

Sharing power: learning by doing in co-management of natural resources throughout the world

by Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend, Michel Pimbert, M. Taghi Farvar, Ashish Kotari and Yves Renard

When picking up this book, you feel that the authors have really left no stone unturned in their quest to pull together in their quest to unveil the secrets of successful comanagement. The result is impressive, energising ... and just a little bit daunting.

Sharing Power is designed to support people who both wish to understand collaborative management processes better, and develop and enhance them in practice. From an overview of the history of human relationships with nature, the volume moves into a more conceptual analysis of actors, equity and co-management itself. Through a bewildering array of 121 case studies from Finland to the Philippines, the authors show us the impact, tensions, inequalities and opportunities that arise in the field of natural resource management and how they bear such important consequences for the livelihoods and quality of life of rural communities.

Co-management is unpacked and explored in detail, from its roots in local systems of solidarity to the unlikely and very powerful merging of traditional practises and modern conservation expertise. But don't expect blueprints or step-by-step approaches. What emerges are many contradictions and chaotic situations, pointing strongly to the crucial importance of adaptive management styles. Despite its emphasis on how different every situation is and how heavily culture, politics and environment affect individual approaches, this book focuses very heavily on practical advice, lessons learnt and ways forward. And it does successfully spell out important messages and offers many practical tools and much sound advice.

Examples are drawn from agriculture, agriculture research, water management and pastoral societies, forest resources, fisheries and coastal resources, mountain environments, management of wildlife and protected areas. There are 94 case studies from the South and 27 from the North. The book also offers 31 different checklists to help with practical implementation, addressing subjects like "ideas to managing conflict" and "characteristics of effective indicators".

Sharing Power is the product of creative tension between realities and visions, what is and what could be, especially in response to external forces that affect local communities, other actors and the natural environment. As such, it is an

inspiring piece of work. The book shows us that that comanagement is all about sharing power. As Juan Mayr Maldonado says in the foreward, "this book invites us to, and equips us for, a dialogue among different cultures in a respectful and equitable search for new forms of natural resource management". He goes on to say, "you will find yourself consulting this book over and over again when you need inspiration and practical help" ... the only tricky part will be uncovering the key gem of information you are seeking.

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