned in March 2022 in Gabon, and further initiatives are on the way.

METHODOLOGY

The landscape dialogues combine tested methodologies of facilitation and group dynamics with new forms of scenario design, taking into account models of landscape change. The models are developed through multi-stakeholder participatory processes and engage stakeholders, resources, dynamics, and interactions that are relevant for the landscape that is being discussed. The dialogue is done in the form of a strategy game, and the participants of the dialogue take the role of a landscape stakeholder (such as a farmer, forest concessionaire, governmental official, indigenous representative, community representative, etc.) in the dialogue, and therefore has an interest in the outcome of the dialogue (Figure 1).

The scenarios emerge from the collective decisions of the participants and the interactions between their decisions and the rules of the game. At the end of the session, participants can analyse the landscape scenario they have developed and identify the strategies that were successful and those that failed. They can then imagine changes to the rules that will help analysing the landscape benefits to different stakeholders in a different direction.

Why is this form of dialogue different from anything else? There are several reasons. First, because the model provides participants with a common description of how the landscape is constructed in its different uses, a solid foundation on which to build consensus. Second, the model provides participants the opportunity to discover the landscape from the perspective of another stakeholder group. This increases mutual understanding and is intended to foster transparency and trust. Third, the model creates a safe operating space where experiments can be tried out, conflicts simulated, and policies tested. With a (1) common description of the system, (2) mutual understanding and trust, and (3) a safe space to challenge the validity of everyone’s beliefs, the chances of finding consensus between participants are greatly increased. The landscape dialogue is targeted to achieve these 3 elements as a basis for the final analysis of the landscape that is explored. The support for achieving this will come from the facilitation by the researchers in the 4-day dialogue.



Figure 1: The model representing all components of the landscape in a physical form. The hexagonal cells constitute the landscape. The tokens represent infrastructures, resources, or people. Based on their strategies, participants place tokens where they want to invest or regulate activities. Throughout the dialogue they will need to negotiate agreements and collaborations with the other participants.

PREPARING THE LANDSCAPE DIALOGUE

1. Landscape selection

The first step in preparing a landscape dialogue is the identification of the country in which to organize the sessions and the specific landscape of interest in that country. For the exploration in Focus Forests in 2022, this will be countries situated in the Intact Forest Landscapes of the Congo basin, Amazon, Russia, and Canada. FSC, supported by FSC network Partners in the country will collect information on the identified landscape, including and not limited to a description and mapping of the landscape, collecting existing information of the IFL, political contexts, and salient stakeholders.

2. Stakeholder selection

An initial list of 20 key invitees identified by FSC Network Partner in the country and other collaborative partners will be proposed based their role in the landscape. The proposal to organize a dialogue is explained to the invitees and government officials, to ask for their support and participation. In compiling the list of invitees, special attention is given to different governmental levels, social and environmental stakeholders, community and Indigenous peoples in the landscape and political structures and customary representatives. To open up the process of selection, the 20 initial invitees are asked to nominate one other invitee each that they consider to be a key stakeholder in that landscape who should be invited too. A landscape dialogue can have a maximum of 40 participants.

ORGANIZING THE LANDSCAPE DIALOGUE

The dialogue will last 4 days and demands active engagement from the participants during the entire period. The dialogues will be led and facilitated by the researcher team (4 to 6 facilitators). Observers are not welcome to be at the dialogue; FSC staff will not contribute to the dialogue's negotiations, but may support and assist in reporting. To allow for important informal exchanges beyond workshop hours, all participants and organizers will stay overnight in the same location.

Day 1 - Forming

The first day of the dialogue starts with an introduction, an icebreaker and the clarification of the participants expectations. The group will then discover the model and go through a tutorial to learn how to play. That tutorial is already part of the scenario development. The participants will be distributed in smaller group, each group taking the role of a landscape stakeholder. The session covers a fictional period of 50 years, allowing stakeholders to build long term strategies and gain insight in how their choices can change the landscape. By the end of day 1, the group has gained the same level of familiarity with the model and a first scenario has been created, that will serve as baseline.



Day 2 – Storming

A collective debriefing will allow all participants to draw lessons from the baseline and their own strategies. They will be invited to point out bridges between the analysis done in the scenario and the actual situation in the landscape. In the case the baseline represents a worsening environmental situation, participants will be invited to design policies to reverse the trend.

The second day will be marked by the confrontation between participants assumptions, behavior of the landscape dialogue changes and the exposure of the effect of scenarios in the landscape. At the end of day 2, a set of joint policies that have successfully departed from the baseline will have been developed.

Day 3 – Norming

Participants will identify the reasons for success / failure and will transfer the winning strategies into the actual landscape that is being discussed. Options will be identified and ranked under guidance by the facilitation team.

Day 4 – Performing and closing

The final day is devoted to finalizing a roadmap, identifying responsibilities and next steps. The last part of the day will serve as closing and gathering feedback, to be shared with the FSC membership as part of the Focus Forest project. This is expected to be done by the recording of a session of all participants, which can be made available for learning how to improve next sessions on landscape approaches in FSC.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT

More information about the Focus Forest project can be found on the [FSC website](#). In addition, the following documents have been published:

- [Focus Forests Fact sheet](#)
- [Focus Forests FAQ](#)
- [Focus Forests Green Paper](#)

To receive regular updates on the project, you can subscribe to the Focus Forests Newsletter [here](#). In case you have any questions about or suggestions for the project, please contact Gemma Boetekees at g.boetekees@fsc.org