

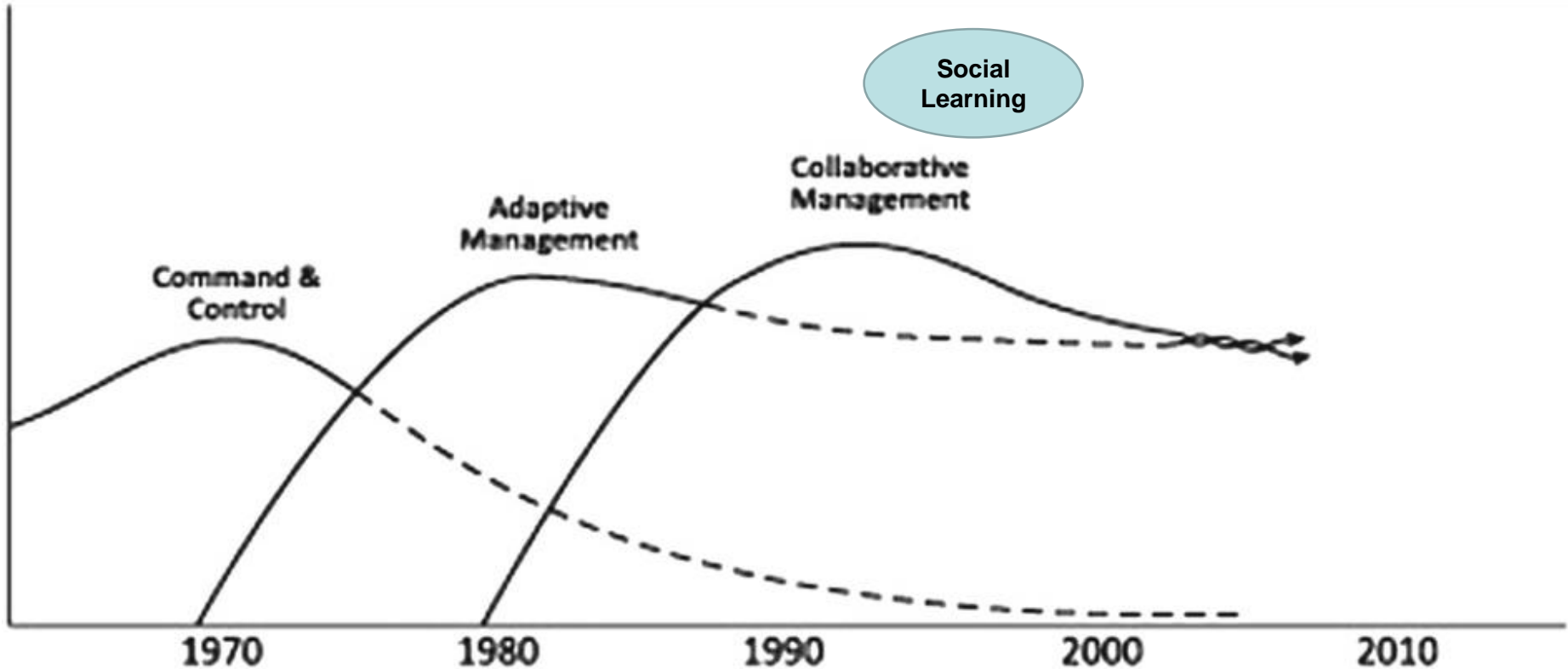
Community-based social learning interventions: conceptual and methodological challenges with delivery and evaluation

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**TIAS Seminar “Conceptualization and measurement of learning”
16th of November 2016, 8:00 – 9:30 am GMT**

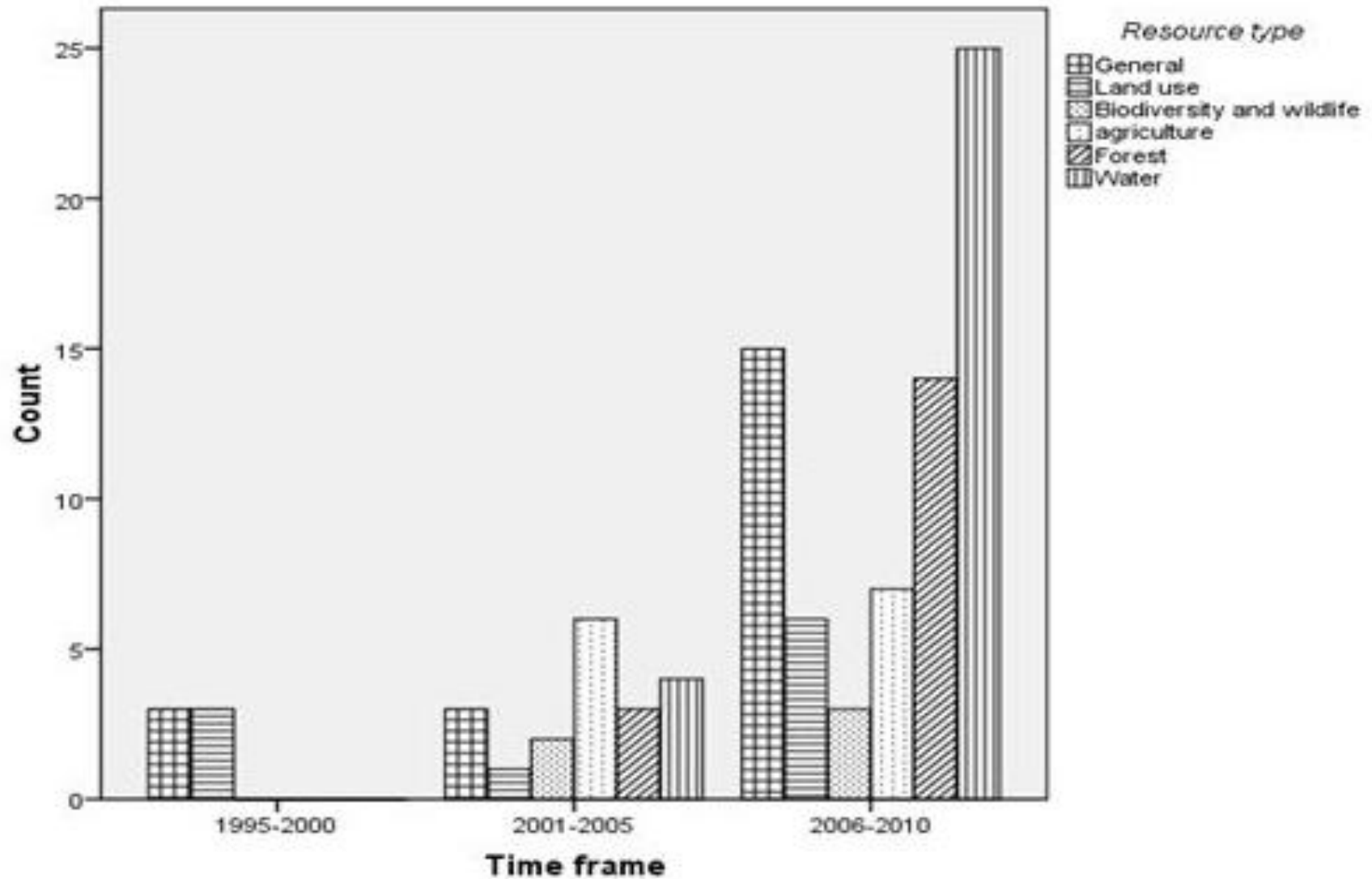
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Shifting management paradigms in natural resource management

Adapted from: Cundill, G., Rodela, R., 2012. A review of assertions about the processes and outcomes of social learning in natural resource management. *Journal of Environmental Management* 113, 7-14.



Publications over time (as from 2013)

Adapted from: Rodela, R., 2013. *The social learning discourse: Trends, themes and interdisciplinary influences in current research.* *Environmental Science & Policy* 25, 157-166.

What is social learning (in NRM)?

- It is a normative **conceptual construct** used in natural res. management
- It is inspired by **theories on learning, systems science, political sciences and community development**
- It is (commonly) used to guide thinking, planning and execution of activities & interventions in the field with communities
- Literature has discussed it in relation to 3 unit of analysis: individuals, groups/networks/ stak. platforms and social-ecological systems (see: Rodela 2013)

What social learning (in NRM) is not about?

- It is **not a theory**
- It is not a theory of behavioral change
- It is not a theory of vicarious learning (learning about imitating others).

What is a community-based intervention (CBI)?

- An intervention is an **activity** delivered over a given period of time with intent to achieve given objectives (normative).
- It targets communities (multiple definitions of community exists; population, geographically, identity, etc.)
- It many involve collab. between community groups and groups from outside of the community e.g. researchers
- It (commonly) acknowledges the importance of resources, power structures and commitment of groups involved,
- It (commonly) operates additively, not challenging directly power structures, shared values, social norms (this would make access very difficult)
- It (commonly) involves evaluation plans to show what has been achieved

INTERVENTION

Scenario analysis

Forecasting

Participatory mapping

Participatory modelling

Serious Games / Role Playing Games
(off-line)Computer Based Serious Games /
Role Playing Games (on-line)

Educative Theatre

Transect walks

Focus groups

there are more..



- Different interventions allow for different ways in which community groups are engaged cognitively and emotionally during the activity; differ in the ways these allow for reflection and critical insight and the sharing of information and knowledge.
- **Most importantly these differ in terms of opportunities to trigger specific learning processes and consequently facilitate for a type of learning objectives.**

Recurring conceptual challenges

- Given multiple and overlapping CF; it is important to consider the logic linking underlying *assumptions/CF* with intervention choices, and make it explicit .
- Given the chosen operationalisation of SL: is the chosen intervention allowing us to make appropriate assessment of *chosen variables* and the construct of interest (i.e. SL).
- Given the assumptions behind the CF and operat of SL: what opportunities are there to generalize results obtained (ie. intervention, CF).
- How well can the CF and operat. of SL take into account contextual factors? (these are there and cant be overlooked)

Recurring methodological challenges

- Often the *difference* between *evaluating the intervention* and the study of social learning is not taken into account, overlooked and underestimated. While the first can inform the latter, the opposite is seldom sufficient.
- Time plays a role in change process and soc. learning: given stated research objectives that is an appropriate aspect to consider when selecting the **res. methodology** (abundance of CS, not of others)
- Data collection a balancing act -> **subjective** vs. **objective**, self-reported answers (subjective) in interviews & questionnaires may be biased (eg. have you learned), while observation data or Q&A check of facts leaves out the lived experience which is key to study learning and change processes it can trigger.
- Operationalization of variables and assessment of these: what measure can best capture the variable of interest?

STUDIES	OPERATIONAL MEASURES OF SOCIAL LEARNING			
	Cognitive dimension	Moral dimension	Relational dimension	Trust dimension
Cheng and Mattor 2010	Knowledge increase.	/	/	/
Germendia and Stagl, 2010	Knowledge increase.	Understanding others viewpoints.	/	/
Pahl-Wost and Hare, 2004	Technical knowledge	/	Relations.	Trust.
Schusler et al., 2003	Learning about facts, presence or lack of resources available to their communities, and actions that might address problems .	Understanding concerns of other participants, areas of agreement and disagreement	Collaborative relationships, group common purpose.	Trust gained in others.
Selin et al., 2007	Factual information.	Learning about concerns of others, differences across concerns, change of concerns.	Developed a common purpose with participants,	Trust towards other participants.
Sinclair and Diduck, 2001	Information exchange.	/	/	/
Webler et al., 1995	Learning about facts.	Understanding of others' perspective, mutual respect for positions, feelings of solidarity, empathize with others, meaning of citizenship.	A sense of collegiality, commitment to the project, group identity.	Trust change in levels.

From: Romina, R., 2014. *Social Learning, Natural Resource Management, and Participatory Activities: A reflection on construct development and testing.* NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences 69, 15-22.

- Research design is an important but overlooked starting point.
- Theory building is an important process (but it appears not very common within the SL community).
- Reproducibility is much need (often severely impacted by insufficient / lacking details about methodological choices as well as construction of the conceptual frameworks used).
- After two decades of research and published works it is about time to move towards research synthesis -> what works and why it works.

Thank you !

Get in touch if you have more questions or need help
with your work on SL.

Current projects on SL:

ALEGAMS: <http://knowledge4food.net/research-project/serious-games-sustainable-shrimp-farming/>

E-mail: rominarodela@hotmail.com

RG: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Romina_Rodela

Twitter [@RominaRodela](https://twitter.com/RominaRodela)