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Evaluation for the Anthropocene: Towards Sustainability-ready Evaluation

EES Biennial Conference

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Paradigm shift

- Integrating biosphere, society and economy for sustainable development
- Focusing on drivers of environmental change
- Landscape approach where human and natural system meet (e.g., agricultural systems, sustainable cities, coastal zones…)

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Complementary but not identical objectives

- As an evaluator, what do you measure and which objectives do you prioritize?

- A sustainability-ready evaluation must consider both human and natural systems
- Assess synergies and trade-offs between environment and development
- Identify unintended or unanticipated consequences

Case: Renewable energy for off-grid communities in Africa

Development

- Powering up previously dark communities
- Benefits to households (cooking, TV, radio…)
- Benefits to children (able to ready and study in the evening)
- Benefits to women (lit areas provide safety after dark)

Environment

- Avoiding greenhouse gas emissions
- Avoiding deforestation and threats to wildlife due to reduced fuelwood use
- Benefits to land degradation
- Carbon sequestration

What has changed?

- Used to consider economic development and environmental protection as opposites
- Agency mandates defined narrowly to focus on one or the other
- Now poverty-environment nexus widely recognized
- Economic, political and social forces drive environmental change
- People's lives affected by all
- Need to address in conjunction

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From fencing off to mainstreaming biodiversity

- Protected area focus
- Could lead to conflicts, governance issues, poaching
- Recent shift towards mainstreaming biodiversity into productive systems
- Linkages with all sectors: infrastructure, tourism, livelihoods, mining, forestry, agriculture
- Socio-economic benefits recognized alongside environmental benefits
- Focus on driving forces of environmental change

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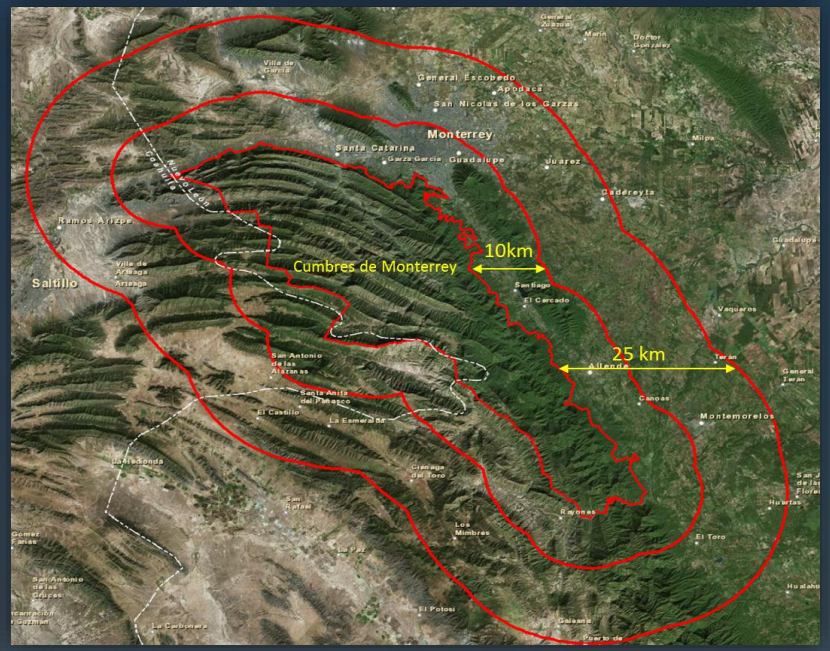
Emphasis on mixed methods

- “Evaluation science is … not reducible to, defined by, or limited to certain preferred methods.” – Michael Quinn Patton, AJE 30(2): 183-200 (2018)
- Don’t allow methods dictate your approach, but select the (set of) methods that are best suited to answer your evaluation questions
- Mixed methods are the norm

Geospatial data for evaluating change on ground

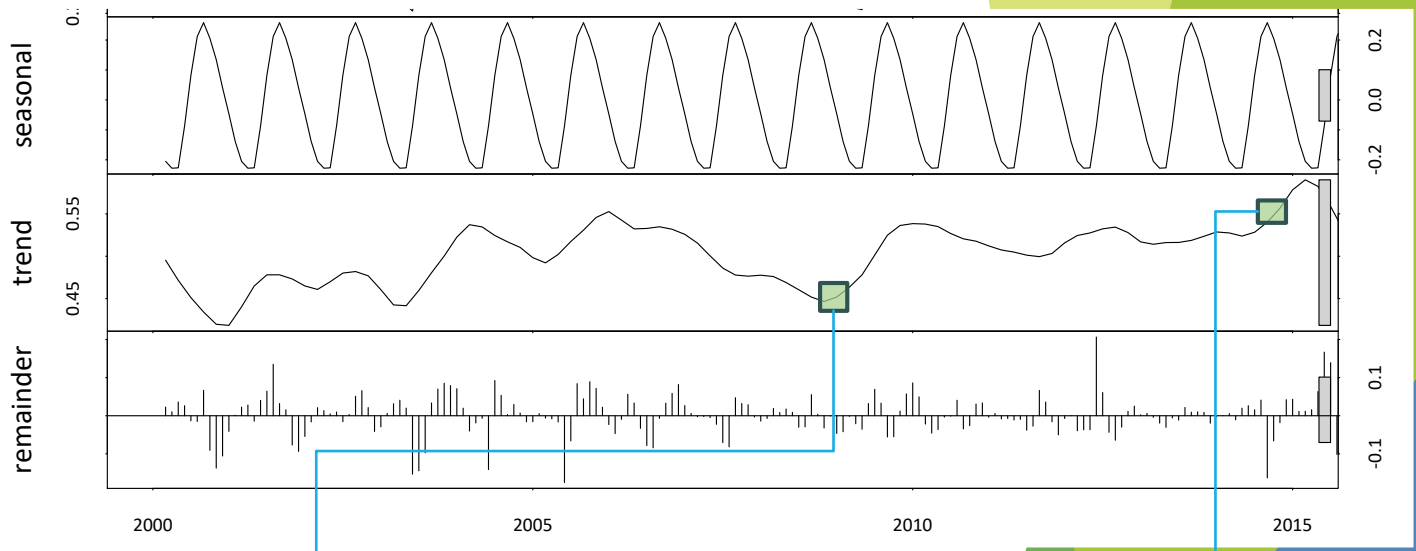


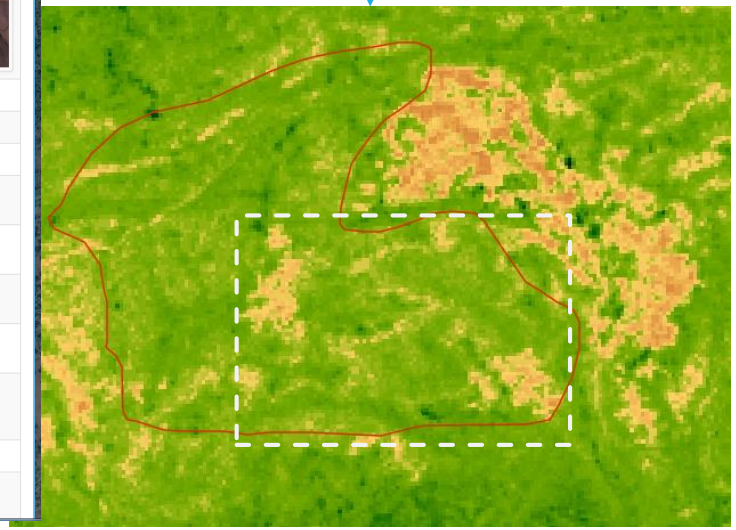
Forest cover loss (2000-2012)

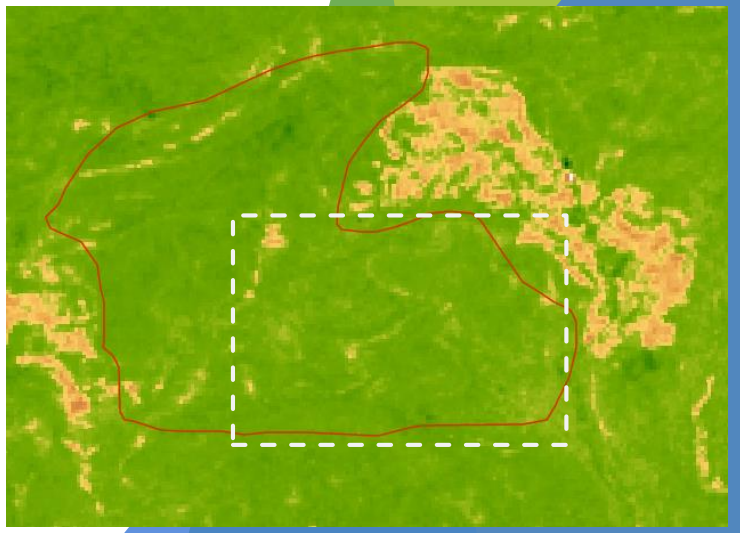
Mixed methods approach

Question	Response
Whats the current date and time	2016-09-18T13:27:00.000+05:30
Where is this interview taking place?	21.76722166205057 78.66110602300134 486.3959563433866 24.0
Can I take a picture?	
Name of Interviewee(s)	Premlal anke
What is your role in the project?	beneficiary
Name of Organization	Borpani
Is the project creating any positive impact in the area/region/site?	yes
Did this project contribute to better land management ?	to_a_moderate_
Has the project increased productivity in rangelands? (Y/N)	yes
Has the project allowed for creating of new jobs and livelihood?	yes
Do you believe project technicians listened to you and took your voice into account when planning or implementing the project?	to_a_moderate_
Did the project involve men and women equally?	yes
To what extent is the local community involved in the project?	to_a_moderate_

te data







How can evaluation become sustainability-ready?

- Understand the context in which intervention takes place
- Define the system boundaries – integrated natural and human – bearing in mind that systems are dynamic
- Construct the theory of change taking into account the context and broader system
- Consider that human and natural systems often have different geographies and time horizons
- Understand drivers of change – environment and development

Practical implications

- Theory of change to stretch beyond internal intervention logic
- Assume all interventions will have environmental consequences
- Bring in scientific knowledge (literature, expertise) to understand human and natural systems and their interactions
- Select methods and build teams based on what is evaluated
- Actively search for unintended consequences

- An intervention can only be a success if it produces desired results and impacts for people, without compromising environmental sustainability – **Sustainable Development Lens!**

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