

# Conservation for Cities and Cities for Conservation:

## Restoring Mexico's public lands

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# 10 Minutes Goals

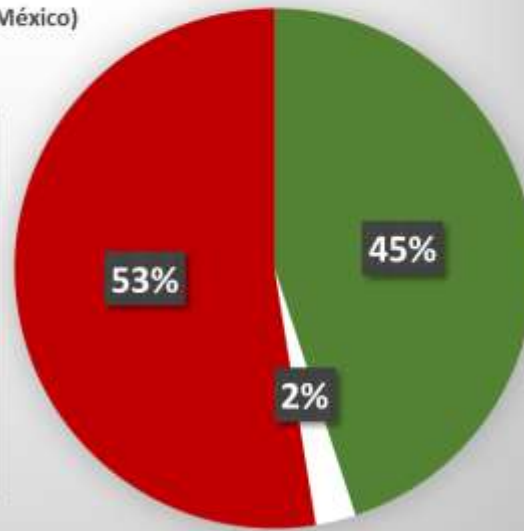
- **Consequences** of XX century land reform for public conservation and land management in Mexico.
- New instrument to equip local governments with land conservation and planning capacities: **Public Lands Initiative (PLI)**
- How can cities leverage public lands to provide essential **goods** and **services** to their inhabitants.
- Challenges to **institutionalize** PLI

# Mexico is one of the most land – privatized countries in the world.

## Distribution of land ownership in Mexico

(Distribución de la propiedad de la tierra en México)

- Private Individual Property (small landholdings preexistent to the 1992 reforms, ejidal parcels given in full domain and urban land)
- Public Property (National Lands and Empty Lands)
- Private Collective Property (Common use lands of Ejidos and Comunidades)



1910  
Revolution

- ~ 103 million ha across the country
- Land could not be sold

1992 Reform

1994 - NAFTA

- Individual parcels can be sold
- Government does not participate in land market.

Land Distribution

Land Market

# Major Consequences of Land Reform



## 1. Poverty

- Slow down of rural – urban migration.
- Dispersion of thousands of rural communities (dependence, lack of services)

## 2. Land Access and Inequality

- ~ 24 % of Mexicans own ~ 98% of the territory

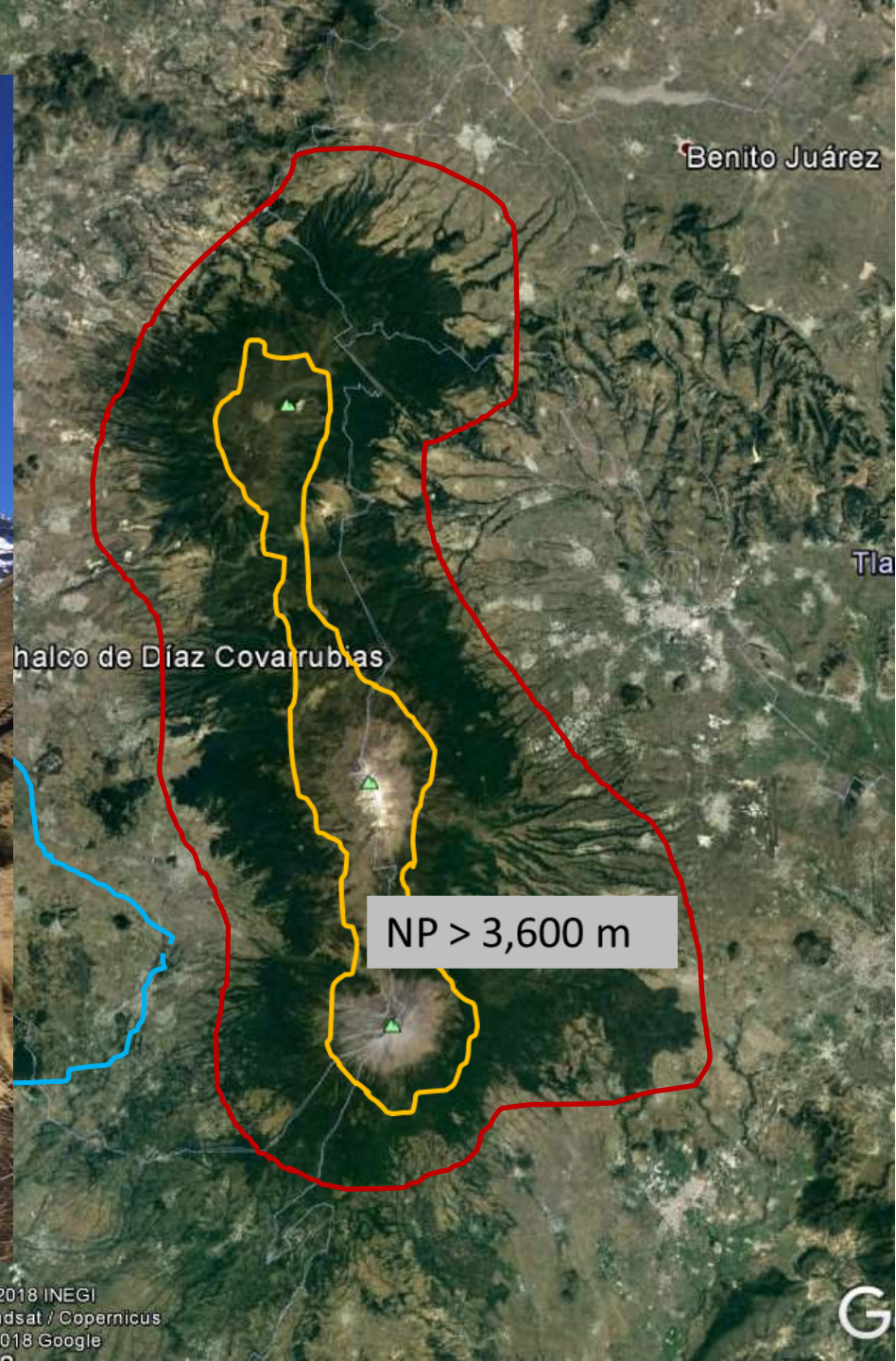
## 3. Deforestation and Challenges for Conservation

- Perverse agricultural subsidies.
- Conservation has occurred only where opportunity cost of land is low.

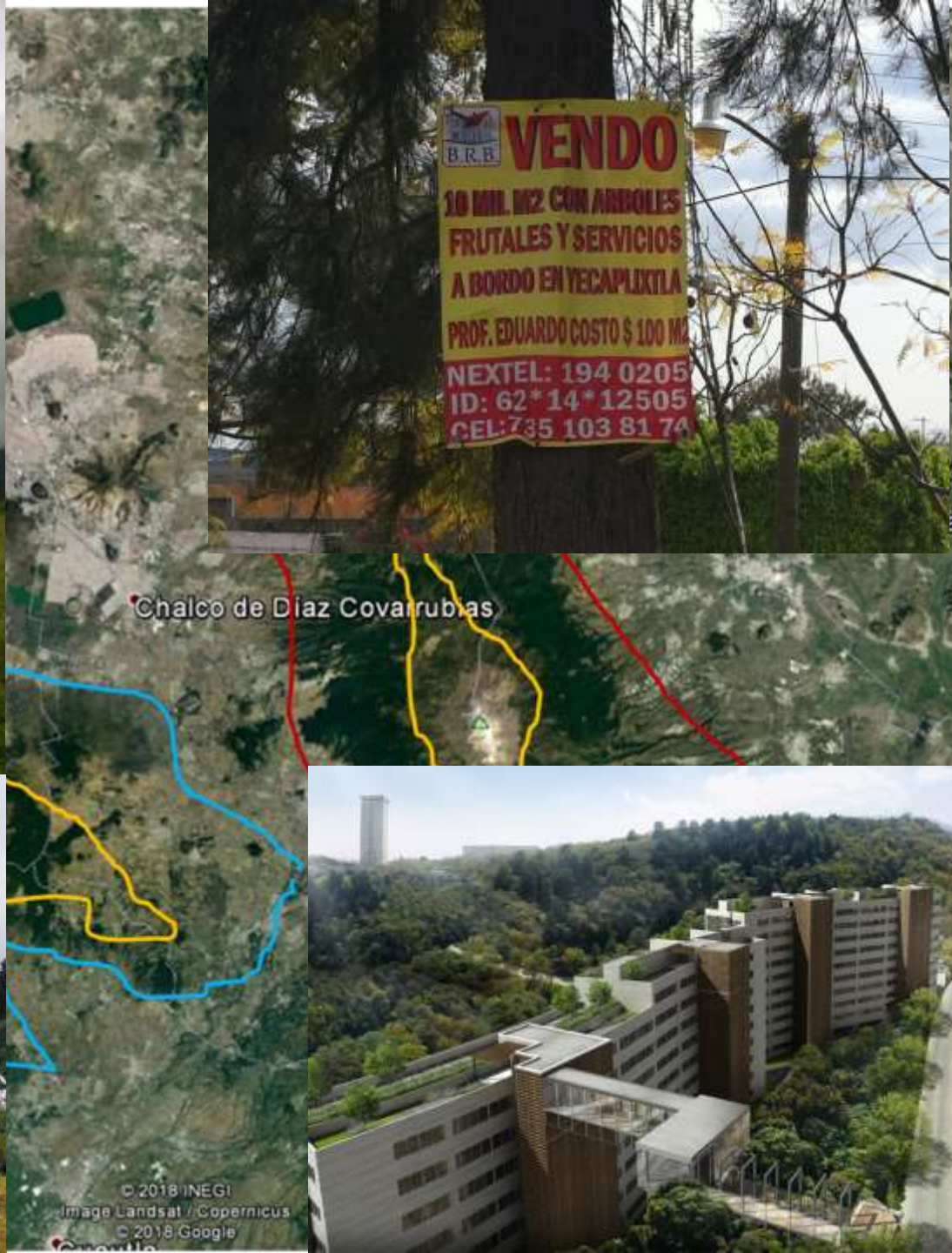
## 4. Difficulties for land use and urban planning.

- Limitation of policy instruments portfolio
- Social and political conflict









# Mexico's Public Lands Initiative (PLI)

- **PREMISE:** after 1992, Government should have created institutions to **participate** and **regulate** the land market.
- **OBJECTIVE:** create a **land trust** to acquire and manage a network of public lands to generate **multiple** social and ecological **benefits** at **multiple** scales (i.e public goods / services)
- **MECHANISM:** use a fraction of **carbon tax + donations**.

TAX = \$ 0.0066 USD / liter → ~ \$420 million USD / Year

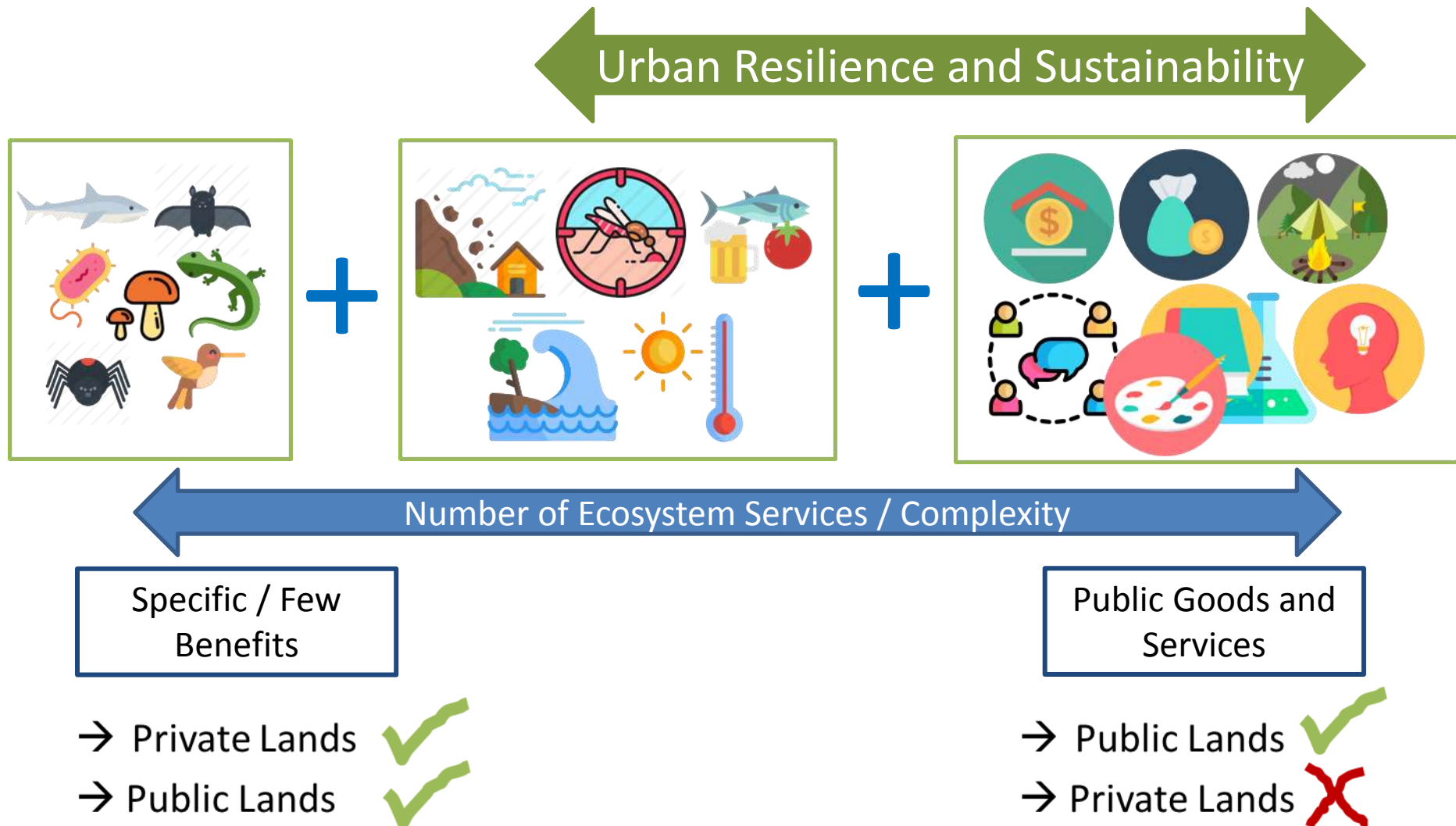


More than 7 times the budget of  
the Park Service in Mexico.

~ 220,000 ha / year

# Why Public Lands?

## Multiple Benefits and Scales of Ecosystem Services





# Successful Protected Area Systems

- Canada
  - Germany
  - United States
  - Costa Rica
  - Thailand
  - Chile
- **Government investments:** infrastructure, management, enforcement.
  - **Public land ownership** as backbone of PA systems.
  - **Inclusion:** governance and access.

Makes Sense! Conservation and Ecosystems are  
a **Public Good**

# Cities and Public Lands

- Cities are the **largest most diverse** centers of ecosystem services demand → Low transaction costs.
- **Urban resilience** is directly dependent on healthy, functional, and inclusive **peri-urban** and **regional** landscapes.
- **Public lands** offer an opportunity to urban dwellers to **engage** in the stewardship of - and benefit from - their natural heritage.



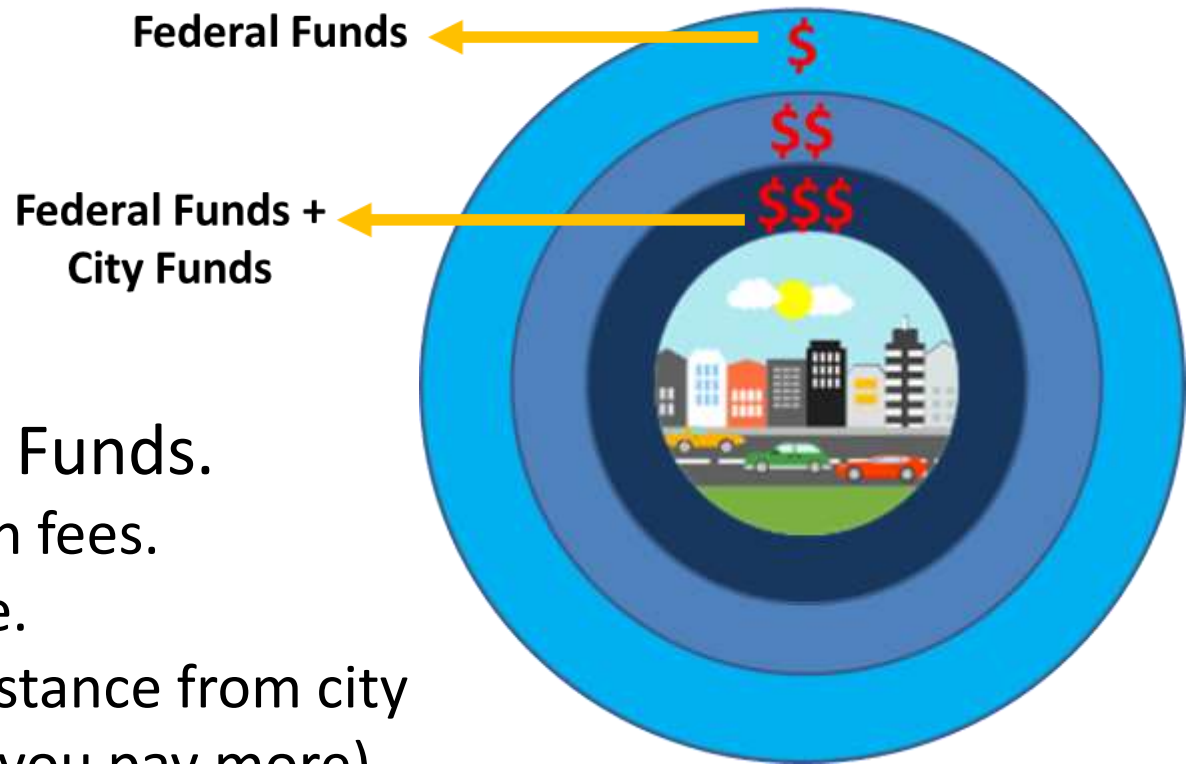
# What can cities do?

## ➤ Zoning

- Peri-urban areas.

## ➤ Financial

- Inter-Metropolitan Funds.
  - Watershed protection fees.
  - Uses more pays more.
  - Fees increase with distance from city center (if you sprawl you pay more).



Free a significant amount of resources from carbon tax funds to target other ecologically important regions



# What can cities do?

## ➤ Co-management:

- Infrastructure and Services
- Enforcement
- Promotion / Local participation
- Monitoring / Data
- Transparency

## ➤ Decision Making:

- Land acquisition priorities.
- Zoning and Management Plans



# PLI Current Status and Challenges

- Housed the PLI inside a national conservation NGO.
- Federal Government committed resources to first studies.
- Coming changes in federal government bring uncertainty. Continuity?
- Seeking alternative partnerships → **Institutionalize:** Research, Planning and Implementation.



# Final Remarks

- Properly managed **public lands** are essential for the production of **multiple – complex** ecosystem services as **public goods**.
- **Urban socioecological resilience** requires production and distribution of multiple - complex ecosystem services.
- **Cities** would be the major **beneficiaries** of a new inclusive system of public lands and therefore need to be **involved**.
- **City governments** can provide important **resources** and a means to **engage urban dwellers** with their surrounding **natural heritage**.





# Thank You

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