Reflections on Successes & Failures of PAR

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Outline of Talk

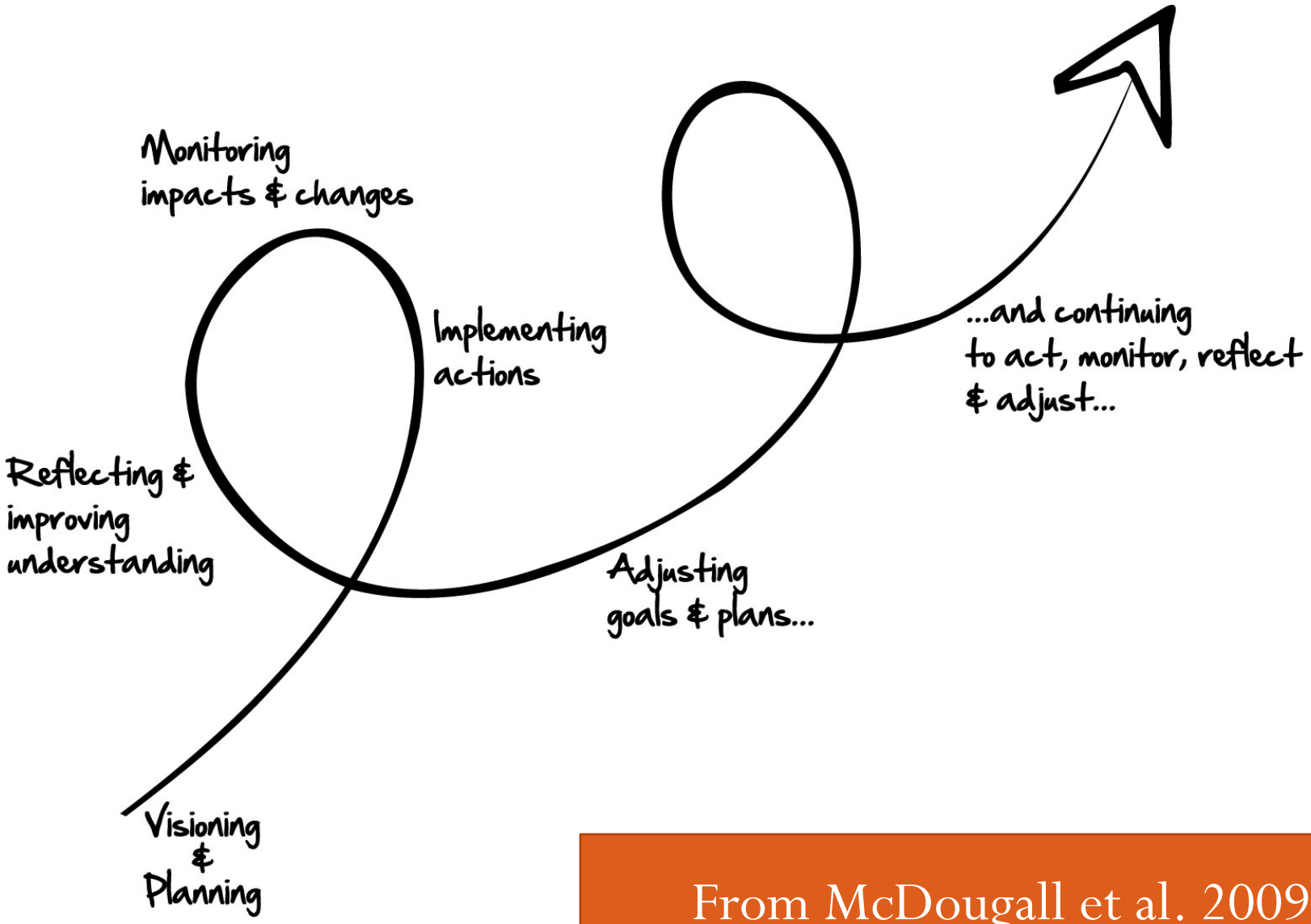
- Review of relevant experience, with strengths and weaknesses of each
- Balancing acts and institutional dilemmas → complications

• Arguments for continuing, nonetheless [partially in pursuit of 'Democracy']



What is PAR (CIFOR's 1999 usage):

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



From McDougall et al. 2009
(CIFOR, Bogor)



Carol's 2002 birthday card

Part I: PAR Cases Examined

- [Precursor: TropSoils]
- *Adaptive Collaborative Management* (ACM)
- *Collective Action and Property Rights* (CAPRI)
- *Landscape Mosaics* (LM)



[Precursor: *TropSoils (a CRSP)*]

- West Sumatra, Indonesia (1983-86)
- Location specific , FSR&D
  - **Iterative & dynamic,**
  - **farmer-based,**
  - **problem-oriented,**
  - **holistic,**
  - **interdisciplinary,**
  - **complementary to other approaches**

Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) – Global (1) – ["Will this work?"]

- 11 countries, 30 sites (1999-2002 + +)
- Vertical (*empowerment*), horizontal (*collaboration*), iterative (*learning*) elements
- Flexibility within broad umbrella
- Teams and facilitator(s) in each country



Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) – Global (2)

- Context studies (6 kinds) + analysis of 7 X-site dimensions, plus locally defined studies
- PAR (facilitation of groups, mostly in communities)
- Multiple emphases (social learning, C&I, modelling, GAD…)



ACM PAR Pro's

- Strongly grounded in local priorities
- Enthusiasm from participants
- Addressed small, locally identified problems

- Growth in ecological & social knowledge
- Capacity building (skills @ analysis, negotiation, conflict management, networking, collective action)
- Equity improvements



ACM PAR Con's

- Few concrete $$ or ecological results (after 2-3 years)

- Seen by some as politically naïve
- Trade-off community action vs. research outputs
- Need for better hand-over and longer term follow-through



Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI) - "Will this work?"

- 2 villages, 2 district sites, Jambi Province, Indonesia - (2004-06)
- PAR in linked communities & districts (2 each)
- Focus on elite capture, poverty alleviation
- Facilitators staying in each community; and for district level from Bogor

CAPRI [new] PAR Pro's

- Similar to ACM results +
- Better linking of community concerns with district concerns (e.g., land tenure, LUP)
- Capacity building at district level (analysis, proposal development, attitudinal change, networking)
- Better access by communities to government resources



CAPRi PAR Con's

- Realized new district level constraints:
  - Less power of facilitators vis-à-vis officials
  - Mobility of officials
  - Officials enmeshed in bureaucracies
- Equity problems re-surfaced (e.g., *Orang Rimba*)



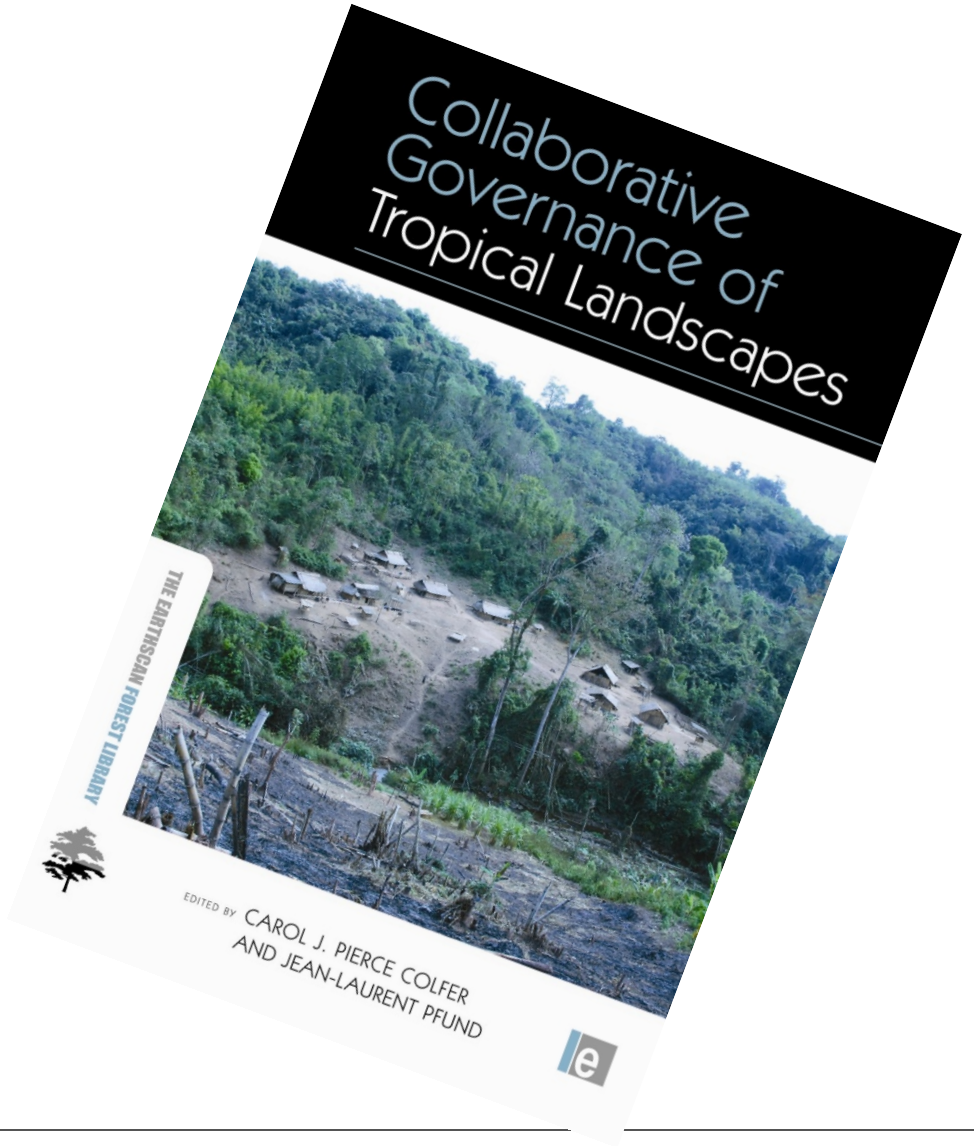
Landscape Mosaics (LM)
Africa, Asia (Tool or Experiment?)

- 5 countries, 16 village sites (+ districts in each) – (2007-2010)
- Themes (livelihoods, governance, incentives & biophysical environment)
- Complex cross site database
- Planned PAR on all sites (separate community/subgroup & district groups)
- High dependence on partners (low funding)

Landscape Mosaics Pro's

- Linking of landscape to national level
- Some good, cross-site studies ☺
- Methods development

[next slide]





Represent landscape with a 3D model

Physical and visual tool used as a common basis for discussion, involving different stakeholders

Link with 2D maps and land uses





1- Landscape understanding

Landscape Mosaics PAR Con's

- Non-implementation of PAR on three of five sites; late start on two
- No district level PAR groups
- Loss of one (Incentives) of four themes





Direct Sources of LM Problems:

- Too short time span
- Too complex, given time and money available

  2 CG sister centers, many partners on all sites (9 in Madagascar!); like ACM, distant sites; time trade-offs

- Misunderstandings, miscommunication, resistance to what PAR really entails, by various key actors

Part II: Indirect Sources
The 'Hard Parts'

Philosophical & Institutional Issues,
& Enduring, Pragmatic Problems
[Common to Many PAR Efforts]

Institutional Balancing Acts within CIFOR (& with donors, partners)

- Biophysical vs. social
- Quantitative vs. qualitative
- Extractive/conventional vs. participatory
- Cross-site vs. local
- Research vs. development/ advocacy



CIFOR's Institutional Culture: Adverse changes from ACM ➡ LM

- Reduction in 'freedom to fail'
- Reduced trust in the approach & staff
- Less recognition of value of teamwork & team building
- Increased pressure towards 'bean counting' (time, money, outputs)

Enduring Pragmatic Dilemmas

- Inequities within teams (center vs. periphery)
- Different interests/strengths (team, partner, community member)
- Time trade-offs (e.g., community vs. district, participatory vs. extractive, settled vs. nomadic)
- **Length of funding cycles**

Problems, Problems, Problems!

But what alternatives for forest peoples?

- Accessibility (no fleeing to the hills)
- Population  ; available land 
- Powerful external actors, with governmental agreement, control what happens in remote areas

Doing nothing *locally* 
forest communities progressively marginalized.

Part III: Ways Forward in Future PAR Work – toward enhanced Democracy / empowerment



No Silver Bullets – but PAR leads to skills needed for improving governance

[If we deal effectively with institutional constraints]

PAR offers a mechanism for local people to

- Strengthen their knowledge, skills & access to external resources
- Feed holistic information about local systems & *IK* to interested others
- Monitor and cope with change
- Organize to collaborate with, monitor, contribute to and/or resist the more powerful.

To strengthen PAR successes, we need to (1):

- Work towards better **interdisciplinary cooperation** (a la IGERT);
- Strengthen **research & training** on PAR & team building: Social analysis, facilitation, diplomacy & networking are key;
- Work on **attitudinal change** in relevant bureaucratic institutions (e.g., '*freedom to fail*' in the learning process; downward accountability; good balance on philosophy of science);

Strengthening PAR successes requires (2):

- Find appropriate '**institutional homes**' from which to routinely conduct PAR.
- Be persistent and calmly insistent about meaningful **decisionmaking for local PAR groups** (sustainability depends on it!);
- Seek **longer term funding** (perhaps thru linking with 'hot topics'---like climate change).

Questions/Comments Welcome!!

[I'm writing a chapter on 'reflections' on our PAR experience…so I'll *really* be listening!]



