

The contested role of inventory based management plans in Nepal's Community Forests

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Nepal's forestry legislation requires community forestry user groups to prepare inventory based management plans for sustainable forest management. Several studies mentioned positive changes in the forest cover after establishment of community forestry; however the role of management plans in bringing such change is less examined. Based on the cases of nine community forests in mid-hills of Nepal, this paper assessed changes in forest conditions, reviewed the management plans, observed forest management activities, conducted household surveys and interviewed executive committee members and forest bureaucrats and discussed the role of management plans in the observed changes. The image analysis showed that the number of trees in the forest has increased after enforcement of the inventory based planning, however improvements cannot be attributed to the plans. The silvicultural prescriptions in the plans were poorly implemented. Instead, other factors such as, i) changes in demographic conditions, ii) reduction on the direct dependency on forest products including shift in alternative energy sources, iii) enforcement of own rules by local community and iv) increase in the bureaucratic control were more prominent reasons. The culture of conservation and detachment of the local communities from the forest resources, turned out to be major reasons for improving forest condition. This question on the need for inventory based forest management plans in the community forests.

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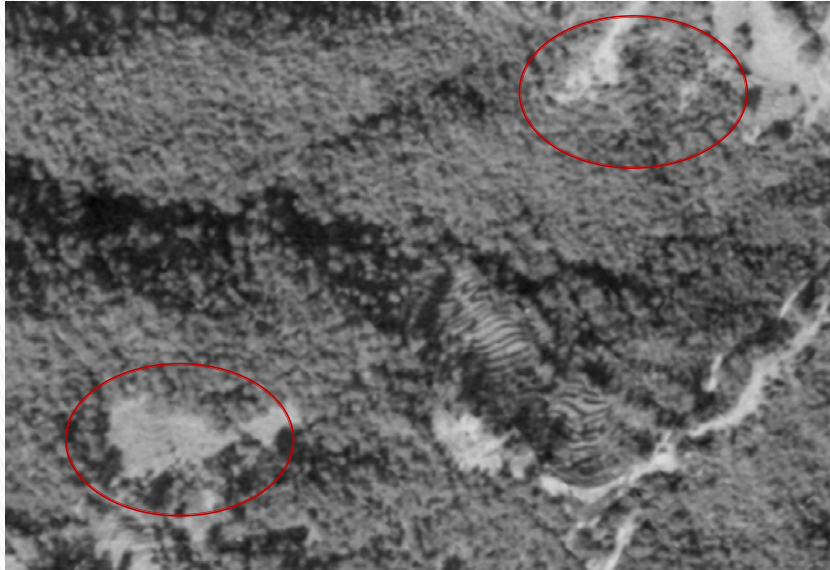
1 Institute of Forestry, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

2 University of Copenhagen, Department of Food and Resource Economics

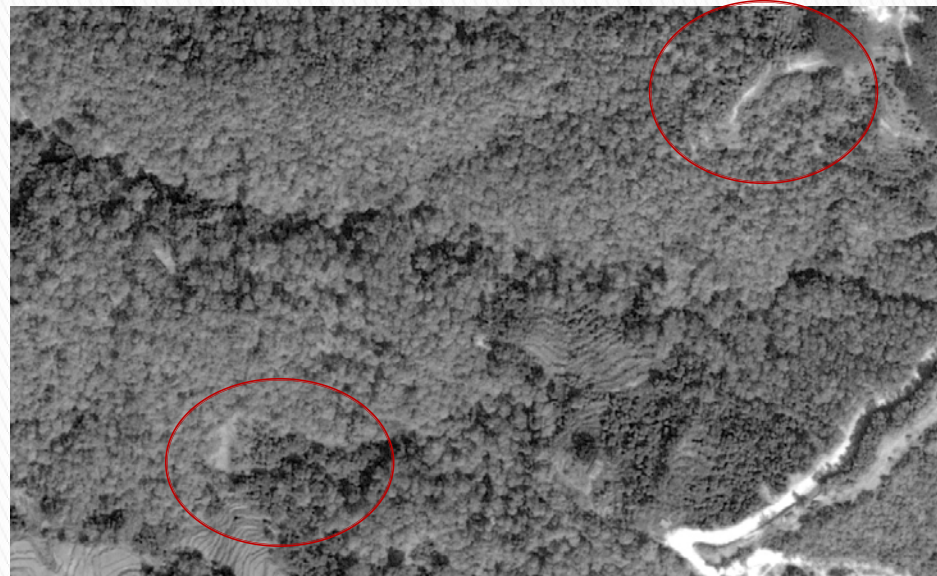
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The common story

- ▶ CF is a pioneer forest management modality
 - CF improving the **livelihoods**
 - Improving **forest cover** community forests ([Acharya, 2002](#); [Gautam et al, 2004](#); [Pokharel, 2007](#), [Yadav et al., 2003](#))
 - Scientific forest management plans pre-requisites of forest handover
 - Locals do not have **scientific knowledge** ([Ribot, 2010](#))
 - Achieve **sustainability**



2000



2016

Is forest condition improving because of implementing CFOPs?

Methods

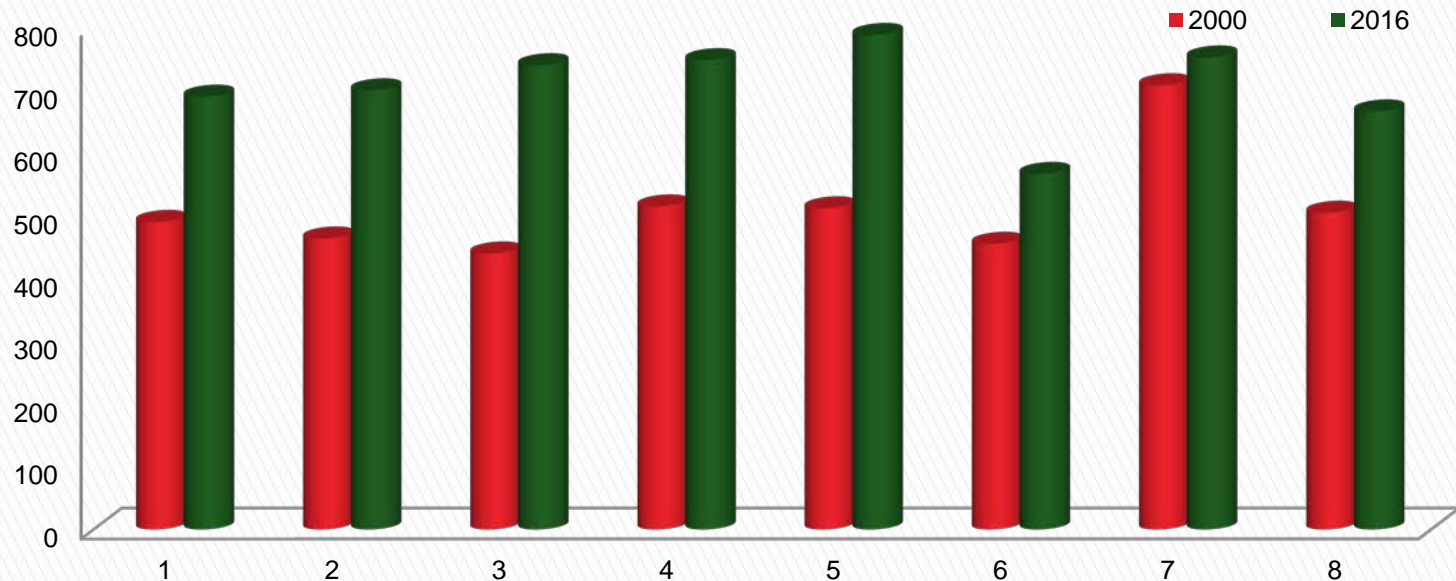
- ▶ Case study approach
- ▶ Mix of techniques
 - Object based image analysis technique
 - Household survey
 - Participated in observation of silvicultural practices
 - Review of CFOPs
 - Key informant interviews
 - Forest official interview
 - Focus Group Discussion



Results

1. Change in Forest condition

Change in number of trees per hectare from 2000 to 2016



Positive changes in the forest condition-
increased number of trees from 2000 to 2016

2. CFOP Implementation

- Silvicultural operations- Poor planning
 - Poorly prescribed- inadequate knowledge
 - Generic -ecological and management goals
- Silvicultural Operations - Poor implementation
 - Tending Operations
 - Selective harvesting
 - Re-establishment

Protection oriented management





Special occasion to
celebrate



3. What makes the forest condition improve?

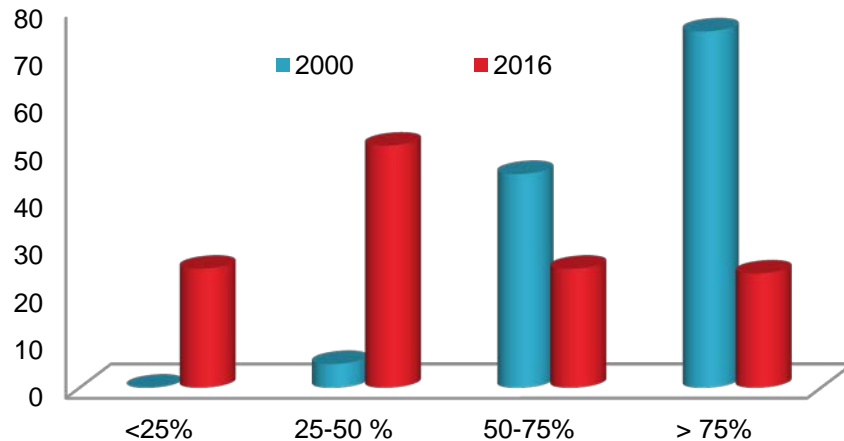
3.1 Demographic shifts



- Demographic changes
 - People migrating out from the village
 - Increased income/remittances
 - Changes in the lifestyle
- Reducing direct dependency on agriculture
 - Reduced agricultural land
 - Abandoned lands

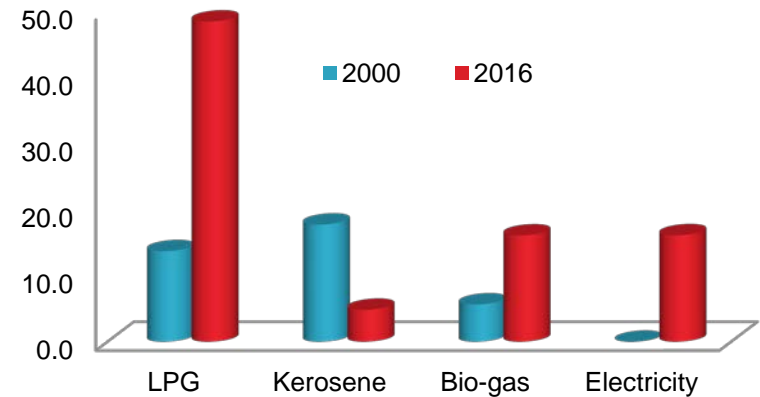
3.2 Changing Direct Dependency on Forest Resources

Change in firewood consumption



Resource requirement (Average)	2000	2016
Timber (Cft per year)	7.2	9.5
Firewood (average Kg per year)	2824	845

Use of alternative energy sources



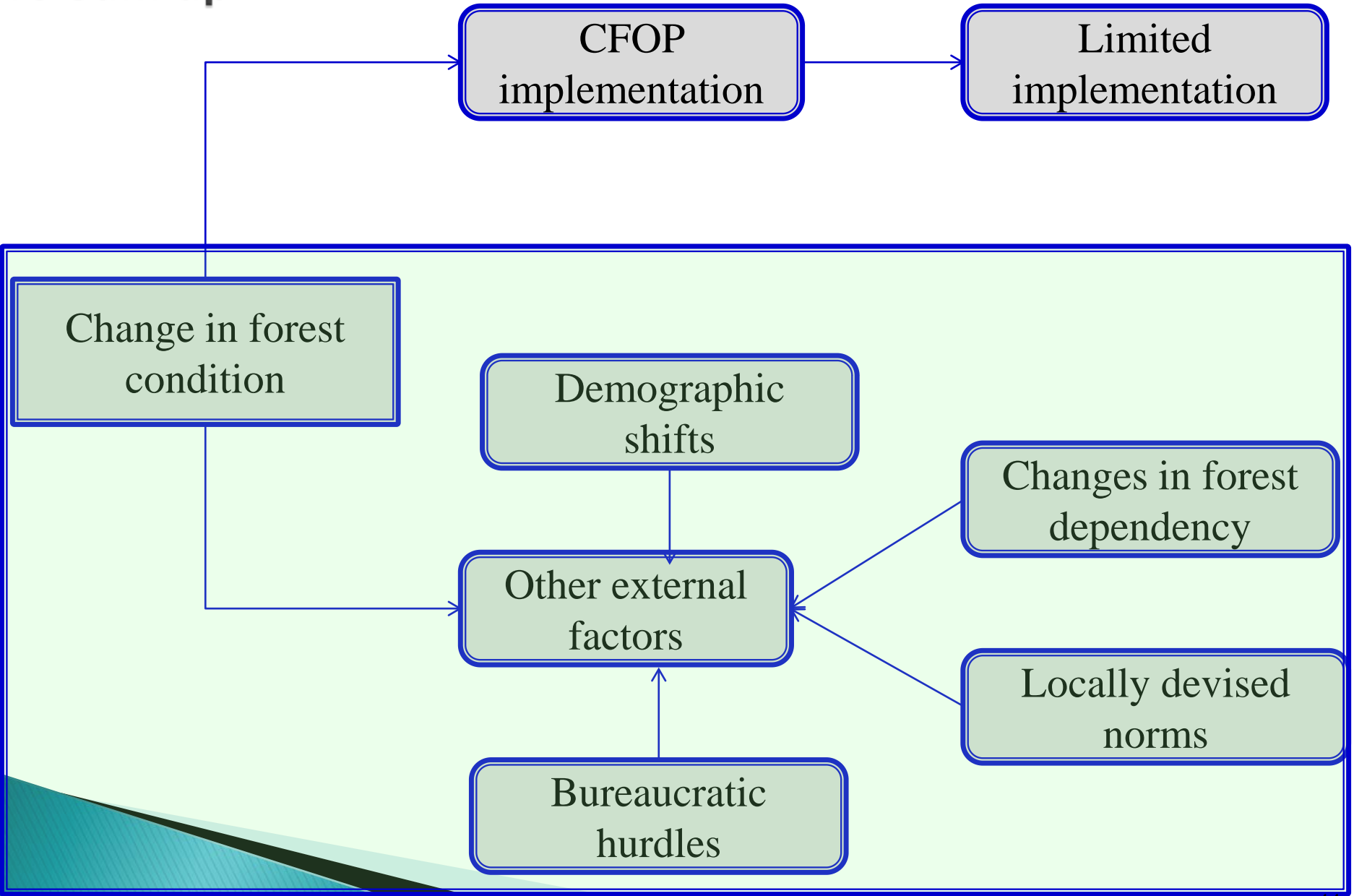
3.3 Community Self Interests

- Defining own rule
 - Considering local norms and practices
 - Avoidance strategy adopted to reduce intra group conflict
 - Executive committee enforced but generally legitimized during general assembly
- Controlling access of valuable products
 - Open access to minor forest products

3.4 Changing Bureaucratic Procedures

- Bureaucratic resistance
 - Discouraging harvest
 - Delaying actions
- Increasing reporting requirement to harvest
 - Annual reports, audit report, harvesting plans etc
- Increasing bureaucratic involvement
 - From marking to harvesting
- Expanding bureaucratic control
 - Administrative guidelines circulars

To sum up



Conclusion

- CFOP has contested role in improving the forest condition in community forestry
- Changing socio-economic context and political process serves towards the improvement in forest condition

Raise concern over the mandatory provision of inventory based forest management planning



THANK YOU