

# 15. Forest governance: a state of the art review

*Bas Arts and Ingrid Visseren-Hamakers*

*Wageningen University, Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group,  
Droevendaalsesteeg 3, 6708 PB Wageningen, the Netherlands; bas.arts@wur.nl*

## Abstract

Forest governance refers to new modes of governing that go beyond the confines of the state. These modes are believed to be more (cost-)effective and legitimate than conventional steering by governments. Over the years, a large body of knowledge has emerged on this topic, which makes a review of the state of the art in forest governance both timely and useful. In parallel, a critical literature has developed that warns against too optimistic, naïve and technocratic accounts of forest governance. Examples are critical governance studies, critical institutionalism, political ecology and governmentality studies. This chapter addresses these critical studies and proposes the 'Triple G' framework – government, governance and governmentality – as a way of analysing the forest policy field in greater depth.

**Keywords:** forest governance, forest government, forest governmentality, Triple G

## 15.1 Introduction

Forest governance has become a new 'growth industry' in forest sciences and practices. In November 2011 a Google search for 'forest governance' produced about 565,000 hits, Google Scholar about 3,800 hits, Scopus about 130 hits and ISI Web of Sciences about 100 hits. These numbers have doubled in only five years or so (Breeman *et al.*, 2009). In our view, this rapid growth in the literature justifies a review of the state of the art on this new topic. This review will be 'positive, yet critical', but far from complete given the size of the literature and the need to focus. Generally, the governance concept refers to new modes of forest governance that go beyond the confines of the state, such as policy networks, certification schemes, social corporate responsibility, public participation, community forestry, markets for ecosystem services, and (public-)private partnerships. These are believed to be more capable of managing public 'goods and bads' related to forests than conventional government. However, over the years a critical literature on forest governance has developed that puts this optimism into perspective. Some criticise the institutional bias of the governance literature, others the naïve belief in managerialism and technocracy, and still others the lack of addressing power and domination. As alternatives, theories like critical governance, critical institutionalism, political ecology and governmentality have been applied to the forest policy field.

This chapter briefly introduces these accounts and then examines governmentality in more depth, analysing the forest policy field from the perspective of the 'Triple G' framework: government, governance and governmentality. The structure of the chapter also follows this logic, with sections on governance in general (which also covers the relationship between government and governance), forest governance, forest governmentality and Triple G.

## 15.2 Governance

The key buzzword in political sciences, public administration and management sciences for the last two decades has been *governance* (Bevir, 2010; Held and McGrew, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Pierre, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000). Etymologically, the concept can be traced back to the Greek verb *kubernan*, which means 'to pilot' or 'to steer' (Kjaer, 2004). In its broadest interpretation, governance is defined by us as:

The many ways in which public and private actors from the state, market and/or civil society govern public issues at multiple scales, autonomously or in mutual interaction.

This definition includes both conventional government and innovative governance arrangements beyond the state. In this broad interpretation, governance is about governing *by*, governing *with* and governing *without* the state. Consequently, the concept acknowledges the actual and potential role of both public and private actors in providing public 'goods' – such as welfare, health, environment – and in managing or solving public 'bads' – such as poverty, disease, pollution – across multiple scales of governance. Generally, the administrative scale – from the municipality to the nation state to the United Nations (UN) – is of the utmost importance for governing public issues. Recently though, various new governing mechanisms have developed beyond this scale, from local to global political spaces. Examples are 'glocalised' networks of NGOs around the world (Arts, 2004) as well as many partnerships among public and private actors that operate between the local and the global level (Visseren-Hamakers, 2009). To 'govern' can of course mean many things, including disciplining others, persuading others or exchanging resources with others to let them do things in accordance with certain policy objectives (Dunn, 2003). All are implied in modern or postmodern governance, often in hybrid combinations.

The broad definition of governance as detailed above is often confused with a stricter interpretation, which is dominant in the literature and which will be followed in the section on forest governance below. Here, the term refers to a 'paradigm shift' in the way in which we govern modern/postmodern societies and organisations today (Arnouts, 2010; Breeman *et al.*, 2009; Pierre and Peters, 2000). According to this interpretation, the old paradigm of top-down, state-led, command

and control ways of steering has lost its legitimacy. The ‘big’ government of the welfare state lost credibility during the economic crisis of the 1980s, while its bureaucracy and elitism raised questions about efficiency and democracy (Pierre, 2000). As a consequence, public administrations became subject to intense reform programmes, like those of the new public management movement, and new modes of governance emerged as alternatives for managing public affairs (Kjaer, 2004). Examples are network-like arrangements, self-regulation by businesses, (public-) private partnerships, emission trading schemes and certification programmes (Agrawal *et al.*, 2008; Kickert *et al.*, 1997; Kolk). Some refer to this development as a ‘shift from government to governance’ (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992), implying that authority and competencies have moved away from the state to other bodies, like international organisations, NGOs and businesses (Pierre and Peters, 2000). This ‘shift’ literature started the debate on whether the state is ‘losing’ power while others are gaining it, as if we are dealing with a zero-sum game (Pierre, 2000; Skjaer, 2004). In the 1990s some theorists even claimed the ‘retreat’ or the ‘death’ of the state (Albrow, 1996; Strange, 1996). Today, however, most analysts agree that the state has remained strong, given its legally-based authority and its numerous political-economic and military resources, although it has been transformed under influence of the governance shifts and the various rounds of public administration reforms since the 1980s (Arts *et al.*, 2009; Kjaer, 2004; Pierre and Peters, 2000).

Table 15.1 gives an overview of the various conceptualisations of governance in the literature. ‘Old’ or *state*-centric governance refers to traditional state steering, ‘new’ or *society*-centric governance to innovative modes of governance, and ‘all’ governance refers to both these categories (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002; Pierre, 2000). One could claim that these three conceptualisations are all analytical in nature; they just

Table 15.1. Four conceptualisations of governance.

Conceptualisation	General definition	Global dimension	Local dimension
‘Old’ governance	state steering (top-down, command and control)	intergovernmental arrangements (international diplomacy, organisation and law)	local authorities (provinces, municipalities)
‘New’ governance	new modes of governance (from partnerships to self-regulation)	new modes of global governance (from issue networks to private standardisation)	new modes of local governance (e.g. public participation)
‘All’ governance	all mechanisms to govern public issues	all mechanisms to govern global issues	all mechanisms to govern local issues
‘Good’ governance	reform of public administration (new public management)	reform of third world government (World Bank, IMF)	reform of local politics (e.g. decentralisation)

try to characterise the various forms and histories of conventional and innovative governing mechanisms in modern/postmodern societies. Normatively, however, one may add a fourth category, namely 'good governance', which is the advocacy of reform of the public sector and/or of corporate management in accordance with a number of good governance criteria, such as cost-effectiveness, transparency, accountability and participation, among others advocated by the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Kjaer, 2004; Woods, 2000). Examples of 'good governance' programmes are new public management (NPM) which applies business principles to public administration for improved cost-effectiveness, and good corporate governance (GCG), which applies principles of government to business practices for improved accountability.

Table 15.1 also identifies the global dimension of governance, since this concept has become an important topic in the study of international relations (Held and McGrew, 2002; Nye and Donahue, 2000). In this literature it is generally referred to as 'global governance', but it has a slightly different meaning in this domain and has provoked some other debates, simply because the international system lacks a central authority (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). Yet some theorists make similar distinctions as in the above, because we observe comparable innovations in policymaking and public steering at the global level as domestically. Therefore, Heritier (2001) distinguishes between two meanings of global governance: a 'restricted' meaning, referring to only *new* governance mechanisms (such as global issue networks of public and private actors) and a 'broad' conceptualisation that refers to *all* modes of public and private coordination in the global arena. The international relations literature also discusses 'good governance'. Under this label, the World Bank and the IMF, for example, operate programmes to promote democratic, effective and transparent governments in developing countries (Woods, 2000). Finally, another part of the global governance literature discusses reforming the governance structure of the UN system, focused on improving the intergovernmental system (Biermann *et al.*, 2009).

Besides global governance, Table 15.1 also includes local governance, the subnational dimension of the governance spectrum. Here again we can identify the four types of governance (old, new, all, good). Local governance often implies two phenomena: decentralisation on the one hand and public participation on the other (Van den Arend and Behagel, 2011; Ribot *et al.*, 2006). The former refers to the transfer of policy-making authority from central to lower administrative tiers, the latter to empowerment of the public in local policy and decision-making beyond regular democratic elections. Both trends are believed to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of local policies as well as to reduce the assumed gap between politics and citizens.

If we take Table 15.1 as a whole, we can also speak of multilevel governance (MLG). Originally, this concept was introduced in the realm of European studies to refer to the multilevel character of EU policy-making, consisting of European institutions

on the one hand and Member States on the other (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Later, the MLG concept was also used in other fields of subnational, national and global policy analysis to argue that the old distinction between domestic and international politics has become blurred, and hence outdated (Held and McGrew, 2002). Also, the original government-centred approach to MLG by Hooghe and Marks has been broadened to include non-state actors as well. After all, local authorities and NGOs are believed to affect global and European politics, whereas global agreements and European directives are conceptualised as having direct impacts on local practices (Arts *et al.*, 2009).

Of course, the shift from government to (multilevel) governance does not take place in a vacuum; it is rooted in a number of trends. Pierre and Peters (2000) distinguish three types of displacement of state power and control: *upward* to international organisations, *downward* to subnational authorities and *outward* to semi-public and private bodies. In other words, governance is rooted in the globalisation, decentralisation and privatisation of public issues and political spaces (Van Tatenhove *et al.*, 2000). These trends are both planned and autonomous. To take the example of globalisation: international organisations gain more authority, not only because the economy is globalising or because many environmental issues are transboundary in nature, which necessitates regulation beyond the boundaries of the nation state, but also because some politicians and bureaucrats actively advocate the strengthening of international organisations, as in the case of the EU. Hence, political globalisation is both planned (advocated) and autonomous (following socioeconomic and environmental trends).

### 15.3 Forest governance

Forests have been considered public goods – and their related problems ‘public bads’ – for a long time. As early as the Middle Ages, in many regions in Europe deforestation and forest degradation led to the introduction of game reserves for the nobility, the protection of forests on steep slopes to combat erosion, and active management of timber resources for the construction of naval ships (Umans, 1993). Later, after the onset of industrialisation in Europe, many national forest laws were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the rapid depletion and degradation of forest resources and as a means for gaining state revenues from forests through taxation and public land ownership (Scott, 1998). These laws required the use of (elements of) scientific forestry, with its sustainable yield principle and silvicultural methods and tools (monocultures of commercial species, forest zoning, rotational harvesting, replanting, afforestation, etc.) (Jeanrenaud, 2001; Wiersum, 1995). For example, Belgium introduced a forest law in 1847 which provided for government subsidies to forest owners – both communities and individuals – in order to stimulate tree planting. The Netherlands introduced its first forest law in 1922, which in principle required that each tree that was felled had to be replaced by the planting of a new one. Also, many of these laws

were meant to regulate forest ownership and forest-related conflicts (Krott, 2005). Often, ownership resided with the state, although many countries accepted private ownership of forestlands as well. However, the old 'forest commons', with their customary rights and responsibilities for rural communities, which had existed for centuries in many European regions, started – or were forced – to disappear due to the modernisation process, although many farmers openly resisted the new laws and policies that denied their traditional access and use rights of the forest resources (Jeanrenaud, 2001). While scientific forestry brought enormous gains in terms of increased timber production and employment, both ecological and social issues related to forests were marginalised for too long in this paradigm, which forced the forest sector to change (Wiersum, 1995). Part of this change has been a shift from forest government to forest governance (Agrawal *et al.*, 2008).

The European system of forestry and forest policy was exported to most of the European colonies (Peluso, 1994; Scott, 1998), where a strong symbiosis of state forestry and scientific forestry emerged, for example in Indonesia, Ghana and India. Forest reserves were issued and declared state property, particularly where the rich forests and valuable timber were located, and plantation economies and concession systems were introduced. These systems, which generally (and often violently) excluded local people from their lands and suppressed traditional forest institutions, have remained in place in many countries in the post-colonial era. However, although built upon modern ideas of scientific forestry, most of these plantation and concession systems have brought neither sustainable forestry nor justice for forest-dependent people (Bose *et al.*, 2011). Deforestation and forest degradation have continued in many regions around the world (up to 13 million hectares on an annual basis; FAO, 2010), particularly in the global South, while forest-related land and resource conflicts have continued (Marfo, 2006). In many cases, colonial and post-colonial states proved to be bad managers of the forests, in various ways: (1) by exploiting the resource itself to the extreme, often in conflict with local livelihoods and their own conservation objectives; (2) by issuing concessions to private companies or public enterprises without any effective monitoring mechanism in place; and (3) by being absent as a manager, leaving the forests open to, often illegal, local use. This situation led to protests by NGOs, which claimed the need for forest conservation, opposition by grass-roots movements, which fought for local land and forest rights, and to pressure by international donors, who advocated sustainable forest management (Agrawal *et al.*, 2008). For all these reasons, many developing countries around the world have recently reformed public forest policy and law, a process which is called 'forest governance'.

One dominant feature of forest governance in the tropics has been participatory forest management, or PFM (an umbrella term for initiatives like community forestry, community-based forest management, collaborative forest management and joint forest management). The central idea behind PFM is that local management of forests, either by communities themselves or jointly with regional

forest departments, can be as – or even more – (cost)effective in conserving and using forest resources than the central state institutions. India, Nepal, Mexico, Bolivia, Kenya and Tanzania have pioneered different forms of PFM from the early 1990s onwards. Many countries, from Ethiopia to Albania, followed later. However, the results of PFM have so far been generally reported as ‘mixed’ (Blomley *et al.*, 2008; Charnley and Poe, 2007; Dressler *et al.*, in press; Mustalahti and Lund, 2010). Where success is reported, this usually relates to the forest condition rather than to enhancing local livelihoods or empowering local people, including women. Also, PFM has been subject to serious power struggles. Elite capture in village forest committees has been frequently reported, as well as conflicts between forest officials and communities over valuable timber resources, land rights, monitoring and the like. Moreover, there has been little ‘real’ transfer of management and use rights and decision-making power from the state to local communities. Finally, PFM initially focused too much on small-scale, local development and therefore depended heavily on the support of NGOs and donor money. Mechanisms such as community enterprises, access to national and global markets, and certification schemes for guaranteeing quality and sustainability have only recently been introduced in the context of PFM (Wiersum, 2009).

Although PFM has been one of the dominant dimensions of forest governance today, it is not the only one. Agrawal *et al.* (2008), for example, refer to the broader term *decentralisation* – of which PFM is part – and to *certification* of forest lands and products. (We exclude the third form of forest governance distinguished by Agrawal *et al.* (2008), namely ‘forest concessions’; we do not see how this arrangement can be considered a *new* mode of forest governance; see the short description of colonial forestry in the above). Besides PFM, decentralisation involves the de-concentration of administrative competencies and/or the transfer of political authority from the central state to subnational administrations (Ribot *et al.*, 2006). The local administration gains technical competencies and/or formal authority from the central state and is to be held accountable by local communities in executing these. Decentralisation is therefore believed to bring politics closer to the people, to increase policy effectiveness and to enhance democratic checks and balances at the regional and community levels. This trend has become very influential worldwide in the forest sector too, although some question both the intentions and performance of such decentralisation programmes in forestry. Overall, decentralisation is an example of forest governance *with* or *without* the state, because it may include local forest departments, local communities, or both.

Forest certification has also become a dominant stream in current forest governance (Cashore *et al.*, 2004; Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen, 2007). This entails a market-based mechanism of independent labelling and monitoring that guarantees to both consumers and producers that timber products originate from sustainably managed forests. One of the first organisations in this field was the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), established in 1993. Because this was an NGO-led initiative, with stringent requirements on sustainability, other industry initiatives



followed later, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) being the largest today. Together, these two initiatives now cover more than 300 million hectares forests around the world and thousands of companies and products, although most of these are located and traded in the global North. Certification is a good example of forest governance *with or without* the state, since FSC is a private initiative and PEFC is a public-private one. A public aim (sustainability) is pursued through (public-)private means (market transactions). Also, governments can enhance certification, for example by subsidising certified companies, through tax exemptions for certified forest owners, or through public procurement policies. However, governments are hesitant to prefer one certification standard over another, arguing that this would generally oppose WTO rules.

The overview by Agrawal *et al.* (2008), however, does miss some relevant current forest governance initiatives. A crucial one is *payment for ecosystem services*, or PES (Constanza *et al.*, 1997; Farber *et al.*, 2002). The core idea is that forest and other ecosystems provide services to society, such as water regulation, soil protection and climate change regulation, that are currently not accounted for in the economic system or in policy. Giving the provision of these services a (shadow) price allows them to compete more equally with services that are already accounted for, such as timber production. However, critics argue that such approaches contribute to the ongoing commodification, privatisation and marketisation of nature, 'sacrificing' its intrinsic, social and cultural values 'on the altar' of the economy (Liverman, 2004). An application of PES in forest governance is REDD+ (Levin *et al.*, 2008). This acronym stands for 'Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries', while the '+' stands for the sequestration of carbon through forest conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (UNFCCC, 2010). Since deforestation and forest degradation are said to contribute to about 15 to 20% of the climate change problem, avoiding these phenomena helps to mitigate climate change. The main idea of REDD+ is that developing countries are paid for their forest conservation and management practices by earning carbon credits and trading these on international carbon markets, while developed countries can buy these credits to implement their international commitments under the post-Kyoto Agreement, which is under negotiation. Currently, REDD+ is being piloted in a number of projects through bilateral initiatives (e.g. between Norway and Indonesia) and multilateral initiatives (through the UN and World Bank). REDD+ is a good example of market governance *with* the state. The ultimate aim is to have self-governing markets for trading credits on ecosystem services, but governments are essential for their design and functioning (being both rule makers and buyers of credits). The broader PES concept also includes examples of market governance *without* the state.

The shift from forest government to forest governance, which we have so far mainly dealt with in empirical terms, also has its origin in theoretical debates. Since Hardin's (1968) seminal work *The tragedy of the commons*, scientific discussion has continued on how to properly manage 'common pool resources' (CPRs). These



resources are characterised as being *rival* (consumption of the resource by A renders consumption by B impossible) but *non-exclusive* (both A and B have access to the resource) (Holcombe, 1997). Examples are 'open access regimes' like fishery grounds, village forests or common grasslands, the latter being the example Hardin uses. He assumes that each herdsman will be inclined to optimise private gains, to continuously add livestock to the grassland, thus undermining its carrying capacity as a collective outcome in the long term – hence a tragedy of the commons is born. To overcome this tragedy, access to the CPR should be restricted, either through state regulation or through private ownership. Although Hardin refers to both options, in the 1970s and 1980s state regulation was generally considered the most promising mechanism to stop a tragedy of the commons in practice, probably because it matched the tradition of state forestry so well (see Scott, 1998).

Since then, however, Hardin's theory and assumptions have been strongly criticised. One of the most-well known critics is Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, who in her book *Governing the Commons* (1990) showed that local community institutions can be very successful in managing CPRs. She used many examples around the world to substantiate this claim, from grazing institutions in the Swiss Alps to the institutions of Zanjera irrigation systems in the Philippines. However, whether such local, communal institutions are robust depends on a number of characteristics, which Ostrom derived from a comparison of these successful cases, such as clearly defined boundaries of the resource, participation of resource users in decision-making, rules that fit the local conditions, monitoring of rule compliance, sanctions against non-compliance and conflict resolution mechanisms. Also, Ostrom criticised Hardin's simplistic idea of rationalism in his tragedy of the commons thesis, questioning whether choices by individuals are only based on cost-benefit calculation and utility maximisation, and whether remote herders on a common grassland, who are hardly or only indirectly affected by Western culture, would follow this rational path of decision-making. Instead, Ostrom builds upon the notions of *bounded* rationality and *institutional* choice (Ostrom, 2011). Not only is rationality bounded, because people often lack crucial information to make good decisions, it is also mediated by the rules of the game in a specific social setting. This implies that the choices made by individuals are deeply influenced by institutions, hence by rules, norms, beliefs and values that are valid for a specific group of people. Individuals do not only choose the option that maximises their own gains, but the one that is also 'appropriate' in a given community.

Ostrom's work has been very influential in embedding most of the (forest) governance literature in neo-institutionalism (Bevir, 2010; Kjaer, 2004). As a consequence, a strong belief in institutions in general ('rules do and can guide behaviour') and in the 'right' institution to solve CPR problems in particular (the state, the market or the community) has dominated the literature on (forest) governance. Although neo-institutionalism is indeed inspiring and does offer interesting perspectives on CPR problems and solutions, it is also limited. Therefore, in the next section, we examine some of the more critical approaches to (forest) governance.

## 15.4 Forest governmentality

The concept of governance and its neo-institutional basis are contested. Criticism is aimed particularly at its managerial and instrumental approach, its lack of theorising about politics and power, and its optimism on institutional design and rule following (Arts *et al.*, 2009; Bevir, 2010; Hewson and Sinclair, 1999; Van den Arend and Behagel, 2011). Too easily, governance analysts believe that 'apolitical' networks and markets can do the public job, based on cooperation, trust, expertise and exchange. Also, relationships between public and private actors in different arenas and at different levels of policy-making are often considered 'free of power games'. If politics are to be located on a continuum between 'rationality' and 'power', which academics often do (Dunn, 2003), the governance literature is definitely at the 'rational side'. Nonetheless, the governance of (controversial) issues often includes interest-driven bargaining, social conflicts and power games. In addition, the question of democracy becomes utterly relevant here, because those who govern through the new governance arrangements do not necessarily have a democratic licence to do so. Finally, due to their institutionalist background, many governance theorists and practitioners have a lot of confidence in institutional design and rule following. Particularly in a context of weak and absent states, or of weak societies, this position is overly optimistic about institutional capacity (building).

As a consequence of the above criticisms, other more critical approaches have been developed. Cutler *et al.* (1999), for example, criticised the shift from government to governance literature, viewing private steering mechanisms as an erosion of public authority, or as the private capture of what should be public. Important issues for these *critical governance* authors include the lack of transparency and accountability of these new forms of governance. Other authors criticised the neo-institutional bias of much of the literature. Cleaver (2002), for example, criticises Ostrom's neo-institutionalism, showing that communities do not simply adopt externally crafted resource institutions, but mix them with – or even reject them on the basis of – socially-embedded rules, norms and beliefs (De Koning, 2011). Cleaver calls this process *institutional bricolage* (and this approach 'critical institutionalism'; see De Koning and Cleaver in Chapter 17 of this volume). This does not necessarily exclude institutional design, but criticises its unquestioned status and adds a sociocultural logic to institution building. With that, the perspective shifts from 'intentions, rules and effects' to 'intentions, rules-in-action and unintended consequences'.

A third, more radical, perspective on forest governance is *political ecology*, although the topic is discussed less in this literature than might be expected on the basis of the popularity of the governance concept. This approach – a marriage between human ecology and neo-Marxist political economy – particularly focuses on power, inequality and injustice in late capitalist and neoliberal resource management and governance (Bryant and Baily, 1997; Peluso, 1994). Unequal access to resources, elite capture in decision-making, state dominance over land and resources, exploitation of people and forests by (multinational) corporations, neoliberal reform of natural

resource sectors, etc. are recurrent themes in this literature. These authors do not believe that a shift to governance will contribute to poverty alleviation or to environmental sustainability, because for them governance represents not a shift away from, but a continuation of, late capitalism and neoliberalism.

A fourth critical, but post-Marxist, approach builds upon the notion of 'governmentality' (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2000). This concept literally refers to 'modes of thought on government': to the way we think, talk and produce knowledge about governing society and its subjects, and to the way we act upon those ideas. Questions like 'How are subjects and identities produced?', 'How are we governed?' and 'How is power exercised' are key to governmentality studies (Dean, 2010). Crucial in this approach is that government by the state and self-government by individuals are intrinsically intertwined. Through discourses, practices and technologies of governance in the family, the school, the hospital, the prison, the university, the parliament, etc., a society produces certain subjects, but these identities are self-confirmed, embraced and strategically used by citizens at the same time. So government is not so much about governing others, but about letting others govern *themselves* by creating 'responsible' subjects ('conduct of conduct'). Therefore, power is to be conceived differently than in mainstream political analysis: not as something embodied in a state, a president or a king, who give orders to docile citizens, but as disciplinary practices that are shaped both by (hegemonic) regulatory logics and (in principle) free subjects.

Two branches of governmentality studies are particularly relevant for forest governance, one on political reform and neoliberalism (Rose and Miller, 2010; Triantafyllou, in press) and one on the environment (Agrawal, 2005; Bose *et al.*, in press; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2006). The first branch theorises about governance (reform) as 'control at a distance' by the state. Governance (reform) is not meant to seriously transfer authority to lower administrative tiers, but to maintain control in a different manner. This can be realised, for example, through performance measurement and reporting obligations at the level of de-central authorities vis-à-vis the central state. Governance and administrative reform also offers ample opportunities for states to decentralise their unresolved policy problems and financial deficits, while maintaining central control over valuable assets and resources. Hence, what looks like empowerment of and increased autonomy for de-central authorities at first glance, might actually turn out to be a way for the central state to dispose of its wicked problems. The second branch of literature focuses on the creation and self-confirmation of environmental subjects and of forest-related identities by states and NGOs. Agrawal (2005) speaks of 'environmentality' and Bose *et al.* (in press) of 'forest governmentality' to capture these processes. Whereas in the past traditional forest dwellers were often identified as encroachers and backward people, today they are suddenly applauded as noble savages and guardians of the forests, holding valuable indigenous knowledge on how to manage the forests more sustainably. And whereas the former legitimised the violent exclusion of such people from their forest lands, their new identities define

them as interesting vehicles for implementing forest policy programmes, both by governments and NGOs. Here power is not only directly and visibly exercised by excluding people from their lands by the state or by enforcing certain norms upon them by NGOs, but by producing certain subjects and identities through societal discourses, state institutions and social practices that work indirectly, invisibly, collectively and in the *long durée*.

If we take the above critical perspectives on board, the following two propositions on forest governance seem justified:

1. Decentralisation of forest management is not so much the transfer of authority from the government to local authorities, but 'control at a distance' to solve wicked policy problems locally, which tends to reaffirm power structures instead of changing them.
2. Community participation in forest governance is not so much an increase of decision-making power for ordinary people, but the shaping of environmentally responsible subjects and the creation of mutual consent around forestry problems and objectives.

These two propositions turn many of the governance claims upside down, namely that governance implies (more) local participation, ownership and empowerment than the conventional regulatory approaches. However, this optimism remains to be seen, or worse, it may even be misplaced, because governance may work exactly the other way around than officially advocated. This should make us cautious about accepting too optimistic or too naïve governance claims.

## 15.5 Triple G

A governmentality perspective on forest governance differs radically from the mainstream governance literature or from the more conventional governmental policy literature. Different questions are asked, different concepts are used, different empirics are investigated and different answers are found. This probably raises the question: 'Who is right?'. However, we consider this to be the wrong question. In our view, these three perspectives may complement each other if they are considered to be different *knowledge claims* (Buizer *et al.*, 2011). The three perspectives of government, governance and governmentality may analyse similar phenomenon, like the forest policy field, but they do so in different ways, probably producing different, maybe even contradictory conclusions. A government analysis may claim that the forest law is effective in enhancing environmental sustainability in a certain region, whereas a governance perspective may claim that local stakeholders are empowered by the social networks related to the forests. A governmentality study may claim that these networks are still controlled by the state and NGOs, for example through external audits and donor money. Instead of evaluating whether or not A is right and B is wrong, we prefer the various findings to be mutually confronted as different knowledge claims. These claims may (partly)

converge, strengthening each side of the story; they may overlap, pointing at a core of mutually confirmed knowledge; or they may exclude each other, each being credible in its own right because each takes a different perspective – reality is, after all, multifaceted. In any case, a much richer picture of a certain phenomenon is now produced by interpreting it from different angles and by mirroring these.

Thus, we opt for a combination of perspectives when studying the forest policy field, which we would like to refer to as ‘Triple G’: (forest) government, governance and governmentality. The objective is not so much to integrate these perspectives – this we consider impossible – but to see them as different knowledge claims that can converge or diverge. Of course, some scholars might object to this approach, because the three Gs originate from different and incompatible philosophies of science (positivist, interpretative, critical; see Crotty, 1998). However, according to a pragmatist approach to science, such different perspectives *can* be applied together (Maxcy, 2003). The question in pragmatism is not so much whether perspectives fully match, ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically, but whether they work or not, in isolation or in combination. We think – in line with this view – that the Triple G framework offers a more in-depth and reflexive analysis of the forest policy field than focusing on the concept of forest governance alone.

### 15.6 Conclusion

The immense and rapidly growing forest governance literature has stimulated us to write this state of the art review. It shows that the term has various meanings, from steering in general to new modes of governance that go beyond the confines of the state, which can be local, national, global and multilevel in nature. The most important new modes of ‘forest governance’ are: (1) participatory forest management; (2) decentralisation of forest administration; (3) forest certification; and (4) payment for environmental services (particularly REDD+). Theoretically, the literature has been strongly embedded in neo-institutionalism, not in the least because of the contributions to the field by Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom. Although her work is very inspiring, it has also attracted criticism. In particular, her faith in ‘optimal’ institutional design and in ‘automatic’ rule following by actors has provoked alternative theories in response. Examples are (1) the critical governance literature, which questions the democratic content of the governance shift; (2) critical institutionalism, which shows the many unexpected ways people can respond to newly introduced institutions; (3) political ecology, which addresses issues of power, inequality and injustice reproduced in new forest institutions; and (4) governmentality studies, which claim – amongst others – that governance should be considered as ‘old wine in new bottles’ namely ‘control at a distance’ by the central state. We were mainly inspired by the last perspective, which prevents us from taking too narrow a view of forest governance. We therefore conclude that forest governance is best addressed in accordance with the so-called Triple

G framework, referring to government, governance *and* governmentality. By mirroring the different knowledge claims of these three perspectives, too optimistic and naïve accounts of forest governance can be prevented. This is essential now that the faith in the new modes of forest governance is so strong.

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