1 Adaptive collaborative management

Experiential and theoretical forebearers

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Introduction

We begin this book with these observations about forests and natural resource management, which have become widely accepted in recent years:

- We are dealing with “wicked problems.”¹
- Life’s problems (human and otherwise) are interconnected and systemic and can rarely be solved through reductionist or unilinear approaches.
- Sustained involvement of and shared decision making with local communities are key.
- Inclusivity is desirable and probably necessary if we hope for peace and prosperity overall.
- Actors – in communities, the wider social context, and the environment – have differing amounts of power and different agendas; these influence the human capacity and freedom to act.

With these observations in mind, we have brought together a cadre of 22 researchers – the authors of this book – from a wide variety of fields and countries,² representing decades of experience working collaboratively with communities around the world. They have produced this treasure trove of examples and guidance on adaptive collaborative management – designed to move us forwards to learn from what has gone before (just as we encourage communities to do in their own adaptive processes).

Adaptive collaborative management (or ACM) is an approach in which shared learning, experimentation, and adaptation are key principles, as are inclusivity and shared decision making at various levels – all of which will become clear in the pages to follow (see Box 1.1 for a preview). These contributing authors, who responded with alacrity and enthusiasm to our May 2020 invitation to contribute, move us all forwards in our understanding of:

- The ways local communities often experience ACM efforts;
- Processes that encourage gender and tenurial inclusivity in forest restoration;
- Constructive ways that disciplinary misunderstandings can be managed;

- The training needed for communities, teams, and other stakeholders in how to do ACM;
- The functioning and improvement of multi-stakeholder forums;
- The significance and management of power in adaptive collaborative processes; and
- ACM as research and/or action.³

**BOX 1.1 ADAPTIVE COLLABORATION
MANAGEMENT – DEFINED (FROM COLFER 2005A, 4)**

Adaptive collaborative management, in our usage, is a value-adding approach whereby people who have interests in a forest agree to act together to plan, observe, and learn from the implementation of their plans while recognizing that plans often fail to achieve their stated objectives. ACM is characterized by conscious efforts among such groups to communicate, collaborate, negotiate, and seek out opportunities to learn collectively about the impacts of their action.

The lessons from this approach are useful not only for researchers who choose to adopt an ACM approach specifically, but also for any initiative that contemplates engaging with communities and that accepts the observations that open this chapter – whether the goals are forest landscape restoration, climate adaptation or mitigation, improved management of extractive industries, biodiversity conservation, nature-based solutions, and/or much more.

Justification for the ACM approach

One central idea in our initial conceptualization of ACM (beginning ~1998) was that success in any such effort over the long term would mean that local people were both willing and empowered to sustain them. We recognized the frequency with which all action stops on a project once the funding disappears. That led us to conclude that continually counting on donors – so frequently the case – to sustain conservation/development efforts made no sense. We hoped that genuine and shared local analysis, planning, monitoring, and reflection could render plans and actions more appropriate – and thus more acceptable and sustainable – for local environmental and social needs.

Another central idea was a concern for equity: how could we fashion conservation/development efforts in such a way that women, marginalized ethnic groups, and ‘the poor’ might participate and benefit at least as much as outsiders or elites?

Still another justification was the recognition that each place is unique, and that therefore standardized solutions were not going to apply universally. In

terms of research, could we develop mechanisms or methods that would allow practitioners and policy and other decision makers to analyse and learn about local contexts themselves and respond to them appropriately, constructively, and cooperatively? We also believed that, from an action or practice perspective, facilitating social learning processes might build on and strengthen local people's abilities to learn from their own experiences, adapt to changing conditions more effectively and resiliently, and enhance their power to influence change.

Our version of ACM⁴ initially inspired work at the community and forest management unit level in 11 mainly tropical countries for periods ranging from two to six years (2000–2006).⁵ These time spans were far shorter than we felt we needed, but donors were not prone, in those days, to grant longer-term funding. We'd estimated 10–15 years as the likely period of time this approach would require to really take hold – a time period recognized in 2010 in the US Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, which shares many features with ACM (e.g., Butler and Schultz 2019).

Later, in the mid-2000s, we took these ideas to other contexts, striving to adapt them to broader scales. We built on the work of Tsing (2005), Vayda (1983), and later Ojha et al. (2016); each of whom showed the mutual interactions among scales, demonstrating its relevance for action. In Indonesia, we worked in Jambi, Sumatra, at both the village and district (*kabupaten*) level, incorporating a more substantial governance component into our work with the CAPRI (Collective Action and Property Rights) programme.⁶ Shortly thereafter, we attempted the same approach in a Landscape Mosaics programme that included sites in five countries,⁷ combining village and landscape-level efforts, with a greater focus on environmental management. Principles of ACM were also built into restoration projects that went beyond the edge of the forest into agriculture, with very promising results (discussed further in Chapters 4, 5, and 10).

This book will provide much more information about the ACM processes we experienced. But in this chapter, we go back in time to ACM's precursors. We approach this as a conversation among the three co-authors, as we revisit the theories and observations that influenced our fashioning of ACM. We hope to bring the reader along this journey back in time, thereby clarifying some of the understandings that underlie our approach.

We recognized from the beginning that we were not inventing an entirely new “beast.” Rather, we were putting existing knowledge together in a way rarely done at that time.⁸ “[F]ar more often than not, what we call beginnings are fulfillments of things set in motion a long time ago” (Gail Godwin, novelist 1999, p. 3). The principles we accepted, and on which we based ACM, are reflected in the six approaches summarized in (Marald et al. 2017), among others: the ecosystem approach, the ecosystem-based approach, resilience thinking, the social-ecological systems framework, the ecosystem services approach, and reflexive governance. The literature on ACM, however, tends to be more explicit than these about ways to implement these principles with communities and with equity firmly in mind and practice.

Our paths to ACM

In this section, we differentiate ourselves to show the variety of backgrounds and experiences that initially contributed to the development of ACM (Colfer, Prabhu), and in its more recent iteration (Larson), we highlight where we converge and diverge in our understandings and practice.

It all began when Prabhu, a forester, was hired by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in 1994 to lead a project that aimed to develop criteria and indicators (C&I) to inform fledgling efforts on forest certification and develop a sound scientific basis in support of the credibility of these efforts. Within months of taking up the responsibility in Bogor, Indonesia, he realized that he needed the skills, training, and experience of a social scientist who understood how local communities interacted with forests around the world. He turned to Colfer to help test and develop indicators for social aspects of sustainability. By the year 2000, this work had spawned a network of efforts around the world, such that the C&I team at CIFOR (Prabhu, Colfer, and others) felt the time had come to take the next steps and let others continue with the momentum that had been generated.

For Prabhu, this came with the challenge, articulated by CIFOR administrators, to formulate and pitch the next funded project. His journey to ACM began with C&I and the quest for sustainability, which he saw as predicated on equity and innovation/learning (which in turn were related to decision making). His training as a forester helped him to look to the longer term. The C&I project had been globally controversial, and Prabhu remembers being sometimes viciously criticized – as different certification bodies competed for preeminence (a political context we strove to avoid).

His experience in that project taught him how important the creation of shared experience was in providing a platform on which analysis and decisions could be based. It was in the creation of these shared experiences and the non-partisan evidence that was thrown up in the process that the C&I project was able to bring around influential parties who had previously been so critical. This left a deep impression.

Prabhu's interest in how indicators could be used began to change. The C&I project had focused on indicators' uses as assessment tools. But he was concluding that, in fact, C&I seemed to work best when used by those who had developed them to make their own decisions. These ideas had emerged as the team audited a forest enterprise in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), testing three certification schemes produced by professional certification companies. It was becoming clear that certification pathways alone were too limited a use of indicators in decision making. While CIFOR had concentrated on the local level ("Forest Management Unit") C&I, others had been focusing on national and global C&I as tools for analysis, reporting, and communication. But how all this – the development of excellent C&I – could actually affect decisions, attitudes, and behaviours remained unclear. He was interested in whether transformational learning actually resulted. Who learned? How? And with what effect?

The opportunity to frame the first ACM project – at that time still called “adaptive co-management,”⁹ came as a result of conversations that Prabhu had at the Asian Development Bank, which was interested in funding a project with CIFOR in three Asian countries. This was to be based on the theoretical framework of adaptive management that Buzz Hollings, Carl Walters, and others had developed, but inspired by discussions that Prabhu had with Colfer, Wollenberg and NC Saxena. Saxena had written the “Saga of Participatory Forest Management” (1997) during a short sabbatical at CIFOR and had influenced Prabhu’s thinking on the dangers of the formalization of participatory processes and elite capture.

At this time, another team at CIFOR had started approaching the topic from a different angle –Lini Wollenberg and Louise Buck (see e.g., Buck et al. 2001; Wollenberg, Anderson, and Edmunds 2001b; Wollenberg, Edmunds, and Buck 2000; Wollenberg et al. 2001a). Prabhu remembers Buck as having initially used the term “collaborative.”

Colfer, a cultural anthropologist, meanwhile, joined Prabhu at CIFOR in late 1994 and continued working full time until 2009 and part time after that. As with other jobs, she’d had to learn the world views of her colleagues, the ways foresters and others involved in forests saw the world, their professional customs. CIFOR was unusual within the forestry world for its focus on policies and people, interest in multiple scales (including community or forest management unit level), and commitment to interdisciplinarity and teamwork, all of which were attractive and congenial for her. However, there remained strong biases in favour of quantitative and experimental methods, the search for generalizability, and quantified impact assessment (less to her liking).¹⁰ There was also a requirement to do comparative research, which was new to her.

She worked first on Prabhu’s C&I project. Her first role was to develop the C&I that could monitor improvements in human well-being in forest concessions. The C&I teams conducted month-long fieldwork in Côte d’Ivoire, Brazil, Indonesia and the United States. Colfer was initially sceptical about the reliability of what we could learn in one month, but each team worked with local researchers to fill knowledge gaps. A second phase involved developing social science methods to assess these C&I quickly, as would be needed for certification of the sustainability of forest management in any given concession (see the nine volumes in CIFOR 1999). Again, local partners were knowledgeable about the areas CIFOR teams knew less about.

Throughout all this, Colfer and Prabhu developed an excellent working relationship. Both were interested in learning from the other and had similar goals about both the conservation and development implications of our work (then and now). We were able to avoid the common interdisciplinary communication problems examined in Chapter 3.

ACM emerged out of this experience, combined with findings from Wollenberg’s programme on devolution of forest management, which had come to many similar conclusions. As Prabhu and Colfer thought about the next steps, one direct influence was his reading of Kai Lee’s *Compass and*

Gyroscope (Lee 1993), which laid out in simple English the underlying approach of adaptive management – an approach that differed from ACM in not including the collaborative element and focusing on a wider scale but also shared a number of features (mainly systems and experimental and learning approaches). Prabhu and Colfer had adjacent offices and meandered back and forth, discussing our work. Prabhu called Colfer over one day and showed her what he was reading. The proverbial “light bulb” went off in her head – as Prabhu remembers it, one that had already gone off in Louise Buck’s head. Buck and Wollenberg’s emphasis at that time was on including communities in conversations and decisions around conservation. Colfer remembers thinking, if we just added “collaborative” to “adaptive management,” our work could integrate the people we both hoped could benefit as much as the environment.

The shift from “co-management” to “collaborative management” evolved, intended to address the complaint that some communities felt they should have primary rights to manage their own locale (e.g., Rice 2001, for the Ikalahan in the Philippines) – a sentiment we understood, while realizing that in other cases (e.g., multi-ethnic or in-migrating communities), this might not be possible.

ACM’s value in both conflict resolution and the development of shared perspectives became increasingly clear as we moved forwards. Prabhu remembers working in collaboration with Cynthia McDougall’s team (Chapter 8), for instance, to bring together polarized stakeholders (the Nepali Government and NGOs, both our partners) whose communications had been disrupted by the Maoist insurgency, the network of community forest user groups (FECOFUN), and others. Prabhu, with McDougall’s team, created an informal breakfast group that met once a fortnight to listen to reports from the community forest user groups involved in ACM. This allowed both sides to continue to reconsider their thinking and compromise on decision making outside formal negotiation arenas. They were thereby able to build on social capital that had been built up over many years among the individuals concerned.¹¹

Another step that proved necessary was convincing the powers at CIFOR that this was worth doing.¹² Prabhu recalls the scepticism of both the Director General and the Research Director in the late 1990s regarding both participatory action research (PAR) and ACM. They felt that PAR would not generate the kind of data that would lead to the generalizable conclusions that the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres were supposed to deliver. Many once-sceptical scientists have altered their views in the intervening years, realizing that *principles* discovered in such processes may well be generalizable and that individual cases, understood in systemic ways, can provide insights applicable in other places. Another objection Prabhu recalls hearing: “We can’t always be holding their [community members’] hands.”

Prabhu and Colfer concluded from the C&I work that while the hierarchically organized principles and criteria might be generalizable, indicators and verifiers were certainly not. But Prabhu notes that at that stage, as we

were formulating ACM, we were only hypothesizing what principles might be key, nor did we yet have data on what particular contexts might require. We also noted that, although Colfer had experience with PAR, no one else on our team did. Prabhu remembers the workshop that was convened early on, with leadership from Bob Fisher and Mohammad Emadi, as making a lasting impression on him, and it provided valuable understanding to all team members. This effort by Prabhu and Colfer was a precursor to the kind of training now recognized as essential and described well in Chapters 6 and 7.

What we proposed was neither experimental¹³ nor quantitative in its orientation. We had often been told that CIFOR's work was to be "strategic," located midway on a continuum between "applied" and "academic." CIFOR leaders worried that our plans were too "applied", that perhaps an NGO should be doing what we proposed (see Chapter 9). The need for the ethnographic component Colfer saw as central (and as genuine research) was not clear to the forestry world (nor, we have to admit, were we able to fully implement her wish in our work).¹⁴

Our intent was also to study the process of collaboration and adaptation, as we implemented it – and thereby learn how to do it better and in other places. We wanted to test ACM – as we understood it and its underlying processes – in several different contexts, much as we had done successfully with the C&I project earlier. Prabhu helped to set up the studies in three Asian countries – Nepal, Philippines, and Indonesia, the first two selected because of the long history with formalized community forest management approaches and the latter because of our good understanding of forest and local community interactions as a result of our history in Indonesia. He then moved to Zimbabwe to help set up and manage the projects in four countries where the European Union had agreed to support ACM research. We selected two countries in the drier miombo forest region of Zimbabwe and Malawi and two in humid forest locations of Cameroon and Ghana. Prabhu's move was predicated on the need to build new teams for Africa that could conduct participatory action research within ACM.

A little later, thanks to work by Cronkleton in Bolivia and Pokorny and Schmink in Brazil, we were able to extend the initial set of research sites to Latin America during the "first wave" of research. Our own work included a second wave attempting to broaden the scale (CAPRI and Landscape Mosaics); and Larson, Mwangi, and others picked up the work in a third wave that brings us to our present understanding of ACM and how to foster its emergence with local communities, actors, and other stakeholders. In one sense, this book (and our next volume) documents the coming to fruition of the hope that ACM can emerge and be nurtured under very different conditions for the benefit of those involved. As this book and others also demonstrate, ACM has proven useful in contexts far beyond the humid tropical rainforests in which we originally assessed it.

When we began this initial journey, we were urged strongly (in fact, required) to pre-define some contextual studies more fully than we had initially planned,

identifying features¹⁵ that we could examine in all our sites – intended to fulfil the generalizability and quantitative concerns of the institution’s leadership (the Director General, the Board of Trustees, some of our colleagues). By the time Larson proposed using ACM, the institution’s reluctance had melted away; she had met no resistance.¹⁶

This was by then the early 2010s, when Anne Larson, whose PhD is in Wildland Resource Science with an emphasis on resource policy and institutions, joined the fray. Together with her CIFOR colleague, the late Esther Mwangi, she implemented a comparative ACM project in Nicaragua and Uganda.

Larson came to ACM from a somewhat different direction and without being part of this history. In the 1990s, she used a political ecology approach for her dissertation research, which explored the relationship between peasants, poverty, and land-use behaviour, examining local people’s land-use decisions in their multiple-scale and historical contexts. Specifically, she studied the challenges of “conservation and development” from the perspective of peasants themselves, taking a critical look at various kinds of participatory approaches. Her research since then has focused on power relations in forest decentralization and devolution processes, including forest tenure reforms. So-called participatory approaches that failed to support local decision making were always a concern, and the search for an approach that empowered marginalized groups (women, indigenous peoples) also led her to ACM.

ACM seemed like the perfect approach to use for a new project on tenure that focused on improving women’s access to forest land and resources through community-level decision making. ACM was based on embedded local learning, collaboration, and reflection. The idea of Larson’s project was to empower women by supporting them, in mixed groups, to define their own needs and priorities regarding forest management and then collaboratively pursue solutions. ACM could, in theory, support women’s empowerment in ways highly sensitive to community life and respect for local perspectives (e.g., not imposing Western feminist views). Her only concern was that ACM might be “too local,” given that the problems of, and solutions to, deforestation and forest degradation were strongly shaped by forces beyond local communities.

Intellectual forebears

Here, we switch to the theoretical and disciplinary perspectives that led us to this approach. ACM is a collage of influences from different disciplines. We discuss the different fields that influenced our respective thinking as we developed the concept, and in Larson’s case, as she and her teams moved it forwards. We begin with the theoretical perspectives Colfer brought to the programme, as the approach makes significant use of social science as its foundation (something unusual in the early 2000s within CIFOR and other centres in the CGIAR). Prabhu discusses issues that arose as we rolled out the

programme, and Larson describes her own intellectual orientation as it affected subsequent work in Latin America and Africa.

Key early social scientific theories

Trained as an anthropologist, Colfer was greatly influenced by that discipline. In developing ACM, Prabhu and Colfer made extensive use of social scientific literature and ideas. In this section, we draw on literature relating to (1) the knowledge and rationality of forest peoples, (2) collective action, (3) stability and change, (4) interlinked scales, (5) inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration, (6) the involvement of policymakers, (7) power, and (8) systems thinking and iterative process. Although separated here to reflect the streams of literature discussing each topic, many of these intersect (e.g., systems thinking is likely to require input from various disciplines and attention to more than one scale, knowledge may intersect with collective action, etc.). We present these literature/theories to make clear our own epistemological orientation as well.

The knowledge and rationality of forest peoples

In graduate school (1967–1969), Colfer focused on, and expected to continue to study, cognitive and psychological anthropology. She was intrigued with ethnoscience and later applied it in Indonesia (Colfer, Peluso, and Chin 1997 or Colfer 1991). She appreciated Metzger and Williams' (1966) work on different ways the Tzeltal (of Mexico) categorized firewood and the methods these researchers used to identify/describe what they found. She made subsequent use of taxonomic analysis, componential analysis (e.g., Goodenough 1956, on Trukese kinship), and triadic sorting – all initially from linguistics – as she tried to capture/reflect the mindset and knowledge of the people whose lives she sought to understand. Such studies confirmed the capacities of rural peoples, of forest peoples, to observe, classify, and build on their own experience – capacities that were widely questioned until recent decades.¹⁷

Her doctoral research made use of *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* by Kelly (1963) – also influential in her thinking about people's observational and analytical capabilities. This theory of personality and cognition postulates that human beings are like scientists in many ways, routinely making predictions based on their own experience and tending to want at some level to make accurate predictions (even if the predicted future is not a desirable one). Kelly's ideas have meshed well with her decades of observations of people everywhere and have influenced her sense of the logic – based on the assumptions extant in a particular place or person or group – of the people she has worked with.

Later, she studied swiddening, learning from Conklin's (1957) seminal study of swidden agriculture in the Philippines, emphasizing the complexity of people's indigenous knowledge. Other early relatively sympathetic treatments of swidden agriculture – so common (and so maligned) in the tropical forests we studied at CIFOR and in ACM – included Kunstadter, Chapman, and Sanga's

(1978) collection on Southeast Asian *Farmers of the Forest* and Dove (1981) on Kantu' swiddeners in West Kalimantan. Such analyses from the literature were augmented by her own long-term experience of swiddening, its variety, logic, and sustainability (in many cases) in East Kalimantan (Colfer and Dudley 1993), West Kalimantan (Dudley and Colfer 1993), and West Sumatra (Colfer 1991).

Collective action

Long ago, Margaret Mead wrote “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” – a dictum we took seriously. This view was further advanced by Elinor Ostrom (1990), whose work identified principles of collective action.¹⁸ These were carried further by her students and the CGIAR programme Collective Action and Property Rights, led by Ruth Meinzen-Dick. A belief in the potential of collective action and shared learning – that would further empower communities and groups within communities – led us to build both centrally into ACM.

Some of these ideas came together for our initial team when we invited Bob Fisher (1995; Fisher and Jackson 1998) and Mohammad Emadi (1995) to give that first workshop, mentioned above, on PAR and collaboration, the approach we intended to use in implementing ACM (see Chapters 9 and 10). Fisher continued his involvement in ACM via participation in the International Steering Committee and later in leading two writing workshops for our teams (both field and headquarters).¹⁹

Stability and change

The conclusions Colfer reached, about the logics of forest people's systems, differ from both ideas about unchanging traditionalism, on the one hand, and many economists' view that people always act “rationally” in their *economic* interest, on the other. Rather, if one looks at the values, beliefs, and expectations in a particular place, one can usually understand the logics being followed and also the variety of decisions people make based on their varying rationales and conditions. We strove, within ACM, to understand both the coherence and stability of cultural systems as well as individual/subgroup differences and change over time.

Although we had no name in 1998 for our recognition that history, the present and the future interconnect and mutually influence each other, Marald et al. (2017) call this awareness “transtemporality.” ACM's concerns with historical context, current shared learning and decision making, and future visioning reflect this recognition and its relevance.

Interlinked scales

In the 1980s, Colfer was drawn into the ecological anthropological (or human ecology) literature. By serendipity, she worked with Andrew P. Vayda on

the 1979 proposal and the resulting research mentioned earlier that led to his ‘progressive contextualization’ (Vayda 1983; Vayda et al. 1980). In 1981, she looked at “tree cutting in context” (published later in Colfer 2008a), which involved examining multiple scales and chains of causation outwards from the East Kalimantan village where she lived and back into it. This approach was helpful as we switched at CIFOR to an emphasis on governance, providing a theoretical basis for moving from one scale to the next, showing the causal links among them.

Later, as we became involved in CIFOR’s governance programme, Colfer turned to Tsing’s (2005) work, *Friction*, also on Kalimantan. Tsing examined the “friction” that exists when policies from afar are implemented in a particular place (“when the rubber meets the road”). Ferguson (1994) also provided a refreshingly insightful, if discouraging, view of how development works and how scales intersect in southern Africa. Many of his observations coincided, or functioned in parallel fashion, with Colfer’s in other contexts. Roe’s (1994) writings on the strengths and inaccuracies of global narratives were also influential – we examined global policies and trends as they affected (or failed to affect) local level realities.

Inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration

As we dove ever deeper into the extensive development literature, seeking sources of inspiration and important ideas for ACM’s development, we focused on the teamwork and interdisciplinary communication that would be necessary. Maruyama (1974) wrote an analysis of the paradigmatic differences among disciplines and cultures that provided a good theoretical basis for our treatment of disciplinary differences as comparable with cultural differences. When Colfer joined the College of Agriculture and Human Resources at the University of Hawaii (UH) in 1980, she knew almost nothing about the disciplines within agriculture. Her strategy to overcome this was to interview individuals in each department, beginning with each department chair, just as she had interviewed villagers, trying to learn how these scientists saw the world. This strategy, combined with participant observation, remained a useful one whenever she encountered practitioners of a new discipline. Interdisciplinary communication and collaboration are central in ACM.

In a Farming Systems Research and Development (FSR&D) project in the early 1980s at UH and in Sumatra, Colfer and colleagues drew on the work of Shaner, Phillip, and Schmehl (1982) and Norman (1982) – who all called for collaboration with farmers (also incorporating local knowledge, collective action, systems, and iterative place-based approaches, and interdisciplinarity, though focused squarely on agriculture). The UH FSR&D team found Hildebrand’s (1986) practice of “sondeos”²⁰ (a precursor to “rapid rural appraisal” techniques) particularly insightful and practical in strengthening cooperation among disciplines.

The involvement of policymakers

As time went by, we also drew on the work of Robert Chambers (1997; Chambers, Pacey, and Thrupp 1993). His accounting of the value of bringing teams of policymakers to the field helped us to conceptualize ACM's national steering committees, made up of influential bureaucrats, academics, and NGO practitioners. Prabhu's experience in advertising before coming to CIFOR was another potent inspiration for these committees. We hoped too that the committee members would learn along with us about community lives and feed that information into their policymaking, research, and practice. We had an International Steering Committee with similar goals (one of whom, Bob Fisher, contributed to this volume, Chapter 9). Chambers' acceptance and use of rapid rural appraisal techniques also encouraged us to incorporate these along with other research methods in ACM.

Power

Colfer's (1983) analysis of the links between power and communication in a logging community in the rural United States, the Qashqa'i in Iran, and international scholars at an American research institute also influenced our thinking. This research clarified to her the importance of power differences between individuals within a community and also between communities and actors at broader scales. Prabhu was taken with Colfer's views on the distortions of voice and power related to "authoritative knowledge" ("knowledge that counts" a la Jordan 1997). We made further use of the thinking reflected in Wollenberg, Anderson, and Edmunds (2001b) and Wollenberg, Anderson, and Lopez (2005), as we strove to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes – among people with very different roles in their societies and varying levels of power. These attempts are brought further forwards in Chapters 6 and 7, this volume. These issues became increasingly important in the later CAPRI and Landscape Mosaics projects. (Chapter 8 suggests a shift from ACM to "adaptive collaborative governance" (ACG), with a more explicit emphasis on power.)

Our concern with power also partially emerged from Freire's (1970) guidance on self- or contextual analysis and empowerment. Escobar (1995) highlighted how defining rural peoples solely or predominantly as "poor people" – ignoring those elements of their lives that were rich – functioned to exacerbate their marginalization. We avoided such characterization; his arguments hit home as our team recognized the many strengths of the "poor" communities we had known. Sen (1985) provided us with a better approach to "poverty" than the usual measures like incomes of <US\$1 or \$US2/day – emphasizing instead capability deficits (missing freedoms and opportunities).

Systems thinking and iterative process

Anthropology's insistence on the holistic nature of social and cultural systems had prompted Colfer's readings on limits to growth (e.g., Meadows, Rome,

and Associates 1974); she was also partially influenced by her husband, Richard Dudley, who routinely exposed her to system dynamics modelling literature. Prabhu remembers being influenced by von Bertalanffy (1968) and systems theory more generally. His system dynamics short course at MIT on organizational learning and another at Wageningen on learning theory coalesced with our own discussions within the C&I project and in crafting ACM. Two other team members, Cynthia McDougall and Herlina Hartanto, took short courses on adaptive management and brought back their own new understandings to us as well. Meanwhile, Jerry Vanclay organized a “hot topic” discussion at CIFOR on systems approaches, culminating in the development of FLORES (Forest Land Oriented Resource Envisioning System) and other forest-people models (e.g., Haggith et al. 2003a, Legg 2003, Prabhu et al. 2003, Vanclay, Haggith, and Colfer 2003b) as part of ACM.

Closer in time to ACM’s inception, we found Waldrop’s (1992) review on complexity theory of relevance, along with Axelrod and Cohen (1999) on systems thinking more generally. Exposure to the ideas of system dynamics strengthened our attention to positive and negative feedbacks and to unintended consequences and provided some useful methods.

Ongoing intellectual influences and the initial rollout of ACM

Meanwhile, we continued drawing on the adaptive management literature (e.g., Hilborn and Walters 1992; Stankey and Clark 1998, Lee’s *Compass and Gyroscope* 1993).

Colfer had not of course forgotten her gender and other equity concerns. She was initially influenced by the very few works available then pertaining to women in forests (e.g., Murphy and Murphy 1965, in Brazil; Siskind 1973, in Peru), as well as her own experience in American (Colfer 1977) and Indonesian (Colfer 2008b) forests. Ardener’s (1975) collection on women’s invisibility in many anthropological analyses was instructive, and a growing number of studies began to come out of the women in development (later Gender and Development) communities of practice. Alerted as our teams were to gender issues, we quickly saw the various kinds of involvement of women in all of our sites, whether managing, monitoring, harvesting, processing, or trading.

Equity influences grew in Prabhu’s thinking around 2000 when Angela Cropper (then a CIFOR Board of Trustees member) invited him to Guyana for an equity conference she had organized as Chair of the Iwokrama Board. This introduced him to the role of “imagination” or “imagining” as a powerful way of surfacing mental models. He was already preoccupied with these, based on inputs from Mandy Haggith, and our systems modelling team, including Herry Purnomo (see e.g., Haggith et al. 2003a, b; Purnomo et al. 2003). But it also planted seeds of doubt about the degree to which forests were actually the purely masculine places foresters were trained to see. Although Prabhu himself did not pursue this, Colfer felt his support in her own efforts. In recent years,

he's recognized that [what some have viewed as] a toxic masculine view of the world has much to answer for in terms of emphasizing competition over collaboration, individual over collective action, and maintenance of many of the wicked problems we face today (something Colfer recently considered in Colfer 2021).

As we gained experience in conducting ACM, we continued to be influenced by others and by the emerging analyses we ourselves were doing. Colfer found the book *Panarchy* (Gunderson and Holling 2002) to be exciting and used it to help structure her analysis of ACM's first few years (Colfer 2005a). This book was written on a sabbatical at Cornell where she came in contact with Norm Uphoff's work in Sri Lanka (e.g., 1996). Uphoff's view had been evolving in parallel fashion to ACM and contributed to Buck et al.'s (2001) compilation that described immediate precursors to ACM within the conservation world. We found the research undertaken at Wageningen on social learning to be valuable (e.g., Leeuwis and Pyburn 2002), strengthened by Tendayi Mutimukuru-Maravanyika's and Mcdougall's emphases on this issue in the Zimbabwe and Nepal ACM sites, respectively. See also Wollenberg et al. (2001a) on social learning; a number of our team members published in Guijt's (2007) compilation on monitoring, both key elements in the ACM process.

Lini Wollenberg, David Edmunds, and Louise Buck, working in Kalimantan and Madagascar, developed tools that helped communities envision their futures (Wollenberg, Edmunds, and Buck 2000), as did Evans et al. (2006). These helped us to facilitate such processes, which proved key both to bringing communities together to share common goals and also providing a "star to guide them by" in their decisions about how to move forwards.

As we moved towards working at larger scales with issues of collaborative governance ever more central, Wollenberg et al. (2007) described the "muddling" nature of working on such topics, using Indonesian examples. Members of the Landscape Mosaics project produced an edited book that pulled together the findings from that programme on ACM and governance in five countries (Colfer and Pfund 2011) – a process that also involved a lot of muddling. Chapter 8 of this volume, which builds on ACM, to propose "adaptive collaborative governance," moves these concerns forwards from a more theoretical perspective.

When we began our "conversation" among the co-editors, we found ourselves intrigued that Larson had been influenced by many of the theories and analyses mentioned earlier (her interdisciplinary degree had drawn on anthropology, sociology, geography, and political science, as well as environmental science). Not surprisingly, many of those below that Larson found of use, Prabhu and Colfer did as well, but Larson brought new insights particularly related to her governance and Latin American expertise.

As Larson considered what had led her to use ACM, one pertinent aspect of her life experience stood out: in Latin America, where she lived for over 30 years and where most of her own work has focused, the history of grassroots

social movements and revolution meant she took the power of local people as a starting point – while also seeing the failure of many Latin American movements to live up to their rhetoric. That is, power relations were altered by revolution but not necessarily in favour of, or out of respect for, local peoples (*campesinos*, or peasants), and women and indigenous peoples in particular tended to remain treated as second (or third) class citizens.

From her academic background, she had read much of the same literature as Colfer but was also strongly influenced by critiques of traditional development and economics from perspectives such as Peet and Watts (1993) and Bardhan (1984), questioning ideas of apparently irrational behaviour among the peasantry, among other things, and Mallon (1987) from feminist theory. She was particularly drawn to political ecology (Blaikie 2000; Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Peluso 1992; Watts 1999; Schmink and Wood 1992; Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999) and social justice literature (Zerner 1999), as well as Sara Berry's *No Condition Is Permanent* (1993) and John Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness* (1982).

She also identified a number of issues that had influenced us as well. We were all concerned about conservation and development, feeling that then-current approaches were not working in a way that benefited (or even maintained) local communities *or* the environment. We all felt that an element of genuine involvement of local people in decision making would have to be central in any successful strategy. People's livelihoods depended on the local context, they had the power to improve or destroy their own areas, and they represented capacities and motivations unlikely to be replicated elsewhere. Larson was also influenced by pertinent analyses conducted in the early 2000s on decentralization and multi-level power struggles (e.g., Ribot 1999, 2001a, b, 2003), see also Larson (2002); on participatory governance, Fox (2000); and on environmentality, Agrawal (2005) – as our respective versions of ACM were being crafted.

Meanwhile in Latin America, significant forest and land tenure reforms were underway. This led to her work with indigenous peoples and local communities – groups that had also been key in the earlier ACM work. Larson also found the work of Wollenberg cited earlier useful.

The focus on indigenous communities led Larson to the globally active discussions about FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent) and self-determination, which were also being passionately discussed in Latin American debates about citizenship, democracy, multiculturalism, racial dominance, and territory (e.g., Van Cott 1994; Yashar 1998; Postero and Zamosc 2006; Bryan 2012; Hale 2011; Offen 2003). Debates about these issues were less public and passionate in other parts of the world but were recognized by many as equally important in the long run.

Larson's ACM work began with an emphasis on gender, something that both Colfer and Prabhu had recognized as important but had downplayed in public ACM planning (using the less controversial "inclusivity" instead) – partly to preempt yet another potential source of institutional reluctance.²¹

Institutional concerns about gender in the early days were mostly lip service. Larson, not confronting the same reluctance the earlier teams had, was able to draw explicitly on feminist and gender literature that were beginning to grow exponentially. She was particularly influenced by Bina Agarwal's take on participation (e.g., Agarwal 2001, 2002).

Larson's emphasis was explicitly about power (see Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8, this volume) and how people rarely sincerely engaged communities to help them make their own decisions but rather came instead with ideas to impose.²² This put the team in a quandary because to some extent her teams came to "impose" the idea of women's participation, although it had emerged out of prior research on issues like exclusion in these same communities. Colfer was also concerned about women's participation elsewhere, as she had seen varying degrees of gendered exclusion all over the world. Larson's view on "participation" was reinforced by working in indigenous areas with legal autonomy, hence communities that *should* in theory have had significant decision-making power over their own lives, but in fact had little control over their territories, and particularly their forests (for historical, racial, political, and economic reasons, in the case she knew best, Nicaragua). She and her teams strove to turn "participation" on its head in favour of "local decision making." Addressing gender in this context of significant masculine dominance of course was doubly challenging.

Colfer was often asked similarly whether her own gender-related efforts were not a form of cultural imperialism, with adverse effects on local cultural coherence. While she recognized that explicit attention to gender had the potential of adverse (as well as benign) impacts, she felt comfortable pointing out that others were "messing with" local cultures in ways that were far more likely to have adverse effects (capitalist intrusion, governmental reach, religious proselytizing, etc. – see e.g., Colfer, Ihalainen, and Monterroso 2020 or Lin 2008). With ACM, the intent and serious effort have been to facilitate local and more just decision making. We cannot deny, however, having what Li refers to as "the will to improve" (2007) – personal motivations to work towards a more democratic, just, and environmentally sustainable world.

Introduction to the book

This book begins to answer the question: What have we learned since the early days of ACM that can improve our practice and that of others trying to work collaboratively and adaptively with forest and other natural resource-based communities? We have structured these contributions, beginning with the field and moving upwards and outwards, metaphorically, as the emphasis shifts from research that is directly field-based to broader scale efforts and thence to contributions about training needs and theory.

We begin in Chapter 2, with the most grounded contribution and one that makes clear the steps commonly involved in PAR – a central building block of the ACM approach. Johnson and Pokorny provide an imagined construction

of a “typical” village participant in a participatory project. Drawing on the authors’ experience with 17 community development projects/studies in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru, these authors highlight many issues that recur in development efforts throughout the tropics: for example, difficult terrain and geographical access; thoughtless expectations and assumptions by outsiders with more resources, formal education, and prestige; and participant fatigue arising from normal, daily farm labour. These authors show the inevitably processual nature – with all its warts – of working collaboratively.

The story begins with an inept fieldworker making the usual mistakes and the community members sharing many common preconceptions about the project’s expected extractive approaches and goals. As the story unfolds, we witness the successes that ensue as a new, more field-savvy fieldworker arrives and as villagers begin to understand PAR. These authors demonstrate the creativity and adaptiveness that farmers, both men and women, can bring to problem-solving in contexts they know well – especially obvious when skilled facilitators use approaches that empower.

In Chapter 3, we turn the tables and look at the relations among team members on a collaborative project. Mutimukuru-Maravanyika, Madzudzo, and Songe tackle the issue of interdisciplinary collaboration. Problems with interdisciplinary collaboration are not confined to ACM style approaches, but they must be addressed in any ACM project. These include differing expectations about what constitutes “good work,” complex power dynamics combined with geographical distance, multiple institutional cultures and procedures, and local-outsider conflicts, among others. Even simple definitional issues can wreak havoc with communication among those trained in different disciplines (e.g., Colfer, Pfund, and Sunderland 2011, on “muddling through” interdisciplinary efforts). The use of vaguely defined boundary terms is wonderful for bringing people together to work on a common topic, but the next step, the development of implementation plans and actions, can illuminate the different meanings that participants attribute to particular concepts and throw real monkey wrenches into the works (“the devil is in the details”). These authors examine their own experience in recent collaborative work in Zambia and synthesize lessons they found useful.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the same project in Uganda from two perspectives.²³ Chapter 4 helps to set the stage, reporting a context study (one of the early steps in a good ACM project) that emphasizes gender and tenure issues, among many others. Bomuhangi et al. document a quantitative approach to a context study – one also designed to communicate village-level realities to Ugandan policymakers. The importance of context has become increasingly apparent to global actors. Unlike the early ACM work in which most context studies were quick and almost entirely qualitative, Bomuhangi et al. have used quantitative approaches to understand the roles, goals, and practices of the partner communities. Specifically, they examine patterned differences in gendered responses and differences between sites approached with ACM and those without – across Uganda.

Mukasa et al., in Chapter 5, complement the work of Bomuhangi et al., with qualitative and process-oriented analyses that closely replicate our earlier ACM work at the village level – but focused specifically on gender. Their study identifies the disadvantages women experienced in six randomly selected communities in Central Uganda, describing the context, cultural and environmental. The authors then show how women’s rights and access to the forest were strengthened and how their participation in forest resource management, decision making, and benefits capture were recognized and enhanced using processes of facilitation and negotiation common to the ACM approach. One important advance over much of the original ACM work is the researchers’ emphasis during a second phase on upscaling the approach within the country. Another was their ability to document what followed in the years after the project. The link between their findings and the broader forest restoration literature – an arena only recently recognizing the importance of attending to local communities (e.g., Mansourian and Parrotta 2018, or Fischer et al. 2021) – renders the study even more timely and important.

In Chapter 6, Cronkleton, Evans, and Larson use three cases to discuss their experience of training for ACM – something we all had begun to realize was necessary – in Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ghana. ACM’s work has always involved partners – partners in the research teams, donors, government officials, and the community partners who implemented the goals they set for themselves. The fact that the approach was new, even alien, to most partners when we began doing ACM meant that much time was spent introducing the concepts and gaining acceptance of the qualitative, holistic, iterative, and empowering emphases. We also had to encourage the trust in communities that was required, the willingness to let go of (the illusion of) outsider control and dominance (as in Chapter 2). Eventually, we realized explicit training in these issues would help us move the ACM process along.²⁴ This was particularly evident in our attempts to move “upwards,” to use the ACM approach at intermediate levels, such as districts and over broader landscapes. Local actors engaged at wider scales often proved both more resistant to adaptive and collaborative approaches and powerful enough to enforce their resistance effectively (e.g., Colfer and Pfund 2011 or Hadi 2006). This chapter provides practical guidance on how to teach partners the key concepts, using three quite different contexts in which such training proved important.

Such partnerships are also the subject of Sarmiento Barletti’s contribution (Chapter 7), based on experience conducting research in 14 multi-stakeholder forums in Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Peru. The author and his team, in a project led by Larson, studied interactive processes that brought together a variety of stakeholders to discuss, decide, and/or implement actions designed to address a shared problem or achieve a goal for their common benefit. The project was designed from the beginning with the recognition that power inequities were one of the most common elements that could derail a collaborative process, and they set out to understand and address these. The team first clarified the significant power differences among partners in the multi-stakeholder

forums studied and considered the behavioural ramifications of such interactions. In the process, Sarmiento Barletti worked with participants to develop a process-oriented and locally adapted tool (*How are we doing?*) that has proven useful in recognizing and addressing these power inequities that are likely to bedevil any multi-stakeholder forum.

Chapter 8 addresses power imbalances directly through an explicitly theoretical discussion of what McDougall and Ojha suggest calling adaptive collaborative governance.²⁵ This analysis of power and social learning critiques our and others' participatory work. Similar critiques have been levied before at ACM: for example, Mutimukuru-Maravanyika (2010) on her own work in Zimbabwe, arguing that we paid insufficient attention to power, with adverse effects on the sustainability of our efforts there. McDougall and Ojha, whose early ACM work was in Nepal, take the next step, suggesting some ways to address these power imbalances that confront us in nearly all forests. Specifically, they look at the following questions as they relate to theory: Why do power imbalances persist in community-based natural resource contexts? How and why can new configurations of power emerge? And how can adaptive collaborative governance's potential influence on shifting power imbalances be understood?

Another "bone of contention" about ACM, mentioned earlier, has been the question of its legitimacy as a research topic. Was ACM research or action? This was a recurrent controversy in the early days at CIFOR about our work, which aimed to span the two (see Colfer 2013b).²⁶ As noted above, the ACM teams felt that we could (and should) study *how* to stimulate/encourage collective action and learning better. Fisher and Jackson carry this discussion further (in Chapter 9) examining the roles of action and research in work they have conducted and supervised, emphasizing PAR, a crucial tool in ACM's toolbox. They first discuss their own early experimentation with action research in Nepal – when it was a nascent approach. They then turn to its use for diverse purposes, in Thailand, Cambodia, Iran, New Zealand, and Japan, in theses they supervised (at the University of Western Sydney – Hawkesbury); and in Ghana and China, as part of IUCN's Livelihoods and Landscapes project, to exemplify their points.

In the final chapter (10), we refer to two Greek concepts: the *orouboros* and the *triskelion*. The first represents circularity and a static state; the second a continuous cyclical motion that spirals outwards – in the way ACM hopes to function, moving us towards better forest and human conditions. We pull together the strands of thought in this book, first briefly returning to the ACM-PAR distinction, and then summarizing *what ACM is* – its elements and how they emerge in the foregoing chapters. We then look at the assessment of ACM's successes and failures. The next section discusses some of the dilemmas of shifting from the village level to the district or higher levels and considers approaches that might work better than those tried so far – using two current, larger-scale African cases to illustrate. We also consider the potential applicability of ACM to issues that others are currently struggling with: trying

to restore forests, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and minimize bio- and cultural diversity loss (and more). The chapter concludes with a warning that a *triskelion* process is agnostic about its direction: we recognize that it can result in a downward spiral. Hence, the importance of using approaches like ACM to spiral upwards, towards improvement, with local people.

Notes

- 1 See our Glossary or Roberts (2000).
- 2 Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Uganda, UK, USA, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- 3 In our initial attempts at ACM, Prabhu considered this to be the source of one of our biggest confounding problems – ACM as a body of (emerging) knowledge and practices, as an object for participatory research, and/or as the way researchers referred to themselves (initially “the ACM team” and later just “ACM”). We were always in danger of confusing the approach – as we initially practised it – with our efforts at using participatory methods to understand what was being practised and how that might be improved.
- 4 There are many other versions whose practitioners we hope can also benefit from this book, such as a cadre at Cornell University (e.g., Louise Buck, Norm Uphoff); the Collaborative Adaptive Management (CAM) group, e.g., Scarlett (2013); or the luminaries represented in this article: Armitage et al. (2009), among others. Here, we build on our own experience.
- 5 These included one to six sites in each of the following countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Ghana, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (see Diaw, Prabhu, and Aseh 2009, Colfer 2005b, Colfer 2005a; Fisher, Prabhu, and McDougall 2007; Guijt 2007; Mandondo, Prabhu, and Matose 2008; Vanclay, Prabhu, and Sinclair 2006, Vanclay, Prabhu, and Sinclair 2003a; Wollenberg, Anderson, and Edmunds 2001b, for description and early analyses of these projects; also <https://www2.cifor.org/acm/>).
- 6 We worked in the Sumatran villages of Sungai Telang in Bungo district, and in Lubuk Kambing in Tanjabbar from 2005 to 2007. See Komarudin et al. (2008) and Komarudin et al. (2012), for fuller descriptions of this work. Unfortunately, this project was planned (by others) for different villages than the original Jambi ACM research (though in the same province), missing the opportunity to lengthen the period of research/action.
- 7 Cameroon, Indonesia, Laos, Madagascar, Tanzania (2007–2010). See Colfer and Pfund (2011), for a collection on this work, or Colfer et al. (2011), for an analysis of our challenges and shortcomings.
- 8 From 14 to 25 September 2020, the editors of this book participated in the annual meeting of the Forests, Trees and Agroforestry Collaborative Research Program (FTA) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; speaker after speaker declared the relevance of local knowledge, systems perspectives, social learning, and equity – all key elements in ACM, elements that had met mostly with resistance in 1998.
- 9 The genesis of these names is discussed below.
- 10 See Colfer (2021) for an analysis of the values that drove forestry researchers, or Colfer et al. (2011) for how ACM had to be repeatedly defended in this scientific context.
- 11 Bob Fisher (see Chapter 9) and Don Gilmore, both involved in our International Steering Committee, also had longstanding relationships with key Nepali forest actors.
- 12 See Colfer (2013a) for a thorough account of the hoops we jumped through in order to develop and maintain this work.
- 13 We had passionate discussions within our CIFOR-based team about the ethics of experimentation on communities, although we did help communities plan their own experiments.

- 14 She saw ethnography as a relatively direct way to gain access to, e.g., local value systems (assumed and demonstrated through action, but rarely verbalized), women's worlds, social differentiation, micro-politics (factions, modes of leadership, aspects of accountability), and norms of interaction.
- 15 These included estimates of levels of conflict, social capital, quality and type of forest, forest management goals, population pressure, and devolution status – discussed at length in Colfer (2005b).
- 16 Indeed, in 2020, ACM was selected as one of the 50 most important innovations of the CGIAR.
- 17 One of the central research questions in a research proposal for “Interactions between People and Forests,” a project which took place between 1979 and 1980, was investigating whether Kalimantan's forest-dwellers made rational decisions.
- 18 Of particular interest were these eight principles designed for managing a commons: (1) Define clear group boundaries; (2) Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions; (3) Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules; (4) Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities; (5) Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behaviour; (6) Use graduated sanctions for rule violators; (7) Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution; (8) Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system (<https://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commons>).
- 19 Such workshops resulted in several edited books, including the collections by Colfer (2005a), H. Hartanto, M. C. Lorenzo, C. Valmores, L. Arda-Minas, L. Burton and R. Prabhu. 2003. *Learning Together: Responding to Change and Complexity to Improve Community Forests in the Philippines*. Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR. Indriatmoko et al. (2007), Kusumanto et al. (2005), and Yuliani et al. (2007).
- 20 In a *sondeo*, an interdisciplinary team goes to the field, splitting into pairs, which are shifted every morning and afternoon, as the varying pairs interview farmers or others of interest. This exposes practitioners to local field realities and the views and knowledge of the different disciplines, bringing new factors to light, and enhancing interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration. It functions to develop the shared experiential foundation Prabhu mentioned earlier.
- 21 This was very much the strategy that early Women in Development (WID) specialists had taken – emphasizing the economic above other sociocultural elements because that was the only avenue that held the potential to be heard more broadly. Sadly, in recent years, these early pioneers have been maligned for that emphasis, without recognition of the hostile environment in which they had selected research topics.
- 22 The ACM approach replicates this recent suggestion of Jane Sherman (2021): “For me, it's a question of inverting the relationship, changing the sage on the stage to the guide on the side, putting the advisees/audience/beneficiaries/participants at the centre of the picture and seeing them instead as the main actors.”
- 23 Larson was one of the co-PIs on this project, along with Esther Mwangi. Mwangi, sadly now deceased, led this Uganda team.
- 24 The early Zimbabwe team recognized the need for attention to such issues in the communities early on, conducting a week of “Training for Transformation” with community members, using Paulo Freire's (1970) ideas about self-analysis and empowerment (discussed in Mutimukuru-Maravyika et al. 2008). But our recognition of the need to more fully train facilitators only came later (see e.g., Evans, Larson, and Flores 2020).
- 25 When CIFOR reorganized in 2002–2003, the ACM team was asked if we preferred to join the Governance or Livelihoods Program. As we felt equally comfortable with both designations, we left the decision to CIFOR administrators, who opted for Governance.
- 26 One reviewer of this chapter seemed to suggest that this boundary should be permeable, noting particular issues like citizen science (which has proven quite useful in many

contexts) and the opportunity/need to monitor and influence decision making within the broader democratic political realm – we are comfortable with a loose differentiation between research and action/development. Conventional research is not devoid of political implications, despite efforts by researchers to remain “neutral” (or naively consider themselves and their work neutral).

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