Beyond financial incentives to foster enduring forest conservation. Lessons learned from the San Martin case-study in the Peruvian Amazon

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Abstract: Forests are widely recognised as an effective measure for mitigating climate change. Their conservation both avoids additional carbon dioxide emissions and enhances carbon storage capacity. As a result, more funds are directed towards forest conservation efforts with the establishment of the UN-REDD program as ultimate example. An increasingly popular practice for these forest conservation efforts is the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme. In such schemes, ecosystem service providers are remunerated by those who benefit from these services. The financial incentive is thereby supposed to guide local land-use behaviour towards activities compatible with forest conservation. The PES-paradigm however is not undisputed. It is unrealistic to assume that PES-schemes and the associated financial incentives will go on eternally. Once land-users no longer receive financial incentives, they might revert to their former deforesting land-use practices. A narrow financial approach to stimulate conservation-friendly land-use behaviour has therefore no lasting impact on forest conservation. Hence, this paper argues that the design of PES-schemes should incorporate initiatives that continue to stimulate participants' conservation behaviour, even after the scheme has been formally concluded. A potent driver for human behaviour is the pursuit of well-being. Connecting well-being to forest conservation is therefore key to establish enduring conservation behaviour. Well-being has an obvious material and economic component, yet its social and psychological component is often overlooked. To include both components of well-being in the analysis, a theoretical framework was established that combines the political ecology approach of Blaikie (1985) and the social-psychology approach proposed by Ezzine-de-Blas et al. (2019) to describe the relation between the political economic context, livelihood, socio-psychological satisfaction and land-use. The framework was applied to the case of the indigenous communities of Chunchiwi and Chiriyacu in the Peruvian region of San Martin, who are involved in a specific PES-program called *Transferencias Directas Condicionadas* (TDC). From the analysis of the experiences of these indigenous land-users with the TDC program, social and environmental relatedness emerged as key determinants for establishing a link between well-being and forest conservation. The fit of the program's initiatives with the social and landscape characteristics of the local context therefore contributes to the endurance of land-users' forest conservation behaviour after the financial incentives have been concluded.