

## Review

# Collaborative Landscape and Bioregional Planning and Management: 25 Years of Experience Towards a Landscape Transformation Support System

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## Abstract

Integrated landscape (bioregional, territorial) management (ILM) is a model for place-based planning and development that integrates values of healthy nature, regenerative economies, human well-being, and social solidarity. This review paper analyzes the support system for ILM to achieve transformative change, highlighting 20 dimensions in five support sub-systems. Though landscape partnerships (LPs) are now widespread, they have little coordinated support to form and have weak capacities, inadequate long-term operational funding, and limited cultural resonance. Landscape programs have proliferated and gained notable system-level support, but LP coalitions and alliances are just emerging, and there is little coordinated provision of LP support services. Despite widespread developments in the knowledge base, methods, and tools for local ILM design, there is little coordinated system support and limited dedicated work on data and IT, impact assessment, or strategic research. Landscape finance tools and business engagement with LPs are being explored, but economic valuation is inadequate, and little financing has shifted to coordinated landscape investments. In public policy, professional planners and international policy frameworks are adopting ILM, but government policies and tenure systems provide sparse support. High-leverage actions can accelerate progress in each dimension. But to fully realize the transformative potential of ILM will require more coherent support strategies.

**Keywords:** integrated landscape management; landscape approach; territorial design; sustainable development; bioregional development; local and regional planning; environmental impact; regenerative development; territorial development; transformative systems change



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## 1. Introduction

Both countries and communities today are challenged by the interconnected polycrisis of food and water insecurity, climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss, land and resource degradation, inequality and social fragmentation, and acute conflicts between

agricultural and other resource-based production and ecosystem protection. Ecological degradation in turn undermines long-term economic development and productivity. In response, growing evidence demonstrates how ecological restoration, agricultural production, social welfare and inclusion, and regenerative economies can be mutually reinforcing, at multiple scales [1].

Yet most strategic planning in public, private and civic sectors remains sectorally siloed, even where their strategies seriously undermine one another. The spatial relations between different land uses and ecological flows are usually ignored. The role of local people in decision-making about their own place is often marginalized. And planning horizons are short-term. These limitations and other drivers (see Section 2.1 and Appendix B) have prompted growing interest in an integrated landscape approach (ILA) to local development, governance, and planning.

### *1.1. Potential of Integrated Landscape Approaches to Address the Polycrisis*

ILA offers a paradigm of place-based planning and development that aims to fully integrate values of healthy nature, regenerative economies, human well-being and social solidarity. This approach aligns with broader movements towards more participatory development that seek to ensure local agency, transparency, and accountability. ILA provides a framework through which ecological integrity, economic rationality, and cultural values can be reconciled, and assets of nature and society managed to sustain collective prosperity.

The landscape movement encompasses many overlapping concepts and communities of practice that follow different paths which are not yet standardized. In 2022, Scherr [2] documented over 100 similar management concepts, with variations in language and practices over time. ‘Integrated landscape management’ (ILM) refers to the implementation of holistic landscape approaches by locally-led, long-term partnerships of stakeholders from agriculture, nature conservation, health, and other sectors, and was chosen in 2012 as an umbrella term by the 75+ diverse organizational partners of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature initiative. The terms ILA, jurisdictional landscape development, bioregional development, territorial development, ecoagriculture, and foodscape all have similar meanings, with slightly different entry points (food, biodiversity, et al.) driving their efforts. The term ‘4 Returns’ refers to both the holistic outcomes of ILM—healthy nature, human well-being, regenerative economy, and inspiration—and to Commonland’s [3] methodology for implementing ILM. Appendix A provides detailed definitions. For simplicity, this article mainly uses the terms landscape and integrated landscape management, but the other terms are implied unless specified.

The focus of ILM is on the socioecological unit of the landscape, and on spatially-targeted action pursuing goals defined by local people. A “landscape” is defined more by its function and coherence than by its area. A landscape is large enough to accommodate natural systems and deliver environmental, social, and economic impact, and small enough to be effectively managed by the people who use the land. The meso-scale ‘landscape partnership’ (LP) provides a bridge between community-based organizations and governance levels, private sector actors and institutions operating at macro-scales, thus linking ‘bottom-up’ with ‘top-down’ action.

ILM can be understood as efforts to rebuild and sustain a type of commons: shared ecological and social assets whose benefits extend widely across society, regardless of land ownership [4,5]. Inclusive landscape governance offers a means of restoring social trust, reducing systemic risk, and creating enduring public value. ILM’s regenerative framing repositions the relationship of people and nature, and people with one another: healthy nature and ecosystems and sustainable economic activities are seen not as separate goals to be maximized, but as critical foundations for long-term well-being of communities.

ILM also plays a role in broader place-based solutions for climate and food systems [6], ecosystem restoration [7], nature-based solutions [8], and rural-urban linkages [9].

### *1.2. A Landscape Transformation Support System: Advancing Theory and Practice*

ILM represents a paradigmatic shift. Thus, extending its use requires multi-scale action to design and institutionalize a robust support system aligned with its values and processes, and that mitigates factors that block its success. Because most institutions in place today were structured historically around narrowly defined sector priorities, usually within an extractive socioeconomic model, building such support demands not just incremental adjustments, but transformative system change, with fundamental shifts in functions, architecture and practices [10–12].

Most literature on ILM focuses on the process, methods and experience of action in the field, rather than systematic analysis of enabling institutions. This ‘sense-making’ paper puts forward the first comprehensive, multi-dimensional framework for transformative landscape system change for ILM and LPs. Using this framework, it reviews evidence from both peer-reviewed and grey literature on the organic development of five supporting sub-systems over the last 25 years. Drawing from that assessment it identifies key gaps and priorities in the support system that must be addressed if ILM is to successfully expand over the next 25 years.

### *1.3. Objectives and Organization of the Paper*

This article draws on selected academic literature, rigorous reports and the informed judgement of the authors to outline the emergent institutional support system for ILM. The aim is to foster inquiry, dialogue and learning towards the design of a more robust system of transformative support for regenerative landscapes. We seek to bridge the gap between theory and application, to guide and inspire more evidence-based recommendations for systemic transformation so that ILM can be an effective strategy to address the global polycrisis. The paper defines the indicators of a robust support system, describes their current state, and proposes additional research needed to design strategies for catalyzing system change, and to track progress. It provides the basis for a theory of change for ILM, and a foundational “mapping” of the subsystems.

Section 2 provides a background overview of the developing field of ILM. Section 3 describes the methodology and proposes a framework for a robust landscape transformation support system. Section 4 describes three enabling sub-systems supporting ILM implementation, and Section 5 two enabling sub-systems of finance and policy. Section 6 summarizes key findings on the state of 20 dimensions of the support system and their strengths and challenges, and proposes high-leverage actions that could accelerate their development. Section 7 presents conclusions and recommendations for further research to mature the field and advance ILM for thriving regenerative landscapes in the next 25 years.

## **2. Background: The Evolution of Integrated Landscape Management**

To understand the current support system for ILM, and factors important for improving its design, it is useful to review how the field of landscape management has evolved. This section provides a brief overview of the motivations driving ILM, the history of its development, key features of LPs, and the evidence of impact. Appendices B–E provide more details.

### *2.1. Motivations for Pursuing ILM*

Interest in ILM has been driven by five main factors. The first is widespread dissatisfaction with current sectorialized models of development and planning that ignore natural systems, even while ecosystem degradation and climate change have become

major constraints on economic development, food security, human well-being, and planetary health [13–17]. ILM explicitly addresses interconnected challenges and considers developing and protecting ecological assets as collective investments in stability and prosperity [18–20].

The second factor is the widespread resentment of local communities and jurisdictions to the imposition by national governments and outside corporations of development plans in their territories that degrade their resources and ignore local people's priorities. In response, movements for food autonomy, territorial sovereignty, and Indigenous self-determination have gained momentum. LPs provide inclusive spaces where local actors can participate in decisions about land use and resource allocation, rebuilding social legitimacy and collective capacity [21].

The third driver is scientific advances and new technologies that provide tools that facilitate ILM, such as GIS and ecological monitoring, and resource management systems that enable synergies among landscape goals. For example, many agroecology, agroforestry, and diversified cropping systems demonstrate that ecological restoration and agricultural productivity can be mutually reinforcing, generating shared benefits at multiple scales [1] (see refs in Section 4.3.1).

The fourth motivation for ILM is shifting paradigms of development, economics, and sustainability towards nexus approaches that connect water, energy, food, and biodiversity to pursue human well-being within planetary boundaries [22,23]. ILM provides territorial and governance frameworks to realize these principles in practice [24–27].

Fifth, as central governments have struggled to address complex socioecological challenges, communities, producer groups, and municipal authorities have devised landscape governance mechanisms [28–31]. In these laboratories of adaptive governance, collective norms and institutions create value and manage shared resources for the public good as well as private benefits [21].

## 2.2. Historical Trajectories and Strands of Integrated Landscape Approaches

Integrated landscape approaches arose to overcome systemic tensions in multifunctional landscapes between agricultural production, mining, and timber extraction; natural ecosystems; and human settlements. Many historical and current indigenous and community-based systems have demonstrated how human presence can enhance biodiversity while supporting livelihoods [32–36]. The modern theory of ILM drew from concepts of land ethics [37,38], regional planning [39,40], 'design with nature' [41], ecological planning and landscape ecology [42,43], holistic systems theory [44,45], resilience and social–ecological systems [5,46–50], sustainability science [51–53], and the regenerative development movement [54].

Applied movements advancing ILM include permaculture [55], integrated natural resource management [56,57], model forests [58], ecoagriculture [59,60], integrated land-use planning [61], integrated rural development [62], community-based conservation and development [63–65], climate-smart territories [66], and climate-smart landscapes [67,68]. By the 2000s, formal organizations were widely adopting ILA [27,69,70]. See more details in Appendix C.

## 2.3. Key Features of ILM and Landscape Partnerships

"Integrated landscape management" is an umbrella term, inclusive of the many communities of practice in the landscape movement. They share some overarching principles: a multi-stakeholder and cross-sectorial partnership; a long-term vision for development; aligned land use practices; spatial planning; and aligned policies and markets (adapted from [69]).

Participatory decision-making underlies ILM [61,69]. Through facilitated dialogue and collaborative action, LPs foster a shared understanding of the landscape; a shared vision, strategy, and action plan for landscape transformation; financing and implementation of the action plan; and learning and impact assessment to inform adaptive management [26]. While doing so, they must actively foster social inclusion, for example of youth, women, Indigenous peoples, and the economically disadvantaged, while managing evolving power dynamics [71,72].

LPs commonly begin informally as platforms for stakeholders to share concerns, learn, and identify possible solutions. Mature LPs shift from fragmented initiatives to institutionalized platforms capable of systemic impact, with rules, collaborative agreements, and secure legal status [73], with diverse features [74]. The types of institutional support needed by LPs are influenced by their form and structure of governance, level of maturity, type of boundary, thematic entry points, type of convener, and links with other LPs (see Appendix D.2 Table A1). See more details on ILM principles and processes in Appendices D.1 and D.2.

#### 2.4. The Impacts of ILM and Landscape Partnerships

Assessing the systemic and long-term impacts of ILM and LPs poses significant methodological and practical challenges [75,76]. By design, these approaches address complex socioecological systems that evolve over long periods and across multiple spatial and institutional scales. Their impacts often emerge indirectly—through changes in governance, relationships, and behaviors—rather than as immediate, measurable outcomes [76]. Attributing observed changes in land use, ecosystem health, or livelihoods to a specific landscape initiative is complicated by the multitude of interacting drivers, external influences, and parallel interventions operating within the same territory [77,78]. Issues of legitimacy of actors, violence, and corruption may limit impact. Initiatives often fail to understand and address underlying issues of power, politics, values and justice [79].

Still, positive impacts were found in comparative surveys of 104 integrated landscape initiatives across Latin America and the Caribbean [80]. Recent case studies with more rigorous assessments of holistic impact have shown benefits in 14 integrated territorial initiatives [81], and in Ghana [82,83], Mexico [84], Spain [85], Kenya [86], Indonesia [87], and Ecuador [88]. There is active debate—though still little systematic evidence—about the specific political, social, and institutional contexts in which ILM can be most successful and how the collective agenda can avoid being co-opted by dominant actors.

See more details on evidence on ILM impact in Appendix E.

### 3. Methodology

Scholars of socioecological transformation emphasize that lasting change requires not just leadership or scaling new practices, but the development of ‘systemic support architectures’ which include the enabling institutions, platforms, capacities, financial mechanisms, learning systems, and coordination structures that enable whole systems to shift direction [89–92]. Analyses of such system changes have been conducted in fields such as mission-driven innovation [93], energy and water transitions [94,95], climate governance [96], and science–policy systems [97,98].

This paper applies a comparable systemic lens to landscape and bioregional regeneration [99,100]. Waddell and Potzin [101] distinguish three phases of transformative system change: **systems experimentation**, innovating and exploring novel assemblages that question status quo assumptions and address the transformational need; **systems re-design**, through which larger-scale processes of diverse stakeholders come together to co-design and implement structures needed to scale successful prototypes; and **systems**

**optimization**, through which the enabling environment supports widespread adoption of the innovations and their ongoing incremental improvements.

The paper's authors are senior and mid-career professionals who have been deeply engaged in scholarship and program leadership related to ILM and systems change for several decades. Using a reflexive historical research approach [102,103], the co-authors met regularly to review, discuss, debate and converge on constructing and applying a framework for high-level assessment of the global landscape transformation support system. The methodology has five parts:

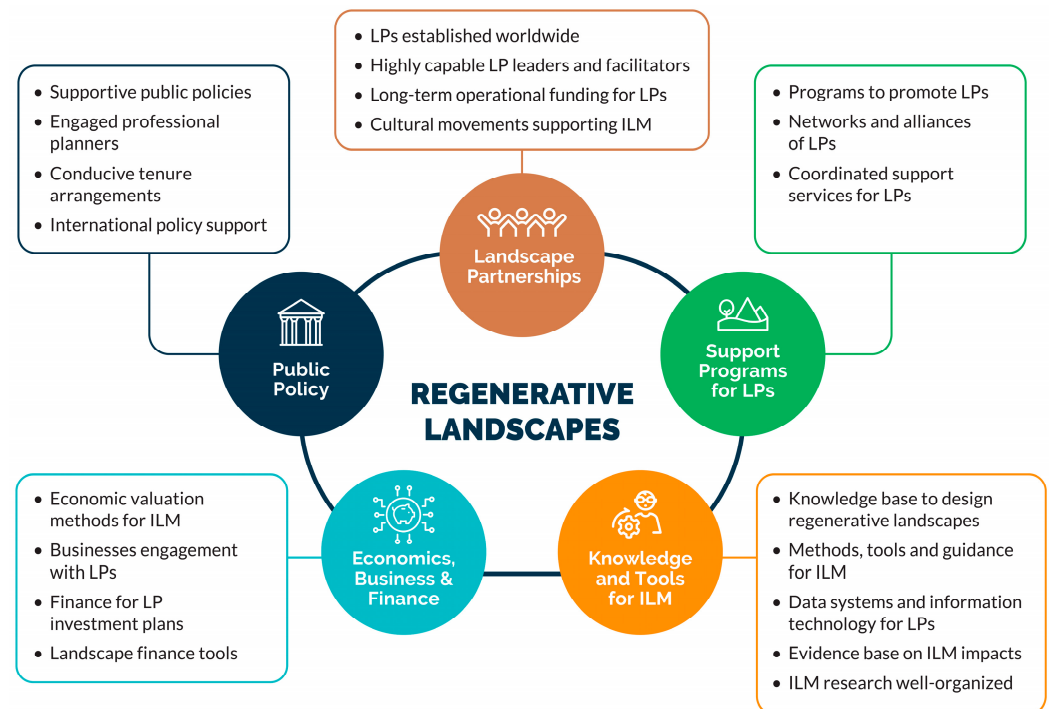
- (1) **A synthetic overview of ILM**, based on a targeted selection of academic and grey literature [104]. This spanned theoretical and practical contributions addressing systemic factors that drive interest and adoption of ILM; the evolution of collaborative landscape approaches; the main features of ILM; and the evidence of impacts of ILM. Details of the overview are provided in Appendices B–E with a summary in Section 2.
- (2) **Specification of key dimensions of a robust support system** that would enable widespread transformation to impactful integrated landscape action and governance. This was adapted from analyses by working groups for the scaling and transformation strategy of 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People (1000 Landscapes) [105]. This global collaborative was formed in 2019 to enable at least 1000 LPs worldwide to deliver solutions for landscape regeneration by 2030. The 1000 Landscapes theory of change identified three broad types of support required for thriving landscapes [106]:
  - Access to locally adaptable tools, services, resources, software, data, and networks that accelerate their actions, strengthen their governance and inclusion, empower them to collaboratively strategize goals and transformation strategies, and enable them to finance and implement action.
  - Abundant financing to support on-the-ground action through projects and coordinated investments aligned with landscape action plans (from inclusive assistance and grants, incentives, and public/private/civic finance mechanisms).
  - Key institutions actively enabling the success of LPs (governments, legislatures, land and resource rights, markets and businesses, and research).

1000 Landscapes' design teams and scaling working group were composed of over 50 seasoned professionals, including all the co-authors, from a spectrum of organizations—international and domestic NGOs, multilateral agencies, technology innovators, and LP network facilitators. They identified potential functions of LPs in regeneration, potential contributions of actors outside the LPs, and factors outside LP control requiring allies to influence or mitigate impact. They qualitatively assessed the current state of support to LPs across 12 'transformation pathways', proposed strategies for intervention, and described critical assumptions, illustrative activities, and aspirational 2030 and 2050 outcomes [107,108].

To refine the conceptual framework for a landscape transformation support system, the authors prioritized 20 dimensions, drawing upon and expanding the framework previously developed by 1000 Landscapes. The 20 dimensions are in five sub-systems: landscape partnerships; landscape development programs; knowledge, tools, and resources for ILM; economics, business, and finance; and public policy. Figure 1 illustrates this comprehensive multi-scale support system.

- (3) **Overview of the state of those 20 dimensions**, based on published peer-reviewed and gray literature. This included studies of the Global Review of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature initiative 2011–2020 [109], the 1000 Landscapes/Regen10 white paper on transforming food systems through regenerative landscapes [6], and the 'theory of change' collaborative assessment of the design teams and scaling

strategy task force of 1000 Landscapes [107,108]. The paper describes the general state of each of 20 dimensions of the landscape support system globally, including three sub-systems on LPs, programs and know-how (Section 4) and two sub-systems on enabling economics and policy (Section 5). The analysis does not address the variation in how well different types of LPs, in different regions, are served.



**Figure 1.** The five sub-systems and 20 dimensions of a global support system for ILM.

- (4) **An assessment of the change in support systems over the past 25 years** and high-leverage actions to accelerate systemic change, based on the co-authors' expert judgment. This involved constructing a qualitative scale of changes in the state of each dimension, specifically: limited experimentation with innovative solutions; widespread experimentation, but little system re-design; widespread experimentation plus coordinated efforts to re-design support systems; and widespread re-designed support systems. The authors systematically and iteratively scored and discussed each dimension on the four-point scale, until they reached convergence. For each dimension, they specified high-leverage actions to accelerate development of the landscape support system, drawing on 1000 Landscapes analyses and insights from work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [92].
- (5) **A reflection on priority areas for research and development** of support systems in the next 25 years. This analysis draws not only on the assessments above, but also on the authors' field experience, analyses and observations in ILM over the past 25 years in more than 60 landscapes in over 40 countries with EcoAgriculture Partners (2002–2024), and learnings with partners advancing ILM in landscape networks, the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature initiative (2011–2020), and 1000 Landscapes (2019–present).

#### 4. Overview of the Landscape Support System: Implementing ILM

This section presents our findings on the three support sub-systems focused on implementing ILM on the ground: the local multi-stakeholder LPs, the landscape programs

assisting them, and the availability and access of knowledge, methods, and tools for effective implementation.

#### 4.1. State of Landscape Partnerships

A well-developed landscape support system has, as its foundation, a strong sub-system of long-term LPs on the ground, wherever needed to address the polycrisis. Below, we assess progress over the past 25 years as assessed on four dimensions: their formation; their capacities for action; operational funding; and the rise of culture, norms, and values among the citizenry that facilitate landscape collaboration.

##### 4.1.1. Formation of LPs

The Landscapes for People, Food and Nature (LPFN) continental reviews documented more than 450 integrated landscape initiatives (ILIs) between 2013–2017 that jointly pursued goals for agriculture, environment and human well-being. The reviews reported 87 ILIs in 33 sub-Saharan African countries [28], 104 ILIs across 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean [29], 166 ILIs in South and Southeast Asia [30], and more than 300 initiatives in Europe, with 71 examined in depth [31]. A subsequent global synthesis of this database [110] added another 23 European landscape cases. In the United States, the Network for Landscape Conservation documented 122 LPs in 2018 [111]. In 2024, Regen10 mapped over 200 LPs worldwide with a focus on regenerative agriculture [112]. The nearly 100 partners of the 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People (1000 Landscapes) initiative collectively supported several hundred LPs in 2024.

Indigenous Peoples manage or hold tenure rights to a roughly estimated 25% of the world's land [113]. The LandMark platform mapped about a third of global land held or used by Indigenous Peoples and local communities [114], though not all have integrated territorial governance and planning. Meanwhile, corporate and jurisdictional disclosure platforms have mapped nearly 300 landscape initiatives, signaling widening private-sector participation [115]. Because many LPs begin informally and evolve over time, all the above tallies are conservative underestimates.

##### 4.1.2. Capacities for ILM Implementation

While financial and policy transformations are essential to unlock the potential of landscape approaches, real change ultimately depends on strong local capacities to implement them on the ground. Those most affected must understand what ILM is and how to pursue it and develop the collective skills to make it work. Local leaders need capabilities in negotiation, consensus-building, coordination, adaptive management, and securing sustainable financing [116,117]. Yet experiences reported from LPFN, 1000 Landscapes, and the Model Forest Networks show that capacity gaps remain a major bottleneck to scaling ILM, especially for integrated governance and systems thinking [118–121].

Valuable training materials and training programs have been developed, such as by the Global Landscapes Forum and Commonland. 1000 Landscapes partners are collaboratively developing an interactive training-of-trainers model to empower local leaders, with open-access content for 'best practice' Landscape Learning modules [122]. A Landscape Learning Network is under development [123].

Building a community-engaged learning and innovation system that reaches actors in the field requires accessible and equitable funding models. That includes deliberate investment in strengthening community-based organizations that anchor ILM processes, such as farmer associations, cooperatives, and Indigenous groups. Meanwhile, embedding education for ILM into academic and professional learning systems is essential not only to broaden reach but also to deepen practice and improve outcomes where ILM is already taking root. This would involve incorporating foundational knowledge of ILM into university

curricula and developing an accredited cadre of professionals in ILM, both of which are now quite limited. None of the above elements is well-advanced.

#### 4.1.3. Operational Funds for LPs

An acute bottleneck for LPs is the lack of sustained operational and ‘process’ funding, apart from the (much larger) funding needed for implementation of the partners’ action plans. Key roles in these multistakeholder platforms include coordination, facilitation, governance, and monitoring. Yet these functions mostly rely on small, short-term grants or limited allocations from project budgets. Many community-based and Indigenous organizations—those closest to implementation—remain excluded from funding streams that favor large international NGOs which often lack local presence or continuity. This weakens their capacity to function as credible governance intermediaries or investment platforms over time [105,124].

Recognizing that LPs require core operational support, partners of 1000 Landscapes are piloting landscape development grant funds—long-term, flexible funding models that can support governance, planning, facilitation, and monitoring across the LP lifecycle [106]. To inform this, a costing study is underway by the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative and 1000 Landscapes, with their partners, to estimate the true cost of long-term implementation of ILM across diverse social-ecological contexts. The study seeks to clarify costs and cost drivers, by scale and maturity of the LP, so funders can better align support with actual needs.

#### 4.1.4. Culture, Norms, and Values Supporting ILM

Some cultural shifts are ripening conditions for communities, planners and policymakers to embrace ILM. A growing focus on local policy and action, higher confidence in local actors, and perceptions of tangible results from local activism fuel interest in ILM [125]. In turn, LP leaders can enrich planning and decision-making and forge shared pride in their landscape by tapping into community culture, local interpretations of history, traditions and values. Work on ‘the return of inspiration’ by Commonland shows how ILM can plant seeds of hope for a better future and give people a sense of purpose [126].

Many broad trends in the culture—such as extreme individualism and competition, short-termism, extraction, and xenophobia—operate powerfully against the values of ILM. Yet, a host of other trends and movements share an affinity with ILM and can become allies of LPs, e.g., indigenous rights, nature rights, farmer empowerment, climate action, sustainable cities, multi-value agriculture certification, biocultural landscape designations, and business support for sustainability (e.g., ESG, B Corp). These movements also demonstrate creative ways to ignite cultural engagement and expression that can support ILM from within, such as through art, music, dance, film, prizes (e.g., Equator Prize, UNESCO), museum exhibitions, and inspired storytelling. By engaging faith-based communities, promoting engaged/informed journalism through local voices, and influencing public school curricula, LPs and their allies can amplify solidarity, placemaking, stewardship and similar values. But little systemic strategy has developed to foster these links.

#### 4.2. State of Landscape Programs

A strong landscape support system includes a sub-system of well-organized programs to assist LPs. Below we assess three dimensions of the evolution of this sub-system over the past 25 years: programs to develop and support LPs, LP alliances and networks, and widely available, coordinated LP support services.

#### 4.2.1. Programs to Develop and Support LPs

Numerous LPs arose independently, and developed organically, as responses to local problems or conflicts. For many others, landscape development programs have been important catalysts and supporters. Today's most prominent programs are organized by international NGOs or social enterprises with an environmental "entry point," such as Climate-KIC, Commonland, Conservation International, IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, RECOFTC, Tropenbos International, and WWF. But many NGOs whose priority was historically agriculture are also now embracing landscape approaches, like CABI, IDH–Sustainable Trade Initiative, Rainforest Alliance, SNV, Rikolto, and Solidaridad. Many bioregional initiatives are promoted by organizations like Bioregional Weaving Labs, BioFi and the Design School for Regenerating Earth.

Some private companies and company alliances have promoted LPs, as have a few farmer cooperatives. Groups like the Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force are promoting jurisdictional landscape initiatives. Various UN agencies support landscape alliances, such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves, and the UNDP- implemented Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, which has funded more than 27,000 community-based and landscape projects in 136 countries since 1992 [127] (UNDP, 2021). Related UN mechanisms—including FAO's Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism, UN-REDD landscape initiatives, and UNEP's support for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration—also provide technical and catalytic funding to strengthen local and territorial partnerships.

A number of countries have set up ILM programs (designated as landscapes, bioregions, bio-districts, watersheds, seascapes or other terms), usually with an environmental, climate or territorial development entry point. Examples are Brazil, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Ireland, Peru, Scotland, South Africa, and the U.S. For example, in Brazil, the Protected Area Mosaics program, under the National System of Nature Conservation Units, promotes integrated, participatory management of clusters of protected areas and their buffer zones, aligning biodiversity conservation and regional development through multi-stakeholder governance councils [128,129].

Costa Rica demonstrates how a national program can institutionalize the landscape approach. Its National Biological Corridors Program, coordinated by the National System of Conservation Areas under the Ministry of Environment and Energy, was created in 2006 through Executive Decree No. 40043-MINAE. The program integrates ecological, social, and productive dimensions under a participatory governance framework designed to reconcile conservation, livelihoods, and sustainable territorial development. By 2025, Costa Rica had developed 54 multifunctional biological corridors, engaging over 1,500 institutional and community actors, with more than one-third of the country's territory forming an interconnected mosaic [130,131]. Its innovative Territorial Councils have the potential to play deeper LP functions.

#### 4.2.2. Networks and Alliances of LPs

A notable institutional innovation has been the formation of coalitions and networks of LPs for knowledge-sharing and policy advocacy. These have diverse models of network governance, recruitment, and service to members. Some formed organically and were then institutionalized, as in the case of Landcare Australia, which originated in the state of Victoria in 1986 with farmers, landholders, and conservationists in response to soil erosion and salinity, and then grew into a nationwide publicly supported program [132,133]. Other coalitions were fostered externally, such as the International Model Forest Network launched in 1992 by the Government of Canada, which has evolved into a decentralized

set of regional self-governed networks encompassing more than 60 LPs in 35 countries working in over 73 million hectares [134].

Subnational government networks connect territorial authorities around integrated, multisector agendas, including United Cities and Local Governments (representing 240,000+ local and regional governments in 140 countries), Regions4 (50+ regional governments in 22 countries), and the Assembly of European Regions (~140 regions across ~30 countries) [135–137]. Alliances of Indigenous territories in the Amazon, Indonesia, Mesoamerica, Australia, and North America defend land and resource rights and influence national and global policies [138–140].

The Aland Foundation, launched in 2021, promotes land regeneration initiatives on the Iberian Peninsula [141]. The Kenya Landscape Actors Platform (KenLAP), formed in 2023 by landscape leaders with a history of informal collaboration, now encompasses more than 100 LPs in three ecoregions of the country [142]. The Network for Landscape Conservation in the U.S. has more than 100 members and affiliates [143]. Common Ground, a coalition formed in 2022 by civil society leaders from across India to promote decentralized landscape action and supportive policy, finance, and markets, is active in over 60 landscapes [144]. The network of Regenerative Production Landscape Collaboratives connects cotton-producing landscapes [145]. Bioregional alliances and platforms—such as Regenerate Cascadia, the Bioregional Learning Centre (South Devon), and the European Forest Institute’s Bioregions Facility—convene actors across ecological regions [145–147].

#### 4.2.3. Support Services for LPs Widely Available and Well-Coordinated

A well-developed landscape support system would provide LPs and landscape leaders with ongoing access to key services. These would include technical advice and training on landscape design and governance; facilitation services; guidance on business development; advisory services on financial assessment, strategy and finance mobilization; training; landscape-friendly design of green and gray infrastructure; data and information technology; and legal services. Service providers might include government agencies, farmer organizations, educational institutions, private consultants, local NGOs or businesses. But these providers require training and experience that explicitly addresses the needs of LPs and ILM. Provider certification systems may be needed to ensure that expertise. Coordination among providers would be critical to build a coherent and efficient institutional ecosystem.

Landscape-related consultancy services for businesses, financial institutions, international NGOs and donors are emerging, but there are only a few examples of organized service provision for LPs. The Sustainable Finance Coalition in southern Africa advises LPs on landscape finance. Some territorial governments are coordinating service provision [81]. The Nature Conservancy’s Foodscape program is designing an advisory service. 1000 Landscapes is exploring strategies to build a cadre of landscape facilitators and finance advisors.

#### 4.3. State of Knowledge, Tools, and Data for Implementing ILM

The third critical sub-system to support implementation is well-developed, locally adaptable and accessible knowledge on the ‘how’ of ILM. The analysis below assesses progress over the past 25 years in five key dimensions: the knowledge base on interventions for regenerative landscapes; methods and tools to guide implementation; availability of relevant data systems and information technology; impact assessment; and ILM-focused research institutions.

#### 4.3.1. Knowledge Base on Interventions for Regenerative Landscapes

ILM challenges the notion that optimizing certain landscape goals at the expense of other key values is an acceptable pathway for development. Rather, every landscape needs to deliver a range of benefits for a variety of stakeholders through co-design at the whole-landscape scale, which reduces trade-offs and generates synergies. To do so requires knowledge about landscape-friendly agricultural production, aligned gray-green infrastructure, nature conservation practices, institutional innovations, spatial planning, market innovations and incentives, and public policies.

There is already extensive literature on such solutions [88,117,148]. For example, a review of 104 studies in five systems of agroecological intensification [149] found many cases of significant positive co-benefits for yield and ecosystem services. A review of 98 meta-analyses and 5160 original comparative studies of biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices (e.g., agroforestry, holistic grazing, rainwater harvesting) found that more than half involved no yield trade-off or yields increased [150]. Another meta-analysis of 24 studies of multiple farm-level diversification strategies in 11 countries, across 2655 farms, found that these created more positive outcomes social (e.g., human well-being, yields, and food security) and environmental (e.g., biodiversity, ecosystem services, and reduced environmental externalities) outcomes than individual management strategies alone [151].

Research on habitat connectivity has shown ingenious methods and spatial patterns to protect biodiversity in landscapes dominated by production and settlements [152,153]. Advances in watershed monitoring have revealed ways to target strict protection in smaller areas and demonstrated agricultural, forestry and fishery practices that have more benign effects on water flow and quality, or even enhance ‘green water’ and ‘green infrastructure’ for water and other ecosystem services [154,155]. One meta-analysis concluded that working landscapes require at least 20% of their land in native habitat to sustain biodiversity [156], though some sensitive species require much more. More nature-friendly designs have been developed for built infrastructure [157–159]. Some trade-offs are more difficult to manage, such as with mining and oil and gas, but even in these cases, landscape-wide compensation practices, biodiversity offsets and other solutions can significantly mitigate harm [160,161]. Nonetheless, huge knowledge gaps remain, and little of the existing knowledge base on potential landscape interventions is available in a usable, accessible, and locally adaptable form to LPs.

#### 4.3.2. Methods, Tools, and Guidance for ILM

Methods, tools, and guidance for ILM planning, governance, and implementation have advanced considerably. EcoAgriculture Partners [162] developed a set of tools for landscape practitioners and, with IDH, produced a guide for practitioners [163]. Buck et al. [164] synthesized guidance on how to design and build partnerships for landscape stewardship. Kusters et al. developed a framework and tool to foster participatory planning, monitoring, and evaluation of landscape initiatives [165], and guidance for facilitating inclusive landscape governance [166]. 1000 Landscapes synthesized methods being used by partner organizations to produce a ‘Practical Guide for Integrated Landscape Management’ [26] and Commonland produced a technical guide for 4Returns [3].

The 1000 Landscapes initiative developed an open-access platform for tool-sharing, and in 2021 conducted a review of tools for ILM, assessing which were robust and which remained under-developed. The strongest were compiled in the *1000 Landscapes Tools Guide* [167]. Reed et al. [168] produced a *methods toolbox for integrated landscape approaches*, for tropical contexts. Tools and guides for bioregional development have also been produced [169–171], and a review of spatial and digital tools for ILM [172]. The UNCBD (via UNU-IAS) produced a guide for integrated landscape approaches [173]. UNCCD [174]

has a primer for ILA tools to manage urban–rural linkages. The Landscapes for the Future project offers resource materials on its website [175]. Overall, useful resources are available for the early phases of partnership development, landscape assessment and participatory action planning, but guidance is weak for long-term strategy development, financing and policy. Tool inter-operability also remains weak.

#### 4.3.3. Data Systems and Information Technology for ILM

There are now extensive spatially explicit global datasets, remote sensing images and other resources from UN, CGIAR, and government agencies that can be accessed digitally. However, the state of data and data management systems for use in ILM remains inadequate. Data quality is often either lacking or not reliable for landscape-scale planning. Many data systems are inaccessible—not user-friendly, prohibitively expensive, or designed to meet the needs of one stakeholder group. LPs typically do not have the expertise or resources to integrate different data layers for integrated planning, design, or monitoring. The 1000 Landscapes open-access digital platform, Terraso, is working to identify and develop solutions to overcome these limitations [176].

Emerging agentic artificial intelligence (AI) systems, capable of reasoning across complex datasets, generating plans, and orchestrating tool use, show promise to amplify the effectiveness of individuals or small groups engaged in land-use planning, monitoring and evaluation, and ecosystem regeneration. Already, machine-learning models can integrate multimodal data streams from satellite imagery and climate projections to socioeconomic indicators. These can be used to support threat assessment, planning, and decision-making at scales previously out of reach for local actors [177]. Yet, heralded use cases, such as near-real-time land-cover classification, ecosystem digital twins, and multi-objective land-use optimization, are still concentrated in research programs, government initiatives, or pilots run by well-resourced organizations. They are not accessible or user friendly to communities on the ground constrained by uneven internet access, limited technical capacity, and costs of data infrastructure. Moreover, models trained predominantly on global datasets can ignore local ecological knowledge and the political and cultural dimensions of governance. Without safeguards, AI risks reinforcing power asymmetries by privileging actors with technical expertise or proprietary platforms.

Practical use of information technology by LPs will require investment in local capacity-building, open-source and low-bandwidth tools, and participatory design processes that embed community priorities from the start.

#### 4.3.4. Impact Assessment and Evidence

The development and implementation of landscape measures that assess impact and generate evidence for learning and adaptation have made disjointed progress. Collaborators in EcoAgriculture Partners' International Landscape Measures project 2006–2009 identified impact assessment as a priority for landscape leaders and allies [178]. Given the practical difficulties and cost for local LPs to manage data for comprehensive assessment across the economic, ecological, social and governance objectives of ILM, the group promoted an approach centered on locally defined indicators and methods. A CIFOR-ICRAF holistic meta-assessment framework for landscapes also emphasized that assessment and MEL should be a community-engaged and participatory enterprise [179]. Sayer et al.'s principles include engaging stakeholders in measuring landscape performance [180], as does the International Partnership for Satoyama Initiative's socioecological indicators toolkit [181]. A Landscape Measures Tool developed by EcoAgriculture used a simple locally adapted framework, participatory methods, and qualitative, spatial, and limited quantitative data [182].

Local actors often express concern about assessment methods that prioritize the information needs of external actors to empower themselves in negotiations over land and markets. But there is growing demand for impact assessment information from actors like businesses, finance, and governments. More structured approaches are being developed to meet the dual needs of local and external actors, such as Commonland's 4 Returns Indicators framework and the Gold Standard for private sector investment in landscapes. The *LandScale* landscape assessment framework enables partners to co-develop a baseline, serves as a monitoring and evaluation tool, and validates credible claims by landscape partners, including private sector [183]. Jansen and Kalas developed and tested an impact methodology for GEF projects [184]. Regen10's Outcomes Framework [112] has made progress in linking farm and landscape scales for regenerative agriculture assessments, as has LandScale's Regenerative Agriculture Assessment Lens. Interest in landscape certification has not yet been translated to practical metrics. Overall, while there is increasing use of various methods, uptake remains limited.

#### 4.3.5. Research Support for ILM and LPs

CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center) began applied research on integrated territorial and landscape management in the 1980s, and the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources Management Collaborative Research Program (SANREM-CRSP), RECOFTC, and CSIRO followed in the 1990s and 2000s. The Landscapes for People, Food and Nature initiative, 2011–2020, organized comparative studies on different dimensions of ILM [185], of which 12 were published in peer-reviewed journals. The International Partnership for Satoyama Initiative (IPSI) network, begun in 2010, organizes landscape research collaboration among its partners.

The past decade saw new international research programs in direct collaboration with LPs. CIFOR- ICRAF's COLANDS project "Collaborating to Operationalise Landscape Approaches for Nature, Development and Sustainability" (ongoing since 2018) organized in-depth comparative research across landscapes in three countries. CATIE and CIAT advanced case research on 'Climate-Smart Territories'. The CGIAR Living Landscapes program is documenting change processes across landscapes linked to nature parks in 22 countries, supported by the UK Department for International Development. International NGOs like Tropenbos International, EcoAgriculture Partners, and the Earth Innovation Institute have studied LPs to design effective ILM implementation tools. 1000 Landscapes, with Regen10, proposes a network of 'focal landscapes' to enable in-depth, long-term analysis of LPs, their action plans and impacts [186].

In 2025, the CGIAR launched a flagship research program on Multifunctional Landscapes. Many universities and research centers have programs related to ILM, including Gottingen University, Hohenheim University, Indiana University, Purdue University, UCLA, the University of British Columbia, the University of Edinburgh, and Wageningen University. A coalition of researchers has proposed a new 'landscape transition science' [79]. CABI, in partnership with 1000 Landscapes, will begin publishing a new scientific journal on ILM in 2026, linking science and practice. Still, much more applied research is needed on whole-landscape management and design that explicitly generates knowledge that LPs and landscape program developers can apply.

## 5. Overview of the Landscape Support System: Finance and Policy

This section presents our findings on the two enabling sub-systems of landscape economics, business and finance, and public policy supporting ILM and LPs.

### 5.1. State of Landscape Economics, Business, and Finance

For holistic landscape regeneration strategies to be viable over the long-term requires that economics, business, and finance be much more aligned with ILM goals and processes. This section describes how systems alignment has evolved over the past 25 years in four key dimensions: economic valuation methods, business engagement with LPs, flows of financing for integrated landscape investment, and tools for landscape finance.

#### 5.1.1. Economic Valuation That Understands and Incentivizes ILM

Unlocking investment in multifunctional landscapes requires valuation methods that capture their full economic, ecological, and social contributions. Standard cost-benefit analysis often overlooks key benefits such as improved ecosystem health, climate resilience, and social cohesion. A systems lens reveals the need for tools that account for the longer-term value of system integrity and reflect the complexity and interconnectedness of landscapes, especially when decisions involve multiple sectors and stakeholders. To be most effective, valuation frameworks must be embedded in inclusive governance processes that ensure local priorities, knowledge, and definitions of value shape how investment decisions are made [13,187].

One example is the economic valuation method developed by KPMG in collaboration with Commonland [188]. Building on the 4 Returns Framework, this approach assesses landscape restoration across four dimensions: financial capital, natural capital, social capital, and inspiration. It accounts not only for monetizable returns like long-term profits but also for changes in biodiversity, soil and water quality, community well-being, education, and the emotional value of restored landscapes. This kind of holistic valuation enables coordinated financial strategies and development of cost-sharing and revenue models that align public and private capital toward shared outcomes.

Spatial finance analysis makes it possible to direct financial resources more efficiently to specific places and risks. Landscape-scale natural capital valuation (NCV) and risk assessment can strengthen such spatial targeting by tying ecosystem-service value, degradation trends, and risk hotspots directly to investment prioritization and project performance management, based on historical project-related changes in land-use. An example is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank's application, with government counterparts, of the Arcadis/EBRD NCV model [189]. This method can bridge gray and green infrastructure design to account for non-financial indicators of return and build greater physical climate and natural resiliency. However, none of these new valuation methods is well known and their adoption is very limited.

#### 5.1.2. Business Engagement with Landscape Partnerships

Business engagement in LPs is gaining momentum. Firms are recognizing that systemic risks such as deforestation, climate change, watershed degradation, labor rights violations, and biodiversity loss cannot be addressed through conventional supply chain approaches alone [190]. Others see long-term business viability as inseparable from the health of ecosystems and communities [191–193]. To meet zero-deforestation and regenerative agriculture commitments, businesses have joined forces, such as through the Forest Allies organized by Rainforest Alliance [194], the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's (WBCSD) Roadmap to Nature-Positive Food Systems [195], the Consumer Goods Forum Forest Positive Coalition [196] and Tropical Forest Alliance [197]. Regulatory pressure—notably the European Union's Deforestation Regulation—is reinforcing this trend. The number of company-supported landscape and jurisdictional initiatives grew sevenfold from 2016 to 2022 [198]. Of over 1000 companies, with nearly USD 80 billion in

potential impacts, who disclosed forest-related risks in 2023, 36% linked transition plans to jurisdictional or landscape initiatives [115].

Reporting and accountability frameworks are beginning to mainstream landscape approaches. The ISEAL Alliance is clarifying “what constitutes a landscape investment” through its maturity framework; and standards such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and the Science-Based Targets Network (SBTN) are encouraging companies to measure and disclose landscape-scale dependencies and impacts.

Companies engage in LPs in multiple roles, as co-investors, supply chain actors, data providers, policy advocates, and governance participants [29,199]. However, participation remains uneven due to misaligned time horizons, uncertainty over returns, inadequate metrics, and institutional capacity constraints [73,124,200]. Competitive market logics sometimes clash with the sociopolitical processes governing landscapes, complicating incentive alignment. Local actors are often wary that businesses will co-opt LPs to secure their own sourcing goals rather than contributing to a shared landscape vision. New initiatives are equipping businesses to move from passive stakeholders to active co-creators of regenerative and inclusive landscapes, such as helping LPs and companies structure blended “landscape investment portfolios” [201,202].

### 5.1.3. Financial Flows to Integrated Landscape Investment

Current finance systems remain poorly suited to the scale and type of investment required for landscape transformation [124]. Aligning public, concessional, and commercial finance around common goals requires long-term commitments and robust governance capacity. Yet most funding continues to flow through fragmented, single-sector projects rather than through coordinated, landscape-wide strategies [199]. Finance is short-term and project-based, misaligned with the long-term nature of ecosystem regeneration and inclusive development [73]. LPs often lack legal status, investment readiness, or visibility within conventional finance channels [203]. Financiers, in turn, have few tools or models for evaluating opportunities through a systems lens or for engaging in participatory, place-based investment. Structural barriers such as rigid risk frameworks, disconnected mandates, and short funding horizons limit the orchestration of capital across sectors, institutions, and timeframes [204–206].

As a result, current flows into investments aligned with landscape action plans remain limited and concentrated in a small number of pilot programs and grant-funded initiatives. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has financed more than 300 landscape and integrated natural resource management programs since 2015 through its Integrated Programs [207]. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest multilateral climate fund supporting developing countries with climate mitigation and adaptation, now has a portfolio of more than 300 approved projects totaling nearly USD 18 billion in GCF resources—and the Fund is increasing investment in sustainable landscape and jurisdictional programs as part of its broader climate finance strategy [208]. The World Bank’s PROGREEN Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes has mobilized about USD 209 million across 60 countries [209], while the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Bilateral donors—especially Germany (BMZ/KfW), the Netherlands (DGIS), Switzerland (SDC), the UK (FCDO), and the US (USAID)—have been pivotal supporters of landscape initiatives through multilateral and blended-finance channels [210]. UN agencies including FAO, UNDP, and UNESCO also finance territorial and landscape programs linking biodiversity, climate, and livelihoods [10,211].

Governments in Kenya, Indonesia, Mexico, Costa Rica and Colombia have begun to channel domestic budgetary resources, environmental funds, and fiscal transfers toward landscape programs [212,213]. National development banks and public–private investment

facilities—such as Indonesia’s Environmental Fund (BPDH), Kenya’s National Environment Trust Fund, and Brazil’s Amazon Fund—are also financing landscape restoration, sustainable agriculture, and local governance strengthening. On the local scale, regional development agencies, producer cooperatives, and Indigenous or community-led funds increasingly serve as co-financiers of landscape initiatives, leveraging public subsidies, value-chain investments, and philanthropic resources to sustain implementation over time.

Despite this progress, only a small fraction of total financial flows reaches locally prioritized landscape investments. Much of the available capital is disbursed through international NGOs, project management units, or sectoral government ministries rather than through place-based mechanisms or LPs. Closing this gap will require not only scaling financial commitments but also investing in the institutional and fiduciary capacities of LPs and territorial backbone organizations to manage finance transparently, aggregate projects, and report systemic outcomes.

#### 5.1.4. Financial Tools and Mechanisms for Landscape Investing

Encouragingly, new financial mechanisms and tools are emerging to provide a more coherent system for channeling capital toward regenerative, inclusive landscape investment [214]. The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) mainstreams spatially explicit data on risk and dependencies, pushing financial institutions and corporations to account for nature-related and systemic risks with a place-based approach. Emerging mechanisms, such as landscape bonds, blended-finance platforms, and bioregional financing facilities, are aggregating capital and managing risk across portfolios and territories [124,215]. The Landscape Resilience Fund, initiated by WWF and South Pole, blends philanthropic and private capital to support smallholder adaptation [216]. These funds channel finance through trusted LP structures, enabling more transparent, inclusive, and adaptive decision-making. Meanwhile, specialized, entities that provide coordination, facilitation, and investment-readiness support to multi-stakeholder platforms are emerging as a critical institutional innovation. These differ from general conveners in that they maintain permanent, professional teams dedicated to brokering relationships between capital providers and LPs, managing shared data systems, and aligning finance with landscape strategies [217].

Complementing these innovations is a growing set of tools and design frameworks to help LPs access, structure, and manage finance aligned with local priorities. The Landscape Finance Accelerator (LFA), developed by 1000 Landscapes, helps LPs translate multi-stakeholder action plans into coherent investment portfolios that bundle diverse, complementary projects—spanning restoration, agroecology, water, and enterprise—into investable pipelines attractive to blended finance. Pilots in Peru, Malawi, Vietnam, Colombia, and Mexico demonstrate how this approach can increase capital alignment and reduce transaction costs [187].

### 5.2. State of Public Policy Supporting ILM

National and state government policies play a critical catalytic role in the success and scaling of ILM and LPs. This section reviews the state of four key dimensions of the policy sub-system: public policies that support LPs and ILM, engagement of planning professionals in ILM, tenure rules supporting ILM, and international policy support.

#### 5.2.1. Public Policy in Support of Landscape Partnerships and Action Plans

In most countries, current policies have a neutral or negative impact on ILM and LPs. Local landscape initiatives and strategies are invisible or ignored in policy processes. Government responsibilities are met through sectoral ministries of agriculture, water, environment, and finance, whose priorities may conflict and whose mandates may overlap

but without coherent cross-sectoral action [16]. Public policies, planning, and budgets are fragmented and siloed. Most LPs lack formal legal status, and government agencies do not incentivize LPs to mobilize or collaborate with them. Few technical, legal, or financial public services are available for LPs. Public sector action in landscapes is disconnected from private-sector action.

Several international reviews have proposed policy responses to address these constraints [218–221]. These responses include: designating a lead agency responsible for serving LPs and advising public and civil society policies and programs; government landscape policies, programs and budgets that support LP-generated action and investment plans; policy coherence across ministries; and mobilizing whole-of-society support for landscape strategies, including markets, finance, digital infrastructure and education. More governments are increasing policy integration, particularly around food systems, and have become more responsive to local policy inputs with decentralization and strong sub-national governments. However, while some countries have put in place ambitious public programs to promote LPs, none has yet adopted a coherent set of policies. Most policymakers are still unaware of ILM and LPs and their potential.

#### 5.2.2. Engagement of Planning Professionals in ILM

ILM offers planners a stakeholder-engaged approach to incorporate issues of land degradation, climate change and attendant nexus issues into public sector plans and budgets. Indeed, regional, state and local planning professionals have begun working with collaborative frameworks and participatory tools that facilitate cross-sectoral, multi-actor regenerative planning across jurisdictions and scales (e.g., [222]). Particularly in European and North American contexts, conventional ‘siloed’ or sectoral approaches to planning are giving way to more integrated and collaborative planning, with land use, water and forest planning drawing upon the deeper experience of urban and regional planners with participatory methods. Engagement is more robust where governments develop legal frameworks for community-engaged planning and planning professionals are tasked to address challenges related to power imbalances and inclusivity [223].

With the broader shift toward sustainable development, planners are being challenged to rigorously examine effective ways to develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need in their practice [224]. Tanzania’s Landscape Climate Smart Agriculture (LCSA) program offers a notable example of planners from different sectors (crop, horticulture, water, forest and municipal sector) working together. From 2017 to 2020 they shared experience and methods in two pilot jurisdictional landscapes to foster the preparation of integrated landscape strategies and action plans, and to design and implement a capacity-strengthening curriculum to build their competencies in LCSA planning [225]. In the Antananarivo region of Madagascar, a multi-sector group of planners applied a territorial approach to integrating crop, fishery and forest management that improved local access to food and fuel within the city and across nine districts [81]. LPs can be integrated into jurisdictional planning processes; for example, the Lari LP has offered knowledge and inspiration to Kiambu District planning in Kenya for nearly two decades [86,106].

#### 5.2.3. Tenure Rules Supporting ILM

Property rights define which stakeholders can access, use, and benefit from natural resources and ecosystem service. Tenure security, whether individual or communal, is usually a pre-condition for investment in sustainable landscape management. Landscape governance includes the procedures, policies, processes and institutions by which land, property and other natural resources are managed. Because landscapes comprise multiple ecological niches and land uses, as well as diverse, and often overlapping, jurisdictions for

land, resource and ecosystem management, tenure-related factors can pose challenges and conflicts for ILM [5,113].

LPs offer a valuable platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and negotiation to find locally-adapted solutions [110,226]. However, the constraints and opportunities around tenure and property rights for ILM have been little studied or addressed systematically in public policy. Major gaps identified in a 2019 scoping study [227] include: a robust analytical framework for analysis and action; in-depth comparative case studies that explore property rights solutions negotiated by LPs; practical tools for LPs to evaluate and negotiate property rights issues; and models for ethical collaboration between indigenous/local communities and international companies/investors.

5.2.4. International Policy Support for ILM

Over the past two decades, landscape approaches have been discussed and promoted internationally as a mechanism to meet needs on the ground at the landscape scale and to manage multi-level institutional and resourcing dynamics across scales. ILM has been endorsed formally by the UN conventions on climate change [228] (UNFCCC, 2016), combating desertification/land degradation [229,230], and biological diversity [231], as well as by the UN High-Level Political Forum of the SDGs [232], the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration [126], UN Habitat [233], the United Nations General Assembly [234], the climate adaptation report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [235], and strategies of the coalition of Regional Governments [136]. Operationalizing these policies with member countries has been slow, but official guidance to do so is starting to emerge (e.g., [173,236]).

6. Summary of Key Findings: State of the Landscape Transformation Support System and Opportunities for Accelerating Its Development

This section synthesizes our key findings on the state of the support system for landscape transformation, suggests leveraging actions that can accelerate development of each dimension of the system, and discusses the challenges for alignment across the system.

6.1. State of the Support System for Landscape Transformation

Table 1 summarizes the key findings from the authors’ assessment of changes over the past 25 years in the 20 key dimensions of ILM support needed for scaling and transformational impact. For each dimension we discuss some advances that have been made, current challenges and gaps, evolutions in this dimension since 2000, and finally recommended high leverage actions.

Table 1. 20 Dimensions of a support system for integrated landscape management: Evolution and high-leverage actions.

\* Column 4 Key: Evolution since 2000 (recognizing wide variations by country and region):

Extensive: extensive experimentation, plus advances in coordinated ILM system re-design;  
Widespread: widespread experimentation, but little coordinated ILM system re-design;  
Minimal: minimal experimentation to support ILM.

| Landscape Partnerships            |                                                                               |                                                                                                                                |                                   |                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                         | Advances                                                                      | Challenges and gaps                                                                                                            | Evolution since 2000 *            | High-leverage actions                                                                                       |
| 1. LPs are established world-wide | Proliferation of LPs under different names and entry points, most organically | Most LPs have little structure support; not set up for long-term sustainability; different communities of practice unconnected | <div><div></div></div> Widespread | Facilitate networks to encourage and guide new LP development, connecting communities of landscape practice |

Table 1. Cont.

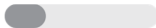
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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. LP leaders and facilitators have strong capacities to plan and implement ILM, and to influence policy | Multi-stakeholder facilitation skills widespread; ILM guidance/design resources and tools becoming available (e.g., 1000L learning modules and tools)               | Most leaders are not trained in integrated planning/design or policy influence; available knowledge resources are hard to access and adapt; numerous gaps                                                                                                                                | <br>Widespread   | Build collaborative programs for capacity strengthening and mentoring for local landscape leaders and landscape facilitators<br>Set up governmental programs for formal ILM education                                                                                                                  |
| 3. LPs have adequate, long-term operational funding                                                      | Some models have been developed for long-term or specific funding windows for certain objectives.                                                                   | LPs underfunded, no institutionalized funding, mostly short-term project cycle funding; 2025 cuts in international funding                                                                                                                                                               | <br>Minimal      | Establish dedicated regional, national and international grant facilities to support LP formation and long-term operation                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4. Cultural movements are raising awareness, inspiration and commitment to holistic goals and ILM        | Innovative approaches and organizations actively promoting democratic and environmental values, community solidarity, long-term stewardship at the landscape level. | Still little focus on landscape-wide collaboratives; weak knowledge and communication by journalists; fragmented messaging;                                                                                                                                                              | <br>Widespread   | Program joint outreach with other movements (e.g., climate, food systems, biodiversity, localization, slow food/money, sustainable cities, pro-democracy, healthy tech use, human rights), to showcase LPs                                                                                             |
| <b>Support Programs for LPs</b>                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Dimension</b>                                                                                         | <b>Advances</b>                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Challenges and gaps</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Evolution since 2000 *</b>                                                                      | <b>Actions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5. Programs to promote and develop LPs are widespread (NGO, govt, business)                              | Program proliferation by international NGOs, Inter-governmental organizations, UN agencies; some governments                                                        | National programs just beginning and usually sectoral; most still top-down; often short-term project initiatives or limited political cycles; many focus on ILM but with little support for LPs; many focus on specific landscape goals                                                  | <br>Extensive  | Curate guidance resources and advisory services for landscape program design, to build long-term LPs                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 6. Networks and alliances of LP's are widespread                                                         | Inspiring examples around the world, focused on learning and policy influence                                                                                       | Only a small number, most incipient, few LPs involved; networks are mostly unfunded                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <br>Widespread | Establish regional grant facilities for landscape networks and alliances through seed funding and support services                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 7. Support services for LPs are widely available and well-coordinated                                    | Models for some specific LP support services are operating; some synthesis of lessons; a few examples of country-wide orchestration of services                     | Legal, financial, and market advisory services for LPs are generally lacking; few services accessible to LPs unaffiliated with specific programs; service provision is fragmented and elements not working synergistically; no standards for technical or professional service providers | <br>Minimal    | Set up a scalable network of LP support service providers with open-access guidance resources, training and advisory services, co-developed with LPs<br>Support initiatives and agencies that orchestrate and align existing programs to build long-term LPs and influence national and global agendas |

Table 1. Cont.

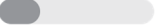
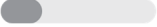
| Knowledge and Tools for ILM                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                                                                        | Advances                                                                                                                                                                      | Challenges and gaps                                                                                                                                                                                     | Evolution since 2000 *                                                                           | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 8. The knowledge base for local design of regenerative landscapes is strong      | Deepened knowledge of agri-socio-ecological function; proliferation of technical solutions for holistic outcomes                                                              | Sectoral technical experts unaware of options; knowledge not curated to support stakeholder negotiation, design and decision-making for landscape goals; little organized science communication for LPs | <br>Widespread | Mobilize a network of higher education institutions and other adult learning efforts to develop integrated undergraduate, graduate, and adult learning curricula on ILM-related knowledge, practices and design tools |
| 9. Methods, tools and guidance for ILM are well developed and accessible         | Rich tools and resources available for many aspects of ILM; curated by 1000L; and growing; A cohort of LPs have utilized and demonstrated their value and utility             | Often these tools are not user friendly and accessibly designed to meet the contexts and needs of partners; often have limited validation                                                               | <br>Widespread | Establish accessible, well-curated platforms of open-access tools from different sources, adaptable for context, along with learning feedback loops                                                                   |
| 10. Data systems and information technology useful for LPs are widely accessible | A lot of data exists and is accessible if users know where to find it; increase of ILM-adapted tools (e.g., Terraso) and MRV, AI opportunities being explored;                | Data not landscape-specific or integrated; too hard or expensive to manage; AI not adapted for LPs and weak on incorporating community elements; minimal data on enabling institutions                  | <br>Minimal    | Explore and synthesize the intersections, opportunities and challenges between data systems and AI in relevant data and tech platforms, with practitioners                                                            |
| 11. Evidence of ILM impact is widely assessed and available                      | Proliferation of tools and methods for components of ILM; more documented case studies; some integrated methods under development                                             | Monitoring methods not integrated across sectors or scales; feel complicated/expensive for users, poor coordination among experts; few rigorous assessments; weak links to decision-making              | <br>Minimal  | Mobilize and coordinate the application of existing impact assessment tools and publish the results and comparative learnings                                                                                         |
| 12. The research community is well-organized to support ILM and LPs              | Growing inter-disciplinary research; growing research institutions; research frameworks from practitioners; advances in technical research on interactions and spatial design | No tracking of landscape systems; fragmented disciplinary focus; not action-oriented; most in grey literature; little focus on LPs; weak coordination among landscape research teams                    | <br>Minimal  | Establish a landscape research community of practice to align research priorities<br><br>Establish strong landscape research programs in major universities and think tanks                                           |

Table 1. Cont.

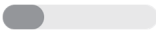
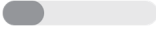
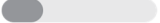
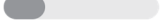
| Economics, Business & Finance                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                                                                                    | Advances                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Challenges and gaps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Evolution since 2000 *                                                                             | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 13. Economic valuation methods in use incentivize ILM                                        | Growing inter-disciplinary methods for natural capital, ILEM, cost-benefit analysis for green- grey infrastructure; evolving approaches to account for systemic risks and feedback loops; ecosystems and restoration seen as assets, rather than costs | Limited application of valuation methods across sectors, scales and connecting spatial dependencies (i.e., DFI's, MDBs and government ad-hoc). Many natural capital methods and their application still ignore systemic effects or interdependencies in their application and strategic use (i.e., BIOFIN, NAPs, etc.) | <br>Minimal      | <p>Establish applied research programs and funding instruments within DFIs/MDBs on methods; share toolkits and results</p> <p>Provide technical support for use of methods in national (inter- ministerial) and subnational multi-level processes (i.e., NBSAPs, NBFPs, NDCs, NAPs, BIOFIN)</p>                       |
| 14. Businesses are widely engaged with LPs and ILM                                           | Large-scale integration into corporate reporting frameworks and corporate strategies; business-led initiatives are motivating                                                                                                                          | Many initiatives focused primarily on international companies; LPs do not have skills/processes to facilitate                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <br>Widespread   | <p>Support easy-to-use assessment tools that clarify shared risks and return on investment for landscape-level outcomes</p> <p>Advocate for policies to incentivize corporate support for ILM</p>                                                                                                                     |
| 15. Financial flows are shifting to investments and activities in integrated LP Action Plans | Increased overall flows for sustainable land management; new mechanisms; growing focus on systems finance;                                                                                                                                             | Finance remains highly sectoral; weak capacities of LPs and financiers; inadequate financial orchestration across investments; weak risk mechanisms; weak integrated whole landscape instruments;                                                                                                                      | <br>Minimal    | <p>Mobilize networks of service providers expert in landscape finance strategy, orchestration</p> <p>Align and mobilize key financial actors and philanthropic funders</p> <p>Develop landscape finance facilities</p>                                                                                                |
| 16. Financial tools are available to facilitate landscape investment                         | High innovation, Landscape 1000L tools review /development; 1000L Landscape Finance Accelerator                                                                                                                                                        | Many missing and underdeveloped tools for capital orchestration, systemic risk assessments, aligning multiple sources of capital and cost-effectively deploying financial instruments towards landscape-scale objectives.                                                                                              | <br>Widespread | <p>Organize cases and learnings on applied systemic risk and finance approaches</p> <p>Define and cost out functions required to deploy and manage systemic, landscape- level finance for a regenerative transition</p> <p>Mobilize ILM finance community of practice around an ever-growing open access tool set</p> |

Table 1. Cont.

| Public Policy                                                   |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dimension                                                       | Advances                                                                                                                                                     | Challenges and gaps                                                                                                                                                        | Evolution since 2000 *                                                                             | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 17. National and state government policies support ILM and LPs  | Recognized by environment-related agencies in some countries; scattered policy innovations; increasing landscape framing and multi-level policy coordination | Weak cross-ministry program and budget coordination, no framework; most policymakers unaware; cross-sector programs not designed; do not use the same language             | <br>Minimal      | Designate government agency to align landscape policies and program across ministries<br><br>Strengthen incentives and mechanisms for public, programs and budgets to support action plans of LPs<br><br>Set up policy think tanks to analyze cross-cutting benefits of policies and program support to ILM and LPs |
| 18. Professional planners are actively engaged with ILM and LPs | Increased focus on participatory planning and sustainability methods/tools; stronger watershed and forestry landscape planning with ILM focus                | ILM not in the literature and training; dominance of technocratic/expert model; scattered expertise; weak agricultural planning                                            | <br>Widespread   | Mobilize professional planners to collaborate with LPs to design and implement sustainable development plans.<br><br>Evaluate and communicate useful linkages between LPs and sub-national govt planning orgs                                                                                                       |
| 19. Tenure arrangements support ILM                             | Many ILM programs and LPs have tenure activities                                                                                                             | Little analysis; innovations are informal so not 'seen'                                                                                                                    | <br>Minimal    | Organize comparative analysis of tenure arrangements for ILM and through LPs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 20. International policies and institutions support ILM and LPs | TP4D; Urban-Rural Linkages; nexus approaches; bioeconomy; officially supported by G20 and all UN agencies' environmental conventions                         | Still early process of national integration across conventions; weak integration in SDGs, not well known outside land area; limited funding or tools for national planning | <br>Widespread | Advocate for ILM as integrating mechanism for all the UN conventions and development goals                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

There has been extensive experimentation plus advances in system-wide re-design in only one dimension of the landscape support system: programs to promote LPs. There has been widespread experimentation, but with little coordinated system re-design, in another 10 of the 20 dimensions. In the other dimensions there has been minimal experimentation with ILM support systems.

The five sub-systems vary considerably in their progress. Though **landscape partnerships** are now widespread, they receive little coordinated support to form and generally have weak capacities for ILM, have limited long-term operational funding, and limited support from the broader culture. **Landscape development programs** have seen widespread experimentation, plus some coordinated system re-design for programs promoting LPs. There is active experimentation with LP coalitions and alliances, but little experimentation with LP support services. Despite widespread advances in the **knowledge base, methods, and tools** for local ILM design, there is little coordinated system re-design to support LPs,

and only nascent efforts to develop data systems and IT for LPs. Despite improved methods there is limited impact assessment. Research is poorly organized to support ILM and LPs.

For **landscape finance, business and economics** there has been considerable experimentation with tools and business engagement with LPs. But there is little coordinated system re-design, little shift in financial flows towards integrated landscape investment, and minimal use of economic valuation methods that reflect the goals of ILM. In **public policy**, professional planners and international policy frameworks are widely promoting ILM. But there has been little experimentation with government policies, or adaptation of tenure rules to enable the goals of ILM. In none of the five sub-systems are the component dimensions well-integrated.

While acknowledging that transformative system change typically requires a generation or two, there are clearly major barriers to systemic transformation to ILM. For example, local LPs are not actively advocating for support services. Most are not aware of the potential for such support; others express concern that ‘top-down’ support will prioritize outside interests or have too many ‘strings attached’. Meanwhile, most policy, business, knowledge and other institutions are unfamiliar with LPs or do not consider them to be attractive partners. LPs may prioritize having allies ‘unblock’ constraints or help local actors navigate the risks and opportunities of external market forces and actors. Better understanding of such barriers could advance system re-design.

### 6.2. High-Leverage Actions to Accelerate Dimensions of ILM Support

The last column in Table 1 proposes high-leverage actions to accelerate development of each dimension of the support system. These can build on existing progress, knowledge and experience to overcome the identified gaps and challenges. Leaders in policy, business, finance, philanthropy, civil society, and science can promote and fund these actions in ways fitting their role and expertise. The critical requirement is that all apply an integrated landscape approach and seek opportunities to implement their specialized work in collaboration with LPs and with landscape-coordinating organizations.

### 6.3. Promoting and Aligning System-Wide Change

The authors were surprised to find that, despite impressive experimentation and innovation in ILM, there is so little system-level re-design in more than half of the dimensions of landscape support. Coordination among initiatives is limited; and projects and programs operate in isolation. There is no coherent institutional infrastructure for scaling ILM. Yet the above leveraging actions would be most effective if interlinked, providing catalytic momentum for one another, with coherence among the sub-systems. Major system change will likely require more deliberate orchestration to align efforts [100].

Who is in a position and has the legitimacy to mobilize systemic change? Public policymakers could do more to support system redesign. For example, the national ‘landscape agency’ proposed by Sethi and Scherr [220] could not only coordinate public programs to align with LP action plans but also mobilize support systems. World Bank or UN agencies could help countries institutionalize landscape support efforts. Professional planners could more actively incorporate ILM into their planning models and building coalitions.

A more coherent landscape movement could define which dimensions most need attention and co-design system support together with LPs and LP alliances. For example, facilitated regional dialogues organized by the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature initiative in Africa and Mesoamerica produced regional Landscape Action Plans [237,238] that inspired landscape leaders and programs. The 1000 Landscapes platform, through its nearly 100 collaborating partners, has begun advancing some of the above leveraging actions through its working groups, responding to priorities of partners.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations: Advancing the Support System for Landscape Transformation

The high-leverage actions in Table 1 suggest many ways to promote impactful landscape, bioregional and territorial development, building on the experience and learnings from widespread experimentation and advances in system re-design. But the movement is still in an early stage of development and faces headwinds for implementation at scale. Major disruptive forces pose new challenges and opportunities, such as AI, pandemics, and political and financial realignment. Strategic action will be required to advance transformative change and unlock systemic barriers, to fully realize the potential of LPs and ILM to serve people, communities, and ecosystems over the next generation. Both deeper theoretical development and action research will be critical for all 20 dimensions of the support system to strengthen landscape partnerships and to design more effective enabling finance and policy. This paper provides a conceptual framework and an expert-informed baseline analysis to guide this work within the broader thinking on socioecological systems change.

### 7.1. Strengthening Support Systems for Implementing ILM

Our review suggests four priority areas for research on support systems for implementing ILM and LPs. A central challenge is the design of ambitious yet realistic **landscape regeneration strategies** that are long-term, landscape-wide, multi-sector, and multi-objective. Local knowledge needs to be integrated with formal evidence of trends and potential changes in markets, demography, ecosystems, climate, and finance. More user-friendly tools and data are needed to guide transformation thinking and scenario development and to connect technical specialists with local communities. More scientific research and technical innovation is needed to design synergistic interventions for holistic outcomes and long-term resilience.

While research on **landscape governance** has provided a foundation for successful integrated landscape action, there are major gaps in understanding governance options in different contexts. The working hypothesis that ILM benefits and fosters democratic processes relies on assumptions about how a landscape approach is planned, implemented and evaluated, and remains insufficiently researched. Since ILM is a multi-generational process, power dynamics and democratic trends will change over time, as will disagreements, tensions and different voices and influences in a place. More innovative guidance and tools can equip leaders with strategies to navigate these changes, e.g., role playing, conflict management, alliance and coalition building and partnership agreements.

**Landscape impact assessments** are essential to advance the knowledge base of landscape approaches, capacity-strengthening efforts, and adaptive learning and program design. There have been advances in thinking through the process and indicators for landscape-scale impact assessments that inform the transition to healthy and resilient landscapes. But it has been difficult to finance holistic assessments that are meaningfully integrated and can be sustained to inform collaborative planning and action over longer time frames. Action-oriented research is needed to develop a new generation of lower-cost methods to generate insightful learning for LPs and for support institutions, and to advance the field.

**Education and training** is a cross-cutting enabler of ILM, but little studied. Capacities of landscape leaders could be strengthened through technical and professional training, institutional programs, higher education and community-based learning. Education could foster a broad understanding of ILM among actors in enabling institutions—government agencies, research institutions, financial partners, and the private sector. Communities of practice and collaborative learning networks could benefit actors in research, education,

and training, enabling practitioners in diverse contexts to share experiences, refine and adapt tools, and co-create new and more effective approaches for ILM in practice.

### *7.2. Strengthening Support Systems for Landscape Finance and Policy*

Much more analysis and action research are needed to advance enabling finance and policy. A critical frontier is the **realignment of financial and economic systems** and tools with the long-term, place-based needs of ILM. This requires orchestration of philanthropic, public, and private investment into coherent landscape portfolios of activities and projects that coordinate risk-taking, concessional and commercial capital. Sustained funding must be found for LP operations. Communities of practice can connect financiers, LPs, intermediaries and researchers to co-develop practical tools, metrics, and governance models. Such groups can explore how mechanisms like blended funds, guarantee facilities, and regenerative investment vehicles shape capital flows, support resiliency, and landscape outcomes. Aligning ILM with the wider systemic finance community, including nature-positive investment and impact transparency, would be vital. Platforms like 1000 Landscapes and TransCap could promote joint learning, co-design, and experimentation to redefine value, risk, and accountability across all forms of capital.

The progress of LPs will remain limited without the right **governmental support**. It is important to generate evidence that will enable policymakers to act, document the tangible benefits and economics of ILM to address the holistic needs of their constituents, mitigate multiple risks, and build long-term resilience. For that, it is essential to develop landscape policy labs, in partnership with universities and research institutions, to document and evaluate policy innovations, understand the true costs of integrated interventions, adapt policy design to specific contexts, and generate technical policy guidance. Research findings could be communicated through peer-to-peer exchanges among economists, policymakers, parliamentarians, political party leaders, and LP coalitions, and through case-based storytelling.

### *7.3. Conclusion: Advancing a Robust Landscape Transformation Support System*

ILM could be an important solution to the polycrisis and to reimagining holistic regeneration, grounding action and resiliency in local realities. However, the current constellation of development institutions—with their short-term frameworks, emphasis on optimizing selected goals for dominant stakeholders, and limited space for local voices—cannot meet the needs of ILM and LPs. Our analysis found widespread, if disconnected, experimentation with new models for community organization, field programs, knowledge systems, economic structures, and policy. These have laid the foundation for a re-designed support system. But new analysis and innovation is required to accelerate landscape systems transformation, especially in four areas.

Integral to successful ILM is **stakeholder alignment** around landscape valuation and commitments to landscape stewardship. This requires a learning mindset to integrate across multiple knowledge systems. Meanwhile, the landscape movement needs to assess ways to communicate and engage more closely and effectively with aligned movements of community-led development, ecological restoration, regenerative economy, inclusive governance, and Indigenous Peoples.

More strategic **collaborative action and systems orchestration** is required to mobilize the changes needed in existing institutions and the design of new institutions, services, and resources to achieve impact at local, national and global scales. Actor networks must have the legitimacy and capacity to steward and orchestrate the evolution of these systems, and mechanisms to track system change. The research community can accompany these efforts, including, for example, more detailed and analytical systems mapping and comparative cross-learning around system design.

The ILM community can also learn more from **related development paradigms** and movements that are growing, evolving and unfolding. Examples are bioeconomy and just transitions, both called for through the Brazil and South Africa G20 Presidencies, as well as the emerging fields of systemic, place-based finance, and integrated climate adaptation. Meanwhile, landscape champions will need to adapt their regeneration strategies in response to emerging developments by more powerful and better-financed public and private sector actors. New thinking is needed on how these broader trends will affect ways that people engage and make decisions and how to balance top-down and bottom-up change.

A systematic stock-taking is needed to identify **priority research questions**. This could build on the conceptual framework outlined in this paper. For example, how can interdependence between production and nature be evaluated and enhanced? How can natural and built infrastructure be better aligned? How can the viability of the mix of objectives in landscape initiatives be evaluated? How can this knowledge be translated into practical tools for local landscape design and planning? How can new methods for analyzing trade-offs and synergies be practically applied by LPs? Through what institutional mechanisms can critical support services be made available to CSOs, NGOs, and governments? Together, engaged researchers and the landscape movement could foster more university partnerships and spearhead the development of think tanks dedicated to advancing the field and to connecting knowledge, policy, and practice.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Appendix A. Definitions

**4 Returns:** A term used by Commonland and partners to describe the holistic benefits from integrated landscape management: inspiration (increased connection to the landscape, motivating stewardship), human well-being (strengthened communities, including health, nutrition, food and water security, and social resilience), healthy nature (including biodiversity, ecosystem functions, and resilience), and regenerative economies (long-term economic resilience and prosperity of communities, farmers, and businesses) [3].

**Bioregional Development:** A community-led approach to social and economic progress, closely related to ILM, that organizes systems around the natural and cultural features of a specific bioregion. This process prioritizes local resources, governance, and knowledge to promote resilience and self-sufficiency, with the goal of creating systems

that align human life with the natural environment, fostering sustainability and a sense of place [147].

**Landscape:** A “socio-ecological” area including interconnected natural and human-altered lands and waters. It is shaped by distinct natural processes, historical events, economic activities, and social and cultural practices. A landscape can include rivers, forests, and mountains as well as farms, cities, settlements, and other land uses, all influenced by the way people and nature interact over time. There are many terms with similar meanings, such as seascapes, territories, bioregions, and watersheds. The scale is bigger than a community though generally smaller than a province or state, often over 100,000 hectares in order to encompass key ecological, economic, or social features and processes. But landscape boundaries are defined by their stakeholders and may be much smaller or range to millions of hectares and may evolve over time [6].

**Landscape Approach:** A framework or way of thinking that acknowledges the interconnectedness of natural and human systems within a defined area to achieve multiple, often competing, social, economic, and environmental objectives [61].

**Integrated Landscape Management (ILM):** Operationalizing the landscape approach through governance strategies that attempt to reconcile multiple and conflicting land-use claims to harmonize the needs of people and the environment and establish more sustainable and equitable multi-functional landscapes. Multi-stakeholder platforms use inclusive, collaborative, and adaptive strategies to develop shared goals and take coordinated action to achieve desired landscape outcomes [75,239,240].

**Jurisdictional Landscape Development.** A form of integrated landscape management where administrative and political boundaries, such as a state or a district, are used to define the scope of action, with high-level government involvement to coordinate policies, implement projects, and enforce accountability across the region [241,242].

**Territorial Development:** Integrated multi-sector development across a specific territory, guided by a spatial vision of the desirable future and supported by strategic investments in physical infrastructure and environmental management [243]. Closely related to ILM, territorial development has a socio-political entry point [244], reflecting an effort for regions to control their own development processes.

**Regenerative Landscape:** A landscape that reflects the enhanced vitality of ecosystems, economies, and communities that have moved from extractive to regenerative models of development. Guided by the principles of interconnectedness, diversity, and reciprocity, regenerative landscapes help nature and people thrive as interconnected systems, inspiring future generations to steward the living world while creating conditions for life to flourish [6].

**Landscape Partnership:** A long-term, intersectoral and multistakeholder collaborative whose members work together towards a regenerative landscape. Related terms include territorial alliance, bioregional partnership, landscape platform, and integrated landscape initiative. All these partnerships take a wide range of forms [26].

## Appendix B. Motivations for Pursuing ILM

Expanding interest in ILM has been driven by a combination of both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors: dissatisfaction with development models that ignore escalating ecological and economic threats to human well-being; institutional fragmentation and the erosion of collective capacity; advances in science, knowledge, and technology; shifting paradigms in development, economics, and sustainability; and the emergence and sustenance of collaborative and localized governance.

### *Appendix B.1. Dissatisfaction with Development Models That Ignore Escalating Ecological and Economic Threats to Human Well-Being*

Ecosystem degradation and loss have become a primary constraint on sustainable development [13]. Declining water quality and availability now affect agricultural production, industrial growth, and urban expansion, particularly in transboundary basins and peri-urban areas, where land use decisions upstream influence the welfare of downstream communities [14]. Food and nutrition insecurity, and impoverishment have grown as land degradation, climate variability, and volatile markets undermine livelihoods and national food systems [15,17]. Climate change intensifies these pressures, exposing the limitations of fragmented and reactive planning. The resulting losses, ranging from crop failure to infrastructure damage and heightened disaster spending have become a significant fiscal burden.

But current government structures and planning processes are inadequate to address these interconnected challenges. Most continue to organize responsibilities through sectoral ministries, agriculture, water, environment, and finance, whose priorities often conflict and whose mandates may overlap without coherent actions [16]. Urban and rural development remain largely decoupled despite their deep interdependence through flows of labor, goods, and ecosystem services [174]. This fragmentation creates blind spots where systemic risks are left unmanaged. Complex feedback among food, energy, water, and climate systems means that interventions generate new vulnerabilities rather than resolve existing ones.

In response, integrated, climate-smart landscape strategies could generate ecological resilience, regenerative economic development and measurable economic savings through avoided costs. Restoring ecological assets through ILM can be a collective investment in national stability and prosperity [18–20,209].

### *Appendix B.2. Resistance of Local Communities and Jurisdictions to External Control*

In many settings, distrust of public institutions and large corporations has intensified as communities experience displacement and loss of control over local resources. In response, movements for territorial sovereignty, food autonomy, and Indigenous self-determination have gained momentum. LPs provide inclusive spaces where local actors can participate in decisions about land use and resource allocation, helping to rebuild social legitimacy and collective capacity. These arrangements represent not only a new governance form but also renewal of a reimagined ‘commons’ as a social institution [245].

### *Appendix B.3. Advances in Science, Knowledge, and Technology*

Scientific advances and new technologies have been key enablers of ILM. Research on socioecological systems has deepened the understanding of how economic activity depends on ecological integrity and how land degradation undermines long-term productivity [1]. Agroecology, agroforestry, and diversified cropping systems demonstrate that ecological restoration and agricultural productivity can be mutually reinforcing, generating shared benefits at multiple scales.

The rapid development of geospatial and digital tools, remote sensing, satellite monitoring, GIS, and large-scale data analysis has made it possible to map ecological change and better understand the interactions between environmental, social, and financial systems. Such information reveals how unmanaged systemic risks, such as climate-induced crop losses or soil erosion, ripple through supply chains and fiscal systems. The transformative potential of science, knowledge and technology lies in being embedded within participatory systems that value local ownership, transparency, and accountability.

#### *Appendix B.4. Shifting Institutional and Knowledge Paradigms Responding to Shocks*

A further driver of ILM lies in the changing dominant paradigms of development, economics, and sustainability. Policymakers and scholars increasingly view climate change, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity not as isolated problems, but as interlinked systemic risks that threaten the stability of societies and economies. Nexus approaches that connect water, energy, food, and biodiversity are reshaping national and international policy dialogues. Traditional valuation and planning methods are no longer seen as sufficient to respond to the root causes [13,14].

The nexus is part of a broader re-conceptualization of economic development models to pursue a concept of human well-being within planetary boundaries [22,23]. The emergence of frameworks for bioeconomy, circular economy, regenerative development, and post-growth has created openings for new forms of integrated planning. The G20 process, particularly Brazil's 2024 declaration, emphasized the potential for aligning economic transformation with ecological regeneration with a framing around the bioeconomy and a clear focus on equity. This has continued with South Africa's G20 agenda. ILM provides a territorial and governance framework through which these principles can be realized in practice, by integrating the management of shared natural assets into systems of production and investment [24–28].

#### *Appendix B.5. Emergence of Collaborative and Localized Governance*

Landscape initiatives are increasingly recognized as laboratories of adaptive governance and as processes of “commoning” where collective norms and institutions are intentionally created to manage shared resources for the public good [21]. This reinforces the view of landscape governance as essential social infrastructure that links vertical coordination between national policy and local implementation with horizontal cooperation across sectors and stakeholder groups. In contexts where central governments have struggled to address complex socioecological challenges, communities, producer groups, and municipal authorities have developed new mechanisms for coordination and social inclusion. Watershed associations, model forest alliances, and local food policy councils illustrate how participatory structures can combine inclusiveness with practical problem-solving. The challenges of operational funding, conflicts of interest, and equity concerns are difficult to address in what are often informal and emerging processes. Nevertheless, the growing number of locally rooted and collaborative governance arrangements represents both a response to institutional weakness and a source of innovation [28–31].

### **Appendix C. Historical Trajectories and Strands of Integrated Landscape Approaches**

Holistic landscape regeneration had its roots in indigenous and traditional community-based governance. In the past century, integrated landscape approaches arose in response to systemic tensions in multifunctional landscapes. Expansion of intensive agricultural production, mining, and timber extraction threatened forests and biodiversity and diverted resources from local food systems, while settlements and infrastructure disrupted watershed functions. These modern movements fostered the rise and institutionalization of ILM.

#### *Appendix C.1. Indigenous and Community-Based Governance Traditions*

Indigenous and community-based systems have long demonstrated that human presence can sustain biodiversity while supporting livelihoods. Rooted in reciprocity, relationality, and responsibility for place, they contrast sharply with monarchical and colonial systems that prioritized extraction. Commons-based systems of forest, pasture, or fisheries gover-

nance similarly embody integrative logics of stewardship [32–36]. These traditions provide foundational models for ILM, blending its cultural, ecological, and economic dimensions.

### Appendix C.2. Influential Modern Movements

Early ecological thinkers like Humboldt in 1807 [37] and Leopold in 1949 [38] stressed interconnected land ethics, while Geddes in 1915 [39] and Mumford in 1938 [40] pioneered regional planning. McHarg's *Design with Nature* in 1969 [41] foreshadowed GIS-based ecological planning, and landscape ecology in the 1980s [42,43] provided analytical tools for spatial mosaics. The regionalist movement in urban planning in the US considered the integration of green spaces, and promoted cross-sectoral planning with housing and transportation, along with equity planning [21]. Systems theorists such as Odum [44] and Capra [45] encouraged holistic development strategies

Applied movements included permaculture [55], Integrated Natural Resource Management [56], Model Forests [58], ecoagriculture [59,60], and integrated land-use planning. Integrated Rural Development programs promoted multi-sectoral planning, though often criticized as technocratic and top-down [62,246]. The development of community-based conservation has influenced the fields of ecology and conservation, emphasizing the need to work more at the systems level and engage and benefit local communities [63,65].

Sustainable development, popularized by the Brundtland Report [247] (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), emphasized balancing economic, social, and environmental goals, but often assumed systems could be stabilized. The regenerative movement arose in critique, stressing that socioecological systems are dynamic and must be renewed rather than sustained. Regeneration reframes the production–restoration divide as a cycle of renewal [54]. Work expanded to apply landscape approaches for regenerative agriculture and food systems (e.g., [6,219]).

Attention to social issues and social inclusion also grew. Pretty et al. [4] showed how farmer groups expanded beyond production to environmental stewardship and collective action. In parallel, the resilience and social–ecological systems literature [5,46–49] emphasized scale, institutional mismatches, and adaptive governance. Sustainability science [51–53] positioned landscapes as integrative arenas linking knowledge to action. CATIE, ICRAF, and Tropenbos developed the concept and approach for ‘climate-smart territories’ [66]; and FAO and the World Bank for ‘climate-smart landscapes’ [67].

### Appendix C.3. The Rise and Mainstreaming of ILM

By the 2000s–2010s, organizations began explicitly adopting integrated landscape approaches [69,70]. The *Landscapes for People, Food and Nature* (LPFN) initiative (2011–2020) helped popularize ILM, convening 75 international partner organizations, including farmer networks, under a shared framework. Led by EcoAgriculture Partners, Biodiversity International, Conservation International, FAO, IFAD, Govt Netherlands, Solidaridad, UNEP, World Bank and World Resources Institute, LPFN advanced ILM through global and regional dialogues, action plans, and influential publications [185,237,238].

Sayer et al.'s articulation in 2013 of 10 core principles of landscape management [61] inspired initiatives across the extensive IUCN conservation community and beyond. The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF), launched by CIFOR-ICRAF and its partners, built a global partnership network and hosted major events that raised the visibility and legitimacy of ILM. Today, the concept of ILM has been institutionalized through multilateral funds (Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, the World Bank), global frameworks (SDGs, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration), national policies, and philanthropic strategies. However, while many international and national actors now support landscape-level

planning and investment, they do not always extend this support to the collaborative LPs that make ILM effective in practice.

## Appendix D. Key Features of ILM and Landscape Partnerships

Below is a brief overview of the basic principles of ILM and the organization and process of LPs.

### *Appendix D.1. Principles of ILM*

“Integrated landscape management” is an umbrella term, inclusive of the many diverse communities of practice in the landscape movement. Despite varying focus and features among them, they share some overarching principles:

1. A multi-stakeholder and cross-sectorial partnership or platform for long-term learning, negotiation, and coordinated action, assisted by trusted facilitators
2. A long-term vision for development defined by stakeholders for the landscape, encompassing regenerative economy, human well-being, healthy nature, and inspiration for a better future that reflects local context, culture, and participatory input
3. Adoption of agricultural, conservation, and other land-use systems and practices that generate economic, environmental, and social benefits aligned with the landscape vision
4. Spatial planning to ensure that different land uses and practices across the landscape—in natural habitats, regenerative production areas, and human settlements—have positive ecological and economic synergies
5. Policies, market, and financial developments that support integrated strategies for economic goals, social well-being, and environmental stewardship, emphasizing long-term resilience, holistic risk management, and holistic valuation of landscape benefits (adapted from [69]).

### *Appendix D.2. Organization and Process of Landscape Partnerships*

ILM fosters a process of collaborative action to guide landscape partners in developing and realizing their vision for regeneration. The LP is responsible for facilitating four processes: a shared understanding of the landscape; a shared vision, strategy, and action plan for landscape transformation; and implementation of the action plan; and learning and impact assessment to inform adaptive management (Figure 1) [26]. This process is iterative, responding to local dynamics as these evolve over time. A landscape initiative may be considered ‘mature’ when it meets core criteria around scale, governance, collective goals and actions, and monitoring [201].

Participatory decision-making underlies ILM [61,69]. Managing power dynamics is essential for any successful LP, and where there are major power imbalances among stakeholder groups, special facilitation tools are needed [71,72]. Where powerful external actors disrupt collaborative action, LPs may need to secure strong external allies to remain viable [246]. This approach is easiest to establish in more democratic societies and can advance democratic norms and practices. While ILA is difficult in authoritarian contexts [248,249], LPs have sometimes emerged and thrived in authoritarian settings in an adapted form [70].

A critical function of LPs is to build trust among stakeholders, creating the social capital needed for sustained collaboration [71,72]. Many LPs help forge connections and act as technical and/or political information brokers between local actors and those at higher scales, or promote financial investments [164].

There is no one way to organize LPs; each partnership is unique. LPs commonly begin informally as platforms or forums for bringing together different stakeholders to

share concerns, learn, identify possible solutions, and eventually pursue common goals through joint action. The motivation for forming LPs may be to address chronic conflict among stakeholders, to overcome common problems facing stakeholders, to mobilize new partners to meet specific goals, or deepen place-based identity. Brouwer et al. [73] describe ways in which multi-stakeholder partnerships evolve from fragmented initiatives into institutionalized platforms capable of systemic impact.

Some LPs formally organize through rules, agreements, carefully specified roles and responsibilities, and secure legal status. Indigenous territories may have the advantage of existing territorial governance, which already designates actors responsible for different dimensions of development [6]. Farmer and producer organizations have mobilized a small but growing number of LPs [250]. Other qualifiers of landscape initiatives are described by Waeber, et al. [74].

Key factors that distinguish LPs are noted in Appendix D.2 Table A1. These factors also affect the institutional support they need, the way such support would be most effectively designed, and who should provide it. While these distinctions are important, Sections 4 and 5 does not get into that level of analysis.

**Table A1.** Features of LPs that influence the design of support systems.

| <i>Feature</i>        | <i>Variations Affecting Design of Support Systems</i>                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance type       | Jurisdictional, indigenous territory, NGO-facilitated, corporate-led, farmer-led                                                             |
| Governance structure  | Dialogue platform, informal alliance, leadership council, legal entity, multi-partner, coalition or cooperative                              |
| Level of maturity     | Collaborative is in formation, developing, mature                                                                                            |
| Landscape boundary    | Administrative, bioregional, cultural, commodity sourcing area                                                                               |
| Thematic entry points | Biodiversity loss, watershed degradation, land rights, agriculture, climate change adaptation, food insecurity, urban-rural linkages, et al. |
| Thematic entry points | Community-based organization, NGO, government authority, land trust, private business or business association, funder                        |
| Links with other LPs  | Isolated, member of landscape alliance, member of landscape service provider network, member of farmer or environmental association          |

#### *Appendix D.3. Challenges and Barriers*

Even well-organized LPs face significant barriers to impact. The composition of actors within LPs matters; there is often outsized influence of stakeholders who, by choice, remain disengaged, yet continue to shape land-use dynamics. There is active debate, but little systematic evidence, about the specific political, social, and institutional contexts in which ILM can be most successful. Emerging concerns are the risk of ILM being co-opted by private sector actors, and the risk that government support will lead to political capture. In some landscapes where outside funding is important, local people may be heard, but their ideas are not acted upon, a kind of ‘performative planning’. In other places, ‘exploitative planning’ is observed, where government actors involve local people in planning but not implementation. Reporting from the field also confirms salient issues of legitimacy of actors, violence and corruption.

## Appendix E. The Impact of ILM and Landscape Partnerships

As the pursuit of ILM is motivated by the failures of conventional approaches described above, the approach per se does not need to be ‘proven’. But it is still vitally important to measure the tangible impacts of using ILM to inform adaptive management by local stakeholders and design of impactful support programs.

### *Appendix E.1. Challenges of Evaluating ILM and LPs*

Assessing the systemic and long-term impacts of landscape approaches poses significant methodological and practical challenges [75,76]. By design, these approaches address complex socioecological systems that evolve over long periods and across multiple spatial and institutional scales. Their impacts often emerge indirectly—through changes in governance, relationships, and behaviors—rather than as immediate, measurable outcomes. LPs still in the early phases of partnership establishment and planning may not yet be generating major land use or economic impacts. Traditional monitoring and evaluation frameworks, oriented toward project-level and short-term results, struggle to capture these nonlinear and cumulative processes of transformation. Moreover, attributing observed changes in land use, ecosystem health, or livelihoods to a specific landscape initiative is complicated by the multitude of interacting drivers, external influences, and parallel interventions operating within the same territory [77].

Long-term studies that clearly correlate initial governance and partnership efforts with systemic landscape improvements are rare. Such assessments require sustained data collection, process documentation, institutional continuity, and stakeholder engagement—conditions that are difficult to maintain within short-term funding cycles and shifting political priorities [78]. As a result, evidence on the effectiveness of landscape approaches remains fragmented, localized, and often anecdotal.

### *Appendix E.2. Emerging Evidence of Impact*

Despite these challenges, findings have demonstrated ILM’s potential to strengthen critical processes, such as governance, multi-stakeholder coordination, reconciliation of objectives, collective planning, coordinated investment and conflict resolution. Carmenta et al. [80], based on an analysis of 104 Integrated Landscape Initiatives across Latin America and the Caribbean, found that more integrated initiatives showed stronger performance across agriculture, conservation, livelihoods, and coordination outcomes. A stocktaking of integrated territorial initiatives by the Territorial Partnership for Development documented a range of positive impacts in 14 landscapes [81]. A study of the impacts of integrated GEF projects [251] found important benefits from their integrated strategy.

Case studies from both peer-reviewed studies and gray literature provide more rigorous assessments of holistic impacts on local economies, nature, human well-being and inspiration. Evidence from the Western Wildlife Corridor in northern Ghana showed that inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes effectively mediated land-use conflicts and fostered shared visions for sustainable governance [82,83]. In Mexico’s Sierra de Tapalpa, the *Paisaje Biocultural Sierra Volcánica* illustrates the integrative potential of ILM, aligning economic, social, and ecological priorities among agribusinesses, community organizations, and local institutions to jointly address real estate expansion, water scarcity, deforestation, and wild-fire challenges while maintaining ecosystem connectivity [84]. Similar achievements were observed in the *AIVelAl* (Spain) and *Lari* (Kenya) landscape initiatives [85,86]. In Indonesia, marine protected areas governed through participatory and equitable approaches achieve significantly higher fishable levels than those relying on top-down enforcement [87]. A comparative historical research approach demonstrated how different elements of ILM

contributed to scaling agroforestry across landscapes in the Amazon Basin and the Andes Mountains in Ecuador [88].

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