

## **Do payments for ecosystem services really work? A spatial analysis in Chiapas, Mexico**

MSC project for students of the MSc in Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability (ICTA-UAB), the MSc in Political Ecology, Degrowth and Environmental Justice (ICTA-UAB), the MA in Planning (Dept of Geography), the MSc in Geoinformation (Dept of Geography) or the Master in Applied Research in Economics and Business (Dept of Applied Economics).

**Required training and skills:** An undergraduate degree in Human Geography, Economics or Environmental Sciences, or a related field; GIS skills; spatial econometrics (e.g. Difference in Difference methods) (desirable); fluent English (speaking and writing); enthusiastic of biodiversity conservation from a public policy perspective! Candidates who do not have GIS OR econometrics skills should refrain from applying.

**Description:** This call is offered within the framework of the Spanish government funded project [PES-Emotive](#). The main objective of the project is to investigate the long-term effectiveness of farmer- and community-based payments in the conservation of standing forests. It also seeks to elucidate how individual motivations and local institutions have shaped participants' willingness to conserve in the long-term, with or without payments. The project has two case studies: one in Mexico and one in Colombia; it started in July 2020 and runs until June 2023.

**Objectives:** The proposed Master thesis will analyze the quantitative data (spatial, demographic, geographic, economic, etc.) already collected by the project team for the Mexican case (three municipalities in the state of Chiapas) to assess the conservation effectiveness of a payment for ecosystem services program using geo-spatial analysis a Difference-in-Difference model ([Costedoat et al., 2015](#), for a similar analysis). The questions that will be answered through the proposed thesis will be:

- Has forest cover been maintained, on average, more on forests with payments than on forests without payments?
- Has forest cover changed in areas where participation has been withdrawn (payments have stopped) *versus* where contracts have been renewed (payments have continued after at least one renewal period, i.e. 5 years)?
- Are forests that currently receive payments better conserved than forests which used to receive payments but do not anymore?

**Technical details:** The MSc dissertation will be co-supervised by Drs. Corbera and Villamayor, with inputs from Costedoat and Izquierdo-Tort. We expect to submit a revised version of the dissertation to a high-impact, peer-reviewed journal. The MSc student will retain first authorship if she/he is able to lead the analysis and complete the MSc project satisfactorily.

**Opportunities:** During the course of the MSc dissertation, the MSc student will work with members of the PES-Emotive team, including Drs. Esteve Corbera and Sergio Villamayor-Tomás (ICTA-UAB), and with Dr. Sébastien Costedoat (Conservation International, USA) and Dr. Santiago Izquierdo-Tort (Université du Québec en Outaouais). She/he will participate in project meetings and share her/his expertise and research progress. She/he will also benefit from direct interactions with other highly-qualified international researchers who are part of a larger research group at ICTA-UAB, i.e. the Laboratory for the Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems, and with whom they will also meet on a monthly basis ([www.laseg.cat](http://www.laseg.cat)).

**If you are interested on writing your MSc thesis on this topic, please contact:**

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**Deadline:** 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020