Changing Definitions of Communities

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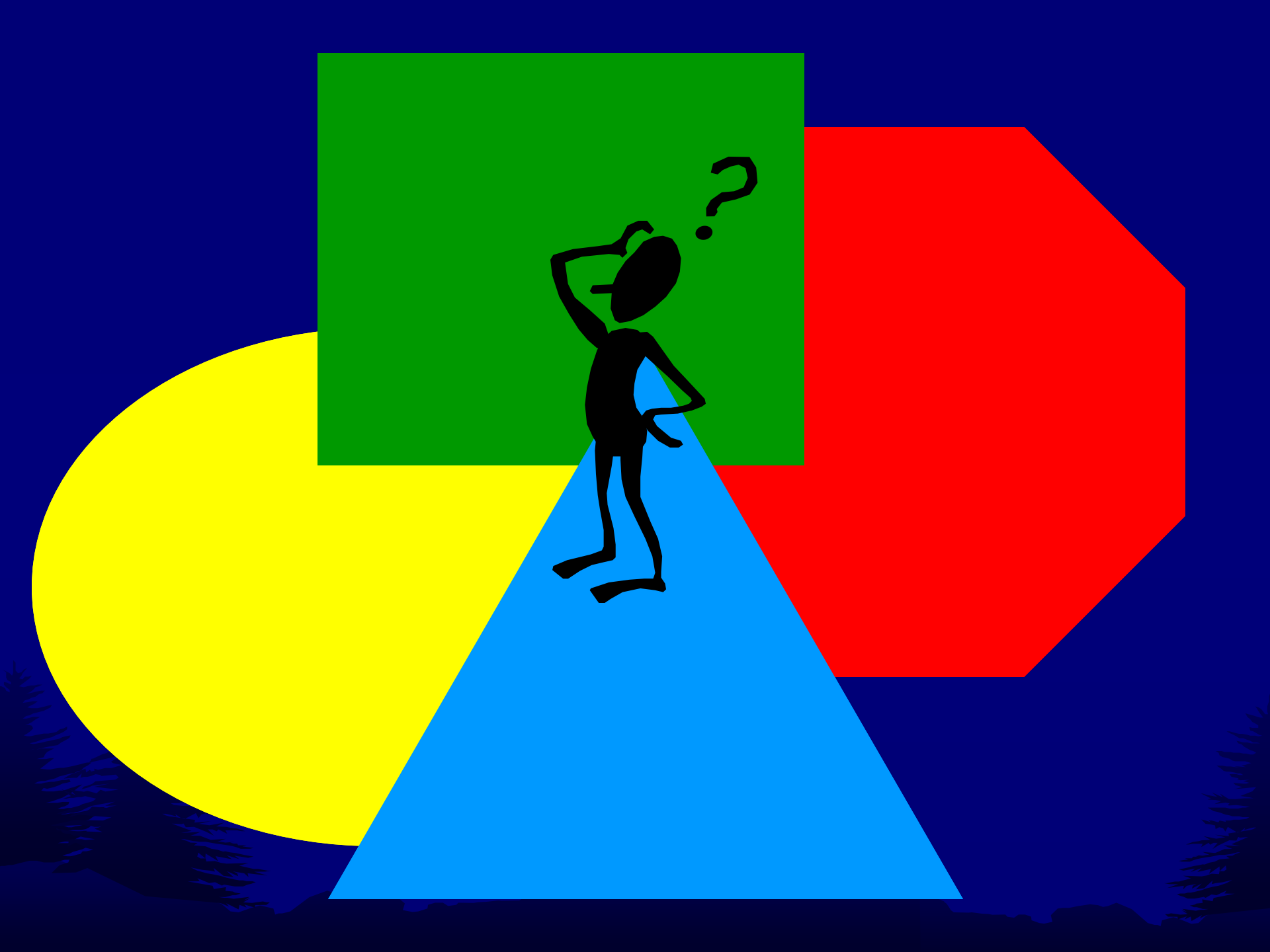
“Defining communities” – What do we mean?

- Delimit boundaries



“Defining communities” – What do we mean?

- Delimit boundaries
- Associate with the boundaries concepts that depict socioeconomic conditions, structures, or processes (e.g., well-being or capacity)
- Develop indicators and measures to assess the concepts and socioeconomic conditions or trends.

Why is it important that we pay attention to how we define communities?

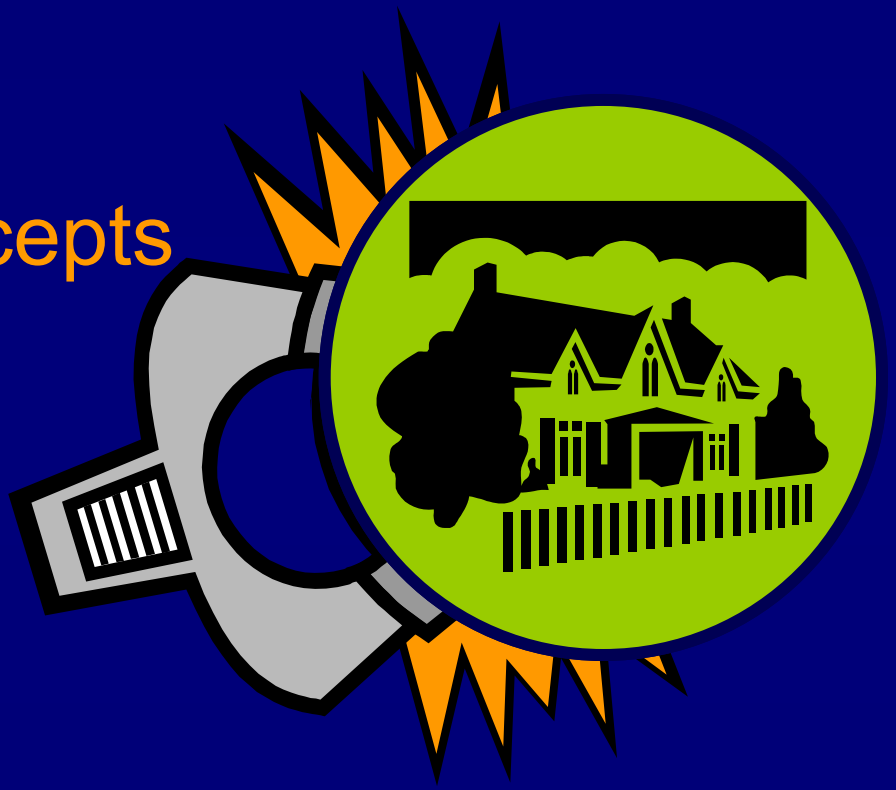
- Socioeconomic conditions are being assessed in social assessments and monitoring projects
- Who is left out?
- What are the consequences? mitigation efforts, economic development assistance, collaborative processes, etc.

Definitions of community have been,
and likely will continue to be,
the product of the interplay,
among
evolving concepts of community,
ways of measuring them,
and the internal and external forces
that change communities.

What shapes how we define communities?

The evolution of concepts related to forest-based communities

Concepts



Evolving concepts related to communities

- Community stability
- Community capacity
- Community resiliency
- Community socioeconomic well-being
- Community vitality
- Community adaptability

Connections that communities have with forests are more complex than some concepts depicted

- "Timber-dependent communities"
- "Forest-dependent communities"
  - Remember those 2 million people!
  - Forest amenities, recreation, cultural, economic and non-economic ties that communities have to forests
- "Forest-based communities"

Freedom

The Power of Concepts

- Even-aged stability

Even flows of timber from federal forests would lead to stable communities.

One of the socioeconomic goals of NWFP:

"Maintain the stability of local and regional economies on a predictable, long-term basis."

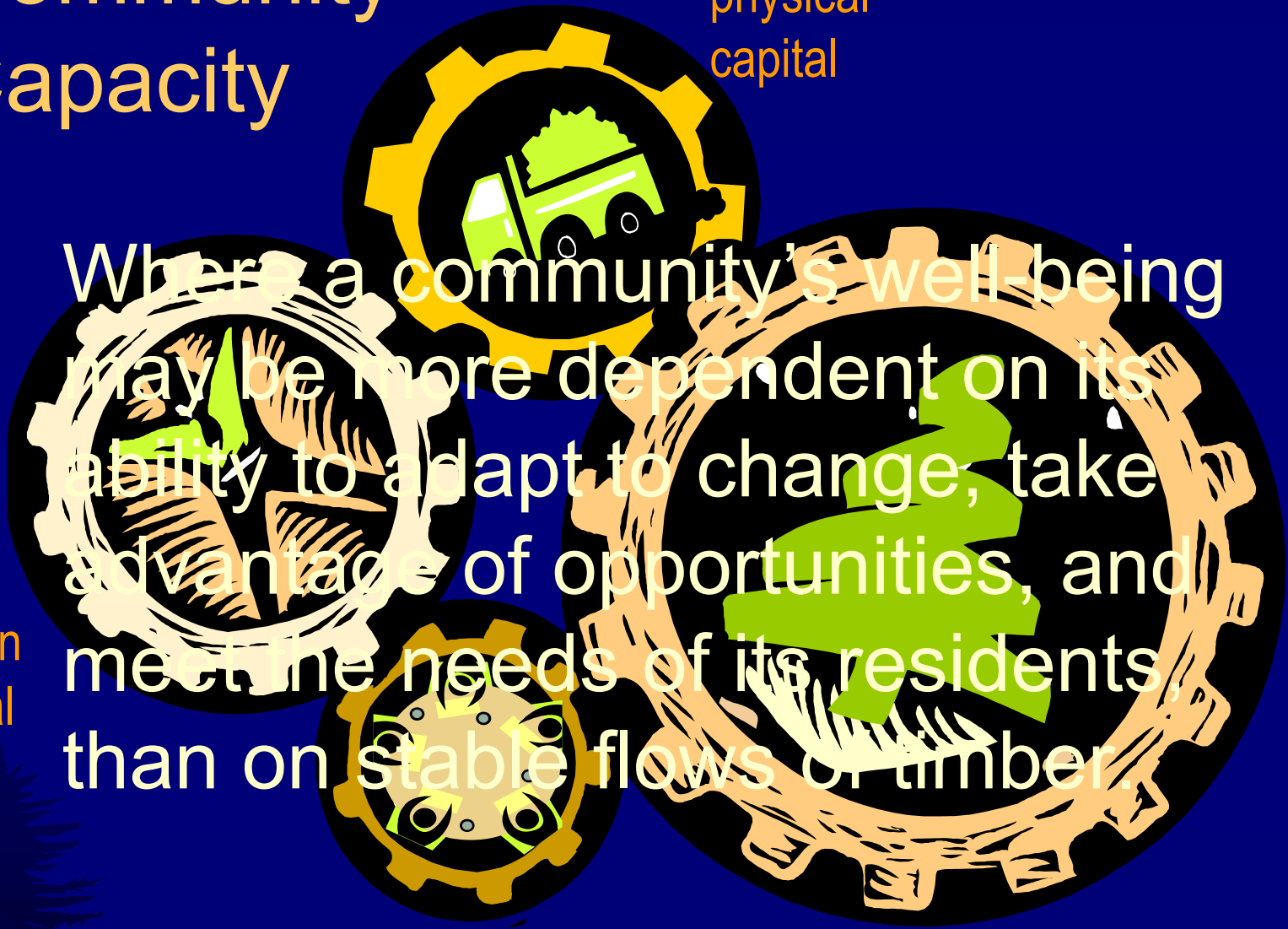
Community Stability

- Assumed that stability was achievable and desirable (in a constantly changing world)
- Tangible and visible (e.g., log trucks)
- Measurable (e.g., timber jobs)
- Legislative heritage (Sustained Yield Act)

- Legacy of the stability concept endured, despite FEMAT social assessment team

Community Capacity

physical capital



Where a community's well-being may be more dependent on its ability to adapt to change, take advantage of opportunities, and meet the needs of its residents, than on stable flows of timber.

human capital

social capital

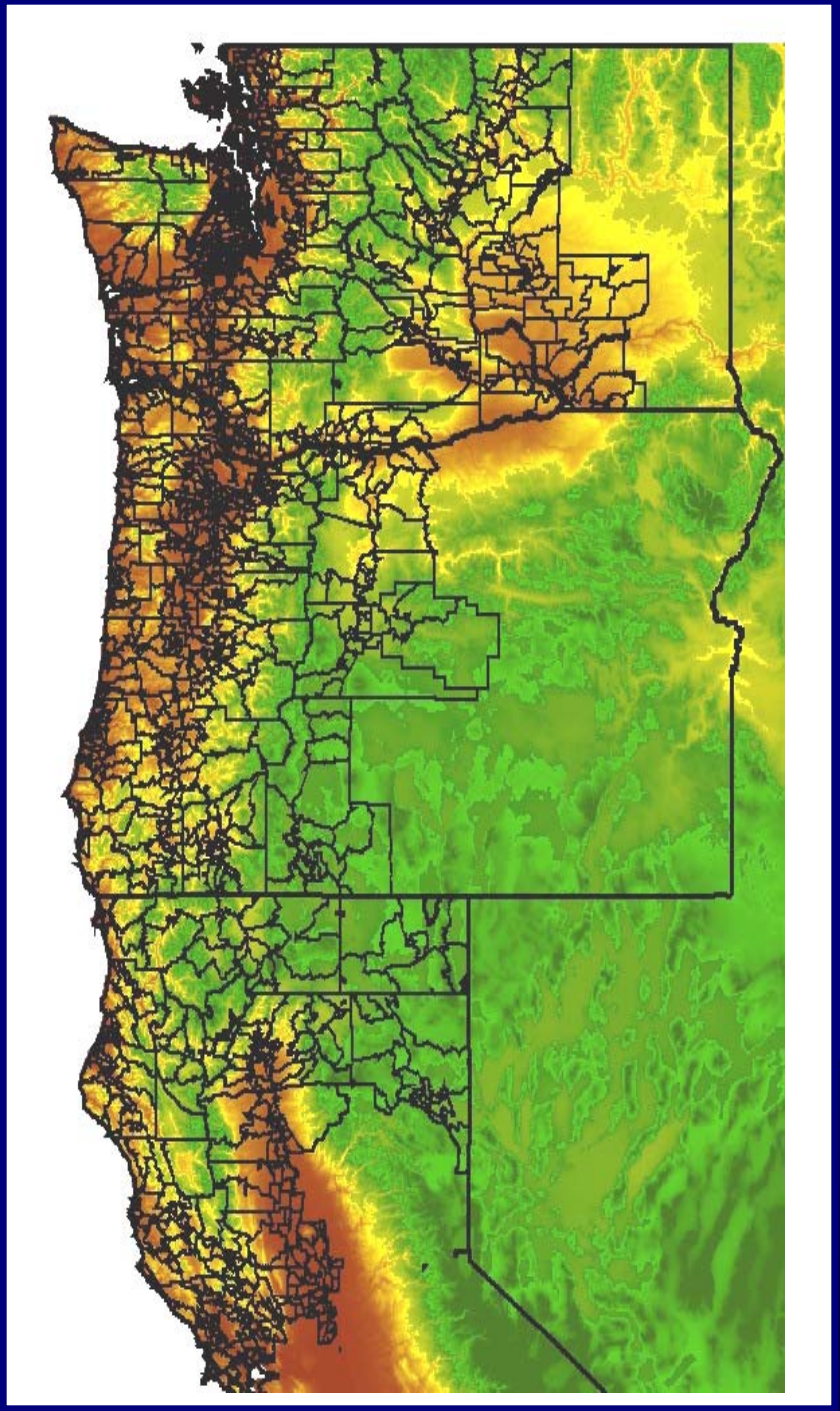
environmental capital

Methodological drivers shape how we define community

Example:
Unit of analysis in NWFP Socioeconomic Monitoring Module

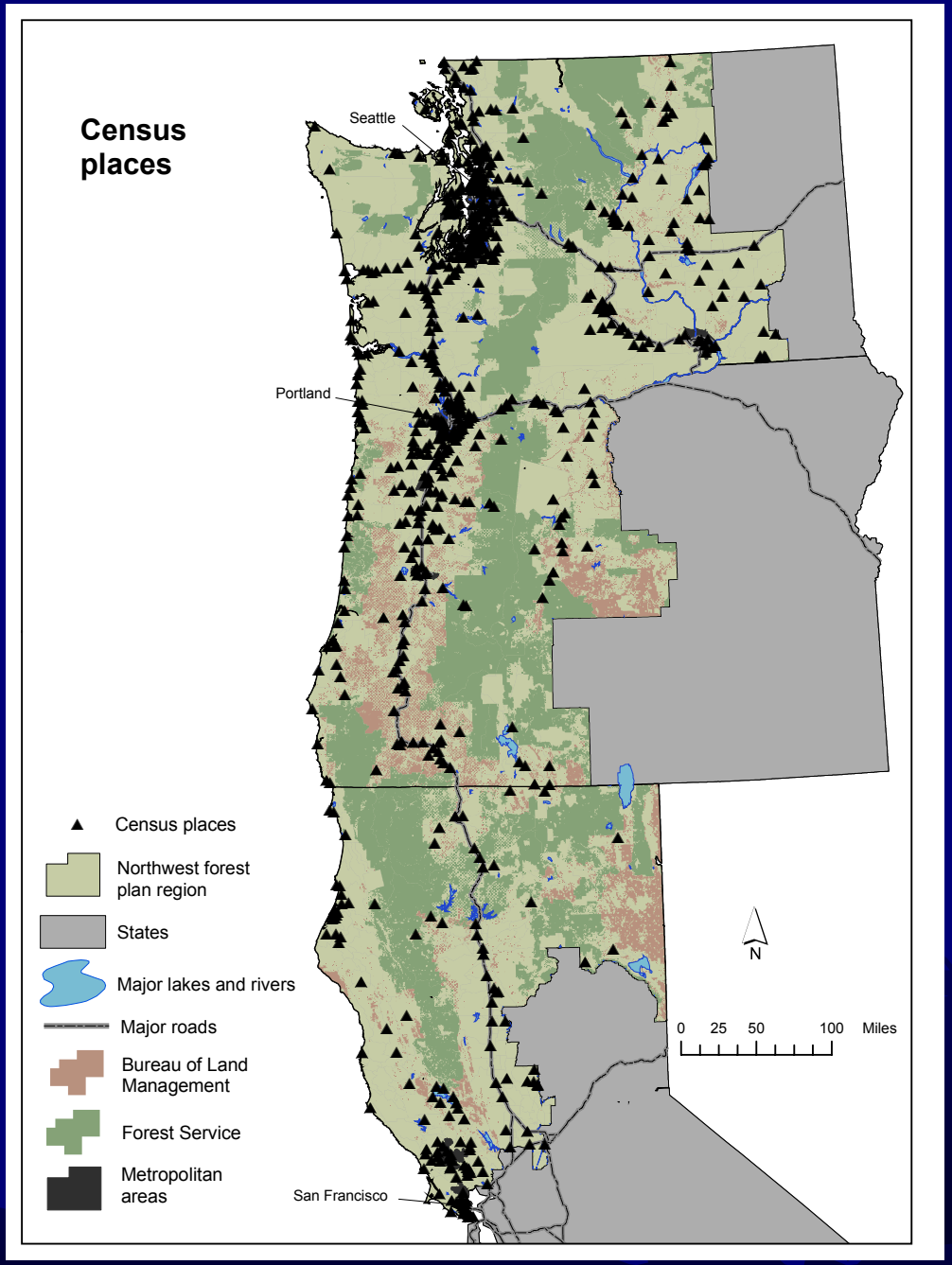
1,314 community block group aggregations

"Communities in the Plan region"



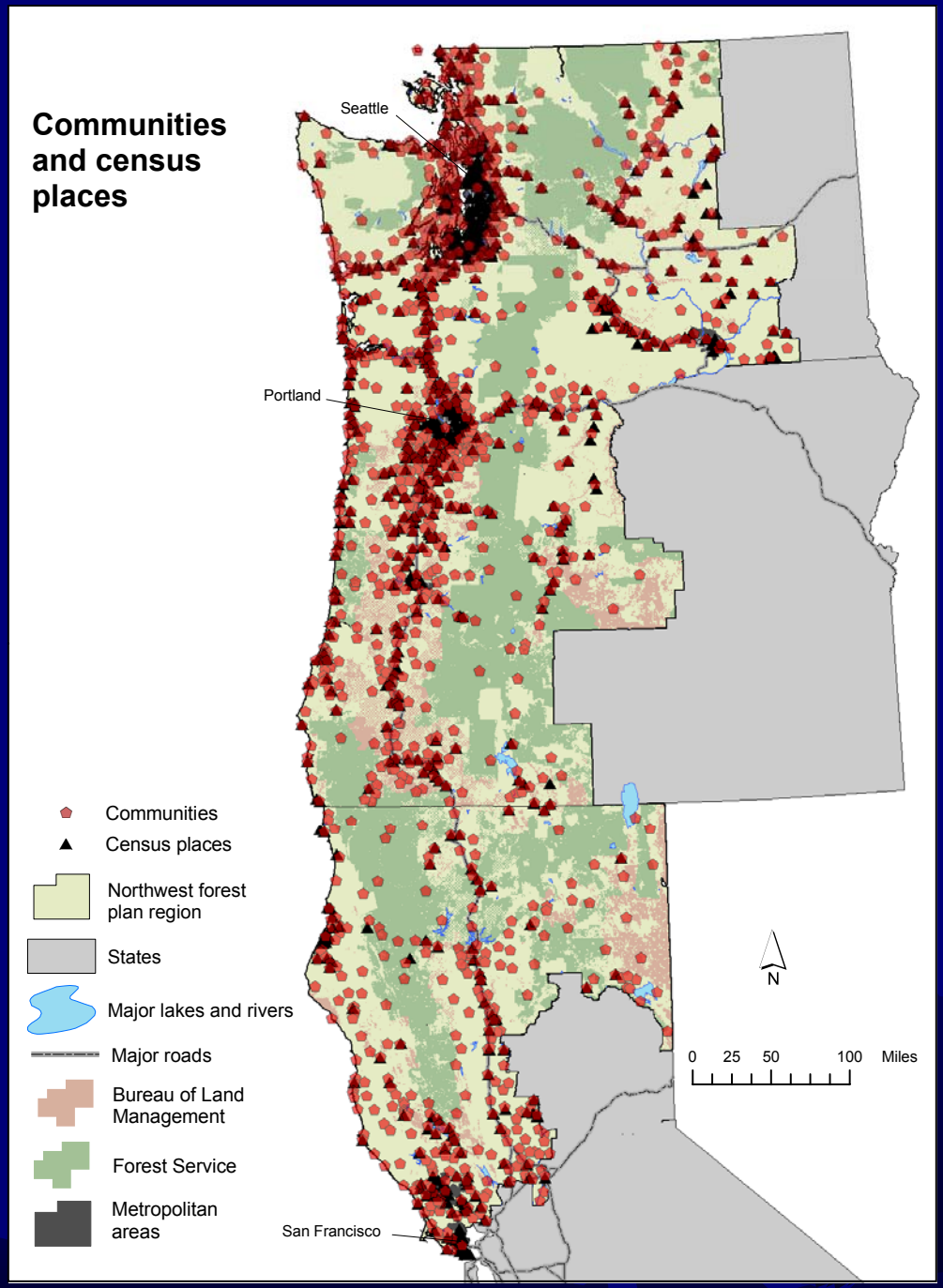
Defining communities as "census places"

Who is left out?

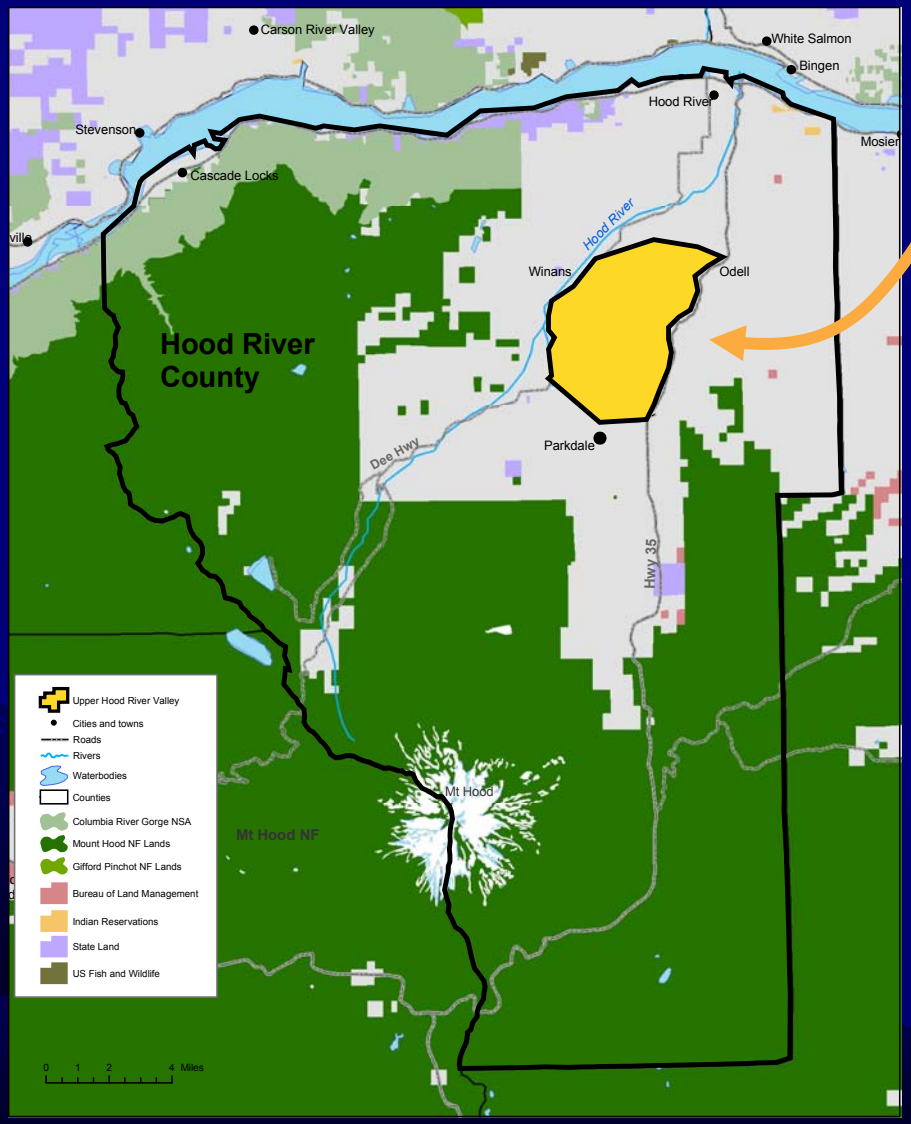


Community block group aggregations vs. census places

- 1,314 vs 517 places
- 4.0 million people vs 2.5 million people
- Note the proximity of red dots ● to public forestlands

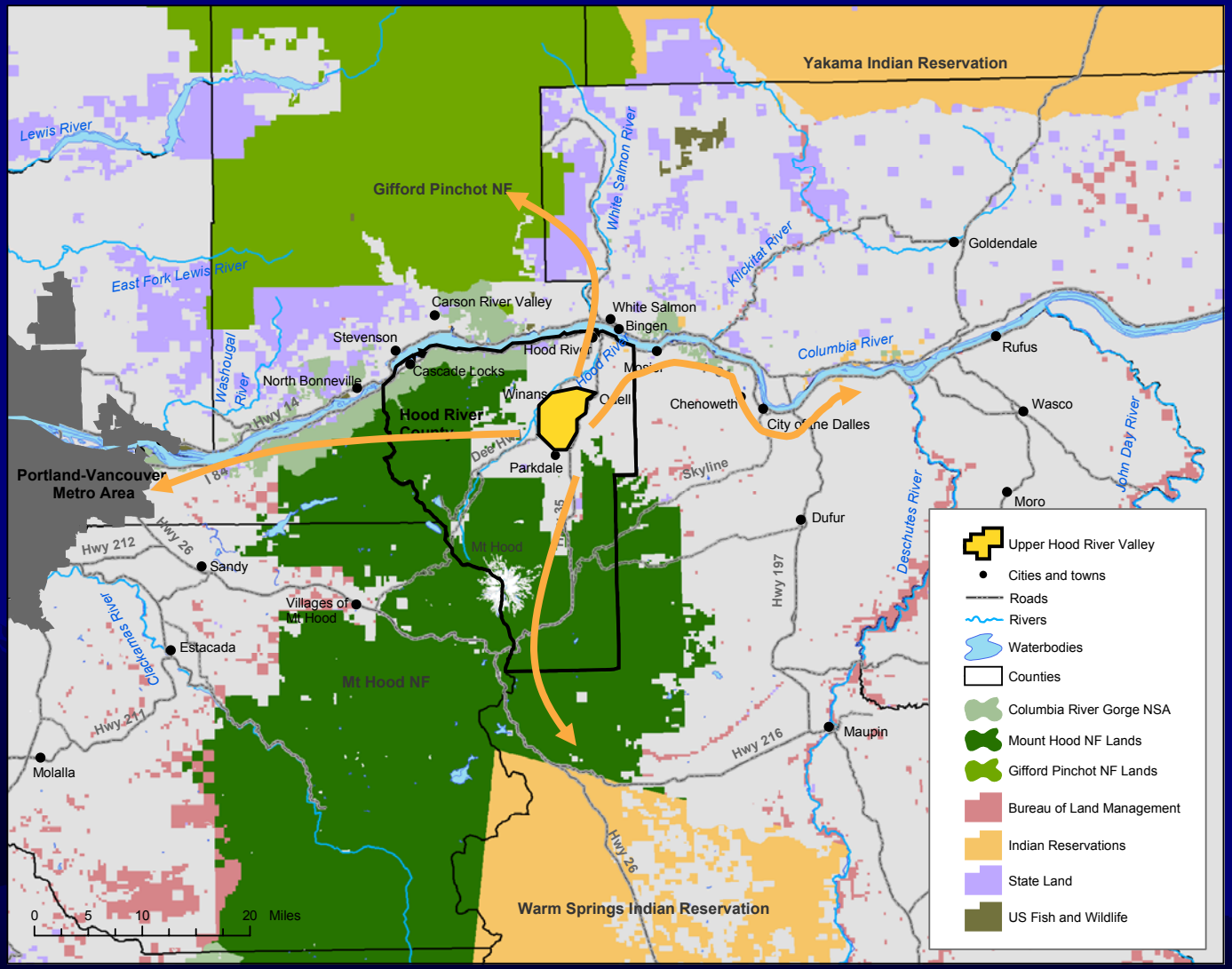


The scales in which we consider communities have changed

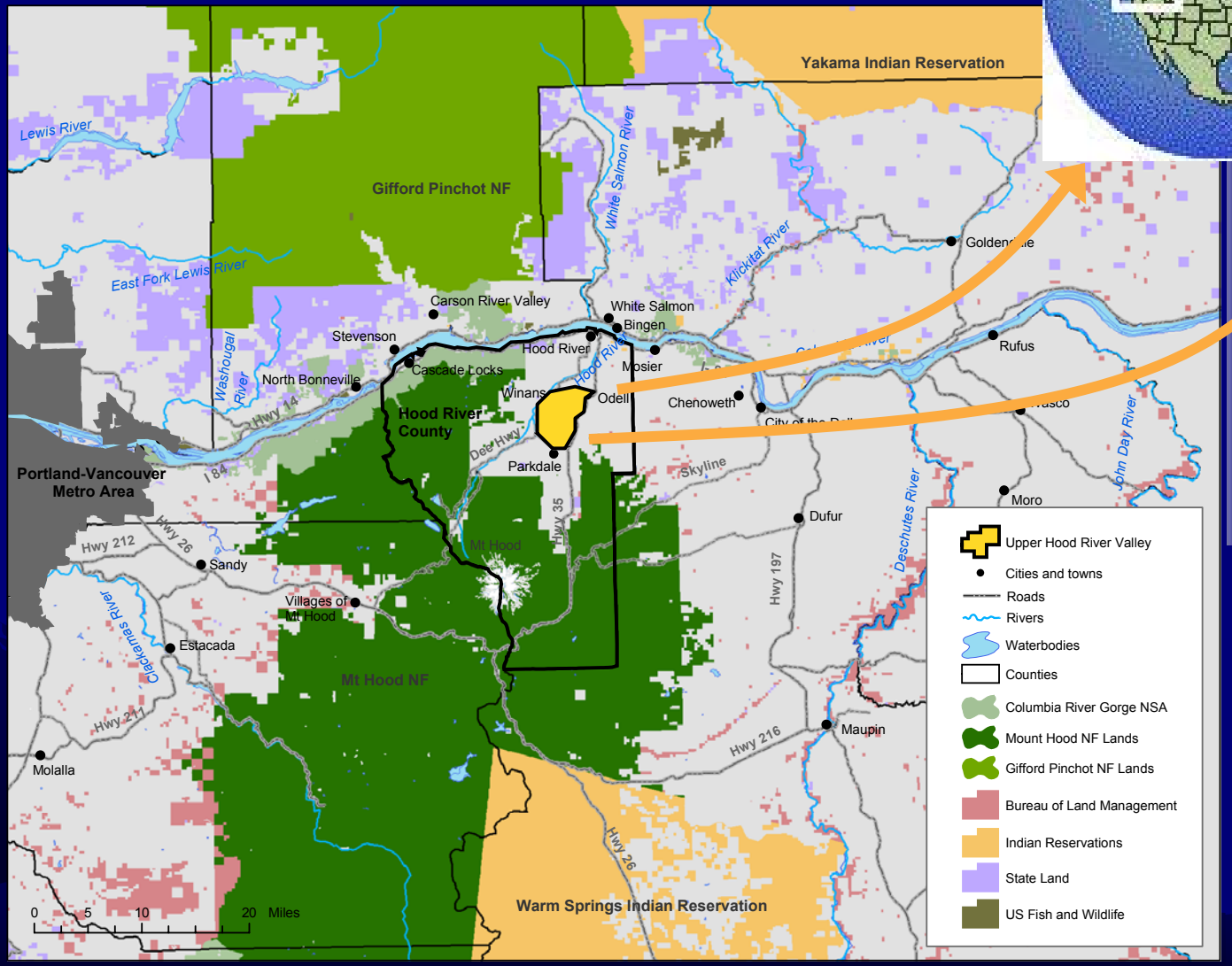


Upper Hood River Valley, Oregon

The scales in which we consider communities have changed



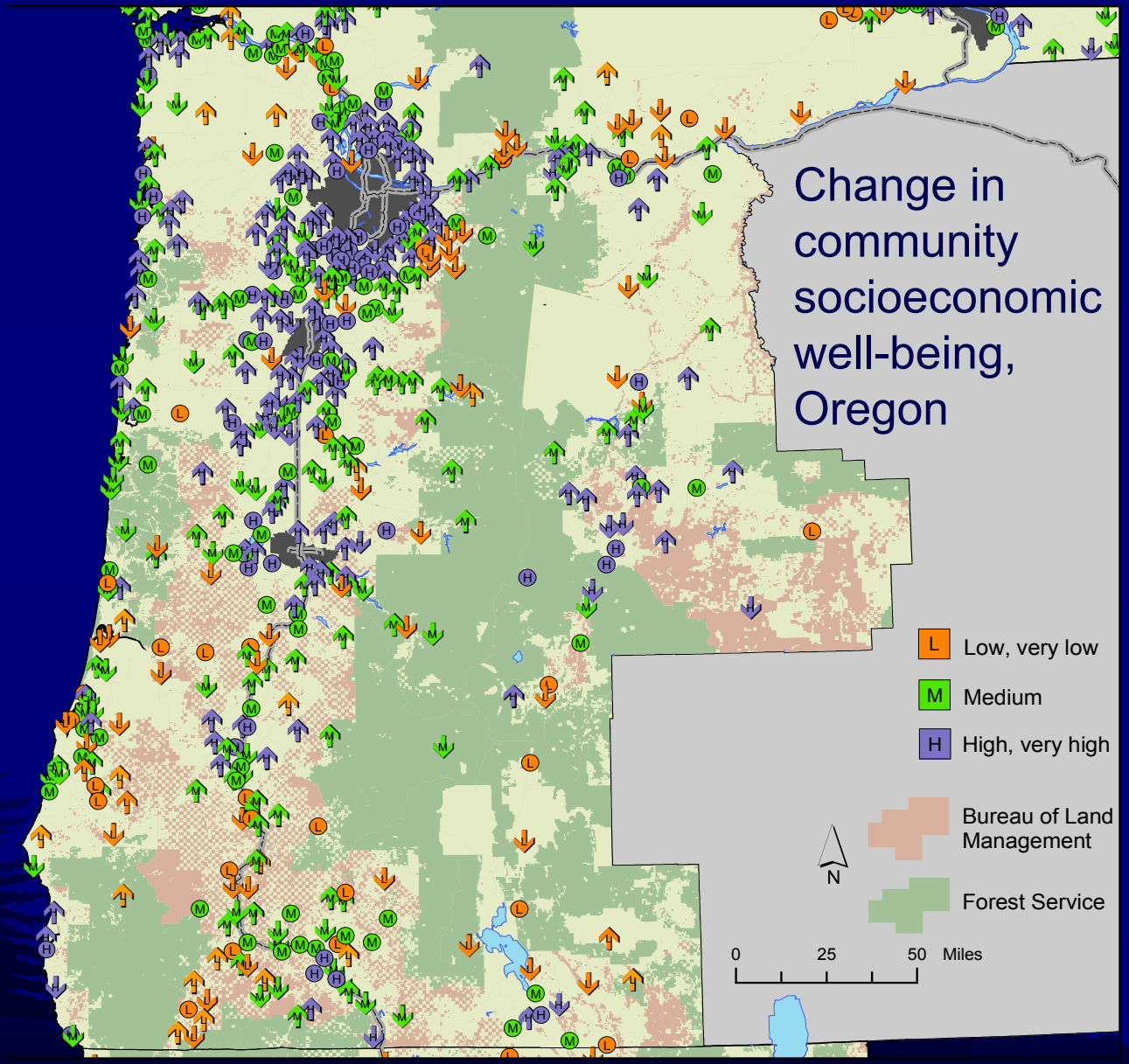
- Connections to other ownerships
- Public lands, metro, counties, watersheds, transportation



- Connections to the state, the region, the nation, and the world

Internal and external forces affect how communities change, and thus how we characterize communities?

Communities change.



How we characterize communities also must change.

Example: Upper Hood River Valley, Oregon

Pre-1990s

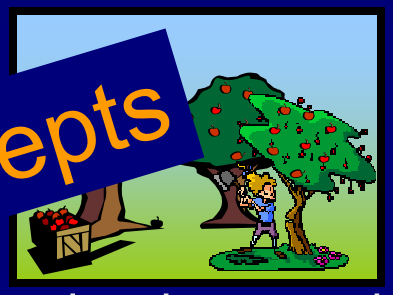
How has our characterization of this community changed?

Example: Hood River Valley, Oregon

Present

orc

ill/wood work



orchard conversi

sers/opps

The power of concepts

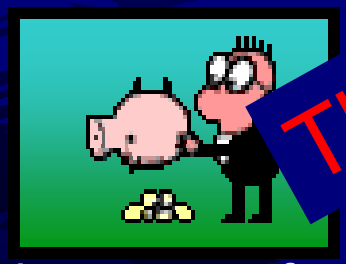
longtime residents

tele

local tourism

amenity seekers

The power of the absence of concepts



retirees, trust-funders

water rec

rec expansion?

congestion?

Definitions of Community Evolve

- Increased knowledge about the complex and multi-dimensional nature of communities
  - Community well-being is no longer just about timber jobs
- Concurrent with overcoming methodological hurdles
- Concurrent with the increased complexity of communities
  - Demographic changes
  - Networks of social and economic systems
  - Relations to forest resources and forest management

Implications of Defining Community

- Let's not be held hostage by concepts, or the absence of concepts.
- Society changes. Communities change.
- Community-forest relations change.
- Building connections between forest management and the diverse relations that communities have with forest is a challenge.
- Opportunities to mutually build community capacity and agency capacity