

# Community forestry programs and social learning: a comparative assessment in the United States

Tony Cheng

Director, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute

Associate Professor, Dept. of Forest, Rangeland & Watershed Stewardship

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

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Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Dennis Becker

# Community-based forestry as reflexive governance

- Constant process of learning about, and adapting to, changing ecological, socio-economic, and political conditions
- Learning and adaptation occurs at community, regional, and national scales
- Incremental changes in US forest governance shaped in part by community-based forestry



Photo: Sandy Guerrerri



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Fort Lewis College Environmental Center

# Community-based forestry as reflexive governance

- Market-based governance: changing forest land values, global markets, and tenure changes – declining opportunities for landowners and residents to retain tenure and derive livelihood
- Government-based governance: legal and policy changes restrict access to resources and decision processes

Community-based forestry (CBF) can be seen as a suite of approaches that seek greater involvement of community residents in shaping decisions affecting, and receiving benefits from, local forest resources.



Photo: Sandy Guerrerri



Photo: Vicky Sturtevant



Photo: Bob Sturtevant

# Three levels of social learning in community forestry

- Community
- Regional
- National



Photo: Wallowa Resources, Enterprise, Oregon



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Dirk Ramsey

# Community-level social learning in community forestry

- How to function as a collective endeavor
- Examining inter-connections between ecological, economic, and social dimensions
- Achieving and sustaining outcomes over time



Photo: National Interagency Fire Center



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Tony Cheng

# Community-level social learning in community forestry

- How to function as a collective endeavor
  - √ Who participates
  - √ How participation is structured
  - √ What organizational form - stand-alone organization; formal partnership; informal, ad-hoc arrangement



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Bob Sturtevant



Photo: Tom Perry

# Community-level social learning in community forestry

- Examining interconnections between ecological, economic, and social...
  - ✓ Joint, collaborative assessments of current conditions & trends
  - ✓ Integration of scientific/technical information and local, experiential knowledge



Photo: Tony Cheng



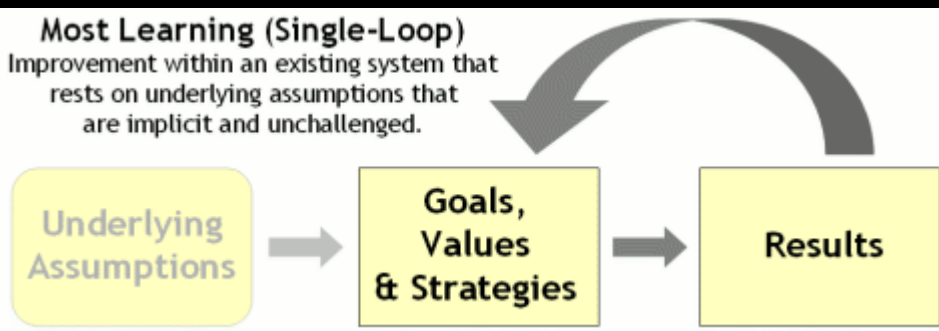
Photo: Vicky Sturtevant



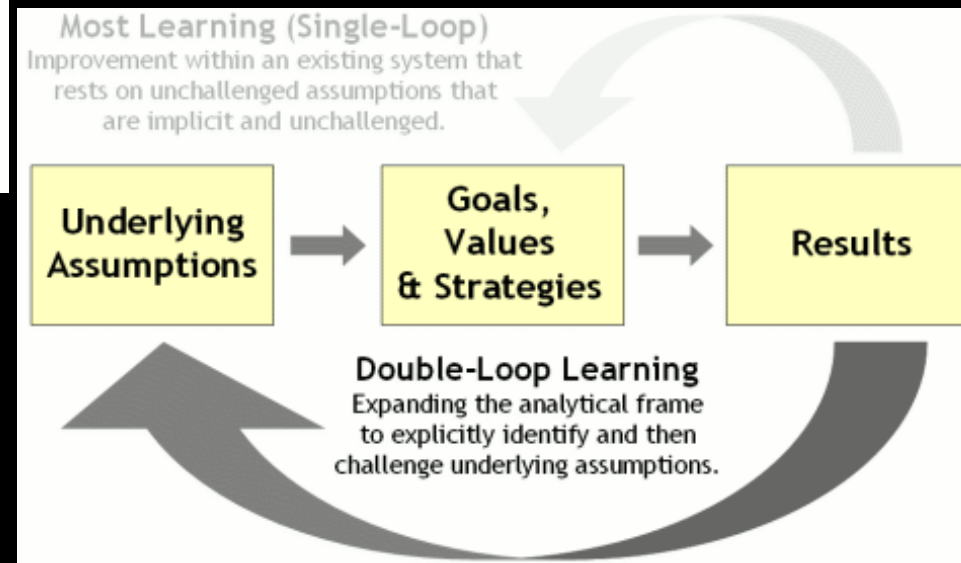
Photo: Vicky Sturtevant

# Community-level social learning in community forestry

- Achieving and sustaining outcomes over time
  - ✓ Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation
  - ✓ Single-loop vs. double-loop learning and adaptation



Single-loop learning (from edbatista.com)



Double-loop learning (from edbatista.com)

# Regional-level social learning in community forestry

- Regional support organizations and networking efforts
  - Trainings on fundamentals of forest stewardship
  - Branding and marketing – accessing niche markets
  - Demonstration projects
  - Networking, learning, and advocacy – expanding impacts
  - Often targeting under-served/limited resource populations
- Government-sponsored collaborative forestry initiatives: CFRP & FLRA
  - Catalyzing community-based, collaborative approaches
  - Annual learning workshops



Photo: For The Forest, Aspen, Colorado



Photo: Tony Cheng



Photo: Sam Burns

# National-level social learning in community forestry

- Ford Foundation Community-Based Forestry Demonstration Program – peer-learning workshops

Organizing  
Monitoring

Marketing  
Sustainability

Fund-raising

- Communities Committee of the 7<sup>th</sup> American Forest Congress  
Policy advocacy  
“Week In Washington”
- Media strategies  
Community-owned forests

- Others: National Network of Forest Practitioners, WestCAN, Partnership Resource Center



Photo: Dirk Ramsey



Photo: Dirk Ramsey



Photo: Tony Cheng

# Impacts of Collective Learning: Governance Change?

- Household-level impacts (vs. community or societal)
- Growing attitude changes
- Growing awareness and appreciation within government agencies and policy-makers – linkage between ecosystem and community well-being
- Policies and programs incorporating ideas and elements of CBF
- Continual adaptation to emerging issues, i.e., carbon markets, ecosystem services



Photo: Sandy Guerrerri



Photo: Vicky Sturtevant



Photo: Bob Sturtevant

# Final Thoughts

- CBF still at the margins – incremental gains, small impacts
- US forest governance still shaped by commodity and land markets, private land owner decisions, legal-bureaucratic processes, and interest-group policy competition – reactive vs. pro-active
- Sabatier 's (1988) policy learning and change framework: collective learning, adaptation, and governance change occurs over a period of decades
- Sustaining collective learning and adaptation at regional and national levels – funding, organizational support, policy champions