

Community, Place, and Decision-Making

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Abstract: The purpose of this chapter is to present an analytical framework for examining the association of community and place, and for focusing natural resource management and decision-making issues upon aspects of this relationship, specifically as it pertains to the notion of community-based natural resource management in and around our nation's public lands. First, we explain that community as an interactional phenomenon provides a unique way of thinking about what a community is and how a community is related to place. We establish that place is a necessary but not sufficient condition for that sociological unit of analysis conventionally referred to as "*the community*." In addition to place, we assert, community requires two additional attributes: (1) a more or less complete local society, and (2) place-oriented collective actions among a local population. A local society refers to the social institutions and associations that cover the broad range of human interests in the shared life of a local population (e.g., economic, educational, familial, medical, political, religious, etc.). Place-oriented collective actions refer to the process of interrelated actions through which residents of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life in the local society. We argue that community-based natural resource management and decision-making activities rooted in the assumptions, propositions, and concepts of the interactional approach have the potential to truly enhance the focus and effectiveness of resource management policies and practices at the *community* level.

Today, the term *community* is commonly invoked in natural resource, ecosystem management and decision-making literature.¹ Domain-specific expressions such as "community fisheries management," "community forestry," "community watershed management," and "community wildlife management," as well as the general, overarching phrase of "community natural resource management" are commonplace in popular and scientific writings. In recent years, there has been a preponderance of papers presented and journal articles published on community-based natural resource management and decision-making issues (Luloff et al., 2004). This relatively large body of research, much of which was conducted in developing countries of southern Asia and Africa, has provided scientists, natural resource managers, policy makers, activists, and the general public with an overview of the paradigmatic shift from the overly

synoptic, scientifically-based, top-down, centralized, expert-driven, rational-comprehensive management and decision-making model to one that promotes – both literally and often figuratively – the integration of “communities” into natural resource management and decision-making processes (Brosius, Tsing, & Zerner, 1998; Conley & Moote, 2003; Cortner & Moote, 1999; Lachapelle, McCool, & Patterson, 2003; Lee & Field, 2005; Weber, 2000). It has also provided empirical information on a variety of community-related natural resource management and decision-making topics, spanning the gamut from implementation to evaluation (Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Kellert et al., 2000; Kruger & Shannon, 2000; Wittayapak & Dearden, 1999).

Theoretically, the core premises underlying community-based natural resource management are very appealing. Included among the principal assumptions of devolving natural resource management and decision-making activities to local communities, as noted by Brosius et al. (1998, p. 158), are the ideas “that local populations have a greater interest in the sustainable use of resources than does the state or distant corporate managers; that local communities are more cognizant of the intricacies of local ecological processes and practices; and that they are more able to effectively manage those resources through local or ‘traditional’ forms of access.” Despite the hopeful enthusiasm, numerous questions surrounding the purported strengths and limitations of community-based natural resource management abound in the literature (cf. Bradshaw, 2003; Cortner et al., 2001; Gray, Fisher, & Jungwirth, 2001; Webber 2000).

A basic, fundamental issue in the extant community-based natural resource management and decision-making literature is the problem of definition. Upon careful examination of both the international and domestic research, it becomes increasingly evident that no shared theoretical foundation or common use of the concept of community exists (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Flint, Luloff, & Finley, 2008; Kumar, 2005; Luloff et al. 2004). The term community has been used in

a vast assortment of ways, and we believe there is no foreseeable end to the countless ways it might be used. Undoubtedly, such variations in conceptual orientations and use have led to a somewhat complex and cloudy knowledge base with respect to “community – and – natural resource management and decision-making” linkages. In fact, with respect to the increasing popularity and use of the phrase “community-based forestry,” Flint, Luloff and Finley (2008) recently posed the following question: “Where is ‘community’ in community-based forestry?”

Concomitant issues surrounding definitions and uses of the concept of community abound in the place literature (Agnew, 1987; Entrikin, 1991; Eyles, 1985). While the term community is frequently employed in the place literature, it is rarely, if ever, rooted to any theoretical perspective of social organization, much less defined. Subsequently, place researchers have tended to use *a priori* definitions of community in their studies, which are generally deduced from objective indicators that may have little in common with any subjective interpretations held by community members. In such investigations, community is often equated with a geopolitically-bounded territory (i.e., township, neighborhood, borough, city, county). A central theme throughout much of the place literature is the identification of settings within territories to which individuals, most often the local residents, ascribe meaning and sentiment. A vast majority of these studies are empirical examinations focused on a particular aspect of human-place bonding (e.g., place attachment, place identity, place dependence, sense of place) within a territorial setting, which is generally referenced as a community (Fried, 2002; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Low & Altman, 1992; Speller, Lyons, & Twigger-Ross, 2002). Virtually no attention is given to the social organization and/or processes girding community, the role of community for the manner in which residents ascribe meaning and sentiment to place, or to community theory.

For researchers and/or policymakers to fit place to natural resource management and decision-making, as the theme of this book promotes, certain conceptual concerns must be addressed if and when attempted at a community level. These concerns include defining the concept of community and explicating its relationship to place. The purpose of this chapter is to present an analytical framework for examining the association of community and place, and for focusing natural resource management and decision-making issues upon aspects of this relationship, specifically as it pertains to our nation's public lands. In the United States, natural resource ownership patterns and management systems are quite different than the resource management regimes found in most developing countries. In many developing countries, some – and oftentimes a relatively substantial portion – of the natural resource assets in the public domain are shared as communal property and/or managed as state property through leases or other agreements between residents and the central government. Conversely, natural resources in the United States, as Flint et al. (2008, p. 528) noted, “are sometimes figuratively shared, but management decisions are made in a complex jurisdictional mosaic where private landowners maintain control over their land and resources while public land is managed in a bureaucratic, top-down approach.”

Despite all of the recent rhetoric surrounding the integration of communities into natural resource management and decision-making activities, management decisions involving our nation's public resources ultimately reside with the government agencies. Policies and management decisions continue to be made by agency scientists with specific disciplinary expertise. A quotation from Lee and Field (2005, p. 291) clearly illustrates the disconnect between decision-making and communities:

Even today, policies are legitimated by chartering scientific studies and policy and management decisions by developing ‘scientific-based plans.’ Communities, especially territorial communities, are the recipients of ‘rational’ decisions made by experts – what we today often refer to as the many ‘ologists’: biologists, ecologists, sociologists, ornithologists, etc. Professional decision makers may solicit community ‘input,’ and make decisions in the interests of interested publics, including communities. Community participation is often avoided because it is replete with the sorts of ‘messiness’ that was to be supplanted by rationality and science-based decisions.

Much of this messiness with respect to community involvement in natural resource management and decision-making, we contend, stems from a lack of systematic theory and a misunderstanding of what a community is, how a community develops, and how community is related to place. Below we provide a conceptual framework for addressing these issues. The interactional theory of community (Kaufman, 1959, 1985; Wilkinson, 1970a, 1991), which asserts that community is a field of place-oriented social interaction, serves as the analytical foundation of our discussion. Before concluding, we highlight the potential applications of the interactional approach for public agency natural resource managers.

Community and Place

For the sake of a place to start, we begin our discussion of community with *place*. Place has been and remains a critical component in social scientific studies of community. In Day’s (2006, p. 32) summation:

... the whole approach to community studies displays a certain circularity. Places are singled out for study because they appear to constitute viable communities, and once they

are investigated and documented, the findings are read as showing precisely what a real community is like.

If, in fact, place is a logical point to begin the search for community, how does one know when he/she has “found” community? Let us assume that one does find community in or around a place, as is often the case; then, of what significance does that place hold for community? Concomitantly, what influence does community have on place? And, most importantly for our present purposes, what are the associations between place, community, and natural resource management and decision-making? Attempts at answering the latter question, theoretically, have been relatively naïve in the natural resource management and decision-making literature. The interactional theory of community advocated by Harold Kaufman (1959, 1985) and Kenneth Wilkinson (1970a, 1991) and further elaborated upon by their colleagues and students provides a useful framework for addressing the aforementioned questions, as well as examining the relationship of community to place and for focusing natural resource management decision-making upon aspects of this relationship.

Rather than quibble with semantics, allow us to clearly state up front what we are talking about with regard to the terms place and community. Our conceptualization of the former term is grounded in Gieryn’s (2000) definition. According to Gieryn (2000), place has three necessary and sufficient features: geographic location, material form, and the investment with meaning and value. This definition is also consistent with other scholars’ conceptualization of place (Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1982; Tuan, 1977). We conceive the concept of community to refer to that sociological unit of analysis conventionally referred to as “*the* community.” The use of the modifier “the” before the word community allows us to distinguish the community – that phenomenon which occurs “in a particular kind of territorial and social environment”

(Wilkinson, 1986, p. 3) – from alternative non-local uses of community (cf. Bernard, 1973; Wilkinson, 1986). As opposed to ‘community,’ ‘the community’ refers to “settlements ... in which *locale* is a basic component” (Bernard, 1973, p. 3; emphasis in original). All major theories pertaining to the local community, including human ecology (Hawley, 1950; Park, 1936; Quinn, 1960), social systems (Sanders, 1966; Warren, 1978), and the interactional approach (Kaufman, 1959, 1985; Wilkinson, 1970a, 1991), emphasize and utilize the concept of place, albeit in varying degrees and at different scales.

From the interactional perspective (Kaufman, 1959, 1985; Wilkinson, 1970a, 1991), the theory of community which we draw upon throughout the remainder of this chapter, place – defined as a geographic location with material form invested with meaning and value (Gieryn, 2000) – can be viewed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the community. No local community exists nowhere; every local community exists, in fact, somewhere. Accordingly, the local community has geographic location. In and around this locality is material form, both natural and man-made. The physical locale with a compilation of material form is invested with varied meanings and sentiments by its residents. The meanings and values of a community are imagined, felt and understood in varying degrees by the people who live there. These meanings and values are often expressed and perpetuated through public discourse, collective representations, and rhetorical devices, including heritage narratives and community typifications (Bridger, 1996; Maines and Bridger, 1992; Suttles, 1984).

In addition to place, which “is an essential element of community” from the interactional definition (Wilkinson 1991, p. 19), community requires two additional attributes: (1) a more or less complete local society, and (2) place-oriented collective actions among a local population. A local society refers to the social institutions and associations that cover the broad range of human

interests in the shared life of a local population (e.g., economic, educational, familial, medical, political, religious, etc.). Place-oriented collective actions refer to the process of interrelated actions through which residents of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life in the local society. The latter of these – the place-oriented collective actions, also referred to as the “community field” – is the inherent and indispensable ingredient of community in a local population from the interactional perspective (Kaufman, 1959, 1985; Wilkinson, 1970a, 1991). The community field provides a unique framework for examining the relationship of community to place, and for focusing natural resource management and decision-making issues upon aspects of this relationship. It is to the notion of a community field that we now turn.

Community Field: A Generalizing Place-Oriented Social Action Field

As outlined by Kaufman (1959, 1985) and Wilkinson (1970a, 1991), local settlements are marked by the presence of several more or less distinct social fields. A social field can be defined as an unfolding, loosely bounded, constantly changing, interconnected process of social interaction displaying unity through time around an identifiable set of interests. As a process, a social field is characterized by a sequence of actions over time carried on by different actors working in or through various associations. Actions include the projects, programs, activities, and/or events in which actors and associations are engaged. Associations refer to formal organizations and informal groups. Actors consist of the leaders and other persons participating in associations and actions.

Multiple social fields comprised of both local and extra-local actors and associations exist and act in any local population. While these social fields can and often do overlap and blend into one another, each field is generally marked to a greater or lesser extent by its own identity,

organization, core interactional properties, and set of specific and/or institutional interests. Common recognizable social fields found in many local settlements include those pursuing interests in education, government, faith-based services, economy, recreation, health care, social services, land use, transportation, and environmental protection. The actors and associations of the various social fields may share similar perspectives, or they may maintain intensely incompatible ideas. Accordance, as well as conflict, confrontation, competition, marginalization, disenfranchisement, and/or challenges for leadership are common occurrences both within and between/among the social fields in a community (Theodori, 2005).

When the actors and associations of the various social fields, likeminded or otherwise, converge and interact on place-relevant matters, the potential exists to form a community field. Following the interactional perspective, the community field is the mechanism that integrates the various social fields of action into an interactional community. Community, from the interactional perspective, arises in a local settlement “when the latent bond of common interest in the place – the shared investment in the common field of existential experience – draws people together and enables them to express common sentiments through joint action” (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 7). In fact, the underlying reason why a community “hangs together,” according to Wilkinson (1991, p. 37), is because of the community field.

A community field is a place-oriented social field that is related to, yet distinguished from, other activity fields in a local population. Unlike most social fields which are typically focused on furthering their own special interests, a community field pursues the interests of the larger population. In other words, the interest that guides a community field is an interest in community structure rather than an interest solely in specific goals of the particular social fields. Like other social fields, a community field is comprised of actors, associations, and phases of

action. Moreover, the actions of a community field, like those in other social fields, are also directed toward certain interests. However, unlike other social fields:

the interests are generalized and intrinsic; they are not specialized or instrumental. The community field cuts across organized groups and across other interaction fields in a local population. It abstracts and combines the locality-relevant aspects of the special interest fields, and integrates the other fields into a generalized whole. It does this by creating and maintaining linkages among fields that otherwise are directed toward more limited interests. As this community field arises out of the various special interest fields in a locality, it in turn influences those special interest fields and asserts the community interest in the various spheres of local social activity (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 36).

The central feature distinguishing a community field from other social action fields is the generalization of place-oriented actions across interest lines. Generalization gives structure to the whole of community as an interactional phenomenon by linking and coordinating the common place-relevant interests and behaviors of multiple social fields. In essence, a community field interlinks and organizes the various social action fields and binds their knowledge, experience, resources, and energy for the common good. It is extremely important to recognize, though, that:

the coordinating actions undertaken in the community field do not necessarily harmonize diverse interests or completely bridge different perspectives and viewpoints. Instead, the community field brings into focus common interests in local aspects of local life. And, of equal importance, as the linkages that comprise the community field proliferate, they lead to a more inclusive decision-making process (Bridger & Luloff, 1999, p. 384).

While the potential for a community field to emerge exists in all human territorial settlements, the extent to which such emergence occurs is highly variable. Numerous structural

constraints at regional, national, and international levels, each manifested at the local level, contribute to this variability (Theodori, 2008). Factors such inequality (e.g., racial, ethnic, class, gender, etc.), poverty, ruralness, population size and dispersion, and deficits in economic and social services (Wilkinson, 1991) often impede the natural processes of local social interaction and, in turn, the emergence of a community field. It follows, then, that the community field is a variable; it is a matter of degree. The presence of the community field is what differentiates a community, that “natural disposition among people who interact with one another on various matters that comprise a common life” (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 7), from an aggregation of individuals who may or may not share a *sense of community* in and around a place with a more or less complete local society. Such variance, as will be described below, has implications for place and any natural resource management and decision-making activities that may be undertaken.

To this point, we have established that place is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the local community. We also have recognized that in addition to place, community requires a more or less complete local society and a community field. And, we have suggested that a community field is not a given. Instead, as we will argue, a community field emerges in a population and persists as long as the local citizens ensure its survival. The idea that community is an interactional phenomenon provides a unique way of thinking about how to build, strengthen, and nurture the community field. This is accomplished through the process of community development.

Community Development

The process of community development – that is, “purposive action undertaken with positive intentions at improving community structure” (Theodori, 2005, p. 666) – is what is

needed for the community field to materialize and flourish in a local settlement. Community development, from the interactional approach, can be viewed as a process of building, strengthening, and maintaining the community field (Wilkinson, 1972, 1991). Concerted efforts to promote community development are needed at multiple levels (e.g., local, state, and federal) to successfully surmount the aforementioned structural impediments that restrict and/or suppress the emergence of the community field. Attempts at the local level without action at other levels, and vice versa, are likely to be less successful than a coordinated, multi-pronged effort (Theodori, 2008). However, it is important to keep in mind that despite the necessity for efforts at other levels, community development, as we conceive it, does not happen unless local people try to make it happen.

Four principles underlie the process of community development from the interactional perspective (Theodori, 2005; Wilkinson, 1972, 1989, 1991). First, community development is purposive. Community development is the intentional consequence of actors and associations interacting to initiate and maintain community among themselves. Second, community development is positive. The purposive intentions of the actors and associations revolve around a shared commitment to improving their community. Third, community development is structure oriented. The purposive and positive actions of actors and associations are direct attempts to establish, strengthen, and/or sustain the community as an interlinking and coordinating structure of human relationships. And fourth, community development exists in the efforts of people and not necessarily in goal achievement. The essence of community development as an interactional phenomenon resides in the doing – the working together toward a common goal – not solely in the outcome.

Viewed in this light, community development involves purposive, positive, and structure-oriented actions between/among the various social fields aimed at constructing, enhancing, and/or sustaining channels of cooperation and communication across interest groups within the community. In this process, individuals, informal groups, and formal organizations, despite their differences, consciously work to increase the number and/or reinforce the strength of relationships among the various social fields, while reducing and/or circumventing the barriers to cooperation and communication (e.g., conflict, confrontation, competing interests, marginalization, disfranchisement, and/or challenges for leadership). With time and effort, these newly formed relationships encourage mutual understanding, cultivate trust, and, in turn, promote social well-being (Wilkinson, 1979).

At this point in our discussion, it is important to draw a distinction between two broad types of development and two broad spheres of community action. The former are commonly referred to as “development *in* community” and “development *of* community” (Summers, 1986; Theodori, 2005; Wilkinson, 1991). In brief, development *in* community primarily refers to improvements and infrastructural enhancements such as economic growth, modernization, improved service delivery, and business retention, expansion, and recruitment activities. In contrast, development *of* community, the type of development described above, is a much broader process aimed at building, strengthening, and maintaining the community field.

The broad spheres of community action are generally known as “task-accomplishment” and “structure-building” (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Kaufman, 1959; Theodori, 2005; Wilkinson, 1970, 1991). Community actions that occur in the social fields containing specialized or limited interests can be viewed as having a task-accomplishment orientation. Task accomplishment refers to activities that move people toward specific goals, which are generally

related to a particular project in a specific field of interest. Task accomplishment processes can be thought of as having five stages or episodes (Bales & Strodtbeck, 1951; Wilkinson, 1970b, 1991). Wilkinson's (1970b, 1991) articulation of these included: (1) initiation and spread of interest, (2) organization of sponsorship, (3) goal setting and strategy formation, (4) recruitment, and (5) implementation. In the process of group problem-solving and decision-making, initiation and spread of interest involves recognizing and discussing a problematic issue as a potential focus for group action. Organization of sponsorship involves identifying an existing structure (i.e., a committee, group, organization) or establishing a new one to deal with the issue. Goal setting and strategy formation involves setting goals and developing a plan to reach those goals. Recruitment involves mobilizing resources, such as participants, facilities, and finances. And implementation involves applying resources and employing strategies to deal with the issue.

The same five stages or episodes can be used to conceptually frame the structure-building actions associated with the acts of a community field. In this case, though, initiation and spread of interest involves generating widespread consciousness of an issue among various fields of interest in a community. Organization of sponsorship involves the formation of multi-interest networks and inter-organizational linkages to coordinate and integrate actions within and across the various social fields. Goal setting and strategy formation involves developing short-term strategies and long-range goals that transcend the special interests of particular social fields. Recruitment involves encouraging participation from the various social fields. And implementation involves applying resources and employing strategies to create, reinforce, and sustain relationships and lines of communication between/among the various social fields.²

In any given community, both forms of development – development in community and development of community – and both spheres of action – task-accomplishment and structure-

building activities – make and shape places and have direct implications for proposed natural resource management and decision-making. However, it is important to understand that the social interactions which occur in/through the processes of structure-building will construct place and affect natural resource management and decision-making actions in a qualitatively different manner than those that only occur with a task-accomplishment orientation. When actors and associations engage in task-accomplishment actions while giving attention to structure-building activities, the place that is made assumes a *gestalt-like* character. In other words, the place that is made in/through the community field is greater than the sum of its individual social field parts. And, the involvement of the community field in proposed natural resource management programs and decision-making processes will be *community-based* as opposed to reflecting the interest of some other unit(s) of organization.

In short, the interactional theory of community and community development described above provides a conceptual framework for understanding what a community is, how a community is related to place, and how a community develops. Our attention now turns to highlighting the potential applications of the interactional approach for natural resource managers and agency personnel.

Potential Applications for Natural Resource Managers and Public Agency Personnel

Good theory, we believe, leads to good application. While other perspectives of community (e.g., human ecology and social systems) do, in fact, exist and may be considered justifiably worthy, we believe that the interactional theory of community has much to offer natural resource managers and agency personnel as they interact with local population settlements in and around our nations' public lands. Community-based natural resource management and decision-making activities rooted in the assumptions, propositions, and

concepts of the interactional approach have the potential to truly enhance the focus and effectiveness of resource management policies and practices at the *community* level.

Before proposing or engaging in any type of community-based natural resource management activity, public agency natural resource managers must assess the extent of community in a local population. Community, as has been maintained throughout this discussion, is not a given; it is a variable. Community has three essential elements – place, a more or less complete local society, and a community field. These three properties provide the criteria for assessing its extent in a local population settlement. Like conventional community studies, an assessment of the extent of community in a local settlement should begin with place. Natural resource managers and agency personnel must understand place and the significance it holds in the everyday life of a local population. With the aid of local key informants, managers must become cognizant of the size and scope of the physical locale, the natural and man-made material forms in and around the locality, and the associated meanings and values of the local population as expressed and perpetuated through public discourse, collective representations, and rhetorical devices.

In addition to understanding place, natural resource managers and agency personnel must recognize the extent and comprehensiveness of the local society. As noted above, a local society refers to the social institutions and associations that cover the broad range of human interests in the shared life of a local population (e.g., economic, educational, familial, medical, political, religious, etc.). Local societies generally vary in the quantity and quality of their respective social and economic institutions. Concerted efforts must be undertaken by natural resource managers and agency personnel to enhance their knowledge of the social institutions and associations that are and are not manifest within the local settlement. Also, natural resource

managers and agency personnel must discern the horizontal and vertical patterns of relationships among the local social units that comprise the various social institutions (Warren, 1978).

Last but not least, natural resource managers and agency personnel must assess the presence and/or strength of the community field. With assistance from local key informants, public agency natural resource managers must first inventory the various social fields that exist within a local settlement. The inventory should include: the principal actors (i.e., formal and informal leaders), the associations (i.e., formal organizations and informal groups), and the major actions (i.e., project, programs, activities or events) that have been, or are currently being, undertaken. Moreover, the inventory should differentiate between highly locality-oriented social fields and their lesser locality-oriented counterparts, and account for the use-value and exchange-value orientations of the different social fields. Unlike their counterparts, highly locality-oriented social fields are clearly identified with the locality; they tend to involve local residents as primary actors and/or leaders. As opposed to those with use-value orientations, the actions of exchange-value oriented social fields generally revolve around maximizing economic profits through the commodification of places and resources in and around the local community. Exchange-value oriented social fields are typically directed by local and/or extra-local elites, who more or less control the local decision-making and growth machinery. Overall, attempts should be made to see that the inventory is as inclusive as possible.

Next, with the help of local key informants, natural resource managers and agency personnel must spell out any/all connections that exist, or have existed, between/among the various social fields. Even though social fields maintain unity through time around an identifiable set of interests, they are in a constant state of change as actors and associations, each with their respective actions, move into and out of contact with the process. Therefore, it is

important to view these linkages temporally. Following this strategy, public agency resource managers should discover which social fields share (or have shared) similar ideas on place-relevant matters, and which social fields display (or have displayed) differences in opinions. In addition, they should uncover which social fields customarily work (or have worked) together on place-relevant matters, and which social fields are traditionally (or have been) hostile to one another. Such an exercise will provide an evaluation of the presence and/or strength of the community field, and it will highlight potential points of conflict to be carefully negotiated.

The presence of strong community fields representing the shared, overlapping place-relevant interests of all segments of the local population, we believe, is required to successfully integrate communities in and around our nation's public lands into natural resource management and decision-making activities. And, community development – purposive, positive, and structure-oriented actions aimed at constructing, enhancing, and/or sustaining channels of cooperation and communication between/among the various social fields – is needed for strong community fields to materialize and flourish. In addition to conventional output-based components, natural resource management plans must incorporate structure-building activities. Efforts to foster development of community at the local level must, in fact, be a key ingredient in natural resource management practices and policies. We contend that much of the messiness surrounding community participation in natural resource management and decision-making, as alluded to above, can be rectified with conscious, systematic endeavors aimed at cultivating and nurturing the community field.

Finally, as public agency natural resource managers work to increase the number and/or reinforce the strength of relationships among the various social fields, while reducing and/or circumventing the barriers to cooperation and communication, they must make a concerted effort

themselves to communicate openly and honestly. Open and honest communication, including full disclosure about the potentially positive aspects and negative consequences of proposed management plans and activities, is likely to reduce the chances of inaccuracies, rumors, and future litigation. All of the efforts suggested above will surely mean investments in time and money. Failure to do so, however, may prove to be even more time-consuming and costly.

Concluding Comment

Our purpose in this chapter was to present an analytical framework for examining the association of community and place, and for focusing natural resource management and decision-making issues upon aspects of this relationship. Our thesis was that a fundamental dilemma associated with these issues is one of definition. We contended that natural resource managers and agency personnel must enhance their understanding of *community*, the concept that lies at the heart of community-based natural resource management, if they plan to integrate communities into management and decision-making activities. Echoing sentiments by Flint et al. (2008, p. 535), “simply invoking community in discussions and efforts relating to access to and management of forest and other natural resources without a clear understanding of the term in frameworks, methods, and implementation endangers efforts to link natural resource management with improvements in community well-being.”

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Notes

¹ Throughout the remainder of this paper, the term “ecosystem management” will be subsumed under the concept “natural resource management.”

² In practice, the stages for both task accomplishment and structure building activities are rarely well sequenced. Task accomplishment activities within a specific social field and structure building activities at a multiple social field level can begin at any stage, frequently backtracking and leaping ahead.