
Co-management and Indigenous Communities: Barriers and Bridges to Decentralized Resource Management—Introduction

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Analyzing Co-management

In recent decades, there has been a profusion of new decentralized institutions for resource management. They have developed as a result of the efforts made by state managers and local resource users to address an array of crises, conflicts and dilemmas surrounding common property resources. Through processes that are variously described as “co-management” or “co-operative management” or “community-based management” managers at the state level and users at the local level have together created scores of new decentralized common property institutions. As joint ventures, these institutions combine different aspects of both state-level and community-level approaches to governance.

Accompanying this growth in common property institutions are efforts to analyze them and, as a consequence, the literature on co-management is also growing. Analyses of co-management are becoming quite diverse as a variety of approaches have been adopted, and a complex mix of differing and sometimes conflicting research findings is emerging. This special theme issue of *Anthropologica* seeks to explore this diversity and to highlight a set of themes and questions related to co-management. It also seeks to highlight research on relationships between indigenous communities and nation states. The authors in this issue adopt a variety of analytical approaches, some more than one, and collectively the papers address issues raised by political ecology, forms of control deployed by modern nation states, critical approaches to issues of empowerment and Indigenous visions of relations to the state. The findings that these papers present do not fit neatly together, nor do they implicitly fit within any one of the theoretical frameworks being used, but they do pose basic questions and tackle issues of wide import that are emerging from this rapidly developing area of research. In the process they also challenge some earlier approaches and assumptions.

The earlier literature on the effects of decentralized resource management was sharply polarized. Discussions of the efficacy of decentralized management were replete with discourses of enchantment or disenchantment with the possibilities of co-management (*Sensu* Agrawal and Gibson 1999). These discourses were more prevalent than analyses of the development of co-management schemes, particularly with reference to North America.¹ However, while this trend existed it must be pointed out that much of the earlier critical discourse that attempted to evaluate these regimes was hampered by the fact that most of the institutions were either too new to possess a track record, or there was a lack of sufficient base-line data to allow effective analyses of their performance. These absences account for the formulaic positions taken in some of the literature. An aim of this special issue on co-management is to persuasively shift the debates about co-management regimes in North America beyond such polarizations toward a more complex and systematic study of precisely how environmental factors, political regimes, cultural traditions and power generate and shape these multi-scalar practices and institutions for the governance of lands and peoples.

A second problematic trend has been that analytic attention has tended to focus narrowly on the formal agreements that simply outline the structure of co-management systems. This trend has had the effect of limiting the analysis of these regimes to their political and legal frameworks. In turn this has imposed limitations on an understanding of the ways in which co-management regimes arise and are shaped by local histories of conflict, contested property rights and national/global political-economic strategies. Further a focus on policy and legal documentation has inhibited analyses of both the uses and the effects of co-management regimes, while also ignoring the sometimes unintended and unanticipated ways in which they can work. The result of this trend combined with the first is that large analytical gaps have been left in much of the literature on North American co-management regimes. The recent literature on African and Asian cases has started to correct these gaps, but there are relatively few such studies to date from North America (but see endnote 1). A further objective in this thematic issue is to explore ways to remedy this lacuna.

We therefore sought papers for this collection which situated joint management institutions within the context of local and national histories, competing claims to wild lands and wildlife, local repertoires of resistance, or issues of control and governance. These regimes all developed within the contexts of the liberal and neo-liberal democratic forms of government that have characterized North America in the past few decades. The co-manage-

ment practices that are analyzed in these papers range from formal regimes established through extended land claims negotiations by Indigenous Peoples with the nation state, to systems of government regulations that were in some cases arrived at *ad hoc*, to systems that had their origins in local stake-holders' political action.

Co-management is an interdisciplinary field of scholarship and co-management researchers use concepts and methods drawn from a range of scholarly and applied disciplines. This is reflected in the papers included in this issue, and authors draw on analytical frameworks in anthropology, conservation ecology, environmental studies, geography, law, political and policy science, history and resource management. For example, Feit uses ethnohistory, resource management, analyses of bureaucratic practices and, with others, post-Foucauldian analyses of the state; Goetze uses conflict management, confidence-building theory and the international legal recognition of Indigenous rights, among other frameworks. Furthermore, co-management research has been closely tied to applied research so its style, and also its strength, is often its grounded focus and policy relevance. For example, one of the editors (Spaeder) holds a doctorate in the interdisciplinary field of human ecology (Spaeder 2000) and has been engaged since graduate school in applied research in wildlife and fisheries co-management, traditional ecological knowledge and ethnogeography, drawing on analytic frameworks from wildlife ecology, common property resource management, institutional analysis and political ecology. Along with a number of other researchers in these closely related fields (Goetze 2005; Pinkerton and Weinstein 1995; Poffenberger 1996; Usher 1995) he combines applied work with scholarly publication. Our interest as editors has been to invite authors to develop analyses that engage the literature and engage central debates within anthropology, but that also draw from the diverse interdisciplinary traditions of co-management.

Co-management: A Brief Context

In recent decades, the control of common property resources by centralized governmental structures has generated much conflict. Many local communities with well-developed local systems of land tenure, ecological knowledge and resource use have witnessed the loss of both land and management rights as centralized governments have asserted control over previously ignored hinterland areas.² For example, in some cases the establishment of parks and protected areas has occasioned both the displacement of local communities and their loss of access to key resources (Brockington 2002; Homewood and Rodgers 1991; Stevens, 1997; West and Brechin 1991;

Western 1994). In other cases, the imposition of non-local control over previously locally-managed wildlife, fisheries, forests, wild lands and grazing lands, means that access and harvest by local communities, when allowed, are now subject to policies and regulations established by remote state institutions. This is illustrated in papers written for this volume by Spaeder, Mulrennan and Scott, Kofinas and Feit.³ As a result of these encapsulating forces, few communities remain beyond the reach of state structures for resource control and are still able to govern local resources by means of self-organizing, autonomous communal institutions (*sensu* Ostrom 1990).

Through organized opposition and informal resistance, as Spaeder and Feit show in this volume, local communities have frequently challenged what they view as coercive and ineffective state structures and policies for managing resources. Colburn (1989), Taylor (1995) and Scott (1985) have provided earlier examples of these ways of challenging authority and power. In some cases intense local opposition has effectively limited or dismantled state-level resource management efforts as Dove (1986), Guha (1990) and Peluso (1993) demonstrate. As a result of colliding local and state-level forces, social conflict has prevailed in contexts where neither state structures nor local institutions could provide effective or equitable or legitimate management of common property resource (Erllich and Magdanz 1994; Peluso and Watts 2001).

In efforts to either mitigate these conflicts, or work around them and provide for sustainable resource management, a plethora of new co-management regimes has evolved over the past decade and a half in contexts where neither strictly local resource control nor state resource control is possible or effective. In practice, different kinds of co-management exist from informal consultation to full and equal sharing of authority (see Berkes et al. 1991 for one such classification). Viewed collectively, these closely related social experiments in decentralized participatory management constitute a fundamental redesign of conventional institutions linking resource managers and resource-dependent local communities. In East Africa and Latin America this approach is termed community-based conservation or integrated conservation and development.⁴ It has been prominent in joint forest management regimes in South East Asia,⁵ and in the co-management of national parks in Australia.⁶

Co-management of natural resources has been championed by both state managers and local communities, although often for very different reasons. As Mulrennan and Scott, Nadasdy, Kofinas and Feit show in this volume, for state-level resource managers these institutions are claimed to provide a means of reducing or managing con-

flict; they supply mediating structures for cross-cultural communication and knowledge dissemination or collection and they increase compliance with provisions for conservation and management. In some cases governments seek to co-opt local institutions of governance and control, and in many cases co-management has involved the expansion of state institutions into new regions.⁷ Like development, as Ferguson (1990) and Escobar (1995) claim, co-management may be a means of extending the capacity of a nation state to govern lands and peoples and of extending the institutions and means by which lands and peoples become subjects of governance.

Local communities have also often readily embraced this approach for their own reasons, as an effective alternative to some forms of coercive state-level management, and as a vehicle for maintaining or increasing local control over resource decisions which affect their lives and which involve the state. In some cases, co-management has informally institutionalized local rights and local management practices without the protracted political struggles necessary to alter the legal foundations of state control. Goetze's and Spaeder's contributions each underscore these dynamics for the communities in which they did their research. In other cases calls for joint management or local rights have served as a basis of resistance and for strengthening local organization (see Spaeder's and Feit's papers in this volume).

Uses of co-management have thus ranged from serving as a means of enlisting uncontrolled social groups and movements in the conservation of resources, while simultaneously and covertly co-opting them into compliance with nation state regimes, to being a means of empowerment of disenfranchised rights claimants, to serving as a vehicle for continuing socio-political struggles. We see this in the work of Pinkerton (1993), Pinkerton and Weinstein (1995), Usher (1995) and Hoekema (1995), as well as Goetze (1998) and Agrawal and Gibson (2001).

Thus in contrast to the "classical" frameworks for analyzing co-management, which focussed on whether it has contributed to the successful management of resources, and whether non-governmental participants have been satisfied with the role they play in decision-making, researchers have increasingly been attending to political and historical contexts, unequal struggles and effects of co-management.

Organizing Themes

The contributors to this special issue were invited to address one or more of a group of organizing themes drawn from this recent literature. Together the papers direct analytic attention to the ways in which these joint

management regimes succeed or fail to mediate conflict, institutionalize local proprietary rights and alter power relations between local communities and governmental management institutions.

Several of the papers focus on the theme of local resource use patterns, land tenure arrangements and the social relations of land users. Where earlier analyses addressed the linkages between local resource users, often indigenous people, and the land and wildlife resources upon which they depend (Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Neumann 1998; Peluso 1992; Pinkerton 1989; Stonich 1993), Spaeder, Mulrennan and Scott, and Feit also analyze in their papers the importance of the social relations of property and the structure of formal and informal claims to land and management rights.

A second thematic focus is the political-economic and ecological dimensions of environmental resource use at different scales of analysis from the village, to regional, national and transnational arenas. The analyses of Goetze, Kofinas, Mulrennan and Scott, Nadasdy and Spaeder in this volume each address the linkages between local resource use patterns, cultures and micro-politics and the larger institutions, ideas and forces that significantly shape the contexts of those patterns. Their analyses complement the work done by Peters (1987), Peluso (1992), Gibson (1999) and Paulson and Gezon (2005).

Another thematic focus is on the cultural practices and meanings of nature and natural resources. Authors such as Hecht and Cockburn (1990), Moore (1993) as well as Fairhead and Leach (1998), have explored the processes by which the cultural construction of natural resources figures prominently in land use and in the degradation or sustenance of environments.⁸ This focus leads to questions about the ways that divergent groups of social actors at different “scales” or “locations” value and socially construe resources, how these divergent perceptions contribute to resource conflicts and whether and how they enter into the practices of co-management regimes. These issues are addressed by Spak and Spaeder in this volume.

We also invited papers which offer historical analyses of the development of co-management institutions involving resource-dependent communities. Authors consider local histories as more than just resistance to national and global processes, and they provide a fuller account of local socio-environmental histories and processes as well as their potential effects, if any, on wider arenas. This is illustrated in the article by Feit.

We think these four organizing themes help to move the analysis of co-management toward a more critical study of the diversity of nation state-local relationships in North America by integrating studies of environmental co-

management with analyses of tenure and rights, governance, history, meaning and power.

Previewing the Issue(s)

Joseph Spaeder’s paper on “Co-management in a Landscape of Resistance” opens this collection by providing an account of how two different co-management arrangements developed “from below,” through the proactive agency of Yup’ik Eskimo hunters in Western Alaska. He shows how these initiatives developed in the context of emerging conflicts over the formalization of state land tenure which was at odds with Yup’ik tenure traditions, and how the Yup’ik moved from everyday resistance to multi-level political action in order to achieve their goals. He therefore begins with an overview of the recent history of the state legal resource regimes they challenged and used. In the course of his analyses he reveals the role of conflicts over both rights and knowledge and the significance of Yup’ik understandings of animals as social, autonomous and sometimes powerful persons for the ways that Yup’ik strategies of resistance, negotiation and co-management developed. His conclusions reveal how these new co-management arrangements were a means to renegotiation of relationships and to changing configurations of power between Yup’ik and state institutions.

Gary Kofinas’s paper, “Caribou Hunters and Researchers at the Co-management Interface,” analyzes a crisis that arose in the early phases of the implementation of a co-management board in the northern Yukon Territory. Kofinas provides an ethnographic description of how the intersecting conflicts between caribou researchers and Gwich’in caribou hunters on the one hand, and between both these groups and oil resource development agencies on the other, created a series of conflicting loyalties and choices for each that changed the relationships of scientists and hunters. He shows how a co-management institution was strengthened as a result of these processes and how the state was not monolithic. But Kofinas provocatively notes that the boundaries of indigenous and state authority became less defined in the processes, and he asks whether these developments may still lead to the co-option of communities and their embrace of instrumental and institutional rationality.

As in the case described by Spaeder, an important part of what happened was shaped both by local political initiatives, some initially outside the co-management institutions, and by the wider historical and political contexts.

Monica Mulrennan and Colin Scott explore two experiences with co-management regimes, one established for several decades in northern Quebec and the other more recent in the Torres Strait in northern Australia in their

paper, “Co-management—An Attainable Partnership?” In the James Bay instance they provide a detailed account of how a negotiated co-management regime, agreed to in the context of Indigenous litigation against the state, has been consistently subverted by governments whenever it conflicts with powerful industries and lobbies for resource interests or with the interests of the state bureaucracy itself. In Torres Strait, where co-management is less developed, they find similar limitations on effectiveness, except when Indigenous peoples mobilize politically or take direct action. They see the states’ insistence on a jurisdictional monopoly as leading to systematic patterns of coercion in state-Indigenous relationships and ask whether effective co-management depends on the capacity of Indigenous actors to continually challenge central government plans or block them in other arenas. Their view presents a sobering account of two co-management regimes that have been established or expanded through struggles but then have been subverted as they are formalized and implemented over the longer term, except where challenges to the state continue.

Mulrennan and Scott’s findings suggest, among other things, that the strategies of resistance and negotiation that, according to Spaeder and Kofinas, were necessary to create and transform locally initiated co-management arrangements and thereby change the terrains of Indigenous-state relationships, are also essential for the effectiveness of co-management regimes in ongoing practice. In the many cases where there are not the enduring circumstances, capacity or commitment to sustain long-term struggles, then state and other resource interests may systematically subordinate Indigenous involvements.

Paul Nadasdy shifts the focus from the problems of creating and practicing co-management regimes to a critical examination of what co-management does and what its often unforeseen and unintended effects are. His paper on “The Anti-Politics of TEK: The Institutionalization of Co-management Discourse and Practice,” explores how a limited-term co-management project developed between the Yukon territorial government and the Kluane First Nation. He argues that when empowerment occurs it is often of a specific form, tied to participation in projects of modernity and modern state institutions, and to rules of the bureaucratic “game.” It thus limits the questioning of existing structures of resource management and may change how First Nations think about land and animals.

At this point an interesting, but implicit, dialogue emerges between the first four papers, because there are elements that would be strongly supportive of Nadasdy’s meta-critique of co-management in Spaeder’s, Kofinas’s

and in Mulrennan and Scott’s papers, especially with respect to the unspoken benefits for the state administration. But the earlier papers, as well as Goetze’s and Feit’s papers which follow, only partially concur with Nadasdy’s suggestions about co-management being a means to limiting Indigenous critiques of state practices and his claim that it limits the Indigenous discourse and agency that occurs outside the domain of co-management institutions. Readers are invited to consider the issues.

Stella Spak’s paper “The Position of Indigenous Knowledge in Canadian Co-management Organizations,” analyzes the claims of two Indigenous-government wildlife management boards that they prioritize the role of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in their operations. She shows considerable differences in the practices and structures of the two boards with respect to Dene Knowledge (IK), one board paying mere lip-service to the idea, and the other actively researching, inviting and using IK. In the former case she describes how this unresponsiveness is established in the face of Dene inputs. But her conclusion is that in both cases IK, whether barely used or actively sought, is put to the service of state scientific and bureaucratic management practices that remain unmodified.

She thus concludes, like Nadasdy, that both co-management boards’ operations do not lead to any challenges or re-examinations of state practices of control, that they extend state ideas and practices into local communities and that they can lead to the perception on the part of Indigenous Peoples that their knowledge has a subordinate role *vis-a-vis* science and bureaucratic expertise.

Tara Goetze’s paper shifts our focus further south to the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, where a massive transnational protest movement against the cutting of iconic temperate coastal rain forests, and a long history of Indigenous political organizing and struggle, created conditions for the negotiation of a co-management agreement involving substantive power sharing among governments, Nuu-Chah-Nulth and local citizens. In her paper “Empowered Co-management: Towards Power Sharing and Indigenous Rights in Clayoquot Sound, B.C.” Goetze documents how Nuu-Chah-Nulth see their active leadership in negotiation and implementation of this agreement as affirming some of their visions for advancing their Indigenous rights claims, positively altering systemic relations between themselves and governments, and creating new confidence among participants in joint decision-making processes. Nonetheless, their experience is quite far from what they aspire to achieving. In the process she offers insights into Nuu-Chah-Nulth accounts of how they seek to engage with the state, the kinds of relationships and sovereignty they

envisage and why they consider that co-management has brought them closer to achieving these goals.

Goetze's analysis of Nuu-Chah-Nulth experience contrasts with the accomplishments of co-management discussed in the three papers that immediately precede it in this volume, inasmuch as she analyzes a co-management regime that has made a political difference, aiding local and Indigenous power-sharing with the state. The context however suggests that Mulrennan and Scott's emphasis on sustained political mobilization is critical. These juxtapositions raise questions about what conditions would make similar agreements to those developed at Clayoquot Sound possible or whether they depend on rare circumstances. Also, how critical were the well developed Nuu-Chah-Nulth negotiating and relational visions and strategies to the outcomes, and what do they bode for ongoing political struggles with the state elsewhere?

Harvey Feit's paper "Re-cognizing Co-Management as Co-Governance: Histories and Visions of Conservation at James Bay," focusses on co-management practices created by a joint Cree-government beaver reserve system begun in the 1930s and on the relationships of those emerging co-management institutions to Cree tenure and leadership practices and ideas which have long been discussed in anthropology as "Algonquian hunting territories." Some of these Cree hunting territory practices were incorporated into the beaver reserve operations to make the reserves workable, and the hunting territories were partly altered by the development of the beaver reserves. But the hunting territories remained distinct from the beaver reserves, and they are still in use long after the abandonment of the beaver reserves. This analysis nevertheless suggests, as several of the other papers, that the process of developing co-management regimes was a process of expanding the authority, legitimacy and capacity of the state to govern northern Quebec.

But Feit's paper also shows, as many Cree hunters claim today, that co-management was also a process in which government agents and institutions repeatedly and explicitly recognized the capacity, authority and legitimacy of Cree governance, rights and practices. This was so even though those recognitions were often surrounded by ambiguities and contradictions, because they conflicted with ideas of the exclusivity of state sovereignty. So the analysis here indicates that co-management may not only empower the state, it may simultaneously, and without creating equality, enhance and recognize the independent legitimacy of parallel local practices of conservation and governance.

We invite readers to both consider questions about the uses, effects and histories of co-management, as well as

how they shed light on the general issues arising from relationships of local polities to nation state practices, institutions and ideas.

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Acknowledgment

We wish to thank Winnie Lem and Andrew Lyons for their invaluable advice on this essay, and the volume as a whole.

Notes

- 1 Among the notable exceptions are: Pinkerton (1989); Berkes et al. (1991); Usher (1995); Hoekema (1995); and Igoe (2004).
- 2 See for example: McCay and Acheson (1987); Freeman and Carbyn (1988); Berkes (1989); Bromley (1992); Ostrom, et al. (2002); Nadasdy (2003), Roué (2003); and Rodon, (2003).
- 3 Others who have written on this topic include: Dove (1986); Feit (1988); Jentoft et al. (2003); and Blaser et al. (2004).
- 4 See for example: Redford and Padoch (1992); Murombedzi (1991); Western (1994); Gibson (1999); and Igoe (2004).
- 5 See the work of: Poffenberger (1990); Poffenberger and McGean (1996); and Greenough and Tsing (2003).
- 6 See: Weaver (1991) and Hill and Press (1994).
- 7 See: Peluso (1993) and Neumann (1998).
- 8 See also: Fairhead and Leach (1996); Neumann (1998); and Anderson and Berglund (2003).

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