

Adaptive Co-management of Natural Resources: A Solution or Problem?

Tendayi Gondo

*Department of Urban and Regional Planning, School of Environmental Sciences,
University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou 0950, Limpopo Province, South Africa
Telephone: +2715 962 8576 OR +27826611558; Fax: +2715 962 8597;
E-mail: tendayi.gondo@univen.ac.za, gondotee@gmail.com*

KEYWORDS Adaptive. Co-management. Natural Resource Management. Experiences

ABSTRACT Natural resource management issues are increasingly viewed from the complex systems theory. There is general consensus among scientist that complex systems are not amenable to conventional resource management approaches that stresses on command-and-control. This has triggered a search for novel governance approaches that are more suited to complexity and uncertainty. Adaptive co-management (ACM) has emerged as a recent interdisciplinary response to this need. However, concepts associated with ACM are relatively new and quickly expanding from multiple perspectives. Consequently the successes and failures of such a methodology has varied from one study to the next. The analysis critiques the utility of such an approach and eventually argues that ACM of natural resources is not necessarily a solution but part of the problem itself. A Delphi method was applied to gather the knowledge of experts in adaptive management. The panel of experts was drawn from East and Southern African researchers whose experiences with the tool had been documented in a series of publications. Such analysis was complemented by evidence drawn from a sample of case studies in the same field. The difficulties faced by the (ACM) practitioners during the implementation phase as well as the evaluation of the associated benefits suggest there is an urgent need to fix the leaking buckets, before sharing optimism that currently characterize the orthodox and ideals of this methodology. Failure to do so (it seems) will see the approach running the risk of being a hollow marketing tool rather than a viable tool.