

Connected Conservation: a transformative approach that can deliver to biocultural wellbeing



Our critical decade for climate action conference, Tyndall Centre, UEA, 8 Sept 2025

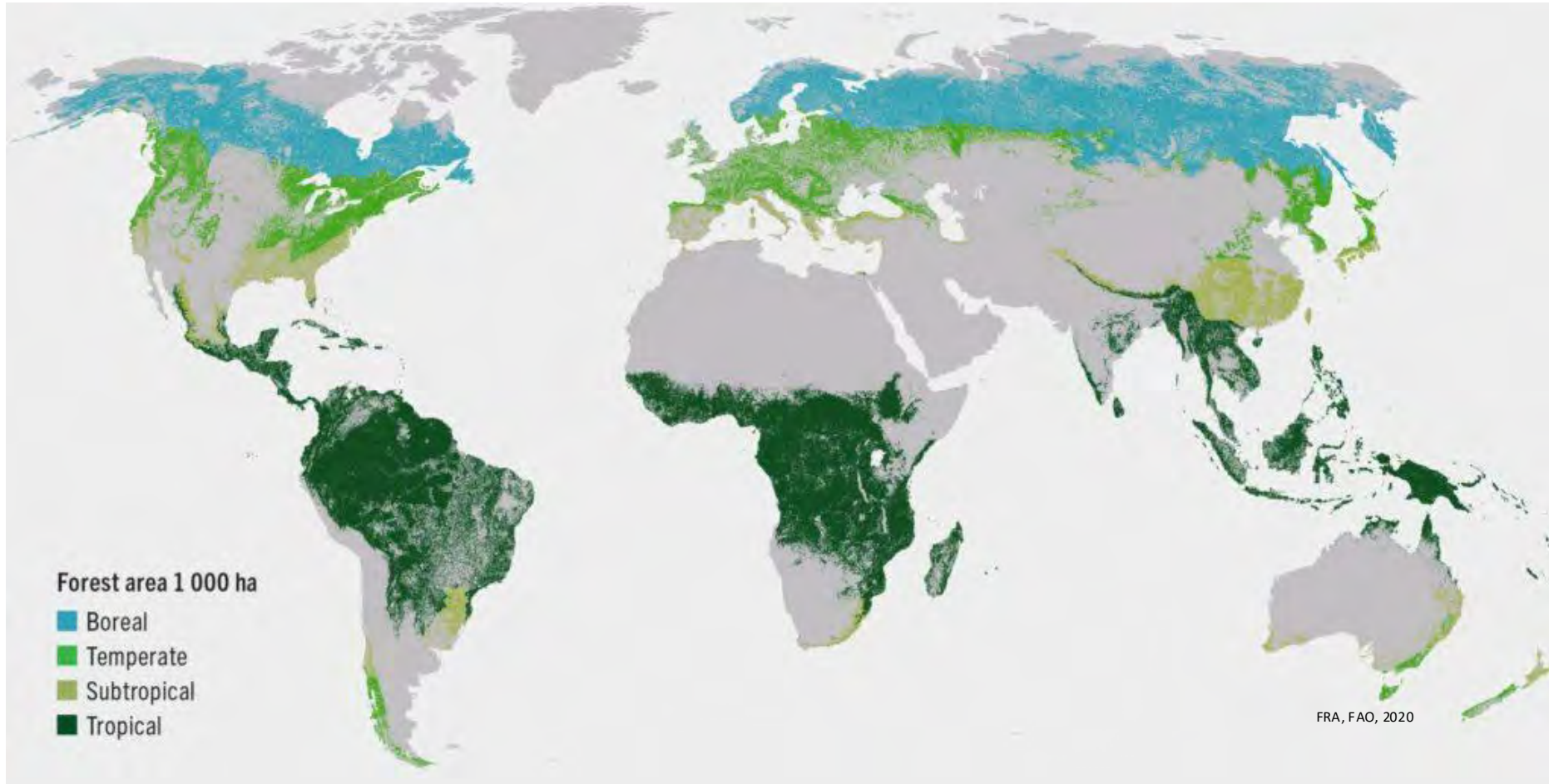


Tyndall°Centre
for Climate Change Research



Rachel Carmenta
@RachelCarmenta
r.carmenta@uea.ac.uk

Tropical forest conservation: crucial to climate change mitigation, biological and cultural diversity



IP&LC are delivering forest conservation in *biocultural* centres



High proportion of Indigenous
lands are low-intensity
anthromes



TRF are the sites and emphasis of conservation action

Movement of conservation, including NBS to win-wins: conservation and poverty alleviation

- Protected areas
- Payments
- Alternative livelihoods

Narrow notions of social impacts – wellbeing as cash-poverty

Exonerates the role of the wealthy / distant drivers – cannot deliver and can create harms

REDD+: If communities are the solution, what is the problem?

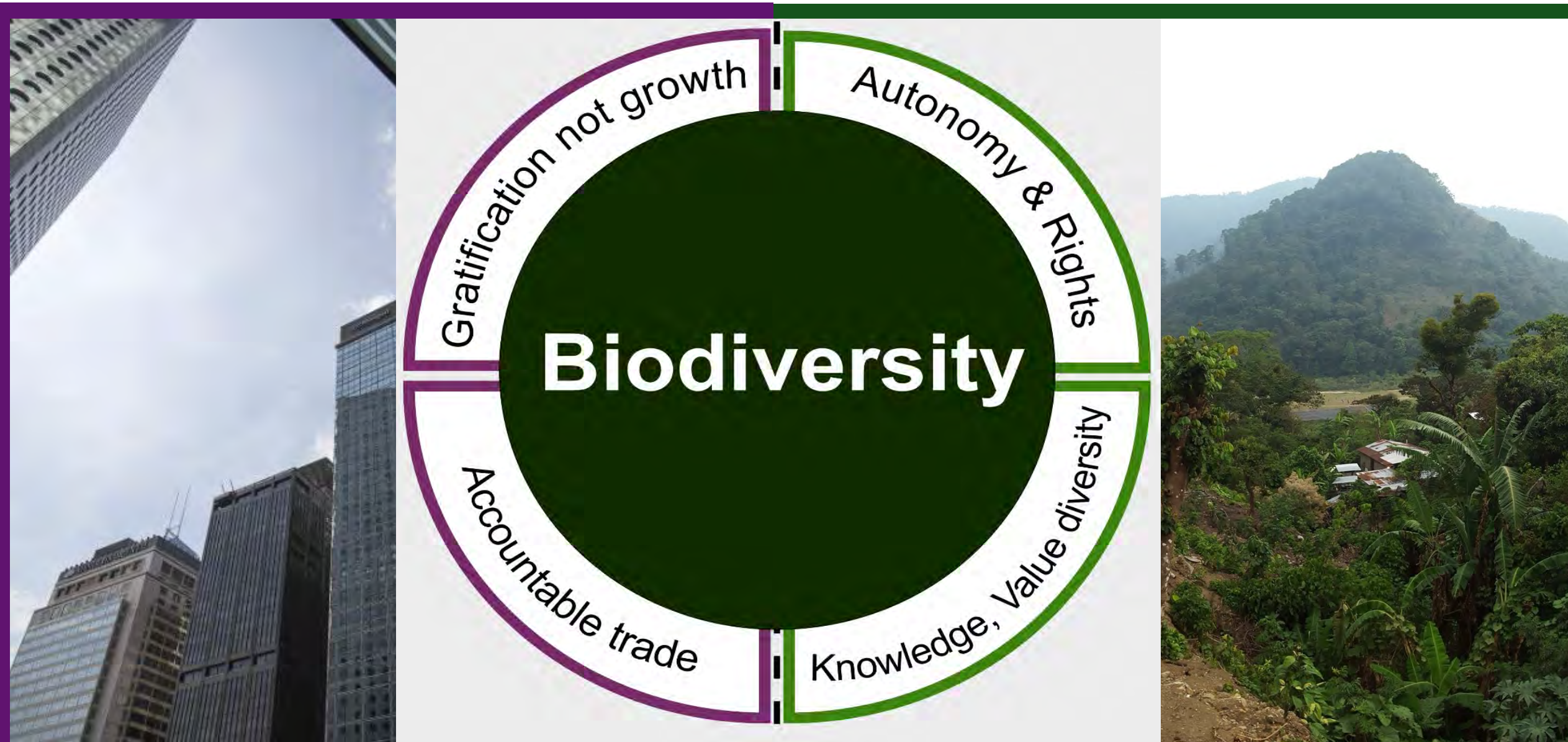
Margaret Skutsch^a, Esther Turnhout^{b,*}

^a Centro de Investigaciones en Geografía Ambiental, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Campus Morelia, Mexico

^b Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, Wageningen University, Netherlands



What should conservation do instead?



CONNECTED CONSERVATION

Dominant flows
Reducing biodiversity

System-based
Telecoupled Conservation

Place-based
Collaborative Conservation

Marginalized flows
Enabling biodiversity

**Financial accumulation
centres**

Trade

GOV
&
ACC

Climate change

ECO
&
FIN

One world
development

IND
&
COLL

SCIE
&
TECH

To disrupt,
diminish

Gratification not growth

Biodiversity

Accountable trade

Autonomy & Rights

Knowledge, Value diversity

GOV
&
ACC

Local governance

ECO
&
FIN

Diverse knowledge

IND
&
COLL

SCIE
&
TECH

To enhance,
amplify

Biocultural centres

To target wealth accumulation

Actions in Biocultural Centres

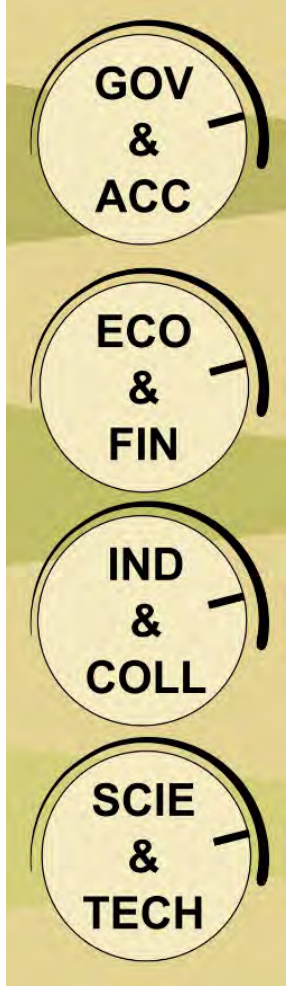
Moves beyond conservations site-level emphasis, away from simple poverty ideas

Enhance and amplify biocultural centres: aiming to enhance human wellbeing over growth

Through e.g.

- Strengthening local governance – counter force to OWD
- Recognising community and commons over individualisation & accumulation
- Enhancing place attachment, territory & relational values
- Diverse conceptions of a good life, philosophies of people/nature relations
- Working with gift, solidarity and moral economies
- Embedding different ways of knowing and experiencing the world
- Techniques and technologies of resource management

Reimagining conservation action: enhanced integration with hitherto 'unusual' partners



Biocultural autonomy, governance, rights

Biocultural centres

Champions empowered, autonomous, self-determined local communities to exercise diverse visions of prosperity and living well supported by established, recognized and defended rights.



- e.g. place-based & indigenous curricula, provisioning basic needs, revitalize and reclaim cultural practices and knowledge, UN rights of indigenous peoples and env law,
- e.g. pricing that reduces the pressures on indigenous lands from accumulation and conversion
- e.g. support IP&LCs movements on principles of sovereignty, solidarity, sufficiency, the collective and participation, self-determination
- e.g. identify what enables persistence and resistance, early warning for communities to mitigate risks, forensic architecture and investigative journalism of infringements, making visible the lived realities

Gratification not growth: reducing demand

Financial accumulation
centres

‘The breaking of capitalist habits’, redefining common visions of well-being and prosperity and normalizing ‘alternatives’.



- e.g. education & advertising to mainstream concepts (justice, planetary boundaries, telecoupling etc), policies that ensure pricing shifts
- e.g. pricing and services that make better decision-making a possibility for many, including by non-environmentally minded constituents
- e.g. motivate citizens to demand GOV support making ‘better’ choices possible inc through changed narratives, emotive language, story-telling, citizens assemblies
- e.g. collab with behavioural science and environmental law, raise profile of seemingly ‘other’ alternatives, super rich

Connected Conservation: reimagining conservation action

- Urgent need to mobilize change to secure sustainable futures
- Enhances biocultural diversity and diverse notions of wellbeing
- Engages with plural values concepts
- Unconstrained by colonial ideas of site-level conservation and simplistic notions of poverty
- Engages new tools to tackle distant disproportionate wealth-related drivers
- Requires actions across scales, interdisciplinary, and multi-sectoral
- Great challenge to the networks and norms of contemporary conservation

Thank you

Carmenta, R., Lima, M. G. B., Choiruzzad, S. A., Dawson, N., Estrada-Carmona, N., Hicks, C., ... & Barlow, J. (2025). Unveiling pervasive assumptions: moving beyond the poverty-biodiversity loss association in conservation. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 74, 101537.

Carmenta, R., Steward, A., Albuquerque, A., Carneiro, R., Vira, B., & Estrada Carmona, N. (2023). The comparative performance of land sharing, land sparing type interventions on place-based human well-being. *People and Nature*, 5(6), 1804-1821.

Carmenta, R., Barlow, J., Bastos Lima, M. G., Berenguer, E., Choiruzzad, S., Estrada-Carmona, N., ... & Hicks, C. (2023). Connected Conservation: Rethinking conservation for a telecoupled world. *Biological Conservation*., 282.



Tyndall°Centre
for Climate Change Research

**SCHOOL OF
GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT**



Rachel Carmenta

@RachelCarmenta
r.carmenta@uea.ac.uk

Conservation strategies hinge on ideas of how poverty connects to biodiversity loss

- **Poverty and conservation are separate policy realms.**
 - Protected areas or payments for environmental services
- **Poverty constrains conservation, 'daily needs driver loss'**
 - Income generating projects
- **Conservation should not compromise poverty reduction.**
 - Do no harm principle
 - Social impact assessments, payments of opp costs
- **Poverty reduction (inc wellbeing) depends on living resource conservation.**
 - Local management, ICCAs and sustainable use reserves

Issues with dominant site-level approach



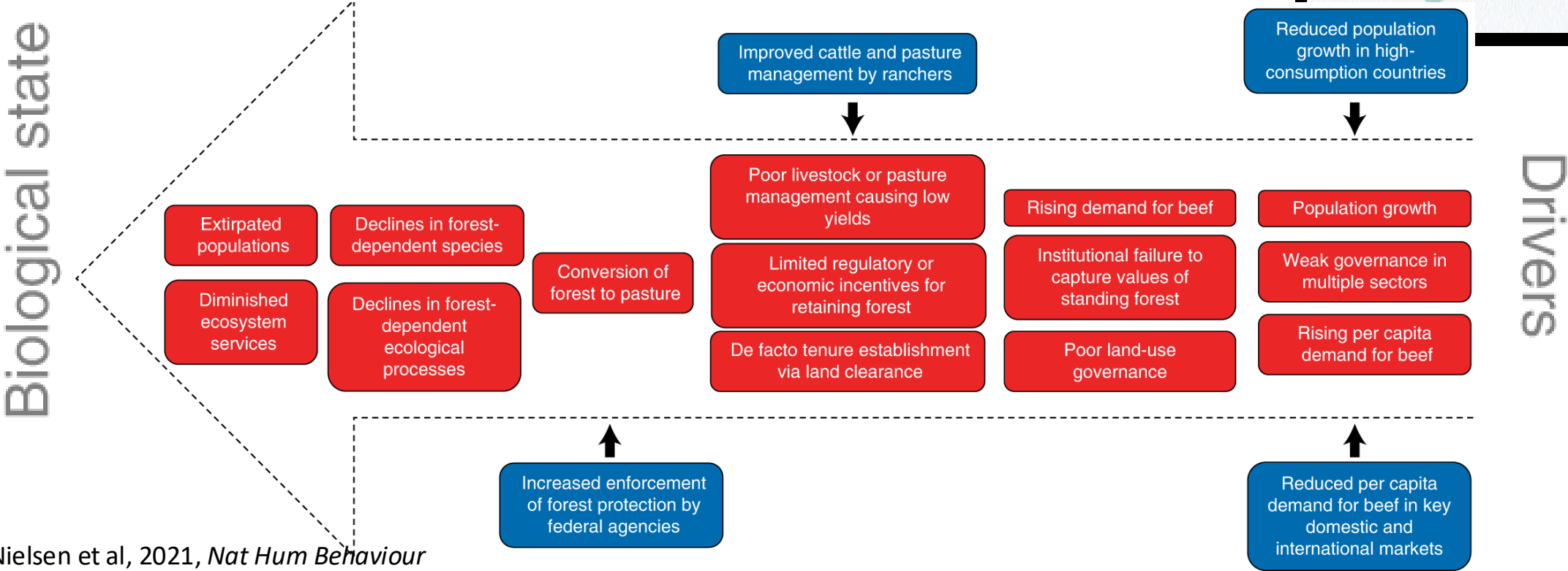
- Exonerates those most responsible
- Forfeits learning
- Not delivering
- Generates harms
- 'Resolve' \$ poverty = virtuous act

Ociredef Zeugnimod, The Global Land Grab





Across multiple scales: threat chains



Actions operating in concert



Wealth and consumption are the greater drivers






Perspective | [Open Access](#) | [Published: 19 June 2020](#) nature communications

Scientists’ warning on affluence

[Thomas Wiedmann](#) , [Manfred Lenzen](#), [Lorenz T. Keyßer](#) & [Julia K. Steinberger](#)

Pervasive human-driven decline of life on Earth points to the need for transformative change

Science

[SANDRA DÍAZ](#) , [JOSEF SETTELE](#) , [EDUARDO S. BRONDÍZIO](#) , [HIEN T. NGO](#), [JOHN AGARD](#) , [ALMUT ARNETH](#), [PATRICIA BALVANERA](#) , [KATE A. BRAUMAN](#) 

[STUART H. M. BUTCHART](#) , [CYNTHIA N. ZAYAS](#)  +19 authors [Authors Info & Affiliations](#)

