

**Networking between the  
Southern Cone and the Tropics  
in Latin America:  
Opportunities and Challenges**

Workshop Summary Report



Hosted by the Southern Cone Working Group

February 7th, 2014.  
University of Florida.  
Gainesville, FL.

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## **Workshop organizers and hosts**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **FOREWORD**

Expansion of the geographic scope of the Tropical Conservation Program (TCD) at the University of Florida (UF) to include regions outside the tropics provides a rich opportunity to compare conservation and development problems among tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions, identify and facilitate regional synergies, and develop innovative transnational solutions. Southern Cone Conservation Leadership Initiative of TCD was officially launched in 2009 with an explicit objective of expanding UF's conservation training activities in southern South America, particularly Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. A very active student-led group has emerged from this initiative – the Southern Cone Working Group (SCWG), which is focused on identifying and finding solutions to challenges that limit successful conservation in southern South America. The workshop described in this report focuses on one of the challenges identified by the SCWG – the need for stronger networks of academics, researchers, and practitioners, both within and between countries in South America.

Dr. Lyn Branch, Director  
Southern Cone Conservation Leadership Initiative.

## **Networking between the Southern Cone and the Tropics in Latin America: Opportunities and Challenges**

### **SUMMARY**

Development of effective collaborative networks between Latin American countries is needed to ensure the success of biodiversity conservation efforts in the region. To examine opportunities and challenges of this enterprise, the Southern Cone Working Group of the University of Florida conducted its first workshop on February 7th, 2014. Thirty-four participants from the University of Florida representing a variety of disciplines discussed issues that need to be addressed to establish and improve networks, including opportunities already available that could promote networking, barriers to overcome, and strategies to improve or promote collaborative networks for conservation in Latin America. The results of the workshop demonstrated clear linkages of participants between North and South America, but few linkages among South American countries, and highlighted diverse approaches for the creation and improvement of collaborative networks in the region.

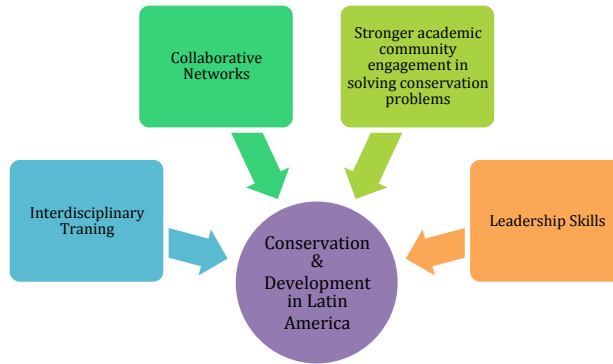
### **BACKGROUND**

The impact of conservation science and practice in the Southern Cone of South America<sup>1</sup> is very low in comparison with the size of the challenge, a situation that is not very different in the rest of Latin America. The Southern Cone Working Group (SCWG) is a University of Florida student-based organization of the Southern Cone Conservation Leadership Initiative that works under the umbrella of the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) program. The SCWG has identified several factors that are significant impediments for the success of conservation efforts in the Southern Cone and other Latin American countries (Figure 1). A key objective of this working group is to examine each of these factors from multiple perspectives, with the goal of developing potential solutions at individual and institutional level. We aim to stimulate discussion on how to improve impacts of conservation research and practice in the Southern Cone.

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<sup>1</sup> Four countries that are located south of the Tropic of Capricorn compose the Southern Cone of South America: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Figure 1: Some important needs that constrain the success of conservation efforts in the Southern Cone.



## WORKSHOP

The SCGW has chosen to first focus on the lack of collaborative networks between the Southern Cone and the Tropics because collaborative processes have the potential for creating revolutionary changes in dealing with current environmental challenges, and the geographically diverse community of students and faculty at University of Florida provides an excellent starting point for networking. To start tackle this issue, the SCWG conducted its first workshop entitled: "Networking between the Southern Cone and the Tropics in Latin America: Opportunities and Challenges". The **goal** of the workshop was to discuss how to improve and create new collaborative conservation networks in Latin America taking in account that a key aspect of collaboration is enhancing the capacity of others for mutual benefit. The workshop took place at the University of Florida on February 7th, 2014 and was sponsored by the student group of the TCD program. An open invitation was sent to the TCD community, including students and faculty from diverse fields related to biodiversity conservation and human and economic development. Although the activity only involved students, faculty, and administrators related to TCD and the SCWG, the attendance was above expected, reaching a total of 34 participants.

## Agenda

Throughout the workshop, four major components were recognized: a) issues to address through collaborative networking, b) opportunities to promote networking, c) barriers to overcome to facilitate networking, and d) strategies to promote networking.

As an icebreaker, participants were asked to represent with a line their main connections related to academic, student, research, and development projects on a map of the American continents. The audience used a red marker to show connections between the United States and Latin American countries and a green marker for connections within Latin American countries. As the SCWG expected, the majority of the connections were red, illustrating unidirectional linkages between the North and South of the continent (Figure 2).



To initiate dialogue, the audience was invited to discuss with the person next to them the following question: *What are the most important issues that should be addressed with collaborative networking in Latin America?*

Then the audience was divided into small groups of 6 to 7 people for the following activity. Three groups were asked to discuss *What factors are in place that could promote networking in Latin America?*; the remaining groups discussed the question *What do we need to overcome to make a network possible?*

Finally, all the groups participated in the following question: *What strategies could promote networking between the Southern Cone and the Tropics?*

## Results

The discussion questions were fully covered and generated great discussion and feedback. Table 1 shows the workshop results for each discussion question summarized under four general topics. For the full list of the results refer to the appendix.

Table 1. Summary of workshop findings

Questions	<i>What are the most important issues that should be addressed with networks in Latin America?</i>	<i>What factors are in place that could promote networking in Latin America?</i>	<i>What do we need to overcome to make a network possible?</i>	<i>What strategies could promote networking?</i>
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Issues to address</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
A) Government institutions and policy	Develop, improve and exchange successful policies	Regional alliances (e.g. ALBA)/ Crisis and migration policies	Bureaucracy/Travel costs	Strengthen government - academia linkages/ Include environmental issues in political agenda/ Know protocols to overcome bureaucracy
B) Knowledge generating institutions	Improvement of educational programs and training/Resource and information exchange (e.g., regional peer reviewed journal focused on conservation and development)	Use of transboundary institutions and programs (e.g., TCD)/Funding and scholarships/Access to information	Lack of interdisciplinary studies/ Poor communication skills/Inadequate discussion in the Latin American realms	Creative spaces to promote south-south collaboration and information exchange (e.g., sabbaticals, multi-lingual journals, internships)/ Allocate funds for networks/ Promote interdisciplinary teams
C) Socio - cultural environment	Individualism and competition/Development and capacity building at community level	Common language (i.e., Spanish)/Existing networks and technology (e.g., internet)	Ensure continuity of team work in new generations/Trust and hierarchical constraints	Use existing social networks (e.g., Facebook)/ Set annual meetings to maintain networks built outside of Latin America/Change scope from local to global/ Improve stakeholder involvement, empowerment and human capacity
D) Biodiversity Conservation	Transboundary conservation alliance for shared species and ecosystems/Transboundary watershed or marine parks management	Existing biological corridors/ Management of common natural resources	Need of an interdisciplinary approach	Develop a regional approach for conservation/ Strengthen environmental institutions

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This workshop was an initial step to open discussion at the University of Florida about networking in conservation and development between the Tropics and the Southern Cone. The collaborative connections between the United States and Latin America were clearly represented in the high density of red lines on the map and green lines were conspicuously absent except in a few cases, illustrating the need to improve networking within the Latin American region.

In general, opportunities for networking were more easily identified than barriers, which represent an encouraging scenario for building networks for conservation and development in Latin America. For instance, academia was identified as a key factor in promoting collaborative networks because of resource exchange (e.g., funding and knowledge). Also, most of the identified barriers potentially could be overcome by strategies proposed by the participants. For example, the audience identified the disconnect between the scientific and the political sectors as an important constraint that could be overcome by reinforcing linkages between these two spheres and including environmental issues in the political agenda.

Numerous opportunities and strategies were identified to potentially overcome the barriers that might restrict the improvement of existing networks and creation of new collaborative networks, thus accomplishing the most important objective of the workshop. The essence of these strategies is diverse, with multiple pathways for positive change and emphasis on the transdisciplinary nature of the challenge. Moreover, international participants recognized the importance of their own role in the implementation of these strategies once they return to their countries. As a participant mentioned, “the success of collaborative networks will require the personal long-term commitment of the workshop’s participants”. To sum up, collaborative networks have the potential to address a multitude of conservation and development problems within the region, especially transboundary issues, and building on this workshop to develop long-term commitments to regional networks is an important next step.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

- A) Full list of workshop results
- B) List of workshop participants
- C) Workshop agenda



**Appendix A: Full list of workshop results**

<b>A) Governmental institutions and Governance</b>	<b>Issues/Networks</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Overcomes</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Institutions</b>		1. Crises	1. Bureaucracy	1. Know protocols to overcome bureaucracy 2. Government policies to overcome Sapismo* 3. Include environmental issues in political agenda 4. Involvement in politics 5. Link Government-Academy
<b>Cross-sector and policy</b>	1. Exchange experiences for policies 2. Create (or improve) similar policies for ecosystem management 3. Develop regional policies	1. Migration policies	1. Visa costs	
<b>Alliances</b>		1. MERCOSUR 2. Initiative MAP Region (Madre de Dios en Perú, Acre en Brasil y Pando en Bolivia) 3. ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) 4. Andean Community 5. CAF (Development Bank of Latin America) 6. CARICOM organization (Caribbean Community and Common Market) 7. Plan de Desarrollo Regional Integral del Trifinio (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) 8. Inter-American Development Bank 9. SIACA (Secretaria de integración economica centroamericana)		

<b>B) Knowledge generating institutions</b>	<b>Issues/Networks</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Overcomes</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Training</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education programs</li> <li>2. Embrace alternative teaching programs/ students exchange and field experiences.</li> <li>3. Development training</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Field courses</li> <li>2. TCD great opportunity</li> <li>3. Graduate programs (international): OTS (Organization for Tropical Studies), CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center), ICOMVIS (Instituto Internacional en Conservación y Manejo de Vida Silvestre), and Earth</li> <li>4. Regional Academic Organizations (FLASCO, CATIE)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve communication skills</li> <li>2. Sapismo *</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Common courses between countries</li> <li>2. Student's exchange within Latin America</li> <li>3. Promote local network (workshop, seminars, etc.)</li> <li>4. Promote south-south collaborations (internships)</li> <li>5. Work groups</li> <li>6. Skill building (in business) - fundraising</li> <li>7. Creative spaces for group/workshop</li> </ol>
<b>Resources exchange</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regional capacity building</li> <li>2. Projects: access to equipment (potential for sharing) / fund raising</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CVLAC (Curriculum vitae de Latinoamerica y el Caribe) Platform</li> <li>2. Fulbright + OAS scholars</li> <li>3. Funding: IAI Science without border/examples</li> <li>4. Funding &amp; scholarships (education policies)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. International meeting (congress)</li> <li>2. Funds that requires interdisciplinarity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sabbaticals in other countries</li> <li>2. Promote south-south collaborations (internships)</li> <li>3. Strategic investment of funds for networks</li> <li>4. Openess</li> </ol>
<b>Knowledge, science, and data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sharing: work load, knowledge, data, experiences, and expertise. Could increase the validity of results.</li> <li>2. Creation of regional peer review journals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to information</li> <li>2. CIAT (International Center for Tropical Agriculture)</li> <li>3. NGO's projects</li> <li>4. NGO's working in the region</li> <li>5. Use organizations as CIAT to networking with their partners in other countries</li> <li>6. Alumni database</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outreach</li> <li>2. Lack of discussion about <i>sapismo</i>* in international meetings</li> <li>3. New Generation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Process to facilitate communication</li> <li>2. Multilingual journals</li> <li>3. Bring research back to the communities</li> <li>4. Avenues to share information (databases, etc.)</li> <li>5. Common open database</li> <li>6. Interdisciplinary</li> <li>7. North American ecologists: lead in organizing international / interdisciplinary interactions</li> </ol>



<b>C) Social - Cultural environment</b>	<b>Issues/Networks</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Overcomes</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Interpersonal relationships</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve personal relationships: trust, jealousy, competition</li> <li>2. Networks for skills and leadership</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Existing networks</li> <li>2. Technology (internet)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building small international and interdisciplinary groups that last beyond graduate school and extend to your own country.</li> <li>2. Trust</li> <li>3. Hierarchical constraints</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Apply network analyses to your professional network (ex. Facebook)</li> <li>2. International marriages</li> <li>3. Rely on individual connections</li> <li>4. Build relationships</li> <li>5. Cultivating interactions with NGOs and little organizations</li> <li>6. Set annual meetings to keep networks build in US</li> <li>7. Networking with grassroots and civil society (take advantage of)</li> </ol>
<b>Cultural factors</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Language</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Language</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change our Latin American mind setting from local to "local + global"</li> </ol>
<b>Community Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity building of local communities</li> <li>2. Infrastructure development and energy</li> <li>4. Climate change adaptation</li> <li>5. Sustainable timber extraction and management</li> </ol>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity building in development project / proposals</li> <li>2. Stakeholder involvement</li> <li>3. Empowerment</li> <li>4. Increase human capacity</li> </ol>



<b>D) Biodiversity Conservation</b>	<b>Issues/Networks</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Overcomes</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	1. Conservation alliance for conservation of vulnerable ecosystems and/or species (e.g., Andean ecosystems, Puna) / multinational protected areas planning / share successful strategies for shared ecosystems 2. Multinational agreements 3. Marine Park Network for conservation 4. Wildlife: trade, diseases 5. Migratory species or metapopulations conservation /transboundary 6. Transboundary watershed management	1. Biological Corridors 2. Management of common resources		1. Develop a regional approach for conservation 2. Strength environmental institutions

\* **Sapismo:** Term used to symbolize the existence of scientists (“sapos”) who work in their own disciplines (“pond”) trying to take overall control of it, while excluding other “sapos” from the “pond” (Mares, M.A. 1991. How scientists can impede the development of their discipline: egocentrism, small pool size, and the evolution of “sapismo”. Pp. 57-75. In Latin American Mammalogy: History, Biodiversity and Conservation. A. Mares and D. J. Schmidly (eds.). Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 468 pp.

**Appendix B: List of workshop participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>
Katie Sieving	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Daniel Montalvo	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Mariana Villegas	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Flavia Montaña	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Mandy Monroe	Center for Latin American Studies (LAS)
Sebastian Palma	School of Forest Resources and Conservation
Ronit Amit	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Marliz Arteaga	Center for Latin American Studies (LAS) / Tropical Conservation and Development
Daniela Salvatierra	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Karen Kainer	School of Forest Resources and Conservation / Center for Latin American Studies (LATAM) /
Julio Tobar	School of Forest Resources and Conservation
Hernan Alvarez	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Karina Martino	Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil - Visiting scientist
Simone Athayde	Tropical Conservation and Development
Maria L. Gavidia	Urban and Regional Planning
Trent Blare	Food and Resource Economics
Bette Loiselle	Tropical Conservation and Development
Xavier Haro	School of Natural Resources and Environment
Jose Soto	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Juliana Bedoya	School of Natural Resources and Environment
Oscar Murillo	School of Natural Resources and Environment
Gonzalo Rivas	Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Sami Rifai	School of Forest Resources and Conservation
Galaxia Cortes	College of Veterinary Research / Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences



<b>Name</b>	<b>Department</b>
Natalie Cooper	School of Forest Resources and Conservation / Tropical Conservation and Development
Antonio Crespo	School of Natural Resources and the Environment, Environmental Horticulture
Viviana Rojas Bonzi	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Felipe Infante	Anthropology
Claudio Moraga	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Antonieta Eguren	Master of Sustainable Development Practice
Ignacio Rodriguez	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Soil and Water Science
Marcela Marquez-Garcia	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Wildlife Ecology and Conservation
Cristina Nunez Godoy	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Tropical Conservation and Development
Mauricio Nunez-Regueiro / Facilitator	School of Natural Resources and Environment / Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Total: 34 participants

## Appendix C: Workshop Agenda

Activity	Time
<p><b>1. Welcome</b> Guests arrive / name tags / snacks and drinks</p>	<p><b>2:00 - 2:05</b></p>
<p><b>2. Opening</b> TCD' student group president briefly introduces the Southern Cone working group (SCWG) in the workshop</p>	<p><b>2:05 - 2:07</b></p>
<p><b>3. Introduction</b> SCWG's facilitator describes goals of the workshop and the SCWG presents the Southern Cone region and conservation challenges</p>	<p><b>2:07 - 2:17</b></p>
<p><b>4. Map activity - Icebreaker</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Participants are invited to draw on the map their <i>main academic connections through students, research, and development projects using different markers colors for US and Latin American linkages and linkages between Latin American countries.</i></p> <p><b>b)</b> SCWG's facilitator recapitulates what the pattern of the map looks like and introduces the next activity</p>	<p><b>2:17 - 2:32</b></p>
<p><b>6. Discussion in pairs</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> People discuss in pairs the question: <i>What are the most important issues that should be addressed with networks in Latin America?</i></p> <p><b>b)</b> SCWG's facilitator recapitulates and discusses with the audience some of the ideas</p>	<p><b>2:32 - 2:42</b></p>
<p><b>7. Discussion in groups</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Participants are divided into groups and discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What factors are in place that could promote networking in Latin America?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do we need to overcome to make a network possible?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>b)</b> SCWG's facilitator recapitulates and discusses with the audience some of the ideas</p>	<p><b>2:42 - 3:10</b></p>



<p><b>8. Open discussion</b></p> <p><b>a)</b> Audience discuss the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What strategies could promote networking?</i></li></ul> <p><b>b)</b> SCWG’s facilitator highlights some points, suggests that the groups explain these conclusions and ideas deeper, summarizes the discussion and conclusions</p>	<p><b>3:10 - 3:28</b></p>
<p><b>9. Closure</b></p> <p>SCWG’s facilitator thanks attendants for coming and participation, lets them know what is going to happen with the information from the discussion, and invites the audience to sign up on a sheet to receive information about the SCWG</p>	<p><b>3:28 - 3:30</b></p>