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## Which Nature Do Nature-enhanced Plantations Create: a Workers’ Perspective

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### Abstract

Oil palm plantations are industrial agricultural landscapes. Such landscapes can be homogeneous and oversimplifying biodiversity conveying little or no human well-being. Yet, integrating nature on plantations can support biodiversity conservation and generate social landscape values. Possibly, the integration of nature on plantations can support their naturalisation in the view of local actors, legitimized through the benefits and values the integrated nature brings in.

As plantation workers are the key local population concerned, affected by and interacting with the plantation, our analysis of the plantation landscape is done through their eyes. Little research has been done on how plantation workers relate to and perceive nature (e.g., gallery and riparian forests) and non-natural areas (e.g., crop such as oil palm) in their plantation. We address this gap by analysing workers’ perception of nature in the Macondo oil palm plantation.

The Macondo oil palm plantation, in eastern Colombia, integrates simultaneously land sharing and land sparing approaches to create a nature-enhanced industrial landscape. We claim that the nature-enhanced design generates human-wellbeing that creates a better working place and legitimize the existence of the plantation in the landscape. The paper addresses the following empirical questions: 1) what facets of nature do the social landscape values perceived by workers reflect? 2) How does nature on the plantation affect workers and their activities in the plantation? 3) How does the workers’ perception of nature in the oil palm plantation reflect the naturalisation of the plantation?

Using content analysis based on focus group and individual interview material of workers depicting their perception of nature on Macondo collected in October 2018 – April 2019, we show that workers derive a great variety of values from the integration of nature on the farm. They also experience an ambivalent relationship to nature on the plantation, typically for interactions with “nature in the outside world”, that is, both benefits and fascination and disservices and fear. Through the perceived benefits to humans and other species, a process of legitimisation can be traced which points to the possible naturalisation of such nature-enhanced plantation.

**Keywords:** Human well-being, integrating nature, landscape social values, natural areas, naturalisation, non-natural areas, plantation, plantation workers