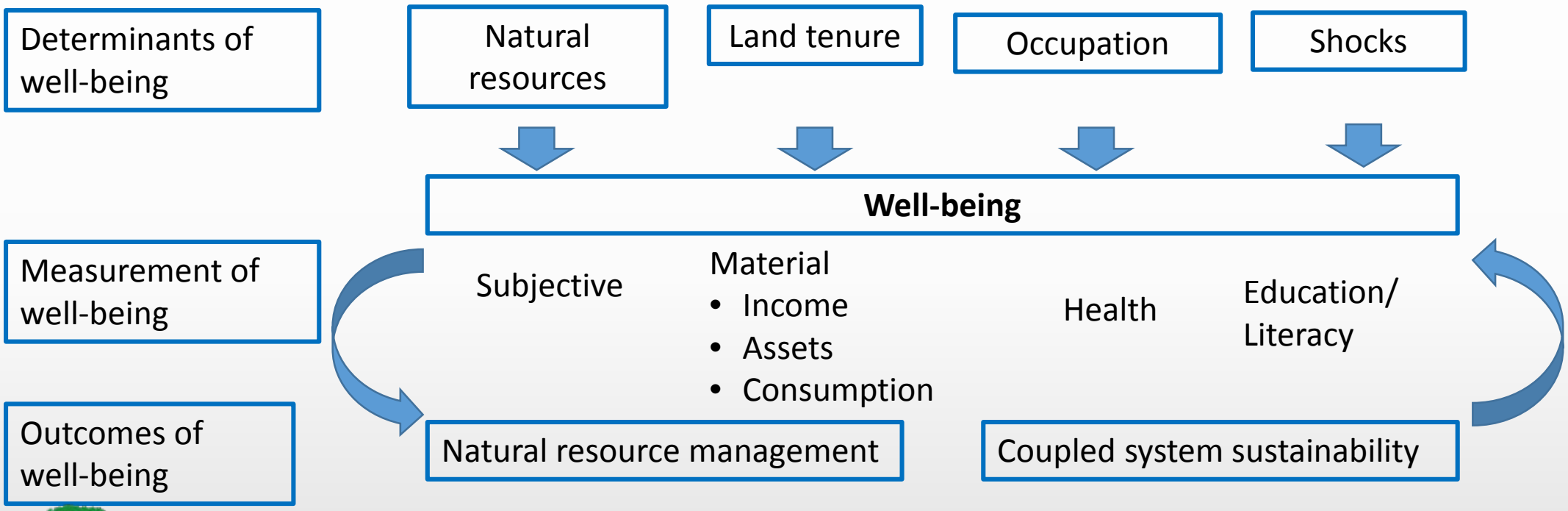
How to use (non) existing data to inform decision-making on community forestry

Laura Vang Rasmussen, Reem Hajjar & Sarah Wilson

Forests and Livelihoods: Assessment, Research and Engagement (FLARE) Network, School of Natural Resources & Environment, University of Michigan, MI 48109, USA

PART 1 OF CLASS 3

Many variables of interest to community forestry



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Advantages of using the IFRI database

- Extensive dataset
- Allows for comparison across contexts (e.g. within Nepal) and countries
- Broad range of socioeconomic and ecological variables
- Well-developed and standardized data collection design

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Potential pitfalls when using the IFRI database

- Limited attribution
- Limited understanding of mechanisms linking forests and people/lack of in-depth knowledge
- Limited generalizability of knowledge from specific sites
- Shortcomings of specific data types
- Data-driven approach

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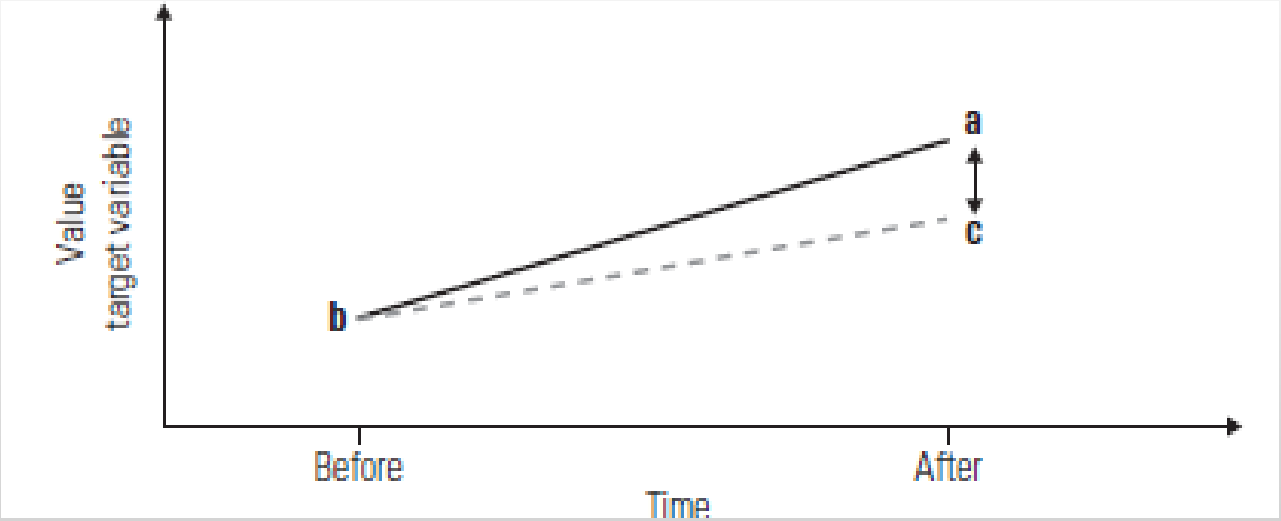
The attribution problem

- Why is it important to address?
  - Know how much of any impact is due to a given forestry arrangement, rather than changes that would have happened anyway, in the absence of the arrangement



- How?
  - No single method that is best in all cases
  - Counterfactual analysis for improved attribution: Compare key outcomes between exposed and similar controls (matching)
- Cases with correlation without causality!

World Bank

PART 2 OF CLASS 3

What is a policy brief?

- A concise summary of a particular issue
- It outlines the policy options to deal with the issue
- It provides recommendations on policy options.
- It is typically aimed at government policymakers and others interested in formulating or influencing policy

- It has to be short, catchy, and to the point

How to write a policy brief to inform decision making on community forestry?

An illustrative example : Agrawal et al. (2008)

- *Central governments own about 86% of the 5.4 billion hectares of the world's forests*
- *But many government-owned forests are managed as common property for multiple uses by local communities and community-based organizations*
- *Local communities and organizations have come to govern close to an additional 200 million hectares of forests compared to the 1980s*

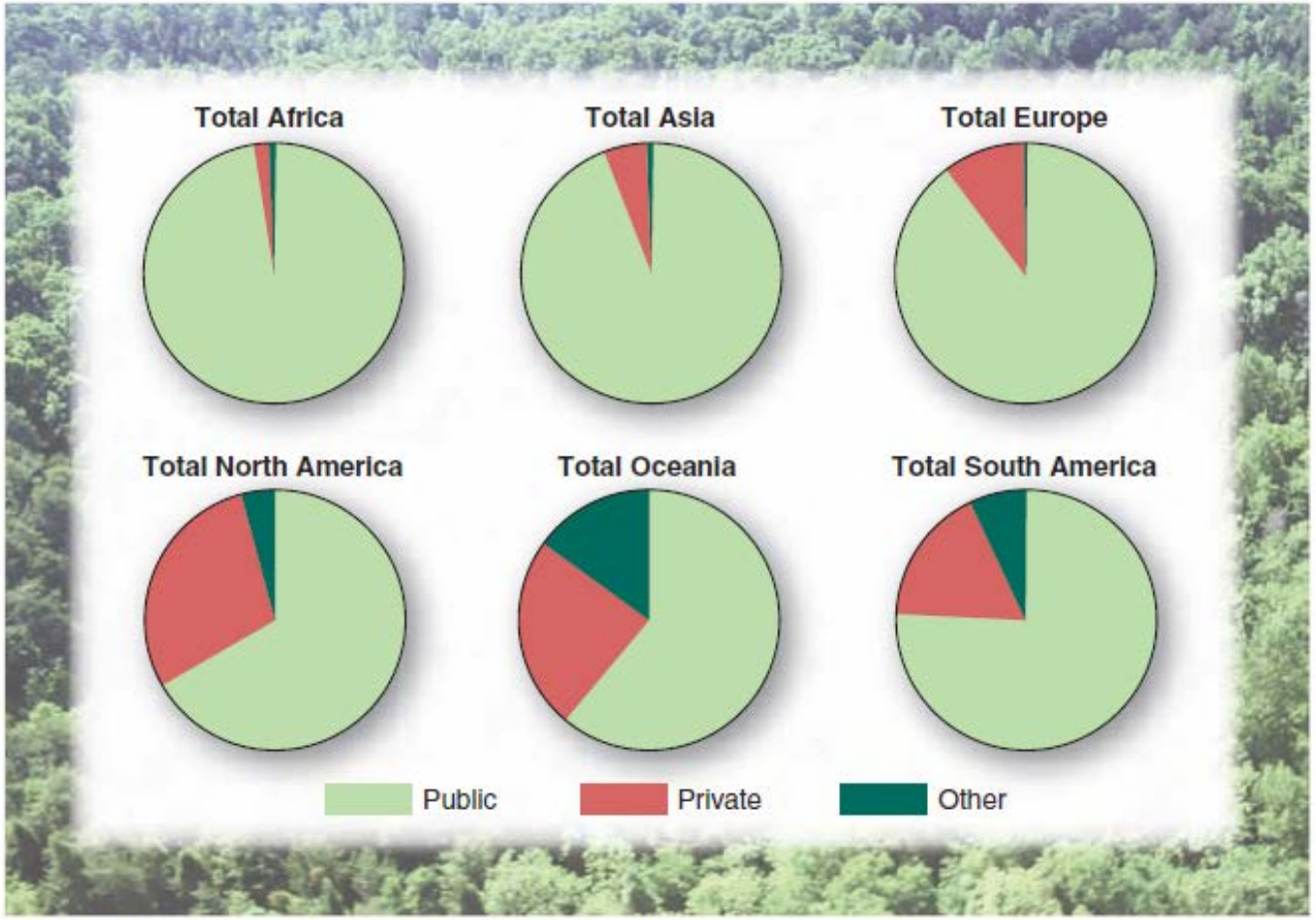


Fig. 1. Distribution of forest ownership by world regions.

How to write a policy brief to inform decision making on community forestry?

An illustrative example :
Agrawal et al. (2008)

The key argument:

- Attention to the factors that lead to effective governance, beyond ownership patterns, is necessary to address future forest governance challenges.

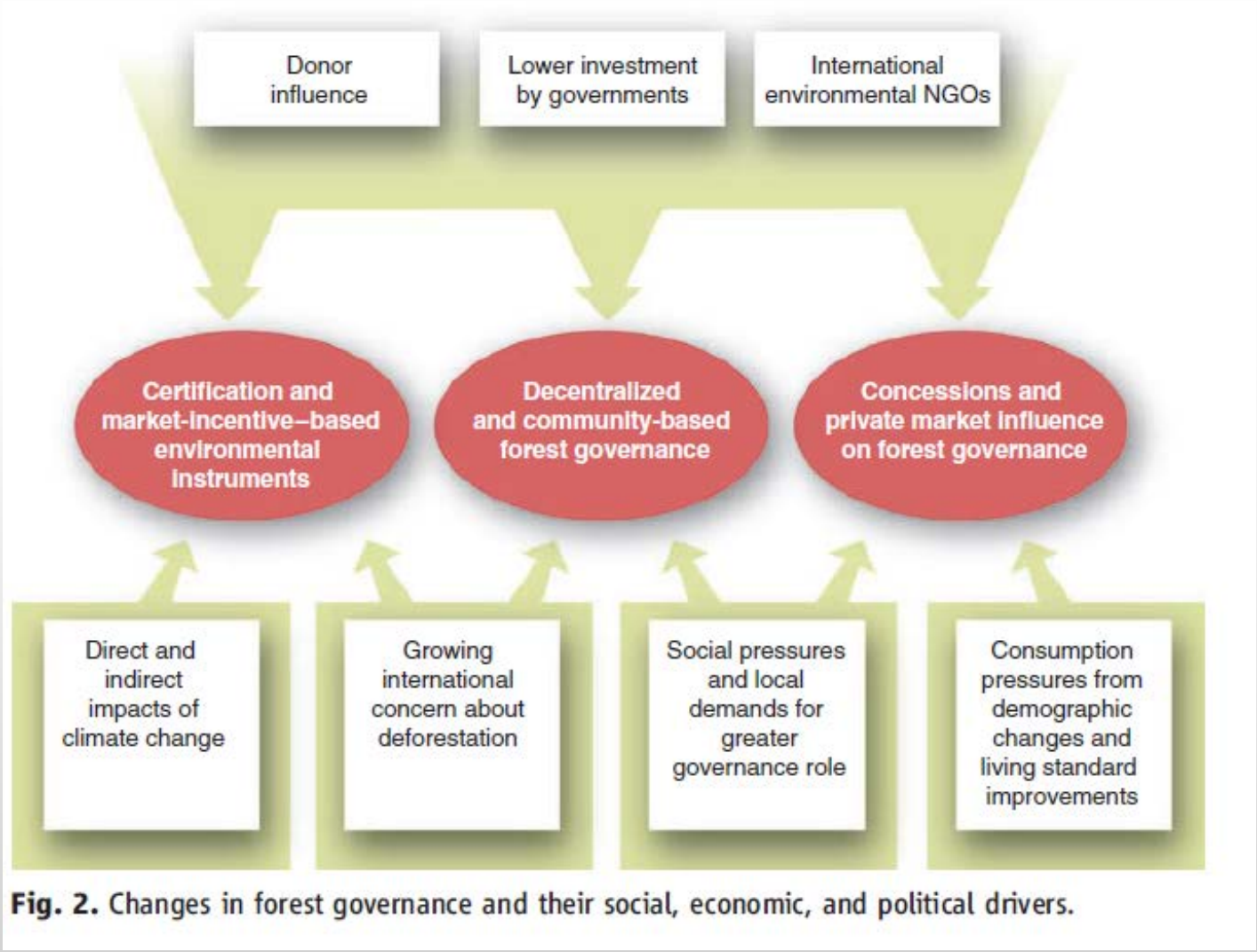


Fig. 2. Changes in forest governance and their social, economic, and political drivers.

Home work assignment: Policy brief

- 1000 to 2000 words
- 1-2 figures
- Up to 15 references

- It must take point of departure in the analyses carried out in Class 2
- Present results in a way that is of interest to a particular audience (e.g., community leaders, national or local-level policy-makers, agriculture business stakeholders, conservationists, or NGO development agents).

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