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UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT'S DYNAMICS IN PARTICIPATORY NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Latifou IDRISOU

Department of Rural Economics and Sociology, Faculty of
Agronomy, University of Parakou
BP: 123 – Parakou – Republic of Benin

Noelle AARTS

Strategic Communication Group, Wageningen University,
Wageningen, Netherlands

Cees LEEUWIS

Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen
University, Wageningen, Netherlands

Annemarie van PAASSEN

Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen
University, Wageningen, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This paper investigated conflicts in participatory protected areas management in Benin to better understand their dynamics. This review paper is based on four articles written from three case-studies of conflicts that emerged and evolved in participatory protected areas management in Benin and a review of literature on the issue of conflicts in participatory processes, particularly in natural resources management. The objective of the case-studies was to understand why and how conflicts emerge and evolve in negotiation among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin. Three cases were studied where participatory protected areas management started with cooperation and shifted into conflicts among the stakeholders involved. In each case-study, frame analysis was used to investigate how stakeholders involved built cooperation at the start of the process and why and how conflicts emerged and evolved. Building upon the results of the individual case-studies and the comparative analysis conducted in a fourth paper, this paper identifies the cross-cutting conclusions and themes about the emergence and escalation of conflict in participatory processes. Subsequently, the paper discusses the practical implications for participatory and community-based natural resources management. The paper ends with the overall conclusion on conflict emergence and evolution in participatory natural resources management, including a reflection on the usefulness of a frame analysis for understanding conflict dynamics in participatory processes.

Keywords: participation natural resources management, conflict dynamics, frame analysis, discourse, institutions, trust, Benin

1. Introduction

Protected areas in Benin were created between 1940 and 1960, during the colonial period of the country. About 59 such areas were created covering an area of 2,179,418 ha, representing about 20% of the country's total area. These protected areas were created by the colonial administration by confiscating rural land and putting it under government control without the consent of the local communities, who considered that their land had been expropriated. Since their creation time until the early 1990s, these protected areas were managed solely by government officials (El-Hadj Issa, 2001; Tchiwanou, 2001; Zoundoh, 2001; Arouna, 2006). Local communities were considered as undesirable in the management of these resources and were kept away from them by force and repression. Forests rangers (FRs) who received military training were deployed around these protected areas and were charged with preventing any human activity from taking place on these lands. Thus, several conflicts arose between the FRs and local communities in relation to access to, and use of, the natural resources in the protected areas. This management system also proved to be inefficient in terms of conservation of these protected areas, where degradation increased over time (El-Hadj Issa, 2001; Tchiwanou, 2001; Arouna, 2006).

In 1993, participatory management of protected areas was enacted in Benin. This was motivated by the country's political and economic liberalization in 1990 and the Rio de Janeiro Summit held in 1992, which recognized the importance of environmental degradation and local communities' involvement in natural resources management. The government issued the new forest law No 93-009 on 2 July 1993, which opened the management of the protected areas to the local communities (Djohossou, 2000). With the support of donors, efforts have been made since then by the government and national and international NGOs to implement several participatory protected area management projects, and some are still in progress. The aim is to make the interventions in protected area management more effective by fostering the participation of local communities in forest resource management. This will, as a result, enable the local communities to continue the activities developed under the projects after the projects themselves have ceased. However, despite many efforts of government and non-government agencies to stimulate local community participation in sustainable forest management projects, the results are not satisfactory (El-Hadj Issa, 2001; Tchiwanou, 2001; Zoundoh, 2001). Several studies revealed that the lack of success of the forestry reforms of the early 1990s was mainly due to the failure to implement a participatory approach in the management of the protected areas (MDR & PGFTR, 1999; Siebert & Elwert, 2004). Timber resources are still illegally logged for the timber market and charcoal production, farmers continue to expand their farms deeper into the protected areas, and the pastoralists are still using the forests as areas for grazing, with little respect for the regulations, violating the agreements set during the project implementation phase. Even the people involved in the management of the projects engage in some practices that run counter to the sustainability of the natural resources (Tchiwanou, 2001; Arouna, 2006).

Some deficiencies have been noted in the participatory projects implemented, such as the limited interest of local communities in project activities during project implementation, and, moreover, just after the end of the projects, local communities and the other stakeholders reverted to their old 'bad' forest resources exploitation in the project areas (Tchiwanou, 2001). Local organizations which were supposed to continue the tasks carried out by the projects have broken down, and the agreements reached between the stakeholders during the project implementation phase have been called into question (Tchiwanou, 2001). Moreover, conflicts have re-emerged between the FRs and local communities and even among stakeholder groups within local communities involved in the management of these protected areas (Tchiwanou, 2001; Zoundoh, 2001; Arouna, 2006; Mongbo, 2008). After nearly two decades of struggling with participatory management of protected areas in Benin, how and why the process evolved to the current situation had to be investigated.

Idrissou et al. investigated three case-studies of participatory protected areas' management in the above context to understand conflicts' emergence and evolution. Four papers were written from these studies and published. The first paper (Idrissou et al., 2011a) focused on the role of discourses in conflict construction in participatory management of the Agoua forest. The second paper (Idrissou et al., 2011b) showed the evolution of social cohesion in participatory management of the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) forests and how this is influenced by formal and informal institutions. The third paper (Idrissou et al., 2013) investigated hidden conflicts in participatory management of the Pendjari National Park (PNP) and the role trust played in. Finally, the fourth paper (Idrissou et al., 2016) looked at the role of stakeholders' identities and their dynamics in conflict emergence and evolution across the three case-studies of participatory protected areas management.

This paper is a thorough review of the three case-studies through the four papers complemented with papers from the vast literature on conflicts especially in natural resources management to better understand conflict dynamics in participatory protected areas management. When looking at the cases from a somewhat greater distance, several cross-cutting themes can be discerned in relation to the emergence and escalation of conflict in the participatory management of protected areas. They relate to the central role of identity and context, the dynamics of trust and distrust, the relations between formal and informal institutions and the role of text and talk in the emergence of conflict. These themes are discussed below.

2. The central role of identity and contextual dynamics in the emergence and escalation of conflict

Conflicts over natural resources are inevitable and ubiquitous (Desloges & Gauthier, 1997; Buckles, 1999; Yasmi, 2003; Yasmi et al., 2009; Mola-Yudego & Gritten, 2010). According to Glasl (1999) conflict occurs when an actor feels "impairment" from the behaviour of another actor. In many studies, such impairment and associated conflicts are seen to be connected to the natural resource itself. That is, people struggle over and compete for the ownership, access and use of, for example, the forest, the trees, the water, or the land (Ramirez, 2001; Wollenberg et al., 2001; Sneddon et al., 2002; Scholz & Stiften, 2005; Fasse, 2006; Yasmi, 2006; Sauer, 2008; Warner, 2009). In this line of thought, conflicts in the management of natural resources occur when there are disagreements and disputes regarding the access and management of the natural resources (Mola-Yudego & Gritten, 2010). This paper shows this is only one side of the story, and that conflicts about natural resource management are not only about bio-physical resources. The case-studies (Idrissou et al., 2011a; Idrissou et al., 2011b; Idrissou et al., 2013; Idrissou et al., 2016) indicate that symbolic resources, including social status, moral values, trust and other identity-related issues play decisive roles as well (Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006).

Participatory forest management involves different stakeholder groups who continuously cast and recast their identities in interaction with others through discursive practices (Ford, 1999; Musson & Duberley, 2007). This is not surprising, as social differentiation to in-groups and out-groups is a universal phenomenon. Individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of group identities and aspire to a positive social identity (Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). Identity construction is an active and essential process of sense making for our 'selves' (Musson & Duberley, 2007). However, the existence of social differentiation leads almost inevitably to conflict and tension (Haslam, 2001a).

In interaction, group members may develop conflicting relationships with out-group members, in order to protect their positively valued social identities (Richter et al., 2005). As demonstrated by Idrissou et al. (2016), the conflicts in the different cases-studied have developed in coherence with the co-construction of

identities among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of the protected areas. All the conflicts involved confrontation between the local communities living around the protected areas and the forest department representatives. The cases show that the co-construction and the dynamics of the social identities of these stakeholders reinforced the conflicts in the different cases (see Idrissou et al., 2016).

While perceived non-respect and threat to, and therewith the salience of, an identity played an important role in all conflicts, the cases also indicated that the salience of identities is not fixed and co-evolved with dynamics in the context. At the beginning of the participatory processes in the different cases, the local communities positively framed the forest department representatives and welcomed their initiative, which comprised of an invitation of local communities to become involved in the management of the protected areas. Positive identity and characterization frames about each other were co-constructed by the different stakeholder categories. The social context created by the forest department in involving the local communities significantly reduced the distance between the two stakeholder groups (local communities and forest department) and minimized the salience of different identities. This enabled cooperation among them at the beginning of the process in the different cases studied. However, progressively the change of the social context triggered the salience of the different groups' identities (both 'we' and 'they') and led to conflict. In the Agoua forest case, the social context changed with the forest departments' decision to implement a plan in which several farmers had to abandon their farms in the forest, which represented their core livelihood (Idrissou et al., 2011a). In the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case the social context changed with the arrival of new forest rangers and their denial to acknowledge the informal institutions and co-management responsibilities/authorities articulated by the former forest rangers and the local communities (Idrissou et al., 2011b). In the Pendjari National Park (PNP) case, the context changed as the identity frame of eco-guards evolved and they started to think that the park direction was not fulfilling the rights and promises made to them (Idrissou et al., 2013). Their identity as eco-guards became a topic, which resulted in changed behavior vis-à-vis the park administration. These cases show differences in identity are not an issue or positively valued when actors collaborate, but when contexts change and conflicts emerge the salience and perceived non-respect or threat of one's identity often play a contributing role (Idrissou et al., 2016).

In all, the cases demonstrate the interplay between the context and the salience of social identities, and how this is associated with the emergence and escalation of conflict. Social identities have particular content and meanings that are inextricably tied to the intergroup relations in specific contexts (Livingstone & Haslam, 2008). The specific social context influences which categories of stakeholder become relevant and form the basis for social identity construction. Social context thus affects the salience or importance of social identities (Jackson, 2002; Shamir & Sagiv-Schifter, 2006). More specifically, the cases suggest that the emergence and escalation of conflict are related to the contextual expression of in-group bias (defined as the in-group being evaluated relatively more favourably than the out-group) which in turn influences and legitimizes courses of action that further aggravate tension (Jackson, 2002). The emergence and escalation of conflict is thus associated with the salience of identities (Stets & Burke, 2000; Haslam, 2001a; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Korostelina, 2007, Idrissou et al., 2016).

3. Trust dynamics and conflict in participation

Given the often troublesome relations between stakeholders in natural resource management, it is not surprising that both scholars and practitioners have become interested in issues of trust. Trust has become an important concept for scholars attempting to better understand the dynamics of cooperation and competition, conflict and conflict resolution, etc. (Eshuis & Van Woerkum, 2003; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Kelman, 2005; Lewicki, 2006; Schumann, 2010). According to Lewicki (2006) trust is fundamental in intergroup relations as it is the glue that holds a relationship together. Thus, trust building and enhancing is a central requirement for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships between individuals, groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong (Kelman, 2005). When groups trust each other, they can work together and even work through conflict relatively easily whereas when they do not trust each other, conflict arises, becomes destructive, and its resolution is more difficult (Lewicki, 2006). In the different cases-studied, the first endeavor of the forest department was to build trust with the local communities – an effort which is in fact advocated as a first step in several handbooks on participatory processes (Slocum, 2005; Schuman, 2006; Kanet et al., 2007; Mysiak, 2010). Although it is recognized by many that the development of trust is not an easy process (Kumar & Paddison, 2000; Mostert et al., 2007; Swain & Tait, 2007; Tait, 2011), the participatory forest management initiatives studied all succeeded to improve relationships between the various stakeholders in the early stages of the process. This is in line with Schumann (2010) who argues that the mere organization of intensified interaction between groups can lead to an increase in trust between stakeholder groups involved in a participatory process. The trust built enabled cooperation at the beginning of the participatory management of the protected areas between the forest department representatives and local communities. However, in all three cases distrust among the local communities and the representatives of forest department re-emerged at a later stage, and went along with intensified conflict and counterproductive processes of identity co-construction (see the previous section).

Distrust emerged in the management of the Agoua forest case when the implementation of the participatory management plan was stated by the forest department and triggered the conflict (Idrissou et al., 2011a). The local communities considered that through this decision, the forest department was not following its words of the beginning of the process. Distrust is also associated to the emergence of the conflict in the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case. The conflict started when the trust built at the beginning of the participatory process vanished with the arrival of the new forest rangers who ignored the informal rules co-constructed which were both the result and the enabling factor of increasing trust. For the local communities, the new forest rangers lacked knowledge on participation and were not even committed to this approach (Idrissou et al., 2011b). The emergence of the hidden conflict in the management of the Pendjari National Park is also associated with the development of distrust between the park administration and the eco-guards. They accused each other of being responsible of the increase of poaching in the park. The eco-guards distrusted the park administration in its willingness to satisfy the (assumed) rights of an eco-guard, whereas the park administration accused the eco-guards of complicity with the poachers (Idrissou et al., 2013). Since the stakeholders increasingly distrusted each other, subsequent interventions and interactions only led to further escalation.

As is demonstrated in Idrissou et al. (2013), the apparently vulnerability of the trust build in the early stages of the participatory process seems to be associated with the type of trust involved. As shown in the same paper, improved relations and trust were built essentially through the proposition of rewards and incentives to local communities for their participation to the management of the natural resources. In terms of Lewicki

(2006) this means that the forest department in the different cases built calculus-based trust. That is: trust based on the assessment that the overall anticipated benefits to be derived from the relationship outweigh the anticipated costs (Lewicky, 2006: 100). However, it is argued by Lewicky (2006) that calculus-based trust is inherently instable, and easily turns into distrust when promises, rewards and expectations are not fulfilled. The case-studies presented in the four papers support that argument.

The promises and expectations of rewards and incentives as perceived in the early stages of the processes enabled cooperation, and reduced the salience of the differential identities of the stakeholders involved in the intergroup relation. However, the trust built at the beginning of the processes vanished progressively when the fulfilment of promises and incentives were seen to be undermined later in the process. Trust is thus a relationship that is not given, but is instead highly dynamic and constantly negotiated over time (Kelman, 2005). The papers presenting the Agoua Forest Restoration case and the Penjari National Park case also show that trust and distrust are discursively constructed social relations that depend on the fulfilling of the agreements and the norm of reciprocity (see also Lewis, 2008). As will be argued in the next section, dynamics of trust, distrust and conflict are also linked with tensions that emerge between the formal and informal arenas that emerge within the participatory management of the protected areas.

4. Formal and informal institutions and conflict in participation

The Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, highlighting the ongoing degradation of environmental resources and the need to involve local communication in natural resource management, inspired many governments try more participatory approaches and invite local communities to participate in the elaboration and implementation of natural resource plans. Notwithstanding a great deal of bottom-up participatory rhetoric, our cases from Benin confirm that participatory forest management projects can go along with considerable government control and disciplining of interaction (see also Cook and Kothari, 2001). The participatory processes often started with the building of formal institutions in terms of formal projects, plans, rules and procedures that should enable and constrain the relationships and interactions between the stakeholders involved in the management of the resources (Leskinen, 2004; Ibarra & Hiraakuri, 2007). These institutions were typically agreed upon in formal meetings between the stakeholders in the framework of project implementation. However, our cases suggest that initial formal institutions are often re-negotiated and complemented by informal rules as the process unfolds and as personal relationships develop (Schumann, 2010). As the cases demonstrate, the mere involvement of actors gives rise to a further articulation and contextualization of process rules to fit the local reality. In interaction, actors progressively re-interpret and operationalize formal institutions into a framework of informal rules and routines, that pay respect to and can work in their (partly tacit) reality. In the cases presented in Idrissou et al. (2011b) and Idrissou et al. (2013) face-to-face communication and co-construction of informal institutions led to social cohesion (Kearns & Forrest 2000). That is: stakeholders developed shared ideas about the value and moral principles of the project, constructed an acceptable social order (e.g. in terms of the distribution of responsibilities and benefits) and built a network and social capital that further nurtured their feeling of territorial belonging and trust. At certain stages of the projects, such social cohesion provided support for the cooperative implementation of the management plans. Thus, while formal institutions provide the initial framework for legitimate action, they become intertwined with informal institutions that become decisive in the achievement of objectives.

Although we have seen that formal and informal institutions are both important and can reinforce each other (Torniainen & Saastamoinen, 2007; Woodhill, 2008), we have also seen that the intertwining of formal and informal institutions may result in problems and conflict, especially when there is discontinuity and turn-over with regard to participants. This is not surprising as participants tend to go through a social learning process, which is hard to explain or transfer to non-involved actors and newcomers (Loeber, 2004). Some issues might be explained but newly arriving participants have to go through an experiential learning period to grasp and master the (partly tacit) articulated informal institutions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case, showed that newly arriving officers had a different interpretation of the concept 'participatory management', and the distribution of responsibilities and benefits amongst the different partners. Although the new forester's interpretations might be in line with the more abstract formal policies, they did not fit the existing informal institutions co-constructed by the local communities and former forest rangers. Even so, the new forest rangers felt that it was legitimate for them to adhere to and impose their own management procedures, rather than to accept and take time to learn about the prevailing informal institutions. In a hard way, local communities learned that existing informal (but very real) locally adapted and highly valued principles and procedures were disregarded, and they subsequently lost trust in the whole exercise. This case shows the importance to recognize the power of informal institutions. When the normative content of newly imposed procedures is at odds with the prevailing informal institutions, conflicts are likely to arise and hamper the achievement of formal plans (Ibarra & Hirakuri, 2007; Woodhill, 2008).

The above discussion shows the relevance of inter-human processes for the emergence and escalation of conflicts in participatory processes. In particular, we mention the role of perceived threats to one's identity and the ignorance of articulated informal rules. Informal institutions are fundamental for the development of social cohesion needed to successfully execute the joint enterprise. Inter-human processes contribute to the success or failure of a participatory management process. As discussed below, actors' utterances reveal these inter-human processes and discursively construct them.

5. The emergence and escalation of conflict via talk and text: frame construction in interaction

The case-studies show that conflicts are gradually co-constructed by the stakeholders involved in the process through their everyday conversations in interactions. Conversations range from single speech acts to an extensive network of speech acts which form arguments, narratives and other forms of discourses, and the full conversational apparatus of symbols, artifacts, theatrics etc. that are used in conjunction with (or as substitutes for) what is spoken (Ford, 1999). In the cases studied, the conversations consisted of talks and texts that were held and written by the stakeholders in formal and informal settings during the implementation of the participatory process. Conversations, thus are organized as well as organizing systems of meaning, which frame reality and influence the way people understand and act upon it (Tietze, 2005).

At the start of the participatory process in the different cases studied, the stakeholders seemed willing to collaborate and their conversations do not reveal any perceived threat to their identity. The stakeholders constructed positive frames about each other, and the text and talk at that time reflects trust and cohesion. This lasted until the discourses of the representatives of the forest department shifted and triggered the creation of a new reality. In the Agoua forest case, it was the decision of the Management Project for the Wari-Waro, Monts Kouffè and Agoua Forest Massifs (PAMF: *Projet d'Aménagement des Massifs*

Forestiers d'Agoua, des Monts Kouffè et de Wari-Waro) to implement the participatory management plan that provoked the shift in conversations and triggered the conflict. The study shows that the stakeholders involved constructed different frames in different interaction contexts. These frames reflect what they perceived was going on, what they thought they were doing, and what they felt was strategically wise from their perspective (e.g. negotiation, cooperation, conflict, etc.) (Agne, 2007). Through conversations, a reality of conflict has thus been constructed (Ford, 1999; Ford et al., 2002; Tietze, 2005). In the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) forests case too it became clear that participation of local people in the management of the forests was realized initially by constructing, interpreting, enacting and maintaining social cohesion through discourse. Via conversations formal rules were interpreted, extended and translated into informal rules that formed the glue for trust and cooperation. As these informal rules progressively became more important than the formal rules, conflict arose from the moment these informal rules were ignored by newly arrived forest rangers that replaced the ones who were involved in the process from the beginning. The Pendjari case has shown that hidden conflicts are the result of actors sharing their feelings of dissatisfaction in conversations with those with whom they already agree and who confirm their existing opinions. In other words, whereas conflict is often supposed to be the result of interactions between opponents, this case makes clear that conflicts often develop in the interactions among actors within 'we' groups. The fact that the conflict was not expressed in interactions among the different stakeholders made it a hidden conflict, which was even more difficult to solve because it amplified serious problems of trust. In all cases we found that the salience of identities were constructed in interactions and triggered by the framing of contextual factors playing an important role in the emergence and escalation of conflict.

The cases show that people actively engage in conversations and in doing so they dynamically (re)shape and develop them with a purpose to justify or legitimate particular actions or outcomes (Kusztal, 2002; Tietze, 2005). The emergence of conflict is thus not only expressed in the relations between individuals and resources but also in the way stakeholders construct realities in which they operate and that include interpretations of contexts as far as they consider these important (see Ford et al., 2002; Kusztal, 2002). Stakeholders thus act and respond within a reality that is constructed in everyday conversation and talk. Within such a setting, emerging shifts in formal and informal conversations reflect the construction of new realities and offer opportunities for new actions and results, leading to either cooperation or conflict (Ford, 1999).

It can be concluded that conflict and escalation emerge from the everyday interactions among stakeholders, and become visible in everyday conversation, text and talk. It is through such talking and framing before, after, between and during critical events that actors actively construe and give meaning to the situation, which may or may not lead to the emergence and escalation of conflicts (Schon & Rein, 1994; Elliot et al., 2002; Prins, 2005; Schweitzer et al., 2005; Dewulf et al., 2009). Therefore, conflict and conflict development can be studied by investigating the frames that people co-construct in different interaction settings, including how these change over time.

6. Implications for participatory and community-based natural resources management

This section outlines several conceptual and practical implications that emerge from the cases studied.

6.1 *Limitations to planning: the significance of human relations and inter-human dynamics*

Participatory and community-based natural resources management are regarded as processes through which management power is shared with or devolved to local communities living in and or around the natural resource areas (Leskniemi, 2004). In the operationalization of such processes there tends to be a lot of attention to methods, procedures and planning of separate meetings and activities as well as for organizing the longer term process. Many handbooks, methods and guidelines exist on how to make joint diagnosis, prioritize problems, reach agreement etc. in different participatory settings (e.g. Chambers, 1994; Pretty et al., 1995; van Veldhuizen et al., 1997; Leeuwis, 2004). In longer term process plans there tends to be considerable attention to the phasing of the trajectory, to defining who to involve and how, and to the roles and responsibilities of all the actors in different stages of the process (Turnhout et al., 2010; Leeuwis, 2004). In the sphere of community-based natural resources management initial activities typically result in the elaboration of a 'management plan' that should be 'implemented' and which contains goals and procedures at both material and process level, sometimes with particular emphasis on the management of power relations and accountability among the stakeholders involved (see Ribot, 2003; Cornwall, 2008; Nikkiah & Redzuan, 2009; Dworski-Riggs & Langhout, 2010). In sum, most attention is given to the careful and rational planning and control of all activities deemed essential for a participatory trajectory such as learning, negotiation, decision-making, and implementation. In many ways this is understandable in view of the demands that donors pose and the enormous challenges such processes face – indeed it would not be wise to confront complex situations such as those in forest management in Benin without proper preparation. However, these cases studied point to the fact that accompanying, less obvious/more tacit inter-human processes and dynamics (e.g. related to identity, relationships and trust) are critically important in the context of community-based forest management. In all three cases conflict escalated because negative inter-human dynamics took the upper hand. Such dynamics appeared to be highly emergent and contextual, and hence are inherently difficult to anticipate and deal with in a pre-planned manner. The cases suggest that the negative inter-human dynamics were only partially recognized by the forest management authorities, who tended to be part and parcel of these tensions rather than being in a position to somehow deal with them from a more distanced and neutral position. In all, it seems important that those involved in facilitating community-based forest management develop better concepts and strategies to 'manage' inter-human processes. This is a useful addition and specification to Leeuwis (2000, 2004) plea for developing a better language to deal with conflict in the context of participatory processes, and fits well within the more general realization that we need alternative planning models that are better suited for complex environments and for building on self-organizational dynamics in networks of interaction (Whittington, 2001; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Stacey, 2001). Some further suggestions on how to enhance the capacity to deal with inter-human dynamics in participatory processes are outlined in the next section.

6.2 *Embedding monitoring of inter-human dynamics in the facilitation of participatory processes*

Dealing effectively with inter-human dynamics and relationships requires first and foremost that participants and project staff have a general awareness that these kinds of issues are important and require active strategies in the sphere of process facilitation and monitoring.

6.2.1 Strengthening facilitation

The general push for participatory management is driven by considerable optimism about its ability to improve the substantive and procedural quality of the decisions and execution. However, in line with the papers on three cases it has been argued that –in the context of natural resource management- processes and procedures tend to pay limited attention to (a) the fact that natural resources management is rife of conflicts among competing interests, and (b) the synchronization of expertise-based management approach with values, opinions and risk concerns of the public (Beierle & Koninsky, 2000; Giller et al., 2008). The proof of the pudding of a well-functioning management system is (a) whether stakeholder values are integrated into the decision making and execution; (b) whether conflicts among interests have been resolved (c) whether actors have trust in the management system (Beierle & Koninsky, 2000). As has been suggested in the previous section, such outcomes are not likely to be achieved when participation is approached solely as a process of ‘participatory planning and implementation’ (see also Leeuwis, 2000) as this ignores the significance of inter-human dynamics. In the broader literature of the facilitation of social learning and negotiation there are many useful insights regarding inter-human dynamics that could be taken into account in a more facilitative approach to participatory processes.

Research on group, team and network development, for example, shows that in interactive processes (potential) participants simultaneously explore and try to solve questions related to substance (what is our overriding purpose and distributions of tasks, etc.), procedures (what style of decision making and conflict management do we want, etc.) and relationships (how is power and influence distributed; how can we collaborate, differ and disagree in a way that maintains respect and dignity of all identities; how to give and receive feedback, etc.) (Halveson, 2008). Rather than assuming that stakeholders have clarity about such issues from the outset and/or that procedural matters can be decided beforehand, initiators of participatory processes may usefully support stakeholders (including themselves) to come to terms with such substantive, procedural as well as relational dimensions of the process (Daniels & Walker, 2001). Such support may be provided by ‘process leaders’ (who have relatively strong ideas regarding process matters) or by ‘process facilitators’ (who tend to give more space to participants). Tuckman (1977) identified four phases or process modes (forming, storming, norming and performing) and related levels of common rules, commitment and trust in the process and co-actors. ‘Leaders’ tend to guide the groups to mature performance via telling, selling, delegation and participation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1972), while ‘facilitators’ rather enhance participants’ open communication, reflection and negotiation of substantive, procedural and relational questions-at-stake (Leeuwis, 2004). A facilitated participatory process seems most fruitful, because deliberation and inclusion of participants’ values, assumptions and concerns coupled with reciprocity tends to nurture the kind of engagement and trust needed to achieve productive cooperation in the complex setting of natural resource management. In such a process, participants may concentrate on the performance of their own and overall tasks and do not monitor each other’s activities as they trust others to perform as expected (Pretty, 2003). Furthermore, collaborative deliberation puts the norm of open communication. In this way participants gain trust that others care for their identity and concerns, and are willing to reflect upon and satisfactorily solve dilemmas and conflict that emerge in the process.

6.2.2 Embedding monitoring

To further strengthen the facilitation dimension of participatory processes, it is useful to think about an active and effective strategy to actually monitor and discover emergent tensions, unproductive dynamics and disturbed relationships. As demonstrated in the papers, participatory management processes take place in an ever changing context in which stakeholders develop new insights, strategies and behaviors. This can simultaneously create new dilemma's, threats to identities, unproductive dynamics and/or disturbed relationships that project members need to deal with. It is important that such emergent dynamics are recognized in a timely fashion. However, monitoring such tensions is far from easy for several reasons: (a) these kinds of problems can be highly invisible for interventionists as they are likely to emerge and happen outside (i.e. in-between) formal meetings, (b) actors may wish to conceal such problems and tensions in view of fear of harm, (c) actors themselves may not even be explicitly aware of collectively repressed or projected emotions and irritations that crop up, or (c) actors have blind spots and blocks as they are controlled by their beliefs, assumptions, values and paradigms (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

Actors with considerable reflective capacities and skills may be able to 'see' blockages, express the issues and work towards a solution. However, as the cases demonstrate, participating actors may well submerge in personal emotions and strategic behavior rather than to act for the benefit of the overall group or process. To evade this trap, it may be beneficial to create deliberate monitoring capacity in the form of a relatively independent outsider who is respected and trusted by the stakeholders involved. This may be the appointed facilitator, but in conflictive settings it can be better to have an extra person who is less absorbed and has time to observe from a distance. Such a more neutral, respected 'monitor' could observe meetings, collaboration and have regular informal talks with various types of participants to capture the perspectives that are only displayed in we-groups and more private settings. As the cases studied have shown, tensions and conflict are created through, and become visible in, the everyday conversations among stakeholders and within stakeholder groups. This implies that a monitor could usefully document and analyze formal and informal conversations to identify emerging tensions. This does not necessarily require sophisticated forms of framing analysis on the side of the monitor, but may be aided usefully by practical guidelines and a checklist with indicators for identifying relevant process issues (see e.g. Van Mierlo et al., 2010a, 2010b) and emerging conflicts in everyday talk.

Through the use of such a simplified methodology the monitor can get an understanding of relevant process variables such as: participants concerns and feeling of urgency about the issues-at-stake and their satisfaction with the results and ongoing process; the extent to which stakeholders feel dependent on each other in realizing positive outcomes; their commitment to the issue; the level of trust in other parties; the frequency and type of communication and interaction; the level of trust in the process; the mutual willingness to share information and express concerns, and the readiness to reflect on and solve emerging dilemmas and conflicts. The monitoring person acts as a 'responsive evaluator' (Abma & Stake, 2001) or 'reflexive monitor' (Van Mierlo et al., 2010b), who analyses utterances and behavior to get an idea of the inter-human dynamics and either starts a dialogue or will advise the involved leaders, participants and/or facilitators. Facilitation and mediation may help participants to overcome deadlocks, re-establish trust and commitment. When conflicts have become too personal threatening and intractable, participants will not be able to unlock the situation and an outside leader or manager has to take action so as to save face and restore balance (Behfar et al., 2006).

However, in addition to remedying conflicts, leaders and facilitators could build and cherish trustful relationships with all stakeholders involved. As discussed above, this requires their participation in informal settings, continuous communication with stakeholders and deliberate efforts to not only invite stakeholders to narrate their stories and concerns, but also to listen to them. It is important that these stories and concerns are shared in safe discussion settings with relevant stakeholders. This prevents the construction of multiple and mutually excluding realities as constructed in conversations within 'we' groups. Facilitators and monitors then become boundary spanners of whom the main task is building bridges between the different stakeholders by ensuring that all parties are constantly heard, and organizing continuous interactions between them.

7. Conclusion

The papers have demonstrated that framing analysis helps to identify inter-human processes and dynamics that are critically important in shaping the course and outcomes of participatory processes. In particular, such analysis has improved our understanding of how and why conflicts emerge and evolve in the context of participatory management of protected areas in Benin. The cases studied have shown that conflict emerges contextually when actors experience a threat to existing or newly emerging identities, and that calculus-based trust alone provides an insufficient basis for inducing constructive conflict dynamics. In addition, the cases studied indicate that informal rules and agreements among stakeholders are critically important to the emergence of social cohesion. Such social cohesion, in turn, aids considerably in realizing a constructive dynamic among stakeholders. However, when authorities fail to recognize and honor the informal basis of social cohesion, escalation of conflict is likely to occur.

The cases also suggest that conflict and tension are partially created in discourse. In everyday conversation people create realities that become a source of conflict, even if nothing is happening (yet) 'on the ground' (in the sense that people are physically denied access from a resource or so). And even without having access to financial or other material resources, communities can derive power and influence through the mobilization of particular discourses and the creation of conflict in the right time and place (e.g. during the visit of a presidential delegation to the region in the Agoua case). In essence, we see that conversations are both the source and the carrier of conflict.

In all, the cases studied draw attention to less tangible dimensions of natural resource management and resource conflicts. Such conflicts are not only about bio-physical resources such as forest, land and water, but also about human identities, relationships and meanings created through discourse. The importance of these less tangible dimensions is so far insufficiently recognized in both theory and practice of participatory community-based forest management. The three cases suggest that such management efforts tend to be informed by planning models that do not take changes in context, conflict and emergent inter-human dynamics within stakeholder networks seriously enough. As the four papers on the three cases demonstrate, frame analysis offers interesting possibilities to come to grips with inter-human dimensions of participatory resource management, and hence has considerable scope for enriching our scientific understanding of the more and less productive dynamics within such trajectories. Moreover, such kinds of analysis could – in a simplified form- be useful as part of a monitoring approach within participatory processes.

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