Reflexive Resource Governance as Embedded Process: A Comparison of Two North American and Central American Community-Based Forestry Organizations

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Abstract

Community-based forestry represents an environmental governance strategy that promotes democratic practices, strengthens local livelihoods, and sustains forest ecosystems for the benefit of all community members. Much prior research has explored the necessary conditions for successful CBF operation. Less attention has been paid to how established CBF organizations, as they near the end of the start-up phase of operations, confront crucial structural choices about how to respond to shifting political, economic, social, and environmental conditions. New challenges facing established CBF organizations include transitioning leadership, requirements for more formalized and diversified decision making, growth beyond pilot activities into sustained programs, and expansion and diversification beyond existing forest activities. What organizational structures and processes are needed to confront these new challenges? CBF organizations also face new pressures to broaden participation opportunities within their communities while retaining adequate commitment to existing participants. Moreover, rapidly changing political and environmental conditions pose threats to their future viability as resource stewards. This interdisciplinary study will compare organizational transitions in two North American and Central American CBF organizations, the Public Lands Partnership in Colorado and the Association of Forest Communities of Petén in Guatemala. The paper conceptualizes these empirical cases as processes of organizational change embedded in multi-scalar contexts rather than sets of static structures best designed a priori. The structural choices confronting these organizations must take into account both factors internal to the group as well as regional, national, and global changes. Participants in these well-established CBF organizations actively pursue a "reflexive governance" process in which they seek to adapt collectively to new internal and external pressures of rapidly changing environments while maintaining commitment to the organizational principles that underlie their historical success: representativeness, equity, and legitimacy. This cross-scale study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role local resource governance regimes play in the larger architecture of environmental governance as they both respond to and help shape larger scale governance change.

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I. Introduction

Community-based forestry (CBF) represents an environmental governance strategy that ideally promotes democratic practices, strengthens local livelihoods, and sustains forest ecosystems for the benefit of all community members (Baker and Kusel 2003). Though prior research has explored the necessary conditions for effective CBF establishment and operation, less attention has been paid to how relatively well-established CBF organizations adapt to the problems posed by success. As these organizations near the end of start-up phases, they confront new challenges including transitioning leadership, requirements for more formalized and diversified decision making, growth beyond pilot activities into sustained programs, and expansion and diversification beyond existing forest activities. These organizations must make structural choices related to change while retaining adequate commitment to existing participants, often within the context of rapidly changing political and environmental conditions (Herman and Renz 2001).

This interdisciplinary study compares organizational transitions in two North American and Central American CBF organizations, the Public Lands Partnership in Colorado and the Association of Forest Communities of Petén in Guatemala. In doing so, we seek to inform scholarship in community-based environmental governance that organizational structural choices greatly matter to governance effectiveness. We conceptualize these empirical cases as processes of organizational change driven by internal dynamics and embedded in multi-scalar socio-political contexts rather than as sets of static structures best designed a priori. The structural choices confronting these organizations must emerge from both pressures internal to the groups as well as those stemming from regional, national, and global changes.

Participants in these two well-established CBF organizations today actively pursue a "reflexive governance" process in which they strive to adapt their organizational structures and processes while struggling to maintain commitment to four principles that underlie the success of any governance approach: representativeness, effectiveness,

legitimacy and responsiveness (Brinkerhoff 2008; Lebel et al. 2006; Paavola 2007; Taylor 2010). The experience of these two cases suggests that organizations that develop an adaptive governance process embedded within nested, multi-scalar socio-political contexts can respond more effectively to new conditions while maintaining commitment to organizational principles that keep them responsive to the communities that created them.

II. Environmental governance and community-based forestry organization[1]

Community-based forestry may be seen as an experiment in innovative civil society-based environmental governance that seeks to link conservation with development. By alleviating poverty and enhancing forest-reliant community livelihoods, CBF hopes to encourage sustainable resource management (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Brechin et al. 2003). An analytical concept and field of research gaining growing importance today, environmental governance includes not only formal governmental regulation and law enforcement for conservation, but also invokes the broader political, organizational and cultural frameworks through which diverse interests in natural and cultural resources are coordinated and controlled (Cronkleton et al. 2008: 1). Researchers in recent years have identified and analyzed multiple sets of institutional frameworks for environmental governance, including government, civil society, hybrid and market-based arrangements (see Hendricks et al. 2009).

Over the last two decades, researchers and practitioners have noted that CBF governance can have significant positive ecological and social impact. They point out that CBF's chances for success are greatly strengthened when secure resource rights, supportive policy frameworks and appropriate technical assistance are in place (Bray et al. 2005; 2008; Klooster 2000; Sekher 2001; Taylor and Zabin 2000). Nevertheless, influential critiques of community-based resource management point to significant problems, including uneven performance toward livelihood and conservation goals (Campbell et al. 2001), unrealistic assumptions about communities' internal homogeneity and commitment to sustainable management (Agrawal & Gibson 1999; Murray Li 2002),

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[1] Sections II, III and IV draw significantly on Taylor 2010; Taylor et al 2009 and Taylor 2009.

inequities in benefit distribution (Mayoux 1995) and difficulties in negotiating across scales with other interested actors (Wells et al. 2004).

Researchers and advocates of CBF point out the importance of effective internal organization for addressing such weaknesses and increasing the possibility of success (Taylor 2010; Wilshusen et al. 2002). Barrett et al. for example, observe that successful resource governance depends on organizational capacity to mobilize authority, ability and willingness to restrict access and use, technical capacity to monitor ecological and social conditions, and flexibility to respond to change (2001: 500). Most attention, nevertheless, has been devoted to identifying necessary conditions for organizing CBF initiatives at their inception, and improving and consolidating their organizational capacity. As such, scholarship has lagged behind practice. Relatively less attention has been paid to problems facing more advanced CBF organizations that have achieved significant success in the start-up phase and now need to move beyond the first generation organizational frameworks if they are to survive as both effective promoters of sustainable resource management and reliable interlocutors for member community interests.

Advanced first generation CBF organizations face unique problems. They often need to move beyond pilot, experimental activities toward more sustained programs. They face pressure to expand and diversify existing forest activities to sustain member support and create new, broader community constituencies. They face pressure to devise more formal, institutionalized decision making and administrative structures. These challenges often coincide, for better or worse, with the need to manage often-difficult transitions of first to second generation leadership. These internal pressures for change also often occur as the organizations face increasingly complex political and environmental challenges that either enable or pose threats to their future viability and legitimacy as resource stewards. These advanced first generation CBF organizations must respond to these internal and external pressures without undermining organizational characteristics that have shaped their past strengths: representativeness, effectiveness, legitimacy and responsiveness.

Representativeness refers to the degree to which an organization serves as an effective space for expression and pursuit of the interests of member constituencies. The degree of representativeness in a community-based organization has an important impact

on the equity of distribution of benefits and a concomitant effect on the level of member support (Bebbington et al. 1993). Representativeness and equity arrangements are constantly negotiated as both organizational activities and member interests change over time (Borras et al. 2008; Bebbington 2007; Edelman 2008).

Effectiveness refers to organizational capacity to deliver on expectations, manage existing activities and develop new ones appropriately (see Bebbington et al. 1993). Community-based organizations nearing a generational transition are pushed to formalize and institutionalize decision making and administrative procedures that in initial stages may have been more flexible and informal. Increasing their effectiveness in rapidly changing contexts requires increased internal differentiation and complexity.

Problems of representation and effectiveness shape a third problem of maintaining *legitimacy*. Community-based organizations lose internal legitimacy if they fail to adapt their agendas sufficiently to the changing interests of their members or are unable to institutionalize and sustain initial activities, often established with external support. As their internal legitimacy is lost, they also lose external legitimacy with external institutional supporters as effective promoters of environmental and social gains for their members (Edelman 2008; Bebbington et al. 1993).

Responsiveness is in large part a problem of governance. CBF organizations must adapt governance structures and procedures to encourage effective adaption to rapidly changing contexts, while ensuring ongoing commitment to the interests and objectives of the communities that are vital to the organization's future viability.

III. Designing second generation CBF organizations

How are the participants of these CBF organizations, their supporters and researchers to move toward a new generation of organization? This problem of organizational "adaptive capacity" is addressed in organizational literature, but is largely lacking overlooked in governance literature. For example, a large and influential "movement" of Common Property Resources (CPR) research and practice has emerged in recent years to guide the organization of community-based resource management for conservation and development. Much of this literature has proposed *a priori* organizational structural design principles often found to be associated with effective collective management of natural resources. Nevertheless, below we build on the

experiences of two CBF organizations now immersed in transitions from first to second generation organization and argue that their experiences suggest elements of a "reflexive governance" process that simultaneously pursues adaptation to new pressures while retaining commitment to organizational principles underlying their past success.

Common property resource theory

Elinor Ostrom's design principles for collective action predict the likelihood that communities will be able to manage common pool resources effectively. Ostrom's "institutional choice" framework focuses on rules governing benefits and costs, participation levels, systematic monitoring, effective sanctions and conflict resolution and external recognition of communities' rights to govern their own resources (1990). Ostrom's work in large part inspired the development of the influential international Common Property Resources (CPR) interdisciplinary research and practice movement (IACP 2009). Her rule-based design principles have been widely tested and adapted in many cases across the globe (e.g. Oakerson 1992; Sekher 2001). Ostrom's selection in 2009 for the Nobel Prize for Economics underscores the contribution of CPR's community-based alternative to Hardin's (1968) prediction of inevitable environmental degradation without strong state regulation or privatization.

Nevertheless, the rational choice theory roots of the institutional choice approach, and of much of the CPR movement more generally, may lead to the privileging of individual rationality in response to self-governing rules, rather than historical and cultural context as the primary drivers of social actors' behavior (Sick 2008). Further, much CPR research adopts a largely *a priori* approach to organizational design, with organizational structures devised according to pre-established and tested principles. CPR theory and research tend to stress institutions-as-rules, largely overlooking organizational structures required to coordinate behavior pursuant to these rules. As an empirical problem, the CPR literature is generally silent to organizational structure and adaptive capacity. Community organization is viewed as largely static and locally bounded (Steins and Edwards 1999). CPR often pays too little attention to communities' operation across scales, and to the fact that their opportunities and limits are shaped by a larger political economic context (Gautam and Shivakoti 2005; Sick 2008; Steins and Edwards 1999). Finally, with significant exceptions, such as Ostrom's own suggestion of "nested

enterprises" (1990); Berkes "cross-scale linkages" (2002) and Britt's "networks" (2002), CPR research has focused most on local community organization (Bebbington 1996; Antinori and Garcia López 2008).

"New economic sociology'' and the theory of embeddedness

This paper focuses on secondary level community associations rather than community-based organization. These representative organizations serve as umbrella structures that provide member communities with a range of services, including representation and advocacy of member interests, channeling of external assistance or direct provision of assistance, production coordination, and other services. We draw on insights from new economic sociology's concept of "embeddedness" and adapt them to natural resource governance problems to analyze how successful secondary level CBF organizations may navigate change in ways both empowered and limited by their community-based character.

Karl Polanyi's seminal work *The Great Transformation* explicitly countered assumptions of neoclassical economics that economic action derives from individuals' "natural" propensities for trade (to truck and barter, as Adam Smith (1970) put it. Polanyi argued by contrast that humans' economic activities are "embedded" in social relations and institutions (1944: 476-59). Krippner remarks that Polanyi's embeddedness is "a kind of shorthand for his method of studying institutions as concrete, multiply-determined objectives that could contain various social processes simultaneously" (2001: 804). Subsequent new economic sociologists have analyzed how economic behavior is embedded in social networks (Granovetter 1985), macroeconomic structure (Fligstein 1996; Zukin and DiMaggio 1990; Smelser and Swedberg 2005), politics, culture and organization (Mohr and Friedland 2008; Powell and DiMaggio 1991).

Polanyi's embeddedness theory suggests an interpretive and methodological framework for exploring how organizational structural choices are shaped by their location in specific historical configurations of social structure, social actors and power. The way community-based forestry organizations operate and change is likely embedded in community history, ecological conditions, and culture and social structures as well as larger legal and policy frameworks, political arenas and markets. The diverse activities these organizations pursue attempt to achieve embedded environmental, economic,

political and social objectives that may at times promote contradictory organizational logics, strain organizational resources, and pose internal conflicts of interests.

Our comparison of two secondary level CBF associations, the Public Lands Partnership in Colorado and the Association of Forest Communities of Petén, Guatemala, conceptualizes community-based organizations as processes that change in response to shifting structural conditions rather than as sets of static organizational processes and procedures (Argyris and Schön 1987; Brechin et al. 2003; Perrow 1986; Steins and Edwards 1999). It focuses on the collective organizational processes through which PLP and ACOFOP participants experiment and adapt while struggling to maintain sufficient representation, equity, legitimacy and responsiveness.

IV. The case studies

With some exceptions (Britt, 2002; Rosen 2008; Taylor, 2010; Taylor and Zabin 2000), relatively little systematic research has been done on secondary level associations that represent and promote their community-based members' interests (Antinori and Garcia López 2008: 3). Moreover, very little comparative research has examined the cross-national experiences of community forestry associations or examined problems unique to organizations undergoing generational transitions. Nevertheless, much can be learned from a comparative approach to the experiences of community forestry organizations in the global North and South (see further Charnley and Moe 2007).

The experiences of the Public Lands Partnership in Colorado and the Association of Forest Communities of Petén pose instructive differences, including the varying nature of land ownership and tenure regimes, their members' relationships to the forest, how they gained historical access to and control over the forest resource and the diverse problems emerging from embeddedness in distinct social, political and economic contexts. At the same time, both organizations confront similar problems as initiatives nearing the end of an initial stage of development. These include internal and external pressures that push them to move beyond pilot to sustained programs, expand and diversify existing activities, formalize decision making and procedures, manage leadership transitions and confront increasingly complex political and environmental challenges. Moreover, they must navigate this process of change while managing

ongoing "normal" problems of representation, effectiveness, legitimacy and responsiveness.

The Public Lands Partnership of Colorado

The PLP emerged to address the management of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) overseen by the USFS in Western Colorado, USA. First established in the early 1900's, the GMUG has been an important contributor to the region's economy and communities' livelihoods for over a century. However, public forest governance rules shifted beginning in the late 1980s away from economic utilization to protection of natural resources (Baden and Snow 1997). Additionally, demographic and economic changes were occurring in many Western US rural communities driven by in-migrants seeking the region's amenity values (i.e., natural scenery, outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing), rather than for natural resource commodity employment (Hansen et al. 2002). Tensions between so-called "newcomers" and long-time residents surfaced in response to national forest management proposals, as lines were drawn between those in favor of, and opposed to, continued economic utilization of public lands and natural resources.

Funded and led by local governments and citizens, PLP is a secondary level community association that serves as a civic forum for diverse sets of stakeholders to engage in collaborative learning, manage conflicts, and encourage the development of management proposals that simultaneously sustain the GMUG's ecological values while providing economic and social benefits to surrounding communities. An executive committee serves as a coordinating body, but the PLP itself operated as an informal gathering of individuals from government, non-governmental, and civic organizations. Between 1993 and 2000, PLP developed into an important local governance institution as it brought multiple stakeholders and organizations together to steer how public forest management issues were being defined and deliberated.

As the PLP began to demonstrate progress as a civic learning and conflict management forum, it was presented with the opportunity to develop its own set of public forest stewardship projects. In late 1999, the Ford Foundation announced a request for proposals to participate in its Community-Based Forestry Demonstration Program (CBFDP), a 5-year, US$15 million investment in community-based initiatives or

organizations around the U.S. involved in linking the restoration and enhancement of forest ecosystems with increasing the well-being of communities reliant on forests (Wyckoff-Baird 2005). The PLP was one of 13 successful applicants, providing financial resources of nearly US$610,000 over five years to make larger, more durable impacts to enhance the linkage between national forest stewardship and community well being.

Combining these resources with contributions from federal, state, and local governments participating in the PLP, the PLP was able to initiate or catalyze several demonstration projects. The first involved the restoration of the 570,000 ha Uncompahgre Plateau. Through a series of meetings convened by the PLP in 2000 and 2001, federal and state natural resource agencies and the PLP pooled together nearly US$4 million in funds to conduct a landscape analysis, design restoration demonstration projects, and develop a native seed cultivation and management program. The restoration projects employed local contractors, thereby providing economic benefits to adjacent communities while achieving ecological goals.

As grant money and on-the-ground resource management projects increased from 2001-2005, the PLP had no organizational structure to manage the funds. The federal and state agencies that were pooling funds into the Uncompahgre Plateau restoration program required their money to be handled differently in different sub-accounts. There was also a need for a mechanism to handle Memoranda of Understanding, budgets, work plans, contracts, and auditing procedures. As a volunteer-driven, "flat" organization, PLP lacked capacity. Developing and sustaining public forest-related stewardship programs would have necessitated a more formalized structure, such as an incorporated organization with 501(c)(3) status.[2] Following this path would require a formalized governing board and paid staff to conduct strategic and annual work planning, coordinate projects and programs, and raise funds. The informality that characterized the relationships and communications among PLP participants might have given way to more formal decision-making procedures. Given the resistance of PLP participants to formalize, the decision was made to create a separate incorporated administrative structure, leading to the creation of UncCom as a 501(c)(3) fiscal agent in 2001.

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[2] The 501(c)(3) status refers to a code under the US Internal Revenue Service which confers not-for-profit status to an incorporated organization.

Ford Foundation funds were also used to create a community planning and monitoring demonstration project for the Burn Canyon Salvage Timber Sales, a controversial set of logging projects in a post-wildfire forested area to generate income for the USFS to offset rehabilitation. PLPs newfound resources allowed it to expand beyond a dialogue forum to managing on-the-ground stewardship projects; concomitantly, its role in public forest governance changed.

When the Ford grant ended in Fall 2005, PLP was confronted with a set of strategic choices that had implications for its future growth and direction. In short, would the PLP expand from pilot demonstration projects for community and government agency education to investing in long-term programs around the Uncompahgre Plateau restoration and community monitoring of various GMUG forest management projects? This choice was fraught with several implications. First, PLP would have had to develop a more formalized organizational structure and direct its energies to raising and managing funds. PLP had confronted this issue as a matter of necessity in 2001, when it created UncCom. However, in late 2005, the choice was a matter of strategy. By focusing on grants, it was feared that the primary mission of the PLP would be subsumed by a primary motivation to sustain adequate funding to support staffing and programs. Additionally, PLP has been an intentionally flat organization in which participants from government and non-government groups interact on a level field. There is no formal representation, voting procedures, or position statements. Many PLP participants desired to maintain this non-bureaucratic structure.

On the other hand, by ending PLP's involvement and funding support for successful projects such as the Uncompahgre Plateau restoration and Burn Canyon projects, there was the danger that these projects would not be fully realized, thereby reducing their effectiveness as community and government agency learning opportunities, as well as their potential for producing long-term ecological, economic, and community benefits. Ultimately, the Executive Committee of the PLP decided – although it was not a unanimous decision – to return to its original purpose as a civic forum and facilitator of public forest management conflicts, and to not expand on demonstration projects.

This decision has subsequently affected the ability of PLP to maintain its relevance. The Uncompahgre Plateau restoration project, for example has evolved to the point of establishing a 7,000 ha forest restoration program that will generate commercial timber harvests, support local employment, and involve a community monitoring component. This program is now being coordinated by the Uncompahgre Plateau Project (UPP), an incorporated 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Collaborative stakeholder learning, planning, implementation, and monitoring occurs under UPP rather than the PLP.

Four additional challenges have confounded PLP in its search to be reflexive. The first concerns PLP participants' competing interests over how to best link public forest management and community well-being. One example involved a proposed project to reduce forest wildfire risks to electricity transmission powerlines traversing the Uncompahgre Plateau by thinning or clear-felling trees in proximity to those powerlines. Local forest industries participating on the PLP saw a benefit from these management practices and federal, state, and local governments saw the benefit of protecting a valuable public infrastructure. However, there was considerable discomfort among PLP's environmental constituencies concerning the ecological impacts of the project. By the same token, PLP's environmental and recreation-oriented participants pursued a project to designate a large unroaded area of the Uncompahgre Plateau as official Wilderness. Wilderness designation has been historically controversial because it removes public land from any future management activities that can produce commercial products, such as timber or livestock grazing.

Second, as an open forum, the PLP was subject to changing internal participation. New participants propose new directions that have sometimes resulted in tensions with original members. At the same time, founding members found it challenging to maintain PLP's focus on issues and projects while accommodating the interests and issues of new members. The Burn Canyon Salvage monitoring project, for example, has since lost interest among newer PLP participants, leaving the project to be maintained by a select group of individuals on their own time.

Third, changes in PLP's leadership have caused disruptions. Having been in existence for over 15 years, many of PLPs founding members have either left or reduced

their involvement. Since the original coordinator stepped down in early 2006, the PLP has gone through two coordinators, each with their own vision and leadership style. Furthermore, changing leadership in federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations, and election of new local government officials has changed participation in the PLP.

Lastly, changes in the external socio-political environment have raised questions about PLP's ability to adapt. Because the USFS is the authorized custodian for the GMUG, it must be attentive and responsive to the public at large, not just a local group of self-appointed collaborators. The lack of explicit budget line items or rewards for line officers means that proposals generated by collaborative efforts are not fully implemented. Additionally, the attitudes of individual line officers against interacting with collaborative groups can truncate any ongoing effort. Since line officers rotate frequently, a new line officer might choose to be less engaged with the PLP as the previous officer.

For the PLP in particular, and other similar community-based collaborative forestry groups in general, there has been a drop-off in philanthropic foundation giving due in large part to the economic downturn, especially since 2008. Prior to PLP's receiving of the Ford Foundation grant, they operated on a budget of $15,000-20,000 which was primarily used to sponsor public education events, field trips, or experts invited to provide scientific or technical assistance. With the Ford grant, PLP's annual budget averaged $300,000, a substantial portion of which went to contracts for on-the-ground stewardship projects. With the expiration of the Ford grant, PLP's budget has returned to a nominal level, with county and municipal governments contributing the lion's share. With the lack of options for larger operating budgets through philanthropic charities, PLP's ability to be effective resource stewards is extremely limited.

The Association of Forest Communities of Péten, Guatemala

The Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP) leads a diverse group of communities and community-based associations that have won rights to manage nearly 500,000 ha of forest in the Multiple Use Zone (MUZ) of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in northern Guatemala (Cronkleton et al. 2008; Gómez and Méndez 2005; Monterroso and Barry 2007; Taylor 2010). The MBR's implementation since its

creation in 1990 has been shaped by the Petén's high levels of conflict and the frequent absence of state control. The MBR's design originally failed to take into account pre-existing settlements and resource related interests (Cronkleton et al., 2008; Gómez and Méndez 2005). The community concessions were an experiment produced originally by unique circumstances in the mid 1990s, including strong international interest in preserving the Petén's natural and cultural wealth in support of a larger Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, broad skepticism about state and private industry capacities for conservation, and pressures to distribute land and resources to peasant communities as part of the 1996 Peace Accords ending Guatemala's 30 year Civil War (Cronkleton et al. 2008; Gómez and Méndez 2005; Monterroso 2007).

ACOFOP today has 23 member communities and organizations directly representing nearly 2,000 individuals. Its members include indigenous and *ladino* (ethnically mixed) communities and a range of for-profit and not-for-profit associations. ACOFOP itself does not manage forest resources directly, but rather represents members with 25 year government forest concessions governed by five-year sustainable management plans approved by the Guatemalan National Commission for Protected Areas (CONAP). Reliable time series data on the conservation and development impacts of ACOFOP and its members is still limited, but several studies point to significant positive conservation and social impacts (Bray et al. 2008; Nittler and Tschinkel 2005; Radachowsky et al. 2004; WCS et al. 2004).[3] ACOFOP, its leaders and its community-based members have won prestigious awards, including a Guatemalan Presidential Environment Award, a UNDP Equatorial Award for Excellence and the World Conservation Union's Environmental Torch Award. ACOFOP's Executive Director in 2005 received the National Geographic Society's Award for Conservation Leadership, the first time an individual in Latin American has won this award.

The community forest concessions represented and supported by ACOFOP are now 15 years into their 25 year contracts. Commercial timber management and

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[3] This research draws on a three year collaboration with a Ford Foundation funded, Center for International Forestry Research research and assistance project in support of grassroots forest organizations in Central America and Brazil (Cronkleton et al. 2008; Taylor et al. 2008).

commercialization have been the principle vehicle for convincing community members, government officials and external conservationist and development institution stakeholders that communities can be partners in conservation. The first years involved a very steep learning curve for all as communities struggled to learn forest management and develop commercial timber activities. Some communities, such as Carmelita and Uaxactún, were "forest communities" with extensive histories of experience with nontimber forest products, but little experience with timber management. Many community members were skeptical or even resisted timber management, equating it with deforestation or the extractive abuses of private actors in the past.

Today, growing internal pressures between existing concession members and community residents who do not participate in the concessions are leading ACOFOP to promote expansion of collectively organized activities into non-timber forest products. Many members, especially in "forest communities" such as Carmelita and Uaxactún, had extensive experience as individual contractors or harvest workers in xate, *chicle* gum or tourism. However, the communities had not organized to collectively manage NTFPs as they have with commercial timber.

ACOFOP and several key member communities are now promoting collectively organized *xate* jade palm, *chicle* gum and tourism as income generating activities that can expand the number of concession participants. NTFPs are also expected to increase legitimacy among external conservationists who oppose logging in any form and doubt the communities' capacity to be effective resource stewards. These new collective resource management activities require more complex management and coordination. They often pose contradictory organizational logics for sponsoring organizations. They introduce new actors into resource management, including concession members and non-members in the communities with significant vested interest in conventional NTFP organization (Taylor 2010).

At the community level, the concessions are organized according in diverse forms, including cooperatives, not-for-profit and for-profit associations. Some communities clearly separate concession activities from local level political leadership while in others the lines of political and resource management decision-making and accounting are more blurred. There remain today significant administrative weaknesses

in some concession organizations, exacerbated by generally low formal education levels, lack of administrative experience, and frequent difficulties in separating community leaders' administrative from political functions.

Both the community concession organizations and ACOFOP face pressing needs to develop more formal and sophisticated organizational structures and procedures capable of handling the new administrative demands of an increasingly complex environment. The diversification of collectively organized forest activities requires more complex coordination and decision-making from existing community-based organizations. As they become involved in collective NTFPs, the communities confront conflicting organizational logics, competition between diverse activities for seasonal labor, vested interests in traditional resource management systems, and new questions of how to track and distribute profits and losses from multiple activities within a single organizational framework (Taylor 2010). ACOFOP, for its part, began as a political organization pressing for community resource rights. Since the communities won those rights, ACOFOP has taken on new roles, including helping coordinate external assistance to the communities, providing technical assistance via a small staff of extensionists, and more recently, helping coordinate collectively organized xate, chicle and tourism activities. As a result, ACOFOP now incorporates several internal units, including political lobbying and organization; accounting; extension; and facilities.

Much of the current leadership of ACOFOP and influential community-based member organizations is still drawn from the initial generation of leaders who fought, often at great personal risk, to win community access to the MBR's resources. ACOFOP is still led by one of these pioneering leader. Its Executive Director is a charismatic leader who was a key actor in negotiating the first community concessions and who today enjoys a very high level of local, national and international credibility. Though a number of younger leaders are assuming responsible roles in member organizations, ACOFOP itself has not yet transitioned to a new generation of leadership. In the medium term, whether ACOFOP could successfully weather a leadership transition without losing important internal and external credibility is an important question.

ACOFOP and the community concessions face significant challenges to their viability as recognized stewards of the MBR's resources. Although most of the

concessions are widely viewed as making positive conservation and development impacts, four of the weaker concessions in particular currently suffer worsening problems of deforestation, expansion of farming and cattle ranching, and organizational weakness. While the violations of sustainable management plans are largely caused by powerful external landowners unconnected to the concessions, the community concessions are held responsible for sustainable resource management in their assigned areas by the state, and influential national and international groups.

Moreover, strong pressures are being levied from powerful external actors to protect and develop the Petén cultural and natural resources via more strict preservationist approaches and, somewhat counter-intuitively, via large –scale commercial tourism. Recent controversies over how to protect and develop the Mirador Basin's archaeological treasures, even at the expense of the community concessions' legal prerogatives, highlight these significant threats. ACOFOP and the concession are under great pressure to correct existing weaknesses in the weaker concessions and gain a more influential role in negotiations surrounding the future development and protection of the region's resources (Monterroso 2007; Taylor 2010).

Organizational change and organizing principles in the PLP and ACOFOP

The PLP and ACOFOP and their members confront these challenges of transition while struggling to maintain key organizational principles that have underlain much of their success until now: representation, effectiveness, legitimacy and responsiveness (see Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 here]

Representation

With respect to representation, the PLP has always kept an open-door policy and has not excluded any organization or stakeholder interest from participating. Furthermore, participants on the PLP do not attend as formal representatives of their organizations, but come explicitly as individuals with a particular perspective on public forest land management. The PLP has maintained participation from municipal and county governments, commodity and recreation users of surrounding public forest lands, conservation organizations, civic groups, and interested individual citizens. However, due to its voluntary nature, PLP has also had problems keeping a full, diverse representation

actively engaged. At its inception, much of PLP's attention was devoted to retaining livelihoods of traditional commodity users, such as forest industry, livestock ranching, and coal mining. Over time, recreation and environmental interests have worked on initiatives to address their interests. There remains tension between PLP participants interested in maintaining commodity-based livelihoods and those interested in non-commodity, ecological or amenity-based values.

Two populations with a stake in public forest management have been under-represented: Native Americans and Hispanics. The Northern Ute tribe had historically occupied the region, but was forced out in the 1880s with encroaching European-American settlement. The PLP did make efforts to reach out and engage the Northern Utes, however, as a sovereign nation, tribes do not see themselves as participants in multi-stakeholder collaborative processes, but as equals with the US government in land management. The Hispanic population is a small but important part of the natural resource labor economy in the region. Social networks and recruiting efforts among PLP participants to the Hispanic community are limited.

There also remains a philosophical and constitutional issue of having a self-appointed local group serving as a public voice in public forest policy and management. Although the PLP does not claim to formally represent any particular set of interests or the public as a whole, there is an undercurrent that PLP is not a legitimate entity when it comes to public processes associated with public forest planning and decision-making.

In related fashion, for ACOFOP and its concession members, representativeness is a significant ongoing issue. First, the community concessions were originally granted to local residents who organized to solicit government concessions, but not all residents of concession communities chose to participate initially. Second, the organizational framework of the concessions varies, with some organized as cooperatives and others as for-profit and as not-for-profit associations. As the concessions have enjoyed relative success and have generated significant new income, tensions between members and non-member residents have become a serious concern. Moreover, ACOFOP's 23 members include both 13 concession holding communities and associations and other types of community-based organizations. The new organized diversified forest activities introduce new representation-related issues, including whether to distribute benefits to all

concession members as currently done with commercial timber, or only to participants in the new activities. ACOFOP must effectively represent and manage these diverse constituencies if it is to pursue its political agenda and fulfill its function of effective promotion of the members' forest-related activities.

Critics of the community concession system have pointed to inequities in the distribution of concession benefits. One study (Tropico Verde 2004) argued that benefits are few and limited almost exclusively to members. ACOFOP and its concessions' participants respond that jobs, income and profit do accrue to some non-members, especially in concessions that require investment of some returns in community projects (Nittler and Tshinkel 2005). But they also argue that they have struggled, invested and risked much to establish the system. "It would be nice to have everybody inside the system" said one ACOFOP leader, "but that would mean someone could come along later and eat the same amount of cake. It's not fair to require that" (Taylor 2010). Nevertheless, ACOFOP sees the task of improving the representativeness of the concession system in the communities in which it operates as a very high priority.

Effectiveness

Both organizations have struggled to create and maintain adequate levels of organizational capacity. The decline in funding and the maturation of PLP spin-off organizations such as the Uncompahgre Plateau Project and Unc.Com has limited the role and effectiveness of the PLP in the past 5 years. PLP has insufficient organizational capacity to take on a large stewardship project such as the Uncompahgre Plateau restoration or the Burn Canyon Salvage monitoring projects. It retains a coordinator on a part-time basis, has a small operating budget, and relies on volunteers for its executive committee and membership. It still serves as a forum for collaborative learning and deliberation, but, due to its success over the past 15 years, there are now other informal, ad hoc forums for learning outside of the PLP. It can be argued that PLP has transformed communication and collaboration between governmental entities and non-governmental stakeholders with regard to public forest management to the point that it is no longer a key facilitator. On the other hand, PLP still exists as the sole venue in which this diversity of organizations and interests can convene around public forest issues.

For ACOFOP and its members, forest management has involved a steep learning curve, especially for those communities with little prior experience with commercial timber. Nittler and Tskinkel pointed to significant organizational problems rooted in generally low formal education levels, lack of administrative experience, frequent turnover of elected leadership, lack of commercialization skills and difficulties among diverse concession organizations to collaborate in joint ventures (2005). Though CONAP officials spoke in interviews in 2005 that some 80 percent of the concessions were on a "path to a better future", in 2008, the weakest four ACOFOP-affiliated concessions along the San Andrés road suffered significant problems with violations of its concession plans that threatened to undermine external support for the concession system (ACOFOP 2008, WCS et al. 2004: 16, Bray et al. 2009; Trópico Verde 2005; Cortave, personal communication 2008).

In addition to these organizational capacity problems, as ACOFOP and its members embark on diversified collective forest activities, including xate, chicle and tourism, they confront new organizational procedures, new participants, and new organizational logics. Guariguata et al. (2008) explore interactions between commercial timber and NTFP activities and suggest that at times organizational contradictions arise between the two. The newly organized NTFP activities operate not in isolation, but in the context of multipurpose organizations, both at the secondary level of ACOFOP and at the local level of concession members. Conflicts rooted in diverse seasonal timing of activities, material characteristics of the product or service, accounting policies and the varying interests of participating communities and individuals, can all create pressures to fragment rather than integrate multiple activities in pursuit of a unified development strategy (Taylor 2010).

Legitimacy

As they have struggled with issues of representation and effectiveness, both PLP and ACOFOP have strived to maintain their own embeddedness in community interests and perspectives, a problem of legitimacy. PLP has always faced legitimacy issues, especially from public interest organizations who resisted any inference that PLP somehow represented a representative public voice in public forest management in Western Colorado. During the revision of the GMUG forest plan, a policy document that

sets priorities for the next 10-15 years, stakeholders not directly involved in the PLP resisted attempts by the PLP to be a co-convener of public involvement processes, claiming that it does not fully represent or reflect the preferences of the broader public.

Given the PLP's intentional aversion to having formal representation from organizations, it is not clear how participants interact with their home organizations with regard to PLP initiatives. PLP participants are under no obligation to commit their home organizations' resources or support for any project. As a forum for learning and information and knowledge exchange, participants are only expected to inform their home organizations of PLP projects; similarly, PLP participants are under no obligation to subject their home organizations' work to approval or sanctioning by PLP. In many instances, it was the initiative of individual participants to advance the relationship between PLP and participating organizations. As long-time participants left and new participants joined PLP, so did the relationships between PLP and participating organizations. The reliance on individual rather than institutional relationships makes such relationships tenuous and subject to individual personalities.

ACOFOP and its member concessions have since the first years struggled to establish and maintain the legitimacy of a community role in managing the MBR's resources. Commercial timber has long been the vehicle for showing community members that conservation can yield short and long term benefits. The internal legitimacy of the new diversified activities will depend much on how well existing and new participants are represented in the activities' administration and how equitably benefits are distributed. Externally, the concessions' successful involvement in the new activities will require recognition by powerful actors at multiple levels, including key government agencies and external conservation and development institutions.

Moreover, ACOFOP and the concessions must ensure that the new diversification does not lead to the "disembedding" of activities from the communities that gave them birth. The introduction of highly diverse production activities, constituents and interests could pose seemingly contradictory organizational logics that distance a single activity from community objectives, promoting fragmentation and undermining unity. For example, some participants in the xate activity in 2007 advocated separating their accounts from those of the sponsoring concession organization. Others argued that profits

should be distributed only to direct participants rather than to the community's concession members. Still others planned for a future separate xate firm legally distinct from the community concession.

Responsiveness

The above discussed problems of representativeness, effectiveness and legitimacy together have significant implications for a fourth organizational principle: responsiveness. Organizational responsiveness is at its heart a problem of governance. What kind of governance arrangement is required to adapt effectively to new internal and external pressures, while maintaining a commitment to the interests of the communities that gave birth to these organizational experiences? Due to the PLP's informal, voluntary structure, it does not produce strategic plans, annual work plans or annual reports. It has an annual "all-members" meeting at which all participating members are invited to attend to review the past year's activities and discuss current and future work. Accountability for PLP comes from participants continued participation; they "vote with their feet", either maintaining their participation by attending meetings or they drop out. This can be regarded as a strength of PLP: the relevance and legitimacy of PLP is determined by who voluntarily participates and contributes. That PLP is still in existence after 15 years is a testament to its relevance and responsiveness. However, it is debatable that current participation fully reflects the interests and values of all stakeholders interested and affected by public forest management on the GMUG. For example, PLP has seen a decline in traditional commodity interests in favor of recreation and conservation interest. The forest industry, for example, is no longer an active member, although it maintains its participation. With the departure of several founding members, the ranching community no longer has a presence. As other entities have spun-off and matured, these interests have dedicated their involvement to those spin-offs as they have a more direct impact on resource stewardship. Emerging issues such as ecological restoration and renewable biomass energy are being addressed outside of PLP by these spin-offs or entirely new partnership efforts, such as the Renewable Energy Development Initiative involving the local rural electricity association, the USFS, and forest industry.

It can be argued that the spin-offs and new partnerships are a product of PLP's success; without PLP, it is conceivable that the capacity would not exist for these efforts

to become established and thrive. This reality raises the issue of whether community-based governance efforts such as PLP should have a planned sunset, either transforming into a different purpose and structure, or dissolving altogether as needs and issues are met through other venues. As is so often the case, organizations seek to persist beyond their initial raison d'etre, raising questions about their capacity to be responsive in the face of other competing organizations.

For its part, ACOFOP has a dual governance structure of elected leaders and professional staff that aim to keep this representative organization effective yet responsive to its members. It is governed by a general assembly of members, an administrative council of concession representatives headed by an elected president and a three-member oversight committee. ACOFOP's Executive Director manages its small paid staff; he is a member of a local community but holds no single concession membership (Taylor 2010). The governance arrangements of ACOFOP's affiliated community concessions vary by organizational model: cooperative, for-profit and not-for-profit associations, but generally include similar member assemblies, elected leadership and remunerated staff members. The governance arrangements, as with similar community-based organizations elsewhere, suffer significant weaknesses, but generally strive to balance effective resource and production management with the need to remain responsive to member needs and interests.

The addition of collectively organized xate, chicle and tourism activities to commercial timber calls for the rethinking of governance arrangements in participating concession organizations and in ACOFOP itself. How should they organize to manage each new activity effectively, within the larger context of the concession system? ACOFOP and its members are experimenting with three organizational alternatives. The first is to decentralize each forest activity by productive sector. Collective xate participants, for example, have formed a separate xate committee and some advocate the creation of a separate firm. This decentralized system could be more flexible, with its "arms-length market relationship" (Fitter and Kaplinsky 2001: 14), yet it could encourage separation from the sponsoring concession organization. A second alternative involves ACOFOP directly, marshalling its expertise and credibility to directly coordinate NTFP production as it has with the collective chicle activity. This, however, threatens to involve

ACOFOP too closely in economic production, potentially undermining its legitimacy as political representative of all concession members. A third alternative suggested is to involve the community-owned forest services firm, FORESCOM, in the NTFPs with ACOFOP advising as a Board Member. This would allow ACOFOP to balance economic coordination and assistance with political support of the general concession system, but would require significantly strengthening FORESCOM first. It is not yet clear which alternative or alternative ACOFOP and its members will pursue (Taylor 2010).

VI. Conclusion

Seeing community-based organizations as embedded can provide analysts, advocates and participants with a framework for analyzing and acting on the complex set of pressures these organizations face. The reflexive governance posture views those organizations' structural choices within a context of embeddedness in multiple contexts across scales, allowing the unpacking of diverse, often conflicting organizational logics, shifting relationships among stakeholders, interests and perspectives, and the reality of organizational objectives changing over time.

As organizations near significant moments of transition, the opportunity and even requirement for structural choices appears, with important implications for existing and potential participants, organizational objectives and future directions of change. Choices are made that lead the organization to change, ceasing some activities and adopting new ones, reaffirming or deemphasizing commitments to existing participants or assuming commitments to new ones and possibly, dissolving some or all existing organizational arrangements and creating new ones. The key issue is not so much whether the new organizational arrangements remain faithful to their original objectives, but rather, whether they remain appropriately responsive to the organization's constituents and its ever-changing environment.

The PLP and ACOFOP today find themselves at a moment of transition with those sorts of structural choices. Both organizations face new organizational challenges: transitioning leadership; need for more formal and diversified decision making, growth beyond pilot to sustained programs and expansion beyond original forest-related activities. Much depends on how those organizations manage the organizing principles of representation, effectiveness, and legitimacy discussed in the previous section. These

three shape the larger issue of an organization's governance: how it organizes and reorganizes to remain appropriately responsive to its participants and its environment.

PLP's representativeness has been shaped by its flexibility. Members come as individuals rather than as official representatives. This open door policy has allowed it to be inclusive, yet it has also created instability as individuals over time cease to participate. Original constituencies such as traditional forest user and rancher groups have been largely displaced by amenity and recreational users. ACOFOP's members, by contrast, until recently discouraged new participants despite the fact that participants are official representatives of their communities and community organizations. Increasing tensions between concession members and community residents who are not concession members leads ACOFOP to seek more inclusive activities to improve its representativeness.

Both PLP and ACOFOP have struggled to increase their effectiveness, their capacity to manage forest-related activities, constrained by resource shortages and other problems of organizational capacity. PLP has encouraged spin-offs of successful activities while ACOFOP fears similar spinoffs would fragment and undermine it and its member community organizations. Both organizations, despite these problems, remain effective conveners and communication facilitators.

PLP's legitimacy as spokesman for its members' interests may be weakened by the fact that its supporters participate as individuals rather than representatives. Some participants, such as forest industry and ranching groups, have left the organization, at least in part because of problems of internal legitimacy. That ACOFOP's members are also representatives of their communities and organizations lends somewhat greater stability and internal legitimacy. Both organizations face external pressures from changing socio-political and economic contexts, shifting policy and budget priorities of governments and ongoing complexities related to land and resource tenure. In both organizations, powerful external stakeholder groups in these larger political environments convey or do not convey external legitimacy and shape the capacity of both to advocate effectively for their members' interests.

Finally, PLP and ACOFOP differ in their governance arrangements. PLP lacks many aspects of formal governance. Though it holds inclusive annual meetings, it

actively resisting institutionalization in conventional ways signaled by formal reports, plans, etc. ACOFOP by contrast, strives to maintain a regular structure of representative bodies with periodic general and more specialized meetings of participants at all levels. It maintains a public presence and advances its agenda through a website and periodic reports and position papers.

Nevertheless, both PLP and ACOFOP share a reflexive approach to governance, which tries to take into account the embeddedness of their activities in external contexts in which stakeholders, interests and even objectives change over time. PLP has in some ways transformed itself, moving away from direct coordination of projects into a more exclusively facilitating role, as its members have spun off successful activities, or left to pursue their interests in other venues. ACOFOP in similar fashion tries actively to transform itself into a coordinator and facilitator of more diversified forest activities, as way of consolidating and make more secure a community role in resources stewardship in northern Guatemala.

What do these two cases suggest as larger lessons for analysis and practice? First, effective organizational structure cannot be "given" a priori nor is it static in practice. As NRM decentralizes and devolves, and community-based governance approaches emerge, the organizational structure of such governance approaches has implications across institutional levels. This is a problem of governance, yet much research focuses on the architecture of international and national structural change, with much less dedicated to local governance.

A critical observation our study makes is that organizations have a life cycle; organizations that move beyond the first generation must strategically adapt their structure and process to expand their work or meet new challenges. We cannot assume that first generation community-based organizations can or should make a transition to a second generation. Whether mature organizations enter new stages and remain relevant to their supporters' interests or, alternatively, enter a "sunset" mode in which they become less relevant and even disappear, depends much on how they perform over time in complex, multilevel contexts in which stakeholders, interests and objectives change.

This paper's analytical and evaluative framework, drawing on embeddedness theory and focusing on organizational principles of representativeness, effectiveness,

legitimacy, and responsiveness, attempts to blend research and application. It calls for enhancing partnerships between researchers and practitioners to address pressing governance architecture problems. It aims to advance scholarship in environmental governance architecture problems, experimenting with theoretical and analytical lenses that cross the boundaries of disciplines, but which can expand understanding of the role local resource governance regimes play in the larger architecture of environmental governance.

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Table 1		
Four Organizational Principles in Action		
	PLP	**ACOFOP**
Representation	•Open door policy •Members come as individuals, not as official representatives of their organizations/communities •Tensions between traditional forest community users (wood, ranching) and amenity/recreational users •questioning of whether PLP is legitimate spokesman	•Door to new members has been mostly closed; now efforts to be more inclusive. •Members formally represent their communities and organizations •Tensions between participants in diverse ACOFOP supported forest activities •Lack of representation of community residents who are not concession members •ACOFOP is widely recognized as spokesman for members.
Effectiveness	•Spin-offs of successful activities have decreased PLP's relevance • Shortages of resources for effective coordination •Important convenor and facilitator of communities' communication •Lack organizational capacity to develop and manage large projects	•Tries not to allow new NTFP activities to spin off and fragment the concessions •Shortages of resources for effective coordination •Important convenor and facilitator •Difficulty developing organizational capacity for complex projects
Legitimacy	•Not seen by some external stakeholders as legitimate spokesman •Participants are individuals, not official representatives of organizations and communities •Individual nature of participation leads to instability over time due to inconsistent participation. •Power outsiders bestow or don't bestow	•Participants are official representatives of communities and organizations, giving ACOFOP legitimacy as spokesman •Somewhat more stability because of official representative nature of participants •Legitimacy and its weaknesses are linked to problems of equity in benefit distribution •Power outsiders confer or don't confer legitimacy

	legitimacy.	
Responsiveness	•Lacks many aspects of formal governance: no annual reports, strategic plans, etc. •Annual meeting of all members to "check in" and plan next year's activities •shifting constituencies as forest industry and ranchers have dropped out and amenity and recreational users have gained influence. •Spin-offs arguably a sign of success even if it results in lessened direct relevance for PLP	•Regular meetings, web site, reports, etc. •Some tension over how to incorporate new kinds of individual and collective participants, given new NTFP activities •Efforts to avoid spinoffs, which are seen as fragmentation.