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Indigenous people and co-management: implications for conflict management

Alfonso Peter Castro ^a ... Erik Nielsen ^{1, b}

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Abstract

Co-management agreements among indigenous people, state agencies, and other stakeholders offer substantial promise as a way of dealing with natural resource conflicts in a participatory and equitable manner. However, experience shows that co-management regimes can set into motion new conflicts or cause old ones to escalate. In practice the result may not be power sharing but rather a strengthening of the state's control over resource policy, management, and allocation. Instead of contributing to local empowerment, such arrangements may further marginalize communities and resource users. We use case material, primarily from northern Canada and South Asia, to explore the pervasive role of conflict in generating, shaping, and influencing the performance of co-management regimes. The paper analyzes the divergent interests and motives of state agencies in planning and implementing co-management arrangements. It highlights the cultural, political, and legal obstacles encountered by

indigenous people and other rural communities in trying to negotiate co-management arrangements. We also explore the conflicts that can arise in co-management regimes where local participation in decision making is very limited. General lessons and recommendations are drawn from our analysis.



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Keywords

Co-management; Indigenous people; Natural resource conflicts; Conflict management; Negotiations; Participation; Community forestry; Canada; India; Bangladesh

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Alfonso Peter Castro is Chair and Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. He has a PhD from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Castro is also a consultant with the Community Forestry Unit of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Erik Nielsen is a consultant with the Community Forestry Unit of the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, where he specializes in natural resource conflict management. He has an MS degree from Cornell University.

¹ Fax: +39-06-57055514.

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