



Chapter 6. NEGOTIATING THE CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND ORGANISATION

6.1 Agreeing on the rules and procedures of negotiation

Negotiating among social actors is the heart of the co-management process. It is wise to invest as much energy as possible in it, as the co-management agreements and organisations are generally as good as the process that generated them. Typically, the social actors involved in the negotiation face two main challenges. The first one is process-related and concerns “communication” in its richest sense. How can a partnership be developed among people who, besides having different interests and concerns, often do not share the same values, attitudes, capacities, ways of working, reference systems and languages— in a word, people who belong to different “cultures”? This implies overcoming serious communication difficulties, both verbal (co-management meetings have been known to need to accommodate five or more languages!) and non-verbal. And yet, communication difficulties are not insurmountable, and plenty of examples exist of collaborative agreements among groups that, at the beginning, appeared very distant or even incompatible (see Box 6.1). The secret, if one is there, seems to be a combination of determination, time, resources and an encouraging social environment.

Box 6.1 **Bicultural co-management in New Zealand**

(adapted from Taiepa *et al.*, 1996)

Collaboration between Maori and *Pakeha* (non-Maori, predominantly of European origin) is a fundamental constitutional requirement of the Treaty of Waitangi. A number of initiatives to involve Maori and *Pakeha* in co-management have emerged on the west coast of the North Island. Their principles embrace both traditional ecological knowledge and relationships with nature (expressed in Maori tradition as *kaitiakitanga*) and modern scientific understanding of interconnectedness and interdependence (expressed through the concept of ecosystem, concerns for the conservation of biodiversity and assumption of stewardship responsibilities). The agreements developed under these arrangements recognise the *mana* (a fundamental Maori concept meaning influence, prestige, power, authority and control) of each *iwi* (tribe) and give effect to their status as a Treaty partner and traditional *kaitiaki* (environmental guardians ensuring the *mauri* or life force) of their resources. The agreements also recognise the responsibilities of statutory agencies that have specialised knowledge in the areas of interest.

One of the innovative steps of these agreements is that they had their first meetings in the local *marae* (the courtyard in front of the Maori meeting house). These *marae*-based gatherings, open to the whole community, helped to create a basis for mutual understanding, trust and dialogue. The *kawa* (traditional protocols followed by each *iwi*) have much to contribute to the development of effective NRM agreements, starting from putting to use the tradition of dynamic debate and decision making by consensus, and the building of a common spirit through the sharing of meals and spiritual invocations. For instance, such discussions have taken place regarding the traditional harvest of the *titi* bird, which is locally very important, both as food and for local cultural practices. A joint research project on *titi* ecology and the impact of its harvesting practices has been developed, including “cultural safety” rules. The contract foresees that Maori people guide the research in consultation with a university research team. The data gathered will be published, but with a delay clause, so that the Maori could meet and formulate their collective view on the research and specific responses, if need be.

The second main challenge is more related to the products of the co-management partnership than to its process. Is it possible for a partnership to distribute the benefits and responsibilities of natural resource management in an efficient and equitable manner, starting from a situation that, quite likely, is neither efficient nor equitable? As described in Chapter 2.1, the starting point of a co-management process may even be an existing conflict, as for the Galapagos Marine Reserve (Ecuador) or the Makuleke land (South Africa). To move from an acute conflict to a peaceful and just situation is a challenge indeed. The learning-by-doing experiences throughout the world summarised in this volume do not provide a recipe for solution, but nevertheless offer several insights. Importantly, for instance, the fairness of the process by which an agreement is developed has lots to do with the quality of its results and overall impact. Some authors refer to this as “procedural justice”.¹

The fairness of the process by which the agreement is developed has lots to do with its quality.

No matter whether the relevant social actors identified by the Start-up Team are many or few, whether they are formally or informally organised, whether they share interests and concerns or are opposed by strongly contrasting positions and values, they need to *meet* and *discuss* issues of common concern. The basic ingredients of the negotiation phase are thus:

- the social actors themselves (hopefully well-informed and organised, as described in Chapter 5);
- an agreed place and time where they can discuss (a discussion forum or

¹ Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993.

platform);

- some rules and procedures for those discussions (at least suggested); and
- some competent support to facilitate the communication, assist in the negotiation and mediate conflicts, as necessary.

Every negotiation process is unique and needs to respond to the specific conditions and needs at hand. Nevertheless, some broadly similar steps are taken by many processes of negotiation for the management of natural resources. These, which can be taken to represent some “process milestones”, include:

- a long-term shared *vision* (ecological and social) for the NRM unit(s) at stake;
- an agreed *strategy* to approach such a vision, based on a common understanding of the issues and obstacles that currently prevent the realisation of that vision;
- a specific *agreement* on how to implement the strategy (usually including a *co-management plan* for the natural resources at stake and *complementary accords*, as necessary, to address relevant socio-economic issues, cultural issues, etc.);
- a pluralist *organisation* set up to implement the strategy and review it, as necessary, on an on-going basis.

Box 6.2 **Setting up a partnership to manage a watershed in the USA**
(adapted from EPA, 1997)

No one entity alone can solve all the management issues in a given watershed. That is why it is essential to pull together a management partnership. Ideally, this will represent the key interests in the watershed, will be of manageable size and will create many synergies. In the USA such partnerships are common. Some are loosely structured, while others are quite formal. Some are open, while others are closed, meaning they do not allow anyone else to join besides its founding members. Regardless of how they are structured, making partnerships work is challenging and takes commitment. Common tasks that partnerships face include: selecting a leader, ensuring that all the right people are involved, and moving beyond any hostility that may exist among members. A group able to develop its *esprit de corps* can be very effective indeed.

Partners can include any group that has an interest in the watershed. They may be conservation groups, local elected officials, chambers of commerce, environmental education organisations, local military bases, farm groups, students, senior citizens groups, religious organisations, financial groups, credit unions and land developers, among others. The important thing is to include all the key interest groups so that the partnership can tap into their strengths, increase its credibility, reduce duplication of effort, and make optimal use of limited funds.

To get past the “forming and storming stages,” some groups that formed for the management of specific watersheds set their own ground rules. Examples: one group has decided that individuals can complain for only a certain amount of time, after which they must move on; some groups have decided to say that issues that are too divisive will simply... not be discussed! Essential ingredients for effective partnerships include: focusing on common interests, respecting each participant’s view point, thanking each other, being willing to learn about others’ needs and positions, and building trust.

Experienced watershed co-managers say that one-on-one contact is most effective in eliciting support.

Further, building partnerships takes time and commitment, and once built they need to be nurtured. However, their benefits are clear, as they lead to wider acceptance and quicker implementation of all sorts of initiatives.

The first procedural meeting

The first step of a multi-party negotiation process is an initial collective contact, a gathering or workshop where the social actors meet in a rather formal way. As mentioned in Chapter 5, one of the fundamental tasks of the Start-up Team is the good organisation of this first meeting. Attention should be paid to the venue (a “neutral” forum such as a school building, a community market or a theatre is preferable to a forum that some could see as partisan— such as a church or government office), to the timing (which should be convenient for people with normal working schedules and should strive to accommodate also particular groups, such as women responsible for cooking for their families) and to the seating arrangement (a circular arrangement without hierarchical dispositions, on the ground or around a table, on rugs, mats, or chairs, is usually appropriate). The agenda should be made available to the relevant actors in advance, to allow them time to discuss their views internally.

At the beginning, the convenor greets the participants and the members of the Start-up Team introduce themselves and recapitulate the work thus far. It is important to be transparent on who has facilitated and financially supported the Team’s work and why. In turn, the representatives of the social actors introduce themselves and explain how their groups have internally organised and identified their representatives. The Start-up Team may then wish to recall and clarify what the CM process is set up to achieve. This is relatively easy when the meeting of the parties refers to a specific mandate, but more elusive when the parties face incomplete or unclear legislation, policy and competencies. Also, the more complex the natural resource unit to be managed, the more vague the situation may be. For instance, some biosphere reserves set up a forum of concerned parties with the mandate of “coordinating”, “providing impulse” and “watching over” their evolving situation. If such a forum would pretend to take decisions it would be seen as a sort of “parallel government”, which would be politically unacceptable.² And yet, a forum of concerned parties may build up its own legitimacy to such an extent that its proposals get to be invariably accepted by the political

Procedural questions are usually easier to deal with than substantive questions....

...a first meeting in a calm and productive atmosphere is important to establish good working relationships and for the participants to start “owning” the CM process.



² Juan Rita Larrucea, personal communication, 1996.

authorities. With or without an explicit mandate for decision-making, an effective stakeholder forum can *influence* local land use plans and NRM regulations, the concession of permits, the sharing of costs, benefits and revenues and the orientation of research. In some cases, it can even be asked to develop the technical proposals to be later decided upon,³ indeed an extremely important way of affecting decisions!

In a first procedural meeting the members of the Start-up Team or a facilitator (if one is present) can illustrate a proposed set of procedures and rules for the negotiation phase (see some examples in Chapter 5, Checklists 5.2 and 5.3) as well as a proposed schedule of meetings. The discussion can then be opened until a broad accord is achieved. In this context, the participants can be invited to state a commitment to fairness and equity in the process. All of them (and especially the professional experts!) can also be invited to agree to a mature, non-paternalist and non-ethnocentric attitude, and to acknowledge the legitimacy of values, interests and opinions different from their own. A skilled facilitator⁴ Lay succeed in getting this point included as part of the basic rules for discussion.

At the moment of agreeing upon who shall attend the next meeting, some people may object to the very presence of others and attempt to exclude them. The facilitator can help diffuse these potential disruptive objections by assuring that an inclusive approach at the discussion table does not mean that everyone will *equally* share in entitlements and responsibilities for natural resource management. It will be the task of *all* representatives together to identify everyone's role and weight in terms of substantive issues and decisions. Some people may also push to discuss substantive issues well before the procedures and rules are agreed upon. A skilled facilitator will not allow this to happen. He/ she can remind the participants that substantive agenda items will be discussed in future meetings, as the rules need to be agreed upon before the discussion can go ahead in an effective way. A productive and friendly first meeting is an important foothold for the subsequent ones, in which specific and often sensitive problems, needs, resources and opportunities will be identified and discussed.

The facilitator may also remind the participants that for every unit of natural resources there exist a multiplicity of good and poor management options (the terms *good* and *poor* referring to the wide range of goals and objectives to be defined by the process), and that conflicts of interest among the social actors are inevitable but, in most cases, manageable. The concerned parties do not even have to agree on the same goals or priorities, provided they can reach a practical compromise. Importantly, in the light of the complexity of ecological and social systems, the best approach is generally one of adaptive management (learning-by-doing). This means that the decisions taken at the negotiation forum should be strictly adhered to until they produce some measurable results, after which they will be revisited and evaluated. On the basis of the evaluation and other intervening change, the decisions could then be adjusted or changed. As a matter of fact, even a satisfactory NRM solution does not remain valid forever, as the surrounding ecological, economic and social conditions do change and management rules and practices need to change in response to them— something everyone has to be prepared for. Flexibility can be embedded in the final agreement through specific monitoring and evaluation procedures (sometimes called “a follow-up protocol”) that allow the agreement to adapt and respond to change.

...the negotiation process will need to make sure that enough flexibility is embedded in the final agreement, so that it can adapt and respond to change.

³ See Box 6.13 in this Chapter.

⁴ Here and in the rest of the Chapter we will use the term “facilitator” with the understanding that the role may be played by one or more external professionals or others, including the members of the Start-up Team.

After the first procedural meeting, there are various possible courses of action, depending on the level of engagement that is being sought. It may be that the first meeting is followed by extensive public consultations lasting several months (this was the case for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in Australia⁵). It may be that only two main parties are going to be involved (e.g., an agency in charge of a protected area and a local community) and that substantive matters can be agreed upon in a series of workshops (this was the case for several National Parks in Uganda⁶). Or it may be that months or even years of negotiations are about to begin among a variety of parties (this was the case for the Galapagos Marine Reserve in Ecuador⁷ and for the Soufriere Marine Management Area in Saint Lucia⁸). In most situations, if the relevant actors are expected and willing to take an active role in management, a series of meetings and workshops is planned ahead, often beginning with the development of a common vision of the desired future.

The role of the facilitator

Negotiation processes have to be firmly anchored in the culture and mores of the actors concerned. Many traditional societies know extremely well how to negotiate in convivial manners as part of normal life and do not need external facilitators, who may actually complicate rather than ease up matters. In other cases, the members of the Start-up Team are sufficiently various and broadly respected to be able to facilitate themselves the co-management process. An external facilitator may be essential, however, when there are strong power imbalances, unresolved conflicts or communication problems among the concerned parties, when the parties belong to very different “cultural” backgrounds or when there is lack of clarity regarding local authorities and rules. Many societies are today characterised by multiple and competing decision-making systems and actors (e.g., customary systems and legal systems, traditional leaders, state administrators, agency personnel, project advisors) and people can “shop around” among institutions until they obtain the decision favourable to them.⁹ These are situations in which positive and lasting agreements are unlikely to generate spontaneously and some external facilitation and the provision of a clear system of reference and rules may be crucial.

One of the key tasks of the process facilitator— whoever is playing that role— is making sure that all the relevant actors express their concerns, that no one dominates the meetings and that the discussion is adequately structured and proceeds towards the shared objectives. The facilitator can also assist in managing conflicts, usually by helping people to move from apparently irreconcilable claims and positions (for instance “we want a road across the forest” and “we want to eliminate access to the forest”) into the fundamental interests of the parties¹⁰ (“we want access to the zone north of the forest because it is an important market for one of our major products” and “we want to maintain a viable habitat for this animal species”). This is actually best done when the parties have taken the time to express, listen to and reflect upon their fundamental interests, and have articulated a long-term common vision (see Section 6.2).

⁵ GBRMPA, 1994.

⁶ Chhetri *et al.*, 2003.

⁷ Heylings and Bravo, 2001.

⁸ Geoghegan *et al.*, 1999; Pierre-Nathoniél, 2003.

⁹ Egeimi *et al.*, 2003.

¹⁰ Lewis, 1997.

Checklist 6.1 Qualities and tasks of a good facilitator/ mediator for a co-management process

A process facilitator should be:

- recognised as independent;
- respected by all those involved in the negotiation;
- capable of relating with everyone in the negotiation;
- extremely able to listen;
- calm, insightful and capable of posing the key questions (for example, on the root causes of the various problems and the feasibility of the options put forward);
- capable of eliciting the best out of the participants and helping them to see a different future for themselves and their communities.

Tasks of a process facilitator:

- helping the Start-up Team and the relevant actors to identify and agree upon the rules and procedures of the negotiation meetings;
- being responsible for the logistics of the meetings (e.g., selection of venue, agenda, seating arrangements, translation services, discussion tools, transportation arrangements, etc.);
- ensuring that the process takes place in accordance with the agreed rules (ensuring a comfortable situation in the meetings) and that everyone has a fair chance to participate;
- checking out that the representatives of the social actors truly represent them (e.g., they are not merely self-appointed);
- helping the group to be conscious of itself and of its goals, mission and opportunities;
- refusing to state his/ her opinion on substantive issues and never deciding for the group on substantive matters;
- promoting the best possible communication among social actors, e.g., by re-phrasing points, asking questions, suggesting the exploration of key ideas in depth;
- helping the group to broaden the range of its options and open up to constructive attitudes, for example encouraging and assisting the group members to:
 - ▶ talk to each other directly, if this was impossible before;
 - ▶ take time to listen to and respect the positions of other groups;
 - ▶ raise new points of doubt and self-doubt;
 - ▶ clarify and enhance their own perception of the situation and opinions of other participants;
 - ▶ bring new information to the attention of everyone;
 - ▶ discover points of agreement that promise to be sustainable and deal with them before other contentious subjects.

The facilitator is also called to prevent the process from being unduly determined and run by “partisan politics”. Party positions are often rigid stands made for the sake of visibility, and clever politicians are more capable of arousing divisive tendencies than collaboration and agreements on common concerns.

Indeed, this is a sensitive issue. Professional politicians may see the negotiation of an agreement over natural resource management as an excellent opportunity to exploit for their own partisan or private interests. This, for instance, was a recurrent problem in the early stages of the local agreements between park authorities and local communities in Mt. Elgon (Uganda)¹¹ where some local politicians saw the negotiation forum as an electoral platform. Because of problems like this, some bodies tend to *exclude* professional politicians from representation roles in the CM process.¹² This is an intriguing and controversial suggestion, hard to achieve in practice. As a matter of fact, many legally-sanctioned CM bodies, such as the pluralist management boards of protected areas in Europe, recognise as representatives of “local communities” only elected political representatives, such as the mayors of the main relevant municipalities.

Fairness, conflicts and power differentials

Politicians or not, it is logical to expect that the parties will be using all sorts of means to advance their interests in the negotiation process. This is inevitable and, given the existing power differentials among people usually engaged at the same forum for negotiation, it seems to present a major and possibly insurmountable obstacle to fairness in negotiation. As aptly expressed by Edmunds and Wollenberg:¹³

“...a truly level playing field is impossible to achieve. Power differences persist, if in no other way than through historical relationships among stakeholders. Rather than assuming that neutral conditions can ever be achieved, we need to assume that we can only work towards this ideal. We need to be vigilantly alert to and deal explicitly with power differences. Instead of assuming we have eliminated or temporarily neutralised political differences within negotiations, practitioners need to acknowledge power relations in negotiations and work actively to increase the decision-making power of disadvantaged groups. [...] a more politically sensitive approach to negotiations can yield better benefits for disadvantaged groups.”

Indeed, power differentials are a serious obstacle to fairness, but they should be seen in the light of what is happening all over the world *outside* the enhanced visibility of a pluralist negotiation forum. The existence of an open negotiation platform, the agreement on rules and procedures and the presence of a competent external facilitator are important steps towards guaranteeing at least a *measure* of fairness in the negotiation even when strong power differentials exist. An experienced facilitator can help the parties take the best advantage of the openness and visibility of the process, making sure that correct behaviour is acknowledged and incorrect behaviour discouraged. The aim is to develop agreements that are as equitable as possible and that do not leave any major social actors out of the picture, humiliated, exploited or treated unfairly. Equitable agreements are desirable *per se*, and some maintain they may have better chances of remaining valid through time.¹⁴

One of the important elements to agree upon in advance is what to do in case of

The existence of an open negotiation platform, the agreement on rules and procedures and the presence of a competent external facilitator may be important steps towards guaranteeing at least a measure of fairness in the negotiation process, even when strong power differentials exist among the parties.

¹¹ Penny Scott, personal communication, 1996.

¹² This is the case for the *Junta de Manejo Participativo* of the Galapagos Marine Reserve.

¹³ Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2002.

¹⁴ In the words of Phillips, for instance, “An iron rule” is that “no protected area can succeed for long in the teeth of local opposition.” (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2002). Others, however, stress that injustice can be sustained for the sake of conservation with remarkable robustness (Brockington, 2003).

serious conflict among the parties, such as blockages in the negotiation, different interpretation of agreements or seemingly unsolvable procedural disagreements. The facilitator may stress that internal consensus-seeking procedures are the first and most promising option. Basically this involves the thorough discussion of the issues and reasons for the parties to uphold their positions, as well as the exploration of any nook and cranny for agreement and compromise. If this is not sufficient to resolve the dispute, a number of possible advisors (individuals or bodies), arbiters and judicial resolution systems can be called to help. Ideally, those would be identified well before disputes arise, as part of a hierarchy of dispute resolution mechanisms agreed upon early in the process.

The facilitator should be well aware of local customs, cultural peculiarities and relevant experiences and institutions, in particular customary ways and institutions capable of managing conflicts, and which could be called in to help in difficult circumstances. Box 6.4 cautions against attempting to understand conflict resolution processes without a sophisticated degree of cultural sensitivity. In Nepal, the Forest Department took nearly two decades to discover that the village-based Panchayats provided more effective and respected forms of conflict resolution among forest users than the western-style law enforcement introduced in the 1970s.¹⁵ In Canada, it has been found that conflicts between the Inuit people and the government biologists could only be resolved through extensive community-based communication efforts and mutual respect. Only if that was present, modern technology could help. A major dispute over the size of a Kaminuriak caribou herd, for instance, was resolved through the use and analysis of videotapes, but this was achieved only when everyone had learned to listen and ensured to the others the full respect of their dignity and a fair share in the final decisions.¹⁶

Box 6.3 **Conflict management— Chinese style**
(adapted from Cao and Zhang, 1997)

In China, it is said that management of the forest can never take place without conflicts, both within and among communities. Intra-village conflicts usually take place over the sharing of forest products among members of the same family. Excess want and unfair allocation are the main reasons for the conflicts. The conflict is usually settled within the family with the village committee as mediator. Inter-village conflicts usually have a long history, at times traced to the very first local settlements. Most disputes are about boundaries of control areas, resulting from the changing patterns of village settlements and immigration.

Mr. Li, a former headman of Dongda village, in the Yunnan province (south-central China), explained the way in which Chinese villages deal with conflicts: "Solving inter-village conflicts involves the participation of local government officials. When two villages debate on the ownership of a certain patch of forest land, the neighbouring committees come in for a debate and the local government is requested to send its representative. The discussion is held alternatively in each of the villages— one day in one and the following day in the other. During the discussion, the host village provides food and accommodation for the visiting village committee. The hot debate is always after the meal, not during the meal. Each side presents all the documents and materials supporting their case, even from the pre-Communist period, and the conflict-solving process takes at the most three days. In case the conflict cannot be settled by the discussion, the local government gives a final judgment and ends the conflict."

¹⁵ Don Gilmour, personal communication, 1996.

¹⁶ Snowden, Kusagak and MacLoed, 1984.

Box 6.4 Conflict management— Iranian style

An American anthropologist was doing his doctoral research on conflict resolution in the “bazaar” of Tehran. After several months of work, he was exceedingly frustrated and wrote a letter to his thesis advisor. “ I’ve now been preparing to observe this process for 6 months. I’ve learned the language and have put myself in positions of trust. I’ve been present at various occasions in meetings where a conflict is expected to be resolved. I turn on my tape recorder, and wait endlessly. These people just keep drinking tea and talking about everything in the world except the issue that is the cause of the conflict to be resolved! Please tell me, Professor, how can I make them talk about the conflict to be resolved, so that I can collect the data I need for my thesis? Help!”

The advisor wrote him that he had just missed the most beautiful way in which they traditionally resolve conflicts: being hospitable and friendly, drinking tea and conversing about all the other things in the world that are not conducive to conflict, until the problem goes away!¹⁷



6.2 Developing and “ritualising” a common vision of the desired future

At the beginning of the substantive negotiations, after the partners have agreed on the rules and procedures to guide the process, one or more meetings can be devoted to establishing a base of common interests and concerns among all the relevant actors. In such meetings, the participants are encouraged to discuss their long-term wishes for the NRM unit(s) at stake, *i.e.*, the kind of environment, natural resources and living conditions they would like, ideally, to leave to their children and grandchildren. The time frame is usually set to twenty or more years from the present, so that people can free themselves, if at all possible, from pressing needs and current controversies. This is a crucial moment in the development of a co-management setting, as it is the first time in which different values and views come to face one another openly and publicly. One of the most powerful confrontations is likely to take place between “local” perspectives and values, often practical, hard-headed and locally wise, and more “general” and abstract perspectives and values, including scientific and ecological views, biodiversity conservation values and the “development” concerns of national governments and private sector interests.

Acknowledging the existence of such differences, the facilitator can nevertheless help the participants to develop a consensus on a common vision of a desired future, with specific descriptions— as visual and concrete as possible— of the ecological and socio-economic situation in the NRM unit(s). This can be done through visioning exercises, scenario-building or simply through dialogues and broad discussion sessions.¹⁸ Visioning exercises are commonly done in many environments and they can be more or less comfortable for the people involved according to local customs and to the homogeneity of participants. In Ghana, a visioning exercise done at the district level proved that local people— ranging from traditional chiefs to bank officials, from small farmers to transport operators,

¹⁷ John Bennett, personal communication, 1971.

¹⁸ For a simple guidance to visioning exercises see Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* (2000). Many resources are also available in the Internet, for instance at: <http://www.sustainable.org/creating/vision.html>

from local government authorities to charcoal producers— succeeded to achieve a fairly harmonious outcome. Different people could indeed harmonise their goals and develop a new willingness to work together. This required some work, however, as the original visions of different actors were not entirely compatible. For instance, some actors saw a future centred on industrial development for the district, while others wanted to maintain its agricultural vocation and stressed environmental sustainability. Eventually, a compromise was developed. Interestingly, it was not a minimum common denominator compromise but a specific and meaningful vision agreed by all (see Box 6.5).

Box 6.5 A Vision for Wenchi district (Ghana) as developed by the participants in a multi-stakeholder workshop
(from Borrini-Feyerabend, 2000)

Twenty years from now Wenchi is an exceptionally rich district, including a large, well-planned and functional town. Its economy is based on modern, mechanised, irrigated and biologically sound agriculture, with diversified production for both the export market (cashew, yam, palm oil) and the domestic market (grains, vegetables, legumes, palm oil). Livestock production is centred on stall-fed animals producing manure to fertilise the land, and small poultry farms. Revenues also come from the mining of stone and gold (with great care to prevent environmental damage), some industrial production (e.g., a brick and tile factory making use of a local clay deposit, a textile factory, a soap factory making use of palm oil products) as well as from handicrafts (e.g., pottery) and other tourism activities (there are several hotels in Wenchi, and even an airport).

Agricultural and industrial activities are based on a well-planned zoning of the district and a consciously sought-out diversification of the economy. The Bai dam near Benda is providing the electricity supply for many small processing facilities and some larger ones (cassava chips, cashew and vegetables).

Agriculture and local food sufficiency are sustained by:

- secured access to land of small farmers on equitable leasing and sharecropping systems;
- a vibrant market system, well linked with Ghaneian and foreign buyers, making use of standard weights and measures in the whole district (today not yet available!) and allowing full and free circulation of products and people;
- an excellent road network and telecommunication system, providing farmers with timely information and connection to local and distant markets;
- superb agricultural advice (the Wenchi Farm Institute has evolved into an Agricultural University), including advice on how to grow crops organically and conduct farm-based experimental trials;
- community credit schemes to assist both agriculture and industry;
- great care to protect environmental resources such as soil fertility (e.g., intercropping, crop rotation, use of compost, legumes, farm manure) sustained by long term land leases;
- full literacy of farmers;
- community organisations sharing irrigation facilities, transport vehicles, storage facilities and farming and processing machineries.

The whole Wenchi district is a beautiful mosaic of well-planned farmland, forest patches sustaining a variety of local plants and animals, and human settlements. More than forty forest patches of sacred groves remain undisturbed since times immemorial. The river banks are lined with vegetation and par-

ticularly beautiful river sites, including waterfalls, are renowned as tourist attractions. The actual increase in forest extension in the district in the last twenty years has brought about an improved rainfall pattern.

Natural resource management is regulated by the District Assembly. Local by-laws (e.g., for the protection of sacred groves, the collection of non-timber forest products, the collection of poles, the creation of windbreaks, the protection of water bodies, the prevention of bush fires) are proclaimed and enforced by local relevant institutions, which include representatives of traditional leaders, farmers, elected representatives and the government. Private and community-owned tree plantations are scattered all over the district, and trees are also found in most farms. Bush fires are a very rare occurrence caused by lightning, no longer intentionally lit by hunting parties or farmers (slash and burn methods).

Services in health, education, electricity, drinking water, sanitation, markets, etc., are available in all district villages. Everywhere children have access to good primary education and infant and maternal deaths are rare. As a consequence, people have no need to move to town, and enjoy being farmers and living in the countryside. The population of the district is relatively stable, and couples plan their family with the help of safe and effective methods.

The services are sustained by a tax system locally collected and managed by the District Assembly. Decentralisation policies have been in place for many years and have developed effective and transparent form of local government.

Private houses are well built, with effective ventilation systems and often surrounded by gardens. Most cooking stoves make use of liquid pressured gas, which has freed the district from destructive charcoal-production practices. The district hosts many schools and colleges, producing a skilled labour force. Due to improvements in food availability, hygiene, housing and health care, diseases such as malaria, polio and Guinea worm are a memory of the past, while measles, bilharzia and diarrhoeal diseases have become very rare. A health insurance scheme is available in the district.

A distinctive feature of the district is the unique disposition of its people to collaborate. Individuals are ready to work together and many productive follow-up are carried out by community-based organisations (CBOs). This is rooted in the cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups inhabiting the district, such as the *nnoboa* work solidarity schemes. There are even special events such as an annual festival that has become an occasion for participatory democracy, when people engage together in a variety of planning and organising activities. Other festive celebrations are often held in the communities scattered throughout the district.

People are sensitive towards avoiding all sorts of discrimination (e.g., public structures are accessible to disabled people; women and men have equal access to higher education; relationships among different ethnic groups are cordial). People are generally healthy, wealthy, well educated, satisfied, free to speak their mind and practice the religion of their choice. There is safe and adequate food supply for all. People enjoy a peaceful and good life.

A visioning exercise should not be taken lightly. If done with appropriate preparation and care it is a powerful moment in the life of a community and should be respected as such. Unfortunately, many projects and donor agencies promote visioning as just “another step” in a rapid appraisal exercise, raising hopes and expectations and later failing to respond to them.¹⁹ This is a dangerous pitfall. External actors should refrain from promoting participatory visioning and planning exercises if they do not have the intention of helping the community carry them through, at least in part.

¹⁹ An example is the donor agency that promoted the visioning illustrated in Box 6.5 but failed to respond to the raised expectations.

In North America, community visioning and scenario building exercises have been practiced for decades with inspiring success. One early example among many is the one of the city of Corvallis in Oregon.²⁰ A complex visioning process was started there in the late 1980s and involved developing a profile of the community, articulating a statement of community values, analysing major trends affecting the community, preparing alternative scenarios of the future and, on the basis of the results of the prior exercises, developing a final vision statement. Local citizens were involved at every juncture through special “focus groups” (including some of children only), neighbourhood meetings and community-wide forums to examine the alternative scenarios. The final result was compiled in a colourful, tabloid-style vision statement with a feedback form inviting citizen comments, and was mailed to literally every household in the community. The document mailed to everyone included a large, bird’s-eye view illustration of the territory, with highlights for foreseen new initiatives. The process lasted well longer than a year but resulted in a vibrant vision that sprouted new activities and

initiatives and served as pioneer for many other communities in Oregon.



The social consensus on a vision of a desired future is extremely important for the negotiation of effective co-management plans and agreements. If conflicts and disagreements will surface during the negotiation process, the facilitator will be able to bring everyone back to the vision they developed together. For this, it is useful to record the agreed common vision on a large sheet of paper (or other appropriate support) and pin it on a visible surface at the site of the negotiation. It is also good to transform the vision into a charter of principles or other appropriate form of social contract. In many cases it is also appropriate to develop a drawing, portrait or tri-dimensional map of the vision.²¹ When different stakeholders develop their own drawings and show it to one another, they often discover previously unappreciated commonalities.²² Last but not least, it is important that people feel free to describe their vision in the local language, as local languages are very rich and in translation may lose part of the meaning that a common vision needs to convey (see Box 6.6).

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Box 6.6 A vision for Moloka’i (USA)

(from a personal communication by Tarita Holms, 2003)

This is the transcript of the result of a long process in *Moloka’i*:

“*Moloka’i* is the last Hawaiian island. We who live here choose not to be strangers in our own land. The value of *aloha ‘aina* and *malama‘aina* (love and care for the land) guide our stewardship of *Moloka’i*’s natural resources, which nourish our families both physically and spiritually. We live by our

²⁰ Ames, 1997.

²¹ Lightfoot *et al.*, 2002.

²² An example from the fishery sector in Chile can be found in www.isglink.org

kupuna's (elders) historic legacy of *pule o'o* (powerful prayer). We honour our island's Hawaiian cultural heritage, no matter what our ethnicity, and what culture is practiced in our everyday lives. Our true wealth is measured by the extent of our generosity.

- We envision strong *'ohana* (families) who steadfastly preserve, protect and perpetuate these core Hawaiian values.
- We envision a wise and caring community that takes pride in its resourcefulness, self-sufficiency and resilience, and is firmly in charge of *Moloka'i's* resources and destiny.
- We envision a *Moloka'i* that leaves for its children a visible legacy: an island *momona* (abundant) with natural and cultural resources, people who *kokua* (help) and look after one another, and a community that strives to build an even better future on the *pa'a* (firm) foundation left to us by those whose *iwi* (bones) guard our land."

As there can be many visions of the desired future for any given environment, the act of choosing one takes on a strong political value. For instance, the Gulf of Fonseca (Honduras) is a Ramsar site. The Bay of Algeiras (Spain) is a biosphere reserve established under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme. Such international labels are social and legal sanctions to a vision of a future dedicated to conservation and sustainable development, in the respective cases centred upon artisan fishing and ecotourism. Currently, there are attempts to revisit those visions— attempts that are not getting by unnoticed. The destruction of coastal mangroves for industrial shrimp farming in the gulf of Fonseca (Honduras) and the starting up of oil prospecting in the Bay of Algeiras (Spain) both approved by the relevant authorities but in contrast with what the same authorities had earlier espoused, generated open popular protests in 2002 and 2003. As a matter of fact, an agreed vision of the future, and especially a vision with international recognition and visibility, has good chances of being internalised and defended by the local people. This is beginning to be recognised by communities all over the world. Setting an environment under some form of national and international protection or restriction constitutes an important strategic move to assure a community vision of its desired future. In chapter 4 we discussed the examples of Mirafior (Nicaragua), Alto Fragua-Indiwasi (Colombia) and Kaa-ya Iya (Bolivia).²³

Box 6.7 Involve the stakeholders and pursue a common vision!

(adapted from Tylor and Woodruff, 1997)

Consultations with relevant social actors were essential in developing a proposal for a marine protected area within the Great Australian Bight. The proposed site includes fishing areas important to the South Australian fishing industry. By involving the affected users and, in particular, the regional fishing industry, Environment Australia managed to develop a credible proposal for a marine protected area, which now enjoys reasonable public support. Valuable lessons were learned in the process. Here are the most important:

- there are benefits in entering the negotiation process without pre-determined outcomes;
- the boundaries of the proposed protected area, as well as the proposed management intentions, need to be negotiated with the relevant resource users;
- a shared vision and common agreement must be rigorously pursued; however,

²³ Munk Ravnborg, 2003; Zuluaga *et al.*, 2003; Winer, 2001; Winer, 2003.

- the risks of compromising conservation objectives because of the involvement of resource users are potentially significant.

A common vision of the desired future of an entire community... is a sort of constitutional agreement. In many cultures this calls for a strong ritual....

An agreement is legitimised when it is accepted and recognised as binding not only by the social actors who developed it, but also by society as a whole. The process by which such legitimisation is achieved, however, is different according to the importance of the agreement. A simple local rule is easily accepted and easily undone. A common vision of the desired future of an entire community, instead, is a sort of constitutional agreement. In many cultures this calls for a strong ritual, respected and acknowledged by the whole society. Such a ritual helps raise the common vision to the spiritual and symbolic level, making it valid in the long term and particularly difficult to disavow.

The choice of the appropriate type of ritual is a culturally specific act, concerning the moral, spiritual and often religious values of the social actors at stake. Traditional practices are often at the heart of such ceremonies. When non-traditional actors and/ or governmental representatives are involved, however, it is advisable that they also produce and sign a written document. In this case, the ceremony held to ritualise the vision could include both a traditional ritual and a modern ritual. The latter could be the public reading, signing and celebration of a document, such as a charter of principles for natural resource management and development approaches in the territory at stake.

The common vision of a desired future is a most appropriate type of agreement to ritualise. If such a vision is ritualised, in fact, it will be regarded as intangible and sacrosanct. As such, it will be possible to use it as a common ground where all social actors can reconcile the controversies and conflicts that may present themselves in the course of negotiations. It cannot be said, on the other hand, *when* it is best to hold the ritual ceremony. In certain cases, the ceremony precedes the negotiation of specific plans and agreements. In others, the ritual comes only after the agreements, as some partners need to see that something concrete can come out of their vision before committing the time and social capital necessary to celebrate it with a strong ritual.

Box 6.8 Fusing the traditional and the modern to ritualise a co-management vision (Republic of Congo)

(from a personal communication by Jean Claude Nuingiri, 2000 and Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2000)

The Conkouati–Douli National Park is situated in the coastal region of the Republic of Congo and characterised by a diversity of ecosystems (savannah, forest, lake, lagoon, etc). From 1994 to 1999, the IUCN supported a co-management process that offered to a variety of local stakeholders an opportunity to develop a common vision for the future of their natural resources. On the basis of such vision, they agreed on the basic elements of a management system (particularly a zoning arrangement and some species-specific rules) and to institute a multi-stakeholder management authority— le *Comité de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles de Conkouati*— COGEREN.

The vision of the future was facilitated and developed through a series of meetings between stakeholders and was legitimised and ritualised during a major ceremony that took place on 8 May, 1999. The ceremony merged aspects from traditional village rituals and administrative and political ceremonies.

On the one hand, there were prepared speeches, a chart to be signed, banners, tee-shirts with slogans, a cameraman filming the event for the national television and all the usual paraphernalia of modern events. On the other, there were songs during which spirits were invoked, oaths taken by the local traditional land authorities (*fumu si* or *chefs de terre*) and dances performed—the same dances usually exhibited during the supplication of spirits for the fertility of women and natural resources (*cianga*). In other words, there was a fusion of rituals: a modern ritual dominated by the signature of the charter on the management of natural resources and a traditional ritual characterised by fertility cults offered to the clan spirits.

The fused ritual was not organised immediately after agreeing on the long-term vision, but nearly a couple of years later, after the zoning of the national park's land and the pluralist management authority had been agreed upon. There were at least three reasons for this:

- Essentially, a vision is an anticipation on time. The local stakeholders did not have the habit of projecting or speculating on future events. The visioning exercise was totally unfamiliar to them and they did not feel particularly confident after having it done.
- The vision appeared to people as an abstraction, dangerously similar to the promises of the political parties, which the local populations consider with considerable scepticism.
- The most important ritual in prior years—the hand washing ceremony of the political class in June 1991— has not been respected despite its “sacred” value: the armed conflicts that brought the country to mourn many deaths were evidence enough of the violation and transgression of oaths.

By organising the ritual only *after* the specific agreements had been achieved, the co-management facilitators departed from abstract considerations and founded it on concrete and transparent engagements, a fact which re-assured the local stakeholders.



6.3 Developing a strategy to approach the common vision

Once a shared vision of the desired future has been agreed upon and, possibly, ritualised, the social actors may wish to compare it with the current ecological, social and economic situation and trends, and thus identify issues and obstacles that currently prevent the realisation of that vision and need to be addressed. This is done in one or more subsequent meetings, where the discussion can start on the basis of a short report illustrated by the Start-up Team (possibly submitted in advance to all social actors), taking care that the report does not define the limits of the discussion. Some of the parties in the discussion, for instance government agencies and conservation NGOs, may also have specific information and analyses to offer to the attention of the others. It is particularly important to review reliable data on issues perceived by the parties as “urgent problems” in NRM. Other good starting points are participatory exercises, such as historical mapping of the management unit at stake, discussion of desirable and undesirable trends with the participation of local elders, or a transect walk. A facilitator can accompany these exercises and pose the crucial questions: “what are the main points of difference between the situation as it is and the situation as we would like to be, *i.e.*, our shared vision? Is society moving towards or away from our vision? What are the key problems and obstacles blocking progress towards it? What opportunities, resources and assets can we rely on?” A realistic discussion of these points may

What are the key problems and obstacles blocking progress towards our vision? What opportunities, resources and assets can we rely on? What tangible results could constitute the “building blocks” of our vision?

take some time, and result in agreed lists of problems and opportunities. It is then the time to focus attention on a short- to medium-term strategy to achieve the common vision. “What needs to change for us to attain our vision?” What would be the main components (dimensions of work, key performance areas) of an effective strategy towards it? What tangible results could constitute its “building blocks”?”

A variety of methods and tools can be utilised to facilitate the development of an agreed strategy. Some groups rely on a free-flowing discussion on issues and opportunities in a non-committal form (*i.e.*, anyone can launch ideas without being committed to agree on them later on). If this moment is truly open and visionary, it can actually free people from the sectoral positions they may be entrenched in. Others are more systematic, examining problems and opportunities in depth, and comparing different options for action. Some relevant methods and tools are briefly described in Checklist 6.2.

Checklist 6.2 **Methods and tools to identify the components and objectives of a common strategy**

(adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; Goethert and Hamdi, 1988)

Brainstorming and structured brainstorming. A basic technique employed to gather the views and perceptions of a group of people. Ideas are offered freewheeling after the facilitator puts forth an open-ended and somewhat provocative question, such as “What are the main obstacles that forbid us to live in the ideal community we visualised for our children?” or “What needs to change for us to attain our vision?” Opening statements and questions should be general and non-leading, *i.e.*, should not stress or overemphasise a point of view that could bias the participants. It should be clear that brainstorming is a free and non-committal way of exploring ideas, *i.e.*, no one commits himself or herself to something by suggesting it in a brainstorming session. At times people offer ideas orally, one after another, and the facilitator writes or illustrates the ideas up on a board. The grouping and refining of ideas is then done by general discussion.

If the participants in the exercise are all literate it is also possible to utilise a structured brainstorming exercise. In this case the facilitator asks a question and leaves time for people to think about their own answers and write them down in large letters on colour cards (there should be one idea per card, represented by a few words). Each participant then presents her/ his ideas to the rest of the group. After each idea card is illustrated, it is pinned up on the wall and the whole group decides where it should be set, to cluster it with related ideas. The final result is a series of “clusters of cards”, each dealing with a main issue. Each cluster is usually later assigned to a sub-group, which examines it in depth and synthesises from it a composite answer.

Analysing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and limitations (SWOL). SWOL²⁴ is a powerful tool for a group to assess an issue of concern, in particular a project, organisation or public service, and to identify opportunities for improving it. Basically, it is a group brainstorming on the positive factors (strengths), the negative factors (weaknesses), the possible improvements (opportunities) and the constraints (limitations) related to the initiative or entity at stake. Usually the results of the brainstorming are listed on a four-column matrix, drafted on flipcharts pinned on a board or wall.

Participants may have widely different opinions or express statements that are mutually contradictory. In such cases, the facilitator can ask further questions to deepen the arguments, but a consensus among the group members is *not* necessary. Contrasting views and alternative options can be listed on the same

²⁴ Sometimes called SWOT (T for threats).

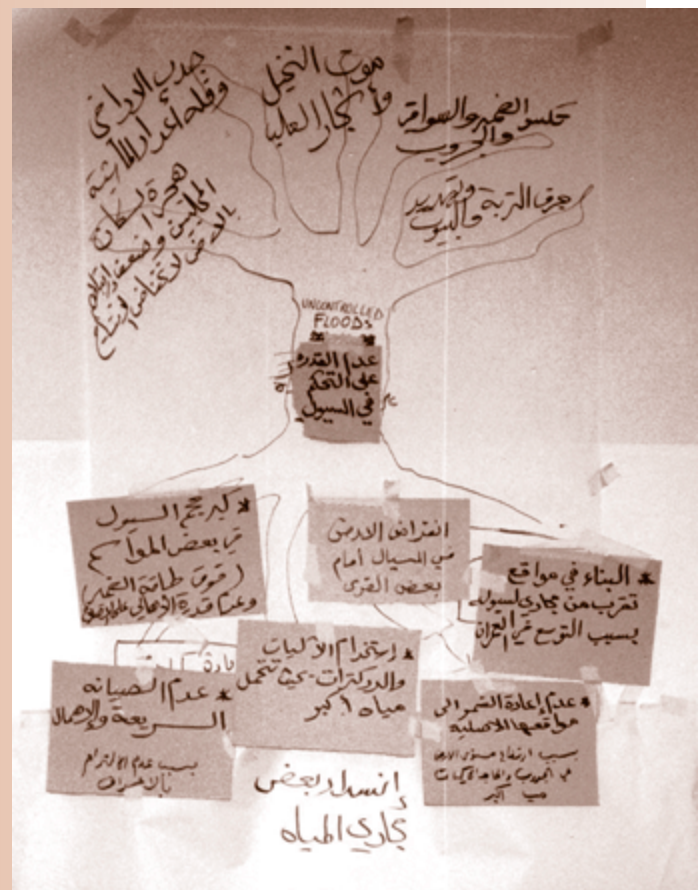
column in the matrix. It may be useful, however, to gather more information on the controversial issues once the meeting is over— information that will be communicated to the whole group in the next meeting).

Situation analysis and problem analysis. Depending on the questions posed to the group, a strategic component may be expressed in different forms (e.g., “managing the watershed in a sustainable way” or “stopping soil erosion in the watershed”). In all cases, the situation, issue or problem needs to be clarified and analysed by the social actors with the help of the facilitator.

“Clarifying” means obtaining a coherent common understanding of the situation, issue or problem at the present moment. In particular, does everyone agree on what are the major “problems” to face? If people disagree on what a problem actually is, the facilitator may propose that a problem is “an effective blockage towards the achievement of the common vision of our desired future”. If the main components of the strategy end up being described in a concise and effective manner, it is a good idea to have them written up on a large sheet of paper and posted on the wall on the premises of the meeting, possibly next to the description of the agreed vision of the desired future. An experienced facilitator takes also care of encouraging the group to be as specific as possible. For instance, instead of “lack of money” the problem may be better described as “scarce capital to invest and lack of entrepreneurial activities that could generate local income”.

“Analysing” means setting the situation/ issues/ problems within a meaningful context of root causes and consequences, in particular with respect to the vision of the ideal future agreed upon by everyone. Such an analysis is vital to directing energy and resources in an effective way. Can everyone see the same causes and consequences for a given issue or problem? A good analysis is comprehensive and invests several dimensions of a given context, but can be completed in a reasonable amount of time and, most importantly, is understood by everyone.

Graphic conceptual framework. Graphic conceptual frameworks are tools to systematise and communicate a situation or problem analysis. They basically consist of a schematic illustration of the relationships between an issue or problem, the phenomena contributing to creating and maintaining it, and the consequences arising from its existence. A usual form is a set of text boxes, with arrows representing causal relationships among them. Another form is a sketched drawing of a tree. On the trunk of the tree is written the name of the problem, at the roots are its causes and at the tip of the branches the effects (see the drawing on the side, produced in Yemen). Ideally, a conceptual framework is coherent and comprehensive, for instance able to accommodate the potentially multi-sectoral nature of problems, but also simple. If possible, it includes some consideration of the time dimension (history, seasonality, processes of social and environmental change, etc.).





Whatever the methods employed, the collective thinking of the group about what needs to change and what needs to happen must be developed and expressed. The discussion should continue until everyone is satisfied or at least “can live with” the collective results. Importantly, the analysis underlying the results should be written down and possibly accompanied by graphs, pictures or other graphic support that would make

communication easier. At this broad level of planning it is important to make sure that everyone has understood the key points of agreement but it is unwise to enter into very precise details. For instance, in the last decades so-called logical framework analyses have been used too early in planning processes and in mechanical, uninspiring ways to the impatience of scores of workshop participants. Often, they produced apparently precise results (e.g., indicators and targets for third level objectives) that did not stand any wind of reality. Effective strategic approaches achieve a balance between specificity (e.g., what do we seek to achieve? What needs to change for that to be achieved? How can we track progress?) and the need to remain open to the inevitable changes and adjustments that reality always demands. If that balance is kept in mind, logical framework analyses and other analytic tools can indeed help. An example of a broad strategic agreement is reported in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 A strategy to reach the shared vision of Wenchi district (Ghana), developed by a multi-stakeholder workshop
(adapted from Borrini-Feyerabend, 2000)

After agreeing on a shared vision of the desired future (see Box 6.5), the stakeholders of Wenchi district compared it with the lists of key district problems and resources (elements of strength) they had also identified. They asked themselves: what crucial change is necessary to achieve our vision? Six main areas of needed strategic change were identified and sub-groups were formed to work on each area. Each sub-group identified the specific objectives for the strategic component, but also who were to be the key actors, what they were to accomplish (activities) and with what means. The six identified areas of needed strategic change were the following:

Six main areas of strategic change	Objectives to be pursued within each strategic area
Productivity of the local farming systems	Increase productivity (crops and animals) in environmentally-sound ways by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● improving land leasing contracts; ● promoting farmer-to-farmer agricultural extension services; ● promoting the growing of non-traditional crops; ● promoting agro-forestry techniques.

Management of the district's natural resources	<p>Manage the forests, waterways and wildlife of the district in a sound way by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● preventing and controlling bush fires; ● banning indiscriminate hunting; ● regulating charcoal production; ● restoring degraded habitats; ● conserving the variety of plants and animal species in the district.
Capacity of local communities and institutions	<p>Support various local actors to enhance their own capacities to manage natural resources and/ or assist others to manage. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● improve the capacity of people, CBOs and communities to utilise natural resources in a sustainable way; ● improve the capacity of extension officers to serve the needs of farmers; ● improve the capacity of the administration to provided needed social services and assist communities.
Local access to funds and credit	<p>Assist small farmers to access credit via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reduced interest rate of loans (which will promote higher repayment rates); ● strengthened funding of rural banks.
Better markets and more private enterprises in the district	<p>Develop a coherent market policy for the district by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● promoting strong and democratic farm trade organisations; ● establishing effective market centres; ● providing easier access to credit from financial institutions; ● attracting investors by developing foreign exchange revenues.
Enhanced cultural identity and social exchanges and improved governance in the district	<p>Harmonise the efforts of the Local Chiefs and the Central Government towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● addressing problems associated with the land tenure system; ● peacefully resolving conflicts of interest; ● ensuring religious and cultural tolerance; ● using cultural celebrations for recreation and relaxation; ● building the capacity of CBOs and social organisations to make them functional, committed, democratic and effective; ● encouraging the creation of new NGOs; ● supervising the activities of the CARE project; ● identifying developmental constraints, needed support to vulnerable groups and ways to influence policy decisions to facilitate community growth and prosperity.

As shown in the example of Table 6.1, some of the components of a strategy deal directly with natural resources (*e.g.*, through management plans for specific forests, a water body, or wildlife throughout the district) whereas others bear upon it in indirect and complementary ways, such as via interventions for economic development, capacity building, governance and culture. Indeed, it would be neither effective nor wise to conceive a strategy to improve the status of the environment and natural resources in isolation from the socio-economic reality that embeds them. In particular, coordinated interventions in several sectors are crucial to allow an equitable distribution of the social costs and benefits of sound

A strategy “links” the management of a specific set of natural resources to the surrounding environmental, socio-economic, institutional and cultural landscape.

natural resource management. In this sense, a strategy is a broad, interdisciplinary and multi-level setting of intents and main ways to attain them. The management of a specific set of natural resources (e.g., a given watershed or forest) may be its key concern, but a strategy “links” that to the surrounding environmental, socio-economic, institutional and cultural landscape, and grounds it as part of local and regional land use plans. Obviously, the group negotiating the NRM management agreement needs to be conscious of the institutional setting in which it is nested and identify ways to connect with other social actors and institutions at various levels. This is essential for all those bodies and authorities whose decisions will bear upon the plans and agreements to be discussed by the specific group of stakeholders.

A strategic agreement does not need to enter into the details of everything that is to happen but needs to specify:

- the key areas or problems to be tackled (*i.e.*, the components of the strategy); and
- the broadly desirable outcomes (objectives) for each such component.
- the main ways chosen to attain them.

If the discussion proceeds well and the key components of a strategy are agreed upon by the relevant social actors, the facilitator may challenge the group to go a step forward, *i.e.*, to understand and evaluate the relationships among the compo-

nents of the strategy, watching for the possible synergies or oppositions among the identified objectives and checking for its overall coherence.



In this sense, the relationship between territories and resources dedicated to conservation and their neighbouring farming systems ought to be considered in particular detail. There are more than a few examples of protected areas dedicated to ecosystem and species conservation surrounded by agricultural areas where ecologically-destructive practices are promoted and subsidised. One example is the Park of the W of Niger, in West Africa. Park W is a World Heritage Area and a refuge of savannah wildlife

shared by Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. In Benin and Burkina Faso the planting of cotton, heavily dependent on pesticides, is subsidised up to the physical border of the protected area. The pesticides have a deleterious effect on pollinators and pollute the waters flowing into the park. Further, the cotton cultivation exhausts the soil and new lands are needed after a few crop cycles. Last but not least, small and landless producers often end up impoverished and destitute, as the cash-dominated crop enriches moneylenders and larger land owners. Many peasants in the periphery of the park have no alternative but trying to find some land by encroaching into the protected area. In this light, the government promotion of conservation side by side with cotton production is inherently non-sustainable and needs to be mended through a broader strategic approach, more at the level

of the *regional landscape* than at the level of a specific body of resources.²⁵

While the shared vision begins to be articulated and made specific, one or more people may distinguish themselves for the extent and quality of their engagement in the process, for their charisma and their capacity to focus the energy of the group. This is sometimes referred to as “leadership quality”. The facilitator may wish to assign to them the responsibility of some important task, while nourishing their capacity to elicit the support and concurrence of others rather than the tendency “to advance alone” shown by some such very valuable persons (see Box 6.9).

Box 6.9 Leaders in the Napa Valley Watershed (California, USA)
(adapted from EPA, 1997)

Leadership is a critical factor in managing a watershed. Watersheds can be large or small, urban or rural, degraded or pristine. They can have resources of local or national importance, and can have little or great development pressure on them. Government may be trusted and relied upon, or distrusted and feared. As watersheds can differ so much, so can their leaders. A leader can be a farmer, a rancher, a coal miner, a member of a non-profit organisation or of a local council, a government staff person, a tribal leader, a federal agent. Leadership can also come in the form of a group or entity, such as a local board, state agency, or the federal government. Essentially, leaders are individuals or groups who strongly care about the watershed and its future.

Leaders tend to reflect the values of the local community and know what works there. They generally are good communicators, have the ability to bring about change and set things in motion, and are committed to making their (or a group’s) vision a reality. They also tend to know how to engage, respect, and empower others and are able to find new or leverage existing resources. Because leadership is so important, many seek to encourage and nurture it. Some states offer grants to budding watershed associations. Several non-profit organisations maintain lists of watershed leaders who are willing to talk to others about their success. Other groups offer training and leadership workshops. Focusing on improving environmental conditions and developing inclusive common goals, rather than simply implementing policies and regulations, tends to be vital for the success of the common efforts.

The process facilitators should also be aware that specific factors and forces may encourage or oblige some of the actors to drop out of the negotiation exercise. Powerful groups, for example, may be inclined to use their political and economic influence to seek desired results outside of the agreed process. Weaker actors may find themselves progressively marginalised, or may at some point lose confidence in the ability of the process to deliver a fair outcome. Facilitators should be consistently vigilant to such occurrences, they should look out for signs of possible exclusion, and use all available means, including mass media and other forms of public scrutiny, to encourage all actors to remain faithful to the process.

The multi-stakeholder meetings have several types of results. If all goes well they manage to achieve important agreements on substance, such as a shared vision and strategy for the environment or resources at stake. They also, however, establish an on-going space for common discussion, where people get to know each other and hopefully learn to respect the views of others and build some mutual trust. A measure of mutual trust is essential in any form of co-management despite or actually, because of, the different interests and positions of the different parties.

A measure of mutual trust is essential in any form of co-management despite or actually, because of, the different interests and positions of the different parties.

²⁵ Bennet, 1998; Beresford and Phillips, 2000.

Box 6.10 **Mutual trust built on the respect for local knowledge and practices: the experience of Tanga (Tanzania)**

(from a personal communication by Rodney Salm, 1997)

Trust-building between government officials, local villagers and project personnel was, from the very beginning, identified as a project priority in the Tanga Coastal Zone Conservation and Development initiative, in Tanzania. A history of patronising attitudes toward villagers and poor government relations had created a deep sense of alienation and distrust between villagers and government officials. How could they work together for the management of the coastal resources?

The environmental problems were also serious. Dynamite fishing in coral reefs by commercial groups had greatly depleted the local fish supply, destroying the breeding grounds. Because of uncontrolled mangrove cutting, the area was also suffering from beach erosion. Since natural resources had always been abundant, the local communities had not developed new management rules to cope with changing conditions. Following the recent depletions, their normal fishing activities amounted to resource over-harvesting. The villagers blamed the government for not enforcing dynamiting regulations in the area. The government blamed the villagers for being wasteful in resource use. Lacking effective NGOs or other major potential partners, the only two actors interested in finding a solution were the villagers and government officials.

It is in this context that an Irish-funded and IUCN-managed conservation initiative intervened in the early 1990s. The initiative started with a three-year phase meant to build the conditions for a partnership, beginning with some measure of trust and willingness to dialogue between the parties. During this phase, communication efforts were crucial. Participatory appraisal exercises were facilitated in every village to analyse problems in natural resource use. The government officials who participated in these meetings were soon impressed by the extensive knowledge of the villagers, in sharp contrast with their prior stereotypes.

After some time, government extension workers took on the role of facilitators of assessment exercises and providers of technical advice. In turn, villagers became capable of doing their basic action plans, they carried out their own cause and effect analysis, identified objectives, drew timetables and selected and monitored progress indicators. To verify the extent of reef damages, villagers helped fisheries officers collect biodiversity information and review the results in a rapid survey. The villagers also set up specific committees to discuss topical issues, all reporting to the village assembly.

As a result of the trust-building and co-management efforts between government and local communities, in the space of a few years dynamite fishing has decreased tenfold in the area, and the coral reefs are being revitalised. Under Tanzania's recent decentralising efforts, government officials are seeing the advantages of greater involvement of village committees in management actions.

6.4 Negotiating and legitimising the co-management agreement and organisation



Progressing from the vision to the strategy, matters become a bit more explicit, but not yet enough.... The identified strategic objectives are generally still broad (e.g., “to manage the forest on top of the hills in a sustainable manner”) and need to be transformed into agreed work plans that answer specific questions such as “What

exactly shall be done? Who shall do it? By when? Where? How? With what financial means and human resources? To what specific aims? What indicators will be used to measure progress?”. This is the moment when everything becomes concrete, a multiplicity of options and choices becomes apparent to everyone, different points of view abound, and conflicts surface in all their power and complexity. The parties in the negotiation have to find an agreement that answers these questions for each one of the strategic objectives, or at the very least for the ones that are of high priority. In addition, they have to identify or create a body to remain in charge of implementing, reviewing and modifying the agreement, as necessary through time.

The discussion will likely focus on a management plan and organisation for the territory or resources at stake, but a variety of complementary accords and initiatives will need to be associated with it to make the plan viable and acceptable to all. These may span new by-laws and policies, changes in local taxation systems, improved services, contracts assigning exclusive rights, training and research projects, as well as investments in a variety of initiatives, from productive activities to conservation measures and communication infrastructures. In other words, the agreement will cover a “package” including a management plan for the natural resources at stake as well as various complementary accords. The accords—which can be seen as conservation incentives or compensations for relevant losses—create a concrete link between the interests of the parties and the interest of conservation. The negotiation meetings are in charge of conceiving such a package agreement and figuring out the conditions for its setting into operation. In this sense, an enormous challenge emerges if the management plan demands important changes in the livelihood system of one or more parties. The complementary accords may need to identify nothing less than alternate means of livelihood for a potentially large group of people, a daunting task indeed!

For each dimension of the strategy the actors need to consider the various options for action to reach the agreed objectives and, among them, select the one best suited to the conditions and needs of the context and to the capacities available among the parties. The discussion may involve examining the experiences and lessons learned in other natural resource management situations, assessing competencies, requirements, procedures and regulations, and refining options through extensive bargaining and compromising. Complex problems require complex and detailed solutions, and everyone should contribute. For this type of discussion small groups work better than large ones, and a dedicated committee or working group may be formed for each component of the strategy, making sure that it includes representatives of the actors most directly affected by the issues under discussion.

Since different avenues and options bring different costs and benefits to different social actors, some such actors are likely to have strong interests and concerns attached to one course of action *versus* another. How can they all reach a consensus or at least a broad accord among themselves? The tools already used to arrive at the long-term vision and strategy (e.g., brainstorming, problem analysis, conceptual frameworks) can help again, but other methods and tools can also be useful, such as the ones described in Checklist 6.3. In some cases the comparison of alternative options *vis-à-vis* a number of criteria identified by the parties in the negotiation can be delegated to an external resource person or group, for example an NGO, a research group or a consulting firm, which will present its results in a

...everything becomes concrete, a multiplicity of options and choices becomes apparent to everyone, different points of view abound, and conflicts surface in all their power and complexity.

...the agreement covers a “package” including a management plan for the natural resources at stake as well as various complementary accords. The accords— which can be seen as conservation incentives or compensations for relevant losses— create a concrete link between the interests of the parties and the interest of conservation....



meeting and possibly facilitate the agreement over a compromise solution.²⁶ At times the representatives of some parties in the negotiation need to report to their constituencies and consult with them before advancing discussions on a topic and possibly agreeing on a consensus position. At other times it may be necessary to call in expert advice or find out new information (market trends, costs of technologies, etc.). These are some of the reasons why a long

time and several planning meetings may be necessary before a full agreement is reached.

Checklist 6.3 **Methods and tools to agree on a course of action** (modified from Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996)

- **Breaking down large issues into smaller or sectoral ones.** A strategic objective that is too broad and complex is difficult to treat. A way of overcoming a related impasse is to break it down into smaller sub-objectives and to assign those for discussion to sub-groups and task forces. Moments of common discussions and an overall strategic view, however, should be maintained.
- **Stimulating the explicit discussion of the hypotheses and assumptions underlying the proposed activities.** Why it is thought that a certain action will lead to a desired outcome? Taking a natural resource management plan as an example, the expected results of implementing the plan should be made explicit (e.g., by specifying the expected change in biological and environmental indicators) and the ecological plausibility of achieving those values should be addressed. The results to be expected from socio-cultural or economic interventions should also be made explicit, for example by identifying expected change in social or economic indicators. The plausibility of the assumptions should be examined in the light of the lessons learned from similar interventions in the past or in other places.
- **Calling upon expert opinion** on controversial issues. If disagreements among the social actors exist over matters of fact, it may be useful to call upon the service of expert professionals (such as a biologist to explain the characteristics of a viable habitat, a hydrologist to estimate how much water can be extracted from a source in a sustainable way, a community elder to recall instances of local extreme weather, and so on). This is not to say that expert opinion should be followed, nor that, indeed, different experts may not disagree. On the contrary. But expert opinions (especially when free from economic and political conditioning) can be helpful to elucidate a controversial discussion.
- **Providing effective conflict mediation.** Conflict mediation focuses on the fact that an agreement that satisfies every party is likely to be more long-lasting and more satisfactory than win-lose results. In the

²⁶ Tom Nesbitt, personal communication, 2001.

long run, compromise may be the best way to serve everyone's interests, especially when overt conflict is replaced by the stability and predictability of a mutually agreeable solution. An effective mediator brings the conflicting parties to agree upon a compromise solution with the help of several expedients.

One expedient is to provide space and time for everyone concerned to clearly explain their views and positions: what they want and why. They should not be interrupted except for points of clarification. Another expedient is to recall the common vision of the desired future (coming back to the present from the future). If all relevant actors have agreed upon, and perhaps even ritualised, a common vision of the desired future, it is difficult for anyone of them to abandon the negotiation table. The mediator can explain the disagreements as a matter of different paths to reach the same goal. If this is clear, then such paths can be compared with respect to various criteria (see below).

- **Comparing alternative options *vis-à-vis* a number of criteria.** Alternative paths, positions and options can be examined with respect to various criteria, such as effectiveness; feasibility; cost in human, material and financial resources; expected benefits and impacts (in particular impacts in terms of environment and social equity, and contribution to social needs, such as community identity and solidarity); sustainability; and so on. The open comparison of alternative options is a very useful tool to help a group decide on selecting one option over many. The discussion can be easily summarised on a board, with alternative options listed in columns and criteria in rows. First the group agrees on the criteria. Second, for all the criteria chosen by the group, the alternative options are assessed and "scored". The matrix is compiled to offer a broad comparative view of options and scores. Importantly, scores should *not* be assigned from the top of the head, but only after a discussion of concrete issues. For example, regarding feasibility, who is ready to take on the major responsibility for each alternative option? In what time frame? With what material and financial resources? Regarding the impact, what are the expected environmental but also the social, cultural and economic consequences of the proposed options? To what degree of certainty are those foreseen? Are there options expected to have a positive impact on *most* or *all* of the components of the strategy to reach the agreed vision? Are there options expected to have a negative impact on some components of the overall strategy, regardless of the positive impact they are expected to have on the one being examined?

Agreements, disagreements, consensus and compromise

The ideal method of deliberating in a co-management negotiation is the consensus. Deliberations by consensus are based on the informed, conscious, voluntary and active development of an agreement among various parties, which often benefit from facilitation and conflict resolution support. Contrary to what is commonly believed, consensus does not mean that everyone is entirely and totally satisfied by the decision collectively taken, but that no one feels strong enough to block the wishes of everyone else over a point of disagreement.

Given the multiple perspectives involved and the importance of perceptions and values in forging agreements, deliberations by consensus are commonly developed through incremental compromise, accommodation and inventiveness. Working by consensus also implies collective responsibilities for the parties involved, as the agreement brings at least some benefits and some response to the concerns of every one of them. Decision-making by consensus has been the traditional way of reaching an agreement over a common decision for local communities all over the world, and still is a superb path for co-management regimes today (see Boxes 6.11 and 6.13).

Deliberations by consensus are based on the informed, conscious, voluntary and active development of an agreement among various parties

Box 6.11 **Consensus decision-making for aquatic resource co-management in Khong district (Lao PDR)**

(adapted from Baird, 1999)

The most important official step in establishing government-recognised co-management regulations of village fisheries in Khong district are one-day workshops (see also Boxes 3.11, 5.11 and 9.11). All the adult members of the community are requested to attend such workshops (usually one or two members of each household participate). Government and project officials also attend, as well as the village headmen of neighbouring communities. Government officials generally arrive in the village the day prior to the workshop, to advise on the necessary arrangements. Since villages initiate the co-management process, the government of Khong feels strongly that communities also need to control the workshop proceedings. Government and project guests act mainly as observers and facilitators and not as active participants. Officials are concerned that problems could arise if villages become overly dependent on government support, leading to a lack of village initiative. They want villagers to own the process.

The village headman chairs the co-management workshops, and opens the proceedings by explaining its objectives and how the agenda will unfold. After short presentations by the government and project officials on the experiences of other villages, the village headman presents the draft of the co-management regulations developed by the community. The community is then divided up into two gender groups for open discussions regarding the draft regulations. Apart from considering the regulations to be endorsed, the groups are required to consider what sanctions (level of punishment) should be mandated for those who break the regulations. Villagers are free to make recommendations regarding management strategies, but they are not allowed to advocate regulations that either conflict with already established national laws, result in increased degradation to natural resources, or cause serious conflicts between or within communities. The district officials are there to ensure that such problems do not arise.

There is no time limit for the villagers to discuss the proposed regulations, but discussions generally last between one and two hours, depending on how much preparation has been conducted prior to the workshop, and the level of internal controversy regarding the management strategies being considered. The discussions, which are not attended by government officials or other guests of the workshop, are generally spirited and lively, and broad villager participation is the norm. Most villagers in Khong possess a great deal of traditional knowledge regarding aquatic natural resources and can easily converse on detailed and specific aspects of management. When group discussions have ended, the men and women rejoin government officials and other guests in the main meeting area, which is generally the village school or the main hall of the village Buddhist temple. Representatives of each of the two discussion groups present their respective conclusions, including recommendations regarding management regulations proposed by the village, and additional regulations which were not considered in the original draft of the management plan. Men generally concentrate on management issues related to large bodies of water and large and valuable fish species. Women tend to focus on issues related to small water bodies and aquatic-life in streams, ponds and rice paddy fields. This gender-related divergence of special interest helps to balance and broaden the final content of management plans. After the group presentations, all the participants debate the regulations to adopt. If the recommendations of the women differ from those of the men, or if one or both groups have ideas that conflict with those of the original proposal, discussions continue until consensus is reached. While Lao villages are not without conflict, they are typically governed by consensus. If disagreements cannot be resolved, the government representative generally recommends that the issue be deferred until later, so as to allow time for resolving any differences that remain. Nobody has ever suggested that a vote be taken to determine whether a regulation should be adopted!

Once a community has agreed upon a set of regulations, the host village headman asks the headmen

from neighbouring villages to comment on the appropriateness of individual regulations. Although guest chiefs rarely object to the decisions of the host community, they sometimes suggest improvements and provide new perspectives. If suggested changes are justified, the host village adjusts its regulations in order to maintain good relations with its neighbours, which is an important cultural norm. However, if the request is considered unreasonable, villagers from the host community have no qualms about refuting ideas. Government officials sometimes act as mediator. When a final set of regulations has been agreed upon and recorded by villagers, the regulations are read back to all the participants one last time. Any errors in recording regulations are corrected as they are read out. Before the village headman closes the workshop, the district chief endorses the decisions of the community. Government support for community-based management is important to villagers, and is certainly a major factor in successful co-management, as the signed plan is officially recognised as “village law”. Four copies of each plan are made. One copy remains with the village, one is filed by district officers in Khong, one is given to the provincial officers, and one is kept by the supporting project.

Deliberations by consensus are facilitated by the use of *flexible instruments*, such as the zoning of the territory or area to be managed and/ or the specification of multiple uses and detailed conditions of resource use (such as by type, time, season, users and technology). Zoning basically involves subdividing a territory or area into sub-areas subjected to different objectives, conditions and rules. Multiple uses refer to one or more resources in the same area and the relevant rules that balance their utilisation by various stakeholders. Multiple use arrangements are striking when involving people engaged in different types of livelihoods in the same territories, such as pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists or fisherfolk. While there are plenty of opportunities for controversy, there are also for synergy and mutual benefits. Finally, an important flexible instrument in NRM are rules detailing the conditions of resource use. Examples include quantities of resources that can be harvested, level of maturity, time of day or season, legitimate users, and extraction and processing technologies that can and cannot be employed. Specifying the zoning of an area, its allowed multiple uses of resources and the detailed conditions of such uses greatly enhances the spectrum of options available to the negotiation partners. Overall, it enhances the flexibility of an NRM plan and the chances of its fitting the needs and capabilities of a given social environment.

As a matter of fact, zoning is one of the most common mechanisms utilised in natural resource management to develop a broad consensus on objectives and regulations. At times, a specific zoning proposal is prepared by some resource management professionals and later submitted to the various stakeholders for their comments and desired changes. This, for instance, happened for the Cairngorm Partnership²⁷ in Scotland and for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, in Australia. For the latter, legislation mandates “public participation” in management and the Authority in charge carried out extensive inquiries with stakeholders prior to developing a draft zoning plan. The draft was then supposed to go to the public for at least one month, but the Authority extended this period to three months to ensure a larger feedback, and organised several specific workshops where the draft plan was discussed in detail.²⁸ In other cases, the parties prepare their own separate zoning proposals and those are later confronted and merged towards a viable compromise, at times with some external facilitation and support. This was the case for the management plan of the Conkouati-Douli National Park, in the Republic of Congo.²⁹ The most typical example where sub-areas are designated and regulated is a biosphere reserve, with its “core”, “buffer” and “transition”

Deliberations by consensus are facilitated by the use of instruments— such as zoning and the specification of detailed conditions of resource use (e.g., type, time, season, users and technology... which enhance the flexibility of an NRM plan and the chances of its fitting the needs and capabilities of a given social environment.

²⁷ Cairngorms Partnership, 1996

²⁸ Graeme Kelleher, personal communication, 1995.

²⁹ Chatelain *et al.*, 2004.

zones. One of the characteristics of zoning is that it is usually impossible to develop it if not “on the ground”, and thus it requires that various social actors spend time together in the field and in meetings, and that they discuss very concrete issues, a fact that can do wonders to develop more transparent and collaborative relationships. This was proven, for instance, for the Galapagos Marine Reserve.³⁰ Mapping techniques of various sophistication (from hand mapping to electronic GIS systems) can be of great help in developing a zoning system (see Box 6.12).

Box 6.12 **Zoning as a product of a participatory GIS in the Amazons**
(adapted from Saragoussi *et al.*, 2002)

Jacaré National Park is the largest National Park in Brazil. Located in the Amazon region, it is managed through an agreement comprising an environment NGO called Fundação Vitória Amazônica (FVA) and IBAMA, the Brazilian agency responsible for environmental issues. The NGO took upon itself to integrate in the management decisions the park residents (locally known as *caboclos* or *riberenos*), greatly knowledgeable about natural resources but generally illiterate and unaccustomed to deal with modern “management plans” as understood by the authorities in charge. To accomplish the task, the NGO opted for the use of a sophisticated Geographical Information System (GIS) in a fully participatory way.

Work began by digitalising a database. This included physical features of landscape (vegetation cover, soil types, geology, etc.) from secondary data provided by the government. It also included social and economic characteristics of the park resident population, such as natural resource uses, demographic and migration indicators, life history and family relationships— all from primary data collected especially for the database. The information from the residents was collected through participatory assessment exercises and in meetings where concepts such as “planning”, “zoning” and “sustainable use” were also discussed at length. The information on the use of natural resources was incorporated into the maps by using small flags (for instance, flags that depicted vegetal fibres, game animals, fish, turtles etc.). These maps were then discussed in workshops among park dwellers, researchers, local decision-makers, and FVA and IBAMA technicians. Ultimately, the maps were the key to delimit the *special use zone*, where extractive activities are now fully allowed. The remainder of the park was considered *primitive zone*, except a small area indicated by the dwellers as *recuperation zone*. Each zone has its own rules of access and use. Currently, the FVA and the local communities are developing further zoning details, allowing for clearer day-to-day use decisions. In all, participatory GIS demonstrated to be a very useful tool, which allowed the integration of information from several sources and the promotion of the engagement of different social actors.

A plethora of instruments such as leases, concessions, use permits, licenses, quotas, collector identity cards, certificates and customary rules can be utilised to regulate access.

Other flexible instruments that facilitate the development of consensus decisions regulate the access to natural resource and the sharing of benefits and rights assigned to the relevant social actors. Rather than “yes or no” answers to access problems, a plethora of instruments such as leases, concessions, use permits, licenses, quotas, collector’s identity cards, certificates and customary rules can be utilised to *regulate* access. In particular, access to resources can be assigned to specific groups only and on conditions of the use of certain types of technology and not others. An important example is provided by the *Parc National du Banc d’Arguin* (PNBA) in Mauritania. PNBA is engaged in some mild form of co-management in which the government staff developed a package of agreements with the representatives of the park’s residents— local people known with the name of *Imraguen* (fishermen). The *Imraguen* are allowed to reside within the park boundaries and to fish in its marine portion, but only if they do so with artisan fishing equipment and sail boats, without the use of a motor. In addition, they agreed on a number of fishing restrictions, including the ban on fishing sharks, in exchange

³⁰ Pippa Heylings, personal communication, 2001.

for some development benefits. It is extremely important that the *Imraguen* remain in the park, as they represent the most powerful social defence and provide a widespread and effective form of surveillance against the motorised fishermen who surround the park's boundaries and could easily help themselves with the park's resources.³¹



Similarly, one of the first agreements between Uganda Wildlife Authority (then Uganda National Parks) and the local communities living around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was about the collection of medicinal plants and lianas from the park. It was agreed that these products, essential for local livelihoods, would be collected only by specialised individuals, selected by the communities and acting on the communities' behalf. The authorised collectors had a quantity limitation, received some training and carried with themselves a special identity card. In this way, some of the many and profound conflicts that opposed the local communities and the park agency could be solved.

Box 6.13 Consensus in a co-management board: a key incentive towards effective agreements for the Galapagos Marine Reserve
(adapted from Heylings and Bravo, 2001)

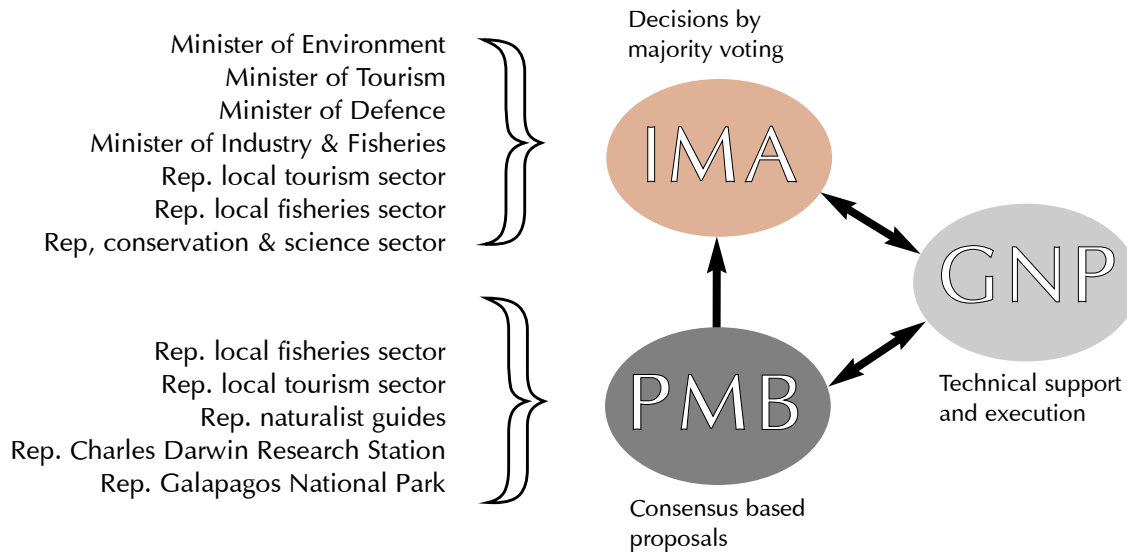
Located approximately 1,500 km from the Ecuadorian mainland, the volcanic Galapagos Islands contain remarkable terrestrial and marine ecosystems and became, some years ago, the focus of complex and violent multi-stakeholder conflicts. The rapid economic and demographic change, the presence of unregulated industrial fishing, the appearance of high-value fisheries for Asian markets, the state-imposed policy and regulations and the general non-compliance with the management plan of the Marine Reserve were all factors fuelling those conflicts. In 1998, in response to national and international concern about the threats facing them, Ecuador passed innovative legislation through a Special Law that, amongst other measures, introduced the control of migration to the islands, created one of the largest marine reserves in the world (some 130,000 km²), prohibited industrial fishing and established institutions for co-management of the reserve. The creation of the Galapagos Marine Reserve was the fruit of a local exhaustive participatory planning process, which took two years (74 meetings of the multi-stakeholder planning group called the "Grupo Nucleo", 2 fisheries summit meetings and 3 community workshops) and produced a consensus management plan. The implementation of this plan, through a legally based participatory management regime, has been in progress now for several years.

The Galapagos co-management institution essentially consists of a tree-pole arrangement (see Figure 6.1) uniting a local Participatory Management Board (PMB), an Inter-institutional Management Authority (IMA) and the Galapagos National Park (GNP). The Participatory Management Board is made up of the primary local stakeholders whilst the IMA comprises representatives of Ministers and local stakeholders. In the PMB, the members introduce specific management proposals (e.g., concerning regulations of fisheries and tourism) which are analysed, negotiated and eventually agreed upon by consensus. The consensus-based proposals are channelled for approval to the IMA and then to the GNP, for

³¹ Pierre Campredon, personal communication, 2002.

implementation and control. Proposals that have reached a consensus in the PMB carry an important social weight at the IMA level. If no consensus is reached in the PMB, the different stakeholder positions are submitted to the IMA, where the decision is left in the hands of a majority of mainland ministerial officials. Statistics are compelling. Basically one hundred percent of consensus-based technical proposals developed by the PMB (which, incidentally, managed to secure excellent conservation results) are approved without modification by the IMA. Clearly, the fact that consensus proposals are invariably approved creates a very strong incentive for local stakeholders to develop and agree upon viable technical arrangements in the PMB.

Figure 6.1 **Schematic description of the co-management setting for the Galapagos Marine Reserve**



If the negotiating parties identify a management option that is particularly interesting but demands major costs and sacrifices from one or a few of the relevant social actors, all the partners could figure out how to compensate the losers for everyone's benefit. This could involve the provision of specific incentives and clauses in the plans and agreements. The very actors who would be compensated may advance suggestions about the incentives that they would like to receive, which could then be discussed by everyone (costs, feasibility, assurance of benefits to be obtained, etc.). Among the incentive mechanisms intended to benefit a whole community rather than specific individuals are Community Investment Funds.

Among the incentive mechanisms intended to benefit a whole community are Community Investment Funds.

A case encountered rather frequently is the one of communities with customary entitlement to a set of natural resources (say a forest, rangeland or a fishing area) but who have been deprived of their customary rights, or who are not wealthy enough or organised enough to invest the means and human resources necessary to manage it productively or to defend its own acquired rights. As a consequence, the natural resources may be falling into an open-access status, and may be used in an exploitative fashion by all sorts of other entitled and un-entitled actors. In other situations the local resources may be well managed, but the community may badly need funds for sustainable development initiatives. In such cases it is most useful to establish a productive partnership among the community as a

whole (which may contribute natural resources such as land, water, access to a fishing area), some community members (who may contribute their labour) and other partners who may bring in the missing factors of production (such as seeds, water, boats, engines and nets, a tourism business, etc.). The productive partnership is set to work (e.g., the community land is laboured by community members with a tractor, water and seeds provided by an external party; the community fishery zones are exploited by local fisherfolk with a boat provided from outside) and the benefits are divided among the production partners, one of which is the community in its entirety. The community share of such benefits (and, at times, also the share corresponding to an initial “factor of production” donated from outside, such as pumps for irrigation water, boats for fishing, tractors for ploughing fields or vehicles for transport) can be utilised to set up a Community Investment Fund.

The rules to manage a Community Investment Fund need to be devised by the members of the specific community, who may also set up a managing committee. In general, the fund is not loaned nor replenished by payments. It is instead invested in productive activities, which *generate* a suitable wealth for the community and income for those directly involved in its operations. This tends to make a Community Investment Fund grow rather than shrink under the effect of inflation and missed repayments. At the end of each production cycle the fund can be partially or totally re-invested for community-based productive initiatives, with or without partnerships with other groups or individuals. Community Investment Funds for sustainable development have important and natural applications in the field of co-management, both as an approach that promotes and strengthens collaboration in society and as a co-management institution in its own right, with internalised incentives for using natural resources in a sustainable way. They are also, however, critically dependent on the viability of the related productive initiatives.

In Iran, Community Investment Funds are called *sanduqs* and have roots in ancient traditions of communal solidarity, also supported by Islam. *Sanduqs* are now being utilised as part of agreements for natural resource management, for instance in the Hable Rood watershed, east of Teheran, and in the Qashqai territories (see Case Example 1.4 in Chapter 1). The management partnerships involve local communities, several departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of the Environment and a national NGO. The *sanduj* resources are being utilised to boost organic production of fruits, vegetables and cereals and to restore the viability of pastoral livelihoods as well as to promote local community-based trade.

...many NRM conflict situations are related to the perception of a violent exercise of power by one party over others.

Managing conflicts

Conflicts in natural resource management can be latent or manifest and generally exist when different parties believe that their aspirations cannot be simultaneously achieved. Conflicts may be rooted in structural power imbalances among the parties or in a power vacuum, in ambiguous land and resource tenure regimes or in rapidly changing environmental and socio-economic conditions. A perceived or real scarcity of natural resources to meet survival needs is one of the most serious causes of conflicts in NRM, but less tangible issues, such as dignity and recognition, physical access to territories, and unresolved historical events can also be involved. Today, new ecological and conservation dimensions have been added to the more usual moral, political and economic issues at the roots of conflicts over natural resources.³²

³² Gadgil and Guha, 1995.

In the last centuries, more and more conflicts have been generated by the impossibility of ensuring survival or cultural continuity within newly imposed legal systems and market conditions. The forced breaking down of traditional institutions and community entitlements rendered authority unclear. The imposition of new values and modes of NRM without the consent of the most directly affected people was bound to generate conflicts. As a matter of fact, many NRM conflict situations are related to the perception of a violent or excessive exercise of power by one party over others. Box 6.14 and Checklists 6.3 and 6.4 include a number of considerations useful in conflict-management processes.

Box 6.14 **Common themes and considerations in conflict management**
(adapted from Fisher, 1996)

- **Power imbalances.** There are often serious disparities among the parties in terms of access to technical, administrative, economic and organisational resources. Authoritarian local government leaders, major commercial or political interests and, in some places, the presence of a strong military or other armed group, can severely constrain the dialogue and choice in resolving conflicts. A general rule is that unequal power leads to unequal agreements. The perceived legitimacy of the conflict resolution process can obscure these dynamics but forced accommodations, cooptation, or “coercive harmony” results in agreements that are often neither fair nor enforceable.
- **Diversity of interests within any one social actor.** There are obvious distinctions among the interests of local communities, conservationists, developers and the state, but distinctions also exist within these groups. “Communities” in Southeast Asia, for instance, may consist of mixed caste, clan, ethnic and economic groups, and may include migrants or squatters with little official recognition. Another example: jurisdictional disputes between line agencies within a national government are often the centrepiece of controversy over resource management. Thus, what is being portrayed as “the position” of a given social actor, may actually be the position of a special subgroup, with little force and representational quality.
- **The role of the Start-up Team and facilitator.** The Start-up Team and facilitator wield considerable authority, and can introduce serious biases in defining the domain of discourse, the relevant actors and the negotiation methods and atmosphere. In particular it is often the case that the facilitator role is played by an “insider partial” rather than an “outsider neutral”. This is not a problem *a priori*— a community leader or a concerned public official may be very capable of assuring participation, fairness and trust— but it can become a serious problem if they misuse their position.
- **The influence of culture.** The importance of values and cultural norms in creating, maintaining and solving conflicts is often underestimated. Traditional forms of dispute resolution, such as those practised in rural Indonesia, emphasise communal inclusiveness and the role of respected elders as arbitrators, in sharp contrast to the Western model of rationalist dialogue facilitated by a neutral third-party. Indigenous conflict resolution techniques can provide effective local mechanisms for dealing with community-level disputes. At the same time, the complex nature of modern common property conflicts— involving larger ecological units, multiple communities and ethnic groups, sophisticated technical aspects, market forces and various institutional jurisdictions— has little precursor in traditional systems.



Checklist 6.4 Ideas for managing conflict

The following ideas³³ have proven their effectiveness in some settings but, indeed, each case is unique and the mediator in the negotiation will have to consult extensively and use her or his best judgement to provide the most effective conditions for reaching an agreement:

- **Start with small issues that are easily settled**

If there are different issues at stake and some are easier to solve than others, starting from those and reaching some satisfactory agreements will help the participants develop a sense of mutual trust and confidence in the process, encouraging them to tackle more thorny issues.

- **Promote personal relationships between the parties in conflict**

Interaction at the personal level even in mundane activities such as travelling together, eating together, sharing the same housing among people who enjoy the respect, credibility and authority of their relevant groups are useful to smooth the way towards effective listening and dialogue.

- **Involve all stakeholders when the parties directly in conflict are about to break up dialogue**

A conflict among some of the negotiating parties may be so serious that one or more of them may choose to withdraw from the negotiation meeting. Among the rules to be set up ahead it is useful to include that withdrawal from discussion is certainly a possibility, but all parties engage themselves to do so only after clearly explaining their problem(s) and seeing if those problem(s) can be addressed with the help of the larger group of stakeholders. This may require separate meetings among each conflicting party and the stakeholder groups.

- **Offer transparency and potential extensive information/ publicity about the controversy**

Some conflicts are rooted in chronic situations of privilege and corruption that could not stand the light of day if openly recognised and assessed. Visibility and the presence of independent parties may break such deadlocks. In this sense, transparent negotiation processes and the potential or actual ample publicity about a controversy may be in themselves effective to change the *status quo*.

- **Do not gloss over major past injustices and losses; rather, recognise them and promote their fair and respectful “closure”**

A process of conflict management should not be an excuse to make a blank slate over past injustices and major losses, often sustained by the weakest parties. Processes of “truth and reconciliation” are not only more equitable than glossing over a painful and often violent past— they are the only way to bring a sense of closure to them, and the willingness to build up a different future.

- **Provide occasions to vent frustrations and discharge negative energy prior to the time of negotiation**

In many cases, even when no major injustices and irreplaceable losses have been felt, people have the need to “vent” their frustrations. Some local debates, possibly with the presence of the mediator and other external actors, can provide a way to channel the accumulated negative energy and aggressiveness. Often, people need to be heard and recognised before moving on.³⁴

- **Promote the taking of unilateral action that inspires trust in the other parties**

At times a deep seated distrust of the intention of the other parties acts as a stumbling block for dialogue and meaningful negotiation. In such cases it may be helpful for some parties to break the deadlock by announcing and carrying out some friendly unilateral innovation that encounters the favour of the others.

- **Show examples of similar conflicts successfully solved and, if at all possible, have the parties visit such examples**

Often a possible solution to conflicts exists but the parties do not manage to see it because they are stuck in their long-term grievances and positions. Translating their case into a different setting may produce a refreshing change of perspective and inspire the parties to act.

³³ Some of these are also discussed in Lewis, 1997.

³⁴ Chatelain *et al.*, 2004.

The conflicts opposing the parties are often a complex combination of social elements intertwined with all sorts of NRM problems. In such cases the negotiation may need to address the various aspects of “local peace” and can take several months if not years to get to a satisfactory conclusion. The issues at stake need to be explored thoroughly and external mediators are crucially useful, as also may be a variety of tools and external inputs.³⁵ For instance, some social conflicts have been resolved by external inputs that helped to enhance the security and productivity of natural resource use (see Box 6.15).

Box 6.15 Enhanced productive use of natural resources helps solving conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists in Itoh (Cameroon)
(adapted from Nguemdjiom, 2003)

Successful conflict resolution linked with conservation benefits and the generation of local wealth took place around the Itoh community grazing area, at the border of the high altitude mountain forest of Kilum, in north-west Cameroon. The grazing area is exploited by both Mbororo pastoralists, who settled in the area about 30 years ago, and by local agriculturalists of a different ethnic origin. For years, the area has been the theatre of bitter confrontations among these people, while the forest was not spared deforestation and encroachments that lowered its water retention capacity and endangered biodiversity. Fortunately, with some appropriate financial and technical help, the situation has now been entirely transformed. Fencing with live sticks has been created around the pasture area to prevent both cattle encroachment into the cultivated fields and the unilateral extension of fields into pasture, as well as stables and paddocks for the animals. The pasture has been improved with the planting of new types of forage and deforestation reversed by the planting of over 30,000 multi-purpose trees. A safer water supply has also been set up for both humans and livestock and very many training initiatives implemented.

The combined impact of these (project-based) interventions has been dramatic. Local wealth and capacities has been created, human and animal health have greatly improved, the Kilum’s biodiversity is much better protected and water is reliably available to all. Peaceful coexistence and new bounds of collaboration and mutual exchange have ensued among the previously conflicting social groups.³⁶

Despite best efforts, a working group may not arrive at an agreement on any one given option for a strategy component because of a variety of contingent reasons (see some relevant considerations in Box 6.14). In this case, a possibility is to present all the retained alternatives to the larger group and ask for advice. The assembly may again examine and compare alternative options *vis-à-vis* a number of specific criteria but also with respect to the actions retained for the other components of the strategy. Examining at once all the strategy’s components may reveal, for instance, that the “losers” in one of the dimensions are the “winners” in another one. Or the discussion may advance with the help of proposals for cross-component compensations and incentives.

Taking the process to a productive close

The final aim of the negotiation phase is a broadly shared agreement on what needs to happen for each component of the agreed strategy, including specific aims, actors, means, activities and a follow-up protocol.³⁷ As mentioned, this is likely to include specific co-management plans for the relevant unit(s) of natural

³⁵ Ramirez, 2002; Egeimi *et al.*, 2003.

³⁶ Unpublished information from André Nguemdjiom, UNDP Cameroon, 2003.

³⁷ This includes results anticipated, progress indicators that will be monitored, individuals and organisations in charge of collecting and communicating data, specific plans for evaluation reviews, etc.

resources, but also complementary accords rendering viable the building blocks of the common vision of the desired future. The co-management plans specify a share of functions, benefits and responsibilities for the various parties and are usually co-signed by them (see Chapter 7 for more details). The complementary accords are approved as appropriate (they may include project implementation contracts, letters of intent, municipal by-laws, the endorsement of traditional authorities, etc.). The more actors and the more important the resources involved, the more advisable it is for the plans and agreements to be made binding (such as formal or legal contracts). The signatories should be those individuals who are directly assigned responsibility in the plans and agreement (and *not* the authorities who may represent them!).

The final aim of the negotiation phase is a broadly shared agreement on what needs to happen.

Box 6.16 **The process we followed in Takiéta: developing a co-management setting for a Forest Reserve in Niger**

(adapted from Amadou *et al.*, 2003)

Takiéta Forest Reserve is located in the agro-pastoral zone of the department of Zinder, Niger, at the heart of a Sahelian environment with scarce and highly variable rainfall. The reserve represents the largest non-cultivated area in the region and is a crucial silvo-pastoral resource in a zone where land is otherwise entirely occupied by agricultural fields (it is rare to find even a few square metres of idle land). Created in the 1950s and, theoretically, owned, managed and protected by the state government, Takiéta Forest Reserve soon became subject to uncontrolled and destructive exploitation by local people and outsiders, with unchecked and rapidly expanding agricultural clearance taking place both at the boundaries of the forest and within the forest itself. Pressure on the dwindling and degraded pastoral resources within the reserve progressively increased as sedentary communities diversified into live-stock production, which brought them into increased competition with transhumant pastoral groups. Despite its degraded state, the reserve continued to play a strategic role in local production systems, but was also threatened by an influential local “de-reservation” lobby that aimed to convert what was a *de facto* common property resource (because of local community traditions and the absence of management/ presence of state agents) into private land.

The Takiéta Joint Forest Management Project was set up in 1995 to promote a process towards the sustainable, decentralised co-management of the reserve. It was implemented by SOS Sahel UK. In 2003, with the project terminated and its objectives fully achieved, it is interesting to review the key steps in the process (see also Figure 6.2). These included:

Stakeholder identification. Clear identification of the natural resources at stake and their limits, and identification of all direct and indirect actors affecting and affected by the management decisions (e.g., local communities subdivided according to their main interests, transhumant groups, government agencies, etc.).

Information, analysis and discussion at the individual “actor” level. This involved an analysis by each group of the natural resources at stake and the role they play in their system of production. It covered historical NRM strategies/ roles; the current situation; decentralisation, including stakes and perspectives for local management; and changing roles and relations.

Information sharing among all the actors. The collated and unmodified information from the different groups was shared among all the actors, exposing each of them to the analysis made by others.

A series of stakeholder workshops. Three workshops were held, where 180-200 representatives debated subjects as varied as: the situation, their joint interest and commitment to doing something about it and

how it should be done. Collective decisions were formalised as written recommendations from the workshops.

Election of delegates to a Local Management Structure (LMS). This was carried out internally within each stakeholder group, according to criteria and modalities agreed in the stakeholder workshops.

Preliminary meetings of all the delegates to the LMS. These meetings served to allow delegates to get to know one another, share information about the resources to be managed, retrace the process leading to the creation of the LMS, discuss and reach agreement on the LMS structure and proposed function, determine internal “roles and relationships” as well as rules and regulations, define what “management” means to the LMS and the people it represents, elect an Executive Committee from amongst the delegates, and formally present the members of the LMS Executive Committee to the local and regional administrative and traditional authorities, which had also been present at stakeholder workshops. The meetings thus included:

- planning and programming activities;
- sharing experiences with other LMS (inter-structure exchange);
- finalising the internal rules and regulations for the structure and presenting them to the relevant communities for their comments and ratification.

Further LMS meetings concerning the natural resources and how to manage them. At this juncture, information regarding the natural resources and their potential, including an inventory and base maps, was collected, analysed and shared; all known users were listed and uses analysed. On the basis of all this, an analysis of the resources and their trends was developed; actual and potential conflicts were examined; a vision of the desired future for the resources was developed; and basic rules of good governance were progressively drafted. Options for improving the resources over time were explored. A proposed management document was drafted.

Establishing institutional relations and communication systems. Links were established between the LMS and the authorities, government services and other partners, including pastoral associations from Nigeria.

Official recognition of the status of the association. The LMS was formally recognised by the state as the “Association Kou Tayani”, *i.e.*, it acquired legal recognition.

Stakeholder review workshop. The proposed management document was presented to all stakeholders for review, discussion and final amendments.

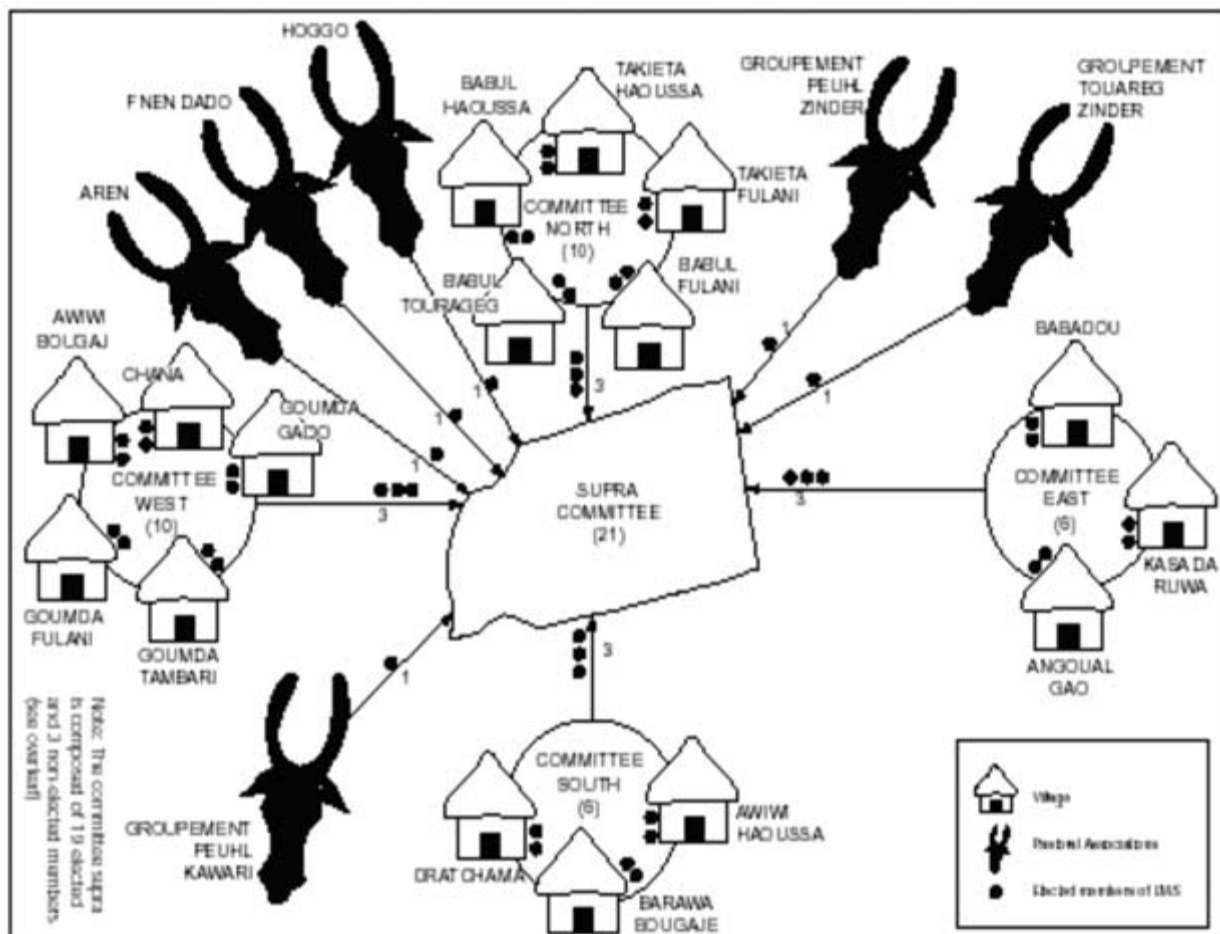
Official submission to local regional authorities. The management document was presented to the local regional authorities asking for a legal recognition of the association’s right to implement their management plan.

Autonomous management. For six months, autonomous management by the LMS went on before the closure of the support project.

Participatory evaluation of the project. A participatory evaluation of the project including both process and results was conducted.

Project closure... and continuation of the management process!

Figure 6.2 Schematic view of the composition of the Local Management Structure for Takiéta Forest Reserve (Niger) (19 elected and 3 non-elected members in all).



It is recommendable that, in the sharing of management functions, rights and responsibilities, the social actors take to full use their comparative advantages and capacities. For instance, government agencies can contribute a variety of technical and administrative functions, ensure that legal and policy frameworks are respected, enforced and protected against negative interferences with the agreement (e.g., by external encroachers). In addition, government agencies are well positioned to provide economic incentives and financial support, to process and diffuse information³⁸ and to make sure that initiatives in various sectors (e.g., natural resource management, agriculture, fishery, forestry, education, training, health and credit schemes) are effectively harmonised. As the impact of economic forces on CM agreements is considerable, market forces may need to be tamed for the benefit of conservation. This is another role government partners can take on. Non-governmental actors can provide specialised knowledge and skills on both the ecological and socio-economic environment (ranging from the responsibility of monitoring biodiversity to the responsibility of assuring a steady flow of tourist income to the natural resource area). Most of all, NGOs often have a unique power of *convening* actors from various parts of society. In the case of local residents, providing surveillance for fire and other natural risks and preventing

³⁸ Baland and Platteau, 1996.

resource use by unauthorised people are responsibilities of great comparative advantage. Para-wardens and para-scouts can be appointed among the local residents with, at times, the power to arrest violators of CM agreements.³⁹ Local traditional resource knowledge may also be applied to the regeneration of biological diversity.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of an “agreement package” depends on a number of factors, including the capacity of the relevant social actors to take on the agreed functions and responsibilities and to absorb the agreed benefits. In this sense, it has been found that well-organised social actors are more capable of taking advantage of incentives, and especially so when the incentives are provided through time and distributed equitably.⁴⁰ Another important feature of successful agreements is their expected capacity of providing benefits on the long-term (see Table 6.2)

Table 6.2 Benefit sharing: a company-community agreement in Cameroon
(adapted from Laird and Lisinge, 1998)

In Cameroon, the company Plantecam Medicam and the villages of Mapanja and Bokwongo signed an agreement for the sourcing of *Prunus africana* bark— the Agreement for Sustainable Management of the Species and Production of *Prunus africana*. The agreement outlines general benefits for the village and promotes the sustainable management of *Prunus africana* in the forest. Examples of benefits resulting from the agreement include:

Actor	Short term benefit: monetary	Long term benefit: monetary
Villages	Set fees for supplies of bark	Resources for Village Development Fund and the Union Fund
Gov. of Cameroon	Increased tax revenues	On-going tax revenues from a sustainable industry
Actor	Short term benefit: non-monetary	Long term benefit: non-monetary
Villages	Training; capacity-and institution-building; infrastructure and equipment	Increased capacity to share in benefits from the exploitation of <i>Prunus africana</i> ; improved institutions and infrastructure, such as water projects
Plantecam Medicam		Assured supply of <i>Prunus africana</i> bark
Gov. of Cameroon	Reduced illegal exploitation	Reduced illegal exploitation

Ultimately, even a good negotiation process cannot guarantee a faultless output. On the contrary, one should expect that pluralist management is bound to be affected by a certain amount of incoherence and uncertainty, especially when voting and majority rule are taken as decision-making method in place of consensus. For some, this is to be expected from all types of democratic decision-making, which can hardly be called “rational”:⁴¹

³⁹ KWS and Mbeere County Council, 1996

⁴⁰ McNeely, 1988.

⁴¹ Navarro, 1997.

“...democracy calls for a particular form of suspension of belief: the certainty that one outcome is best for all, rational. Decisions by numbers or by rules do not have prima facie rationality. The everyday life of democratic politics is not a spectacle that inspires awe: an endless squabble among petty ambitions, rhetoric designed to hide and mislead, shady connections between power and money, laws that make no pretence of justice, policies that reinforce privilege. This experience is particularly painful for people who had to idealise democracy in the struggle against authoritarian oppression, people for whom democracy was the paradise forbidden. When paradise turns into everyday life, disenchantment sets in.”⁴²

And yet, despite a strong chance of disenchantment, collective decision-making carries with itself a liberating power. On the one hand, the dialogue and transparency are bound to reduce malpractices and corrupted deals. On the other, the knowledge of the rules of the game is a powerful de-mystifier. It creates, little by little, a political culture of informed and active citizens, it reduces the chances of populism and demagogy. Participatory decision-making is not a guarantee for intelligent or successful decisions. But it brings about decisions that are “owned” and can become part of the knowledge of the ones who made them.

Once an agreement (e.g., a consensus over a management plan and a given sharing of rights and responsibilities) is reached, it should be recorded in terms clear and comprehensible to all and in both official and local languages. The agreement may not be written on stone, but it should certainly be written on paper (various copies should be kept by various parties) and publicised as widely as possible within the relevant communities and among the relevant actors. As mentioned below, it is also good to underline its importance by means of a specific event or ceremony. As far as possible, the signatories should be people directly taking on management responsibilities (e.g., the Head of a village, the President of a fisherfolk cooperative or the District Chief Administrator)—not distant authorities who have little to do with the agreement. The parties should commit themselves in public (see an example in Box 6.8), and the agreement should be given ample visibility, e.g., a copy of the agreement could be posted in local communities as well as in the premises of an agency in charge of the natural resource area, if applicable.

A good agreement includes provisions for how to deal with exceptional situations (e.g., who should take responsibility for what in case of acute ecological stress or social crisis). It also makes clear what results are expected and how those are to be monitored and evaluated. Following such evaluation, certain provisions of the management plan may also be reviewed and modified. Some forms of complementary accords, such as a memorandum of understanding, are also usually flexible and allow for revisions. Other forms, such as contracts among legally-recognised parties and involving substantial economic and financial resources, are less easily modified. Even less so are agreements formalised as a local by-law or enshrined in legislation. While, as discussed earlier in this Chapter, it is useful to have flexibility embedded in an agreement, it has also been observed that co-management agreements incorporated in legislation—including in “weak” legislation that calls for voluntary compliance—are stronger and tend to be better respected than the others.⁴³

Participatory decision-making is not a guarantee for intelligent or successful decisions. But it brings about decisions that are “owned” and can become part of the knowledge of the ones who made them.

⁴² Przeworski, 1991, quoted in Navarro, 1997.

⁴³ Graeme Kelleher, personal communication, 1995.

Box 6.17 **Developing an integrated, participatory development plan in Richtersveld (South Africa)**

(adapted from Turner *et al.*, 2002)

The process that sustained the integrated development plans in Richtersveld resulted in a strong public commitment to conservation objectives, and in the identification of various conservancy initiatives by the communities themselves, initiatives that amount to community owned and managed protected areas. The process was built around intensive, repeated rounds of information sharing, awareness raising and consultation. In addition to public meetings in each of the four towns in the area, letters were written to all Richtersveld residents to explain the process and to brief them on progress. Besides broad consultations with the general public, a range of more focused consultations took place with key players, such as SANP (South African National Parks) and the mining industries that are active in the area. Local capacity to conduct public meetings and manage conflict was also strengthened and the process had a unifying and empowering effect on the local communities, who are now able to express clearly their priorities and commitments.

The core planning process, built around these consultations, went through to the following steps:

- agreeing on a development vision for the Richtersveld;
- identifying development priorities;
- filtering the vision and the priorities through a situational analysis of the area, which helped to assess how much was feasible;
- devising development strategies;
- adjusting these strategies in the light of the Land Development Objectives also drafted as part of the public process;
- preparing the integrated development plan through a series of drafts, including an initial Working Plan, submitted to the provincial government for review;
- following initial approval of the plan, sending it for approval to provincial government.



As the co-management plan and the complementary accords require on-going monitoring, evaluation, experimenting and learning, the process of negotiating and implementing the agreement is never “finished”. A pluralist organisation usually needs to remain in charge of reviewing the agreement(s) on an on-going basis (more on this in Chapter 8). The composition of such an organisation may be very similar to the one of the negotiation platform, *i.e.*, include the representatives of the parties that developed the agreement in the first place and “continue” the negotiation platform on a more stable basis. The parties may also

identify or set up several CM organisations for the same NRM unit(s), for instance an advisory body, a body to originate technical proposals, an executive secretariat, a decision-making board.

Regardless of the type of organisations developed through the negotiation process, it may be useful that the social actors involved in it engage in reflection on what constitutes “good governance”, and on whether they are actually developing such a system for the natural resources of their concern.⁴⁴ It can be argued that, if good governance principles are upheld, the CM organisational setting will be stronger and rendered more sustainable.⁴⁵ It is also likely that the very process of a pluralist negotiation enhances the chances of every participant to understand what governance is all about and how to attempt to improve upon it. Table 6.3 provides an overall view of principles and conditions of good governance derived from the work of the United Nations.

The Five Principles	The United Nations Principles on which the five principles are based	Primary indicators of good governance in co-management settings
1. Legitimacy and Voice	<p>Participation: All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.</p> <p>Consensus orientation: Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Views are freely expressed, with no discrimination related to gender, ethnicity, social class, etc.</p> <p>Dialogue is active and consensus is often achieved.</p> <p>There is a measure of trust among stakeholders.</p> <p>Agreed rules are respected because they are “owned” by people and not solely because of fear of repression.</p>
2. Accountability	<p>Accountability: Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisations and whether the decision is internal or external.</p> <p>Transparency: Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.</p>	<p>All management partners possess adequate knowledge, and quality of knowledge, about what is at stake in decision-making, who is responsible for what and how responsibilities can be rendered accountable.</p> <p>The avenues to demand accountability are accessible to all.</p> <p>Accountability is not limited to verbal exchanges but linked to concrete and appropriate rewards and sanctions.</p>

⁴⁴ This exercise could be proposed and assisted by the process facilitator.

⁴⁵ Abrams *et al.*, 2003.

3. Performance	<p>Responsiveness: Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.</p> <p>Effectiveness and efficiency: Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.</p>	<p>A competent administration is in place, assessed through management effectiveness mechanisms.</p> <p>Institutional and human capacity is available to assume management responsibilities, as appropriate.</p> <p>The management regime is robust and resilient, <i>i.e.</i>, able to overcome a variety of threats/ obstacles and come out strengthened from the experiences.</p>
4. Fairness	<p>Equity: All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.</p> <p>Rule of Law: Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly as they regard human rights.</p>	<p>Conservation is undertaken with decency and dignity, without humiliating or harming people.</p> <p>The governing mechanisms (<i>e.g.</i>, laws, policies, conflict resolution forums, funding opportunities, etc.) distribute equitably the costs and benefits deriving from conservation.</p> <p>Public service promotions are merit-based.</p> <p>Laws and regulations are applied consistently through time</p> <p>Fair avenues for conflict management are available as is, eventually, non discriminatory recourse to justice</p>
5. Direction	<p>Strategic vision: Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.</p>	<p>Effective leadership draws from customary and innovative ideas and processes and provides a model of good conduct, being consistent in what it is said and done.</p>

The end of the negotiation process (or at least of its first round) is usually marked by a meeting in which the results of the participatory process are made known to the relevant communities and the public at large. The meeting is usually held in the presence of authorities with more extensive powers than those who participated in the negotiations, thus providing an ostensible political endorsement of the outcomes of the process. The relevant actors review the common vision of the desired future, the components of a strategy designed to move from the present situation to the common vision, the co-management plan for the natural resources, the agreements set up for each component of the strategy and the organisations and rules developed to accompany everything through. For any major component of the strategy (*e.g.*, the NRM plan or other key initiatives or

projects), someone should be appointed as “responsible” for communication and carrying out the follow-up protocol (including results anticipated, progress indicators to be monitored, individuals and organisations in charge, etc.).



This meeting is an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the work of the negotiating parties as well as the co-management convener, Start-up Team and facilitator(s) and, in general, to celebrate the new hope generated for the entire community. At the meeting, the key actors can also publicly vow to respect and “collectively guarantee” the co-management package, which is described and discussed as openly as possible.

...the key actors can also publicly vow to respect and “collectively guarantee” the co-management plans and agreements.

The co-management agreement and the pluralist organisations possibly identified or established to implement and review it should be confirmed and celebrated, but not ritualised to render them sacrosanct, as it might have been the case for the common vision of the desired future agreed upon by all relevant actors. On the contrary, the plans, agreements and organisations are to be monitored, evaluated and *modified* in an on-going way, according to their performance, results and eventual impacts. Trial and error, experimentation and even some slightly erratic management adjustments may be quite healthy, as NRM decisions need to be made regularly, and demand the on-going participation of the relevant social actors. This is not to mean, however, that an agreement can be changed at will by the unilateral decision of some parties. Unfortunately, many powerful stakeholders are the most reluctant to enter into the negotiation process because they “fear that the local communities will not respect the agreements” but later on they are the ones who actually break the agreements and fail to deliver.⁴⁶ For some, this potential lack of robustness of the agreements *vis-à-vis* the most powerful stakeholders is the most insidious problem of co-management.⁴⁷ Where is the guarantee that the agreement will be respected and that the organisation set in place by the process will remain recognised through time? A crucial question indeed!

⁴⁶ Chatelain *et al.*, 2004.

⁴⁷ Peter Schachenmann, personal communication, 2000.

