Recognising impact: some personal reflections
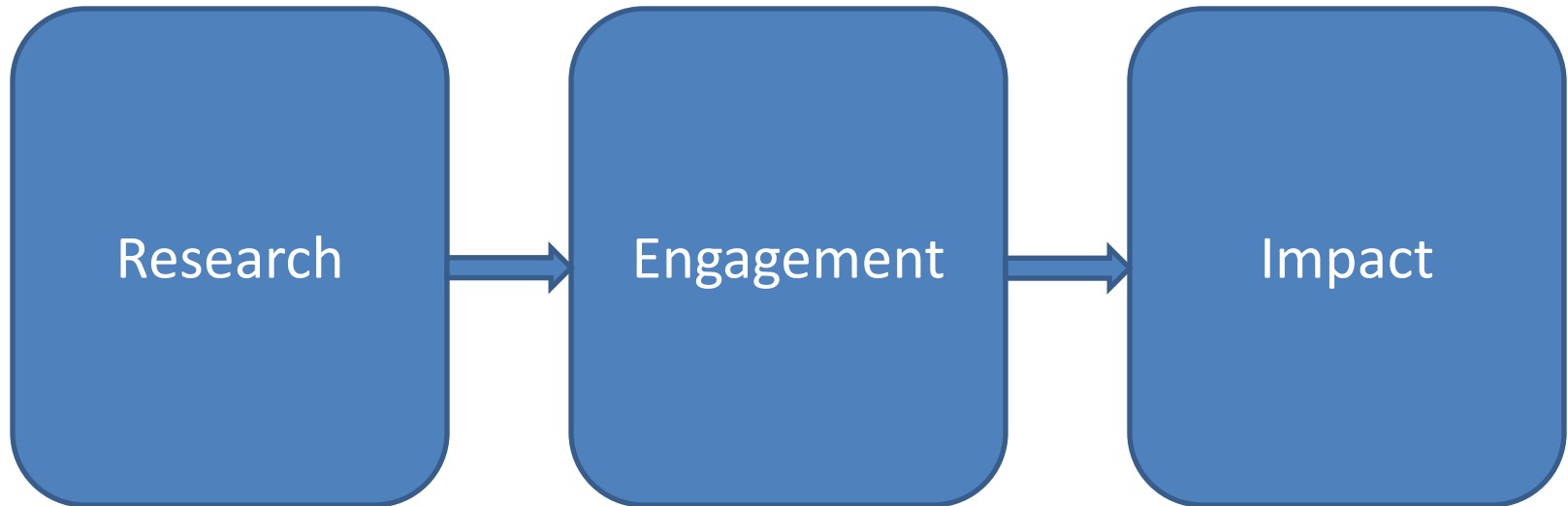
Thomas Sikor
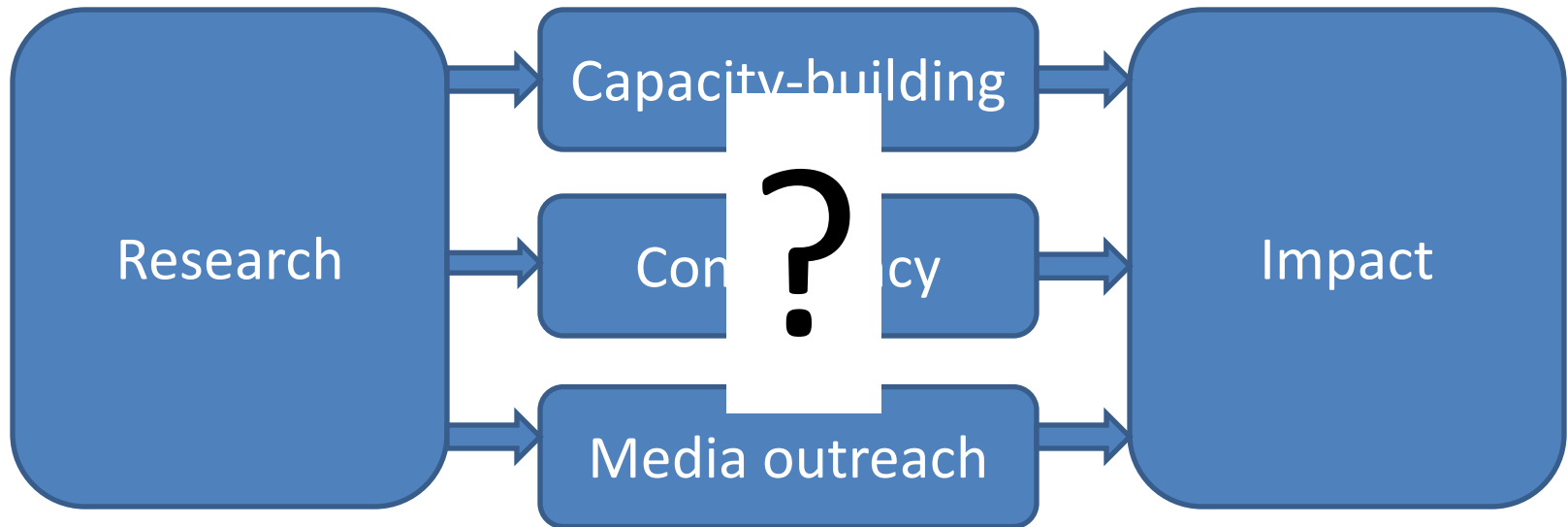
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Our interest

Research → Engagement → Impact

My question

- the message: community-based forest governance
- beneficiaries: 15 million 'forest people', wider society
- Vietnam: large set of players, strong in-country capacity

Research

- funding by NSF, Ford Found., GIZ, BMZ and EU
- lots of journal articles 2001-now
- special issue 2006, book 2011 (international)
- 3 PhD dissertations
- critical components:
  - partners: Ministry, donors, national researchers
  - transdisciplinary engagement
  - PhD students from Vietnam

Follow-on-Funding (ESRC)

- partnership with international organization having office in Vietnam (ex-PhD student)
- write workshop: junior analysts
- 5 policy briefs
- strategy paper and policy seminar
- 2 'specialist' films (on TV and website)

=> capacity-building

Consultancy (UN-REDD)

- co-author on widely circulated report for domestic and international use
  - Vietnam leading international REDD+ efforts
- lead author on another report
- technical expert on pilot activity

=> consultancy

Press briefing

- December 2011, in response to current concerns over illegal logging
- partnership
  - organized by Vietnamese NGO
  - in cooperation with global NGO
- synthesis of 2011 paper

=> media outreach

Impact

- Follow-on-Funding
  - diffuse, more long term, but does not go away
  - 5 'translators', networks strengthened
- consultancy
  - immediate uptake by government & UN agencies
  - but: policy changes frequently; effects on practice?
- press briefing
  - briefing: massive echo in newspapers, followed by high-level meeting at Ministry
  - but: change in awareness & policy uptake to be seen

UNDERLYING: networks, 'social capital'

Recognising impact

- impact is about reception, reception resulting from 'signals' and 'receptiveness'
  - $\Rightarrow$ how do you influence reception? improve receptiveness?
- possible indicators for receptiveness
  - long-term involvement
  - sustained partnerships
  - returning PhD students ('translators' and 'champions')
  - responsiveness to changing contexts and issues

=> important role of capacity-building and network development