What context-relevant governance model for positive performance outcomes for Forest Landscape Restoration schemes in Malawi? Cases study from Dedza and Ntchisi Districts

**Presenter:** Ida Djenontin; Michigan State University  
**Presenter Email:** djenonti@msu.edu  
**Authors:** Ida N. Djenontin, Michigan State University; Leo C. Zulu, Michigan State University

Among approaches aiming to manage forest resources to sustain their multifunctionality and potentials for ecosystem services provision for socio-ecological benefits is the Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) paradigm, which advances restoration of degraded and deforested landscapes through a planned and well-governed process. FLR paradigm grows out of concerns over significant failures and trade-offs from narrow and sector-based schemes that proliferate management institutions across interlocking agricultural and forest landscapes. It resonates with calls for integrated approaches for addressing environmental degradation through a landscape-scale model. Consequently, FLR schemes are cross-sectoral, subject to multiple environmental policies and goals, and entangle a constellation of actors straddling different land-tenure/use systems at different scales.

With the great appeal to FLR and the unprecedented momentum it is gaining, we address one, increasingly stressed, major challenge for the successful implementation of FLR schemes. FLR multidimensionality escalates and complicates resources governance conundrum already manifested in sectoral and single-goal environmental schemes. Little is known on what appropriate governance model and institutional arrangements can promote such people-centered landscape-scale forest restoration and meet its demands.

Under the idea of multi-layered and cross-scale systems for managing environmental schemes, we use a recently developed theory of polycentric governance, the Ecology of Games Framework, to explore the structure and functions of promising governance systems, and in particular, how well such systems address FLR’s acute challenge of institutional externalities in the context of institutional fragmentation in Malawi.

We intend to depict cooperation among stakeholders, resources-sharing arrangements, and social and policy learning, which influence levels of collaboration among policy institutions and can help to address capacity limits. We expect to shed light on coordination failures and policy incoherence by identifying existing institutional externalities and why they occur in order to address them. In doing so, we will articulate a context-appropriate nested, multi-scale, and multi-level governance model and institutional configurations for more cooperative and collaborative fragmentation to enhance performance outcomes of trees and forests restoration in Malawi’s forest landscapes.

The research will contribute knowledge on attributes of suitable polycentric governance model to landscape-scale forest restoration and generate evidence on the potential of FLR paradigm for advancing forest policy mixes.