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Foreword: The backloop to sustainability

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Introduction

I hazard a guess that people know enough about growth to know how to nurture it – mostly. But when growth stops or collapses, they do not know enough about protection or about novelty to know how to renew confidently for the next phase of growth. And they do not know how the two – growth and novelty – interact. As one consequence, economic forecasters, for example, do well in predicting rates of growth while on a growth path. They do a poor job at times of recession, or even worse at times of looming depression.

That is why I said 'mostly'. Growth of a cell or a society occurs gradually. It builds potential that accumulates slowly and it creates two conflicting attributes – increasing potential but also increasing vulnerability. Increase in potential roughly represents an increase in wealth represented in those structures that acquire, store, maintain and use potential. Increase in wealth gives potential for alternative futures. The increase in vulnerability comes from increase in structure that adds complexity but also vulnerability. As a consequence, eventually cells can die and societies can revolt. Growth then stops or reverses.

But cells and societies also reproduce and reinvent in the process of cyclic transformations. That is when evolution and deep changes are created. The bewildering, entrancing, unpredictable nature of nature and people, the richness, diversity and changeability of life come from that evolutionary dance generated by cycles of growth, collapse, reorganization, renewal and re-establishment.

We call that the adaptive cycle, as noted in Figure 1.2 in the introductory chapter, where its essential features are described. The 'front-loop' of that cycle is the loop of growth. The 'back-loop' is the loop of reorganization.

The editors of this book, Carl Folke, Fikret Berkes and Johan Colding, are interested in sustainable systems. Those are systems that persist, but also that evolve and change. Growth is important, but even more so are the forces in a healthy system that dominate during episodes when growth is halted or reversed,

when deep uncertainty explodes, when several alternative futures become suddenly perceived and unpredictability explodes. It is a time of crisis, but also of opportunity. Unexpected interactions can occur among previously separate properties that can nucleate an inherently novel and unexpected focus for future good or ill.

At such times, the future can also be suddenly shaped by externally triggered events such as those from slowly changing climate, from entrants of invasive species, from human immigrants driven by geopolitical changes or from unexpected terrorist events. Such apparently external events can launch future development along an unpredictable path.

During such times, uncertainty is high, control is weak and confused, and unpredictability is high. But space is also created for reorganization and innovation. It is therefore also a time when individual cells, individual organisms or individual people have the greatest chance of influencing events. There is opportunity with low costs of failure possible. The future can be mapped by experiments rather than by long-term plans. It is the time when a Gandhi or a Hitler can use events of the past to transform the future for great good or great ill. In a biological evolutionary setting, it is a time when mammals can replace dinosaurs as the dominant life form. It is the time of the 'Long Now' (Brand, 1999).

The editors therefore break a tradition in this book. They see that the essence of sustainability cannot be defined from metaphors of growth, equilibrium and stability. Rather it is defined from metaphors of novelty, memory and instability. They reverse existing traditions of exploration and analysis by focusing on the back-loop of collapse and reorganization, rather than on the front-loop of growth and predictability. They therefore focus on foundations for change. They focus on forces of evolution from biology, ecology, society and culture.

Their approach is integrative, merging the natural and social sciences. And they do that by choosing largely an analysis of existing contemporary and traditional societies around the world and by exploring the responses of such systems to crises and change. That focus emerged as one of the four central themes of the Resilience Project, a 5-year international project to develop integrative theory for sustainable systems and to propose integrative practice that can be tested within developed and developing regions.

The overall theories of the Resilience Project emerged from selecting, expanding and integrating existing theories in economics, ecosystem science, institutional research and adaptive complex system theory. The practice emerged from experience in regions where there is significant multiple use of renewable resources: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, rangeland grazing, wildlife and eco-tourism. Specifically, the regions included semi-arid grasslands and

savannas in Africa, Australia and North America, coral reefs in tropical regions, boreal forested regions in Canada, the USA and Europe, enclosed seas of the Baltic region of Europe and in south Florida, and wetlands of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Florida and Europe. The research has been an effort of synthesis through cooperation among a wonderful international group of scientists, scholars and practitioners, together with their students and collaborators.

This book is one of four that the project has created. One concerns nonlinear economics (Mäler and Starrett, in process) and the breakdown of traditional linear economics under certain conditions when resources are exploited in ecosystems. Another explores different large-scale ecosystems and identifies their structure and function (Gunderson and Pritchard, 2002), particularly the causes of multi-stable states and the surprises that result. Still another is the central integrative volume (Gunderson and Holling, 2002) that presents the integrative theory called panarchy. It is that theory that this book chooses as its base in its delightful examination of the structures formed by people and nature, particularly at times of fundamental crisis or transformation. Its message is therefore of deep significance at these times of national and international transformations in economics, society and security.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington are the events that make this period one recognized as a time of crisis and transformation by the peoples of the world. But those events emerge from slower processes that have paced changes in development, politics and our natural endowments since the Second World War – locally and globally. This book and indeed all four of the books provide a foundation to develop and evaluate responses of nations and people to such profound changes. We do not do that here, because the terrorist events are so recent. But the shape of the influence of these works is becoming clearer, and will be the foundation for the next immediate target of thought and action. We encourage readers to do the same, enriching the effort with their own experiments in enquiry and invention.

The pathology of regional development

Our resilience work focused particularly on regions where local history and status interact with global and international processes. It was launched by the following pattern that was observed in several dozen examples of development and resource management policies initiated in both developed and developing nations (Gunderson, Holling and Light, 1995; Holling and Meffe, 1996). That pattern exposed an intriguing paradox in regions dominated by the 'modern' context of the developed nations since the Second World War. It consistently emerged as those regional systems experienced a crisis or policy change.

The Regional Resource and Development Pathology has the following features:

1. The new policies and development initially succeed in reversing the crisis or in enhancing growth.
2. Implementing agencies initially are responsive to the ecological, economic and social forces, but evolve to become narrow, rigid and myopic. They become captured by economic dependents and the perceived needs for their own survival.
3. Economic sectors affected by the resources grow and become increasingly dependent on perverse subsidies.
4. The relevant ecosystems gradually lose resilience to become fragile and vulnerable and more homogeneous as diversity and spatial variability are reduced.
5. Crises and vulnerabilities begin to become more likely and evident and the public begin to lose trust in governance.

In rich regions the result is spasmodic lurches of learning with expensive actions directed to reverse the worst of the consequences of past mistakes. An example is the present effort to restore the Everglades ecosystem in south Florida – the largest effort of restoration that has ever been attempted (Gunderson, 1999).

In poor regions the result is dislocation of people, increasing uncertainty, impoverishment and a poverty trap. Rarely, a radical new approach to development is invented that depends more on people's inventiveness and the transformation of strategic goals than on money. An example is the invention of community and economic utilization of biodiversity in Zimbabwe after the catastrophic droughts of the 1980s exposed the unsustainability of past development (Lynam, 1999). But that transformation is now being destroyed as its vulnerability to national political corruption is exposed.

Diagnosis of the pathology

Sustainable development and management of global and regional resources are not an ecological problem, nor an economic one, nor a social one. They are a combination of all three. And yet actions to integrate all three in the developed nations have short-changed one or more. Sustainable designs driven by conservation interests ignore the needs for an adaptive form of economic development that emphasizes individual enterprise and flexibility. Those driven by industrial interests act as if the uncertainty of nature can be replaced with human

engineering and management controls, or ignored altogether. Those driven by social interests act as if community development and empowerment alone can surmount any constraints of nature or of external forces. As investments fail, the policies of government, private foundations, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) flop from emphasizing one kind of partial solution to another. Over the last three decades, such policies have flopped from large investment schemes, to narrow conservation ones, to equally narrow community development ones, to libertarian market solutions.

There has been lots of despair over failures but little benefit from the learning that has occurred. And little sharing of learning across regions.

Each spasm of policy change builds on theory, though many would deny anything but the most pragmatic and non-theoretical foundations to their proposed actions. The conservationists depend on theories of ecology and evolution, the developers on variants of free market models, the community activists on theories of community and social organization. All these theories are correct. Correct in the sense of being partially tested and credible representations of one, but only one, part of reality. The problem is that they are partial. Each misses a critical dimension. Economic theory deals poorly with slow variables that form cultural and ecological foundations for sustainability. Ecological theory ignores the richness of people's needs and inventiveness. Social theory is fragmented and static.

But our integrated theory has now been developed by a leading group of ecologists, economists and social scientists drawing upon extensive regional experience. It is a theory that recognizes the synergies and constraints among nature, economic activities, and people – a theory that informs and emerges from empirical practice.

Even the most ruthlessly pragmatic goals for developing policies and investments for sustainability need such a theoretical foundation that integrates ecological with economic with institutional with evolutionary theory – that overcomes the disconnect rooted in current theoretical limitations within each field. It is that integrative theoretical foundation and the practical consequences of it that have been the focus of the Resilience Project supported by The MacArthur Foundation. It is that integrative theory that was expanded by the discoveries in this book.

A prescription

The failures of the past have not been complete: there have been partial successes. This mixed picture comes because theories, trials and projects were not wrong, just too partial. The recent fad for community-based development

alone is another such correct, partial solution that will fail. The gales of change internationally (international financial contagion, migration, the emergence of the Internet), globally (climate change, ozone depletion, novel diseases) and regionally (conflicts and politics of sustainability, terrorism, biodiversity and resilience loss) create opportunity and a potential for constructive change. Now is the time to protect and integrate the good experience, ignore the bad and launch and communicate safe-fail experiments.

Oddly, the present recognition of global crises makes this the time to share the fruits of innovative development widely between North and South as it emerges, not just among those of the North or those of the South after it has in part failed. The Internet provides an arena to invent and communicate ways of learning and doing that are discovered in local regions around the world.

These gales of change suggest that the window for constructive change has opened at several scales. It is a time when conditions of the back-loop of the adaptive cycle dominate. Under those conditions, the elements of a prescription for facilitating constructive change are:

- Identify and reduce destructive constraints and inhibitions on change, such as perverse subsidies.
- Protect and preserve the accumulated experience on which change will be based.
- Stimulate innovation and communicate the results in a variety of safe-fail experiments that probe possible directions, in a way that are low in costs for people's careers and organizations' budgets.
- Encourage new foundations for renewal that build *and sustain* the capacity of people, economies and nature for dealing with change.
- Encourage new foundations to expand and communicate understanding of change.

Lessons that derive from exploration of these backloop studies include the expectation that dynamics of social-ecological systems will have multiple domains of attraction and that the system can flip from one to another, with large consequences for people (Berkes and Folke, 1998). The delightful simplified models of Carpenter and Brock show the consequences are real when integration is at the heart of the models (Carpenter, Brock, and Hanson, 1999). Resilience, multi-stable states, and learning about slow and spatially remote variables are revealed as a key to sustainability (Holling 2001). That is where the social-ecological memory plays a central role, as shown in several of the studies of this book. For some time prior to a domain flip, the impending collapse can be evident to some participants in the system and the system itself becomes an

accident waiting to happen. Breakdown is inevitable. After collapse, innovation and experimentation can be favoured. Participants find themselves asking how learning can be stimulated in ways that enhance sustainability. In the end, we find that we need to create excitement, identify options in the form of alternative visions of the future, and build hope.

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Introduction

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1.1 Building capacity to adapt to change: the context

A common perspective until recently was that our problem-solving abilities have been improving over the years. In the area of resource and environmental management, for example, there was a great deal of faith in our growing scientific understanding of ecosystems, our bag of increasingly sophisticated tools and technologies, and the application of market mechanisms to problems such as air pollution control and fishery management through individually allocated quotas. However, the experience over the last few decades does not support such optimism (e.g., Clark and Munn, 1986; Ludwig, Hilborn, and Walters, 1993; Gunderson, Holling, and Light, 1995). Many of our resource and environmental problems are proving resistant to solutions. A gap has developed between environmental problems and our lagging ability to solve them. This is coming at a time when the Earth has become an increasingly human-dominated system. Many of the changes in the biosphere, including the modification of landscapes, loss of biodiversity and, according to some, climate change, are driven by human activities. Furthermore, changes are occurring at an increasingly faster rate than previously experienced in human history.

There is an emerging consensus regarding the need to look for broader approaches and solutions, not only with resource and environmental issues but along a wide front of societal problems. A survey of senior American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) scientists revealed an intriguing insight. When asked about the most urgent challenges facing science and society, scientists identified many items, but a common thread was that each issue 'seemed to have radically outgrown its previously accepted conceptual framing' (Jasanoff *et al.*, 1997). For each of the issues identified, there were new theories and explanations appearing on the horizon, many calling for more creative forms of collaboration between scientists and society, involving a broader range of disciplines and skills needed for the process.

Broader public participation was also important. Scientific solutions were being undertaken with greater attention to their social context, and the interaction between science and society was increasingly seen as important (Jasanoff *et al.*, 1997). The kind of research that is needed may be 'created through processes of co-production in which scholars and stakeholders interact to define important questions, relevant evidence, and convincing forms of argument' (Kates *et al.*, 2001).

There is also an emerging consensus on the nature of the problem. Many of our resource and environmental problems are seen as *complex systems* problems (Levin, 1999a). Natural systems and social systems are complex systems in themselves; furthermore, many of our resource and environmental problems involve the additional complexity of interactions between natural and social systems (Norgaard, 1994; Berkes and Folke, 1998). Such complexity creates a huge challenge for disciplinary approaches. 'Phenomena whose causes are multiple, diverse and dispersed cannot be understood, let alone managed or controlled, through scientific activity organized on traditional disciplinary lines' (Jasanoff *et al.*, 1997). Complex systems thinking is therefore used to bridge social and biophysical sciences to understand, for example, climate, history and human action (McIntosh, Tainter, and McIntosh, 2000). It is at the basis of many of the new integrative approaches, such as sustainability science (Box 1.1) and ecological economics (Costanza *et al.*, 1993; Arrow *et al.*, 1995). It has led to the recognition that much of conventional thinking in resource and environmental management may be contributing to problems, rather than to solutions (Holling and Meffe, 1996).

In this volume, our ultimate objective is to contribute to efforts towards *sustainability*, that is, the use of environment and resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We consider sustainability as a process, rather than an end product, a dynamic process that requires adaptive capacity for societies to deal with change. Rather than assuming stability and explaining change, as often done, one needs to assume change and explain stability (van der Leeuw, 2000). For our purposes, sustainability implies maintaining the capacity of ecological systems to support social and economic systems. Sustaining this capacity requires analysis and understanding of feedbacks and, more generally, the dynamics of the interrelations between ecological systems and social systems.

Social systems that are of primary concern for this volume include those dealing with governance, as in property rights and access to resources. Also of key importance are different systems of knowledge pertinent to the dynamics

Box 1.1 Sustainability science

By structure, method, and content, sustainability science must differ fundamentally from most science as we know it. Familiar approaches to developing and testing hypotheses are inadequate because of nonlinearity, complexity, and long time lags between actions and consequences. Additional complications arise from the recognition that humans cannot stand outside the nature–society system. The common sequential analytical phases of scientific inquiry such as conceptualizing the problem, collecting data, developing theories, and applying the results will become parallel functions of social learning, which incorporate the elements of action, adaptive management, and policy as experiment. Sustainability science will therefore need to employ new methodologies that generate the semi-quantitative models of qualitative data, build upon lessons of case studies, and extract inverse approaches that work backwards from undesirable consequences to identify pathways that can avoid such outcomes. Scientists and practitioners will need to work together with the public at large to produce trustworthy knowledge and judgement that is scientifically sound and rooted in social understanding.

Source: <http://sustsci.harvard.edu/keydocs/friibergh.htm>

of environment and resource use, and world views and ethics concerning human–nature relationships. *Ecological systems* (ecosystems) refer to self-regulating communities of organisms interacting with one another and with their environment. When we wish to emphasize the integrated concept of humans–in-nature, we use the terms *social–ecological systems* and *social–ecological linkages*, consistent with our earlier work (Berkes and Folke, 1998). We hold the view that social and ecological systems are in fact linked, and that the delimitation between social and natural systems is artificial and arbitrary. The specific objectives of the volume are to investigate:

- how human societies deal with change in social–ecological systems, and
- how capacity can be built to adapt to change and, in turn, to shape change for sustainability.

Figure 1.1 sketches the scope of the inquiry. We consider change and the impact of change as universal givens. The social–ecological system is impacted by change and deals with it as a function of its capacity to adapt to change and shape it. We look for effective ways of analyzing the phenomenon

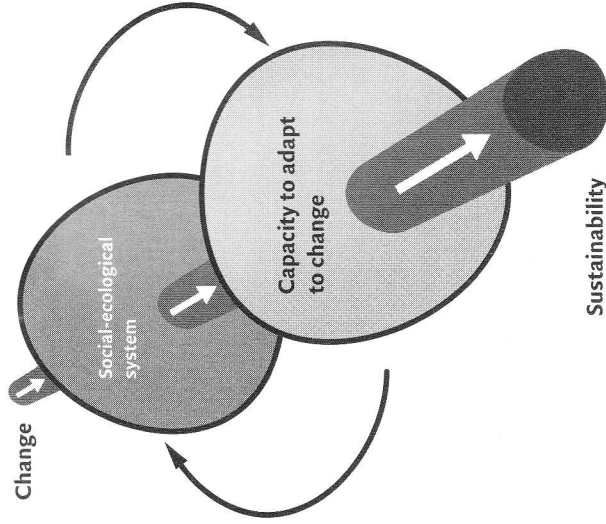


Figure 1.1 The focus on adaptive capacity for sustainability. Sustainability is viewed as a process, rather than an end-product, a dynamic process that requires adaptive capacity in resilient social–ecological systems to deal with change.

of change and how to respond to change in a manner that does not lead to loss of future options. We seek to analyze social–ecological system adaptability to meet novel challenges without compromising sustainability. The approach used in the volume is novel in that we are not focusing merely on environmental change or on social change but rather on social–ecological system change.

This chapter starts with the investigation of some of the implications of complexity in natural systems and in resource and environmental management systems. This is followed by a section that provides an overview of several integrative fields, such as common property and ecological economics that deal with integrated social–ecological systems and provide the starting point for many of the chapters in this volume. We then turn to explaining the rationale of the resilience approach. The systems we deal with are complex, but, as C.S. Holling points out, not *infinitely* complex. In seeking to integrate the two streams of thought, ecological system complexity and social system complexity, we use the idea of *resilience* as our organizing concept and scoping device. Thus, we deal with the issue of change and adaptation through the lens of resilience, which is the subject of the fourth section of this chapter.

1.2 Complex systems: ecology and resource management

A major change in the science of the last few decades has been the recognition that nature is seldom linear and predictable. Processes in ecology, economics and many other areas are dominated by nonlinear phenomena and an essential quality of uncertainty. These observations have led to the notion of *complexity*, developed through the work of many people and groups, notably the Santa Fe Institute (2002). Earlier challenges to the idea of linear causality and reductionistic science go back to general systems theory developed in the 1930s and 1940s (von Bertalanffy, 1968). General systems theory is concerned with the exploration of *wholes* and *wholeness*. It emphasizes connectedness, context and feedback, a key concept that refers to the result of any behavior that may reinforce (positive feedback) or modify (negative feedback) subsequent behavior. It argues that the understanding of the essential properties of the parts of a system comes from an understanding of not only these components but of their interrelations as well. Understanding comes from the examination of how the parts operate together, and not from the examination of the parts themselves in isolation.

With the science of complexity (Costanza *et al.*, 1993; Kauffman, 1993; Holland, 1995; Levin, 1999a), a new understanding of systems is emerging to augment general systems theory. A complex system can be distinguished from one that is simple – one that can be adequately captured using a single perspective and a standard analytical model, as in Newtonian mechanics and gas laws. By contrast, a complex system often has a number of attributes not observed in simple systems, including nonlinearity, uncertainty, emergence, scale, and self-organization.

Nonlinearity is related to inherent uncertainty. Mathematical solutions to nonlinear equations do not give simple numerical answers but instead produce a large collection of values for the variables that satisfy an equation. The solutions produce not one simple equilibrium but many equilibria, sometimes referred to as stable states or stability domains, each of which may have their own threshold effects (Scheffer *et al.*, 2001). Complex systems organize around one of several possible equilibrium states or attractors. When conditions change, the system's feedback loops tend to maintain its current state – up to a point. At a certain level of change in conditions (threshold), the system can change very rapidly and even catastrophically (called a flip). Just when such a flip may occur, and the state into which the system will change, are rarely predictable. If so, Holling (1986) pointed out, phenomena such as climate change would hardly be expected to proceed smoothly and predictably, and he drew attention to a system's resilience as a critical factor in environmental management. Resilience may be considered an emergent property of a system, one that cannot be predicted or understood

simply by examining the system's parts. Resilience absorbs change and provides the capacity to adapt to change, as defined later and as illustrated in several chapters of this volume.

Scale is important in dealing with complex systems. A complex system is one in which many subsystems can be discerned. Many complex systems are hierarchical – each subsystem is nested in a larger subsystem, and so on (Allen and Starr, 1982). For example, a small watershed may be considered an ecosystem, but it is part of a larger watershed that can also be considered an ecosystem and a larger one that encompasses all the smaller watersheds. Similarly, institutions may be considered hierarchically, as a nested set of systems from the local level, through regional and national, to the international. Phenomena at each level of the scale tend to have their own emergent properties, and different levels may be coupled through feedback relationships (Gunderson and Holling, 2002). Therefore, complex systems should be analyzed or managed simultaneously at different scales. Consider, for example, biodiversity conservation. Problems and solutions of conservation at the genetic level are considerably different from those at the species level or the landscape level. Different groups of conservationists focus on different levels; they may use different research approaches and may recommend different policies. Biodiversity can be considered at different levels of the scale. However, because there are strong feedbacks among the genetic, species, and landscape levels, there is coupling between different levels, and the system should be analyzed simultaneously across scale.

Self-organization is one of the defining properties of complex systems. The basic idea is that open systems will reorganize at critical points of instability. Holling's adaptive renewal cycle, discussed later in the section on resilience, is an illustration of reorganization that takes place within cycles of growth and renewal (Gunderson and Holling, 2002). The self-organization principle, operationalized through feedback mechanisms, applies to many biological systems, social systems and even to mixtures of simple chemicals. High-speed computers and nonlinear mathematical techniques help simulate self-organization by yielding complex results and yet strangely ordered effects. For example, for many complex systems such as genes, Kauffman (1993) argues that spontaneous self-organization is not random but tends to converge towards a relatively small number of patterns or attractors. At each point at which new organization emerges, the system may branch off into one of a number of possible states. The direction of self-organization will depend on such things as the system's history; it is path dependent and difficult to predict.

These characteristics of complex systems have a number of rather fundamental implications for resource and environmental management. In this chapter we deal with three of them: (1) the essential inadequacy of models and perspectives

based on linear thinking; (2) the recognition of the significance of qualitative analysis as a complement to quantitative approaches; and (3) the importance of using a multiplicity of perspectives in the analysis and management of complex systems.

The inadequacy of conventional resource management models and output objectives, such as the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) in fisheries, has been discussed for some time. For example, Larkin (1977) pointed out in a seminal paper that MSY assumes away such complexity as food-web relations in trying to predict single species yields. These models often do not work. However, the issue is more than the ecological shortcomings of a few management tools such as MSY. There is a more fundamental problem. The conventional wisdom in much of twentieth-century ecology is based on the idea of single equilibria. Although most ecologists no longer hold the popular idea of a 'balance of nature', many of them consider population phenomena in the framework of equilibria and consider population numbers, and ecosystem behavior in general, to be predictable, at least in theory. To be sure, very few ecologists would consider predictive models in ecology as easy to achieve. But there is a fundamental difference between the view that quantitative prediction is *difficult* and data intensive ('we need more research') and the view that nature is *not* equilibrium centered and *inherently* unpredictable. For much of ecology and resource management science, complexity is a subversive idea that challenges the basis of population and yield models.

Recognizing the importance of qualitative analysis is one consequence of the recognition of complex system phenomena for natural resource management (Box 1.1). By qualitative analysis we mean the understanding of the system's behavior to help guide management directions. Qualitative analysis follows from the nature of nonlinearity. Because there are many possible mathematical solutions to a nonlinear model and no one 'correct' numerical answer, simple quantitative output solutions are not very helpful (Capra, 1996). This does not imply that quantitative analysis is not useful. Rather, it means that there is an appropriate role for both quantitative and qualitative analyses, which often complement each other.

Some of this qualitative management thinking has been put to work. Managers may specify objectives in the form of management directions and the understanding of key processes for sustainability. For example, Lugo (1995) pointed out that trying to quantify supposedly sustainable levels of yield in tropical forests rarely leads to ecosystem sustainability. If the objective is conservation, a strategy of focusing on resilience, through an understanding of regeneration cycles and ecological *processes* such as plant succession, may be the key to tropical forest sustainability.

In the area of fisheries, some managers are beginning to experiment with the use of reference directions (e.g., increasing the number of sexually mature year-classes in the population or reducing the proportion of immature individuals in the catch) instead of the conventional target reference points (e.g., a catch of 1000 tons of a particular species). Note that using reference directions, rather than targets, still requires quantitative data, but the choice of the management direction itself is a qualitative decision. This alternative approach shifts the focus of management action from the exacting and difficult question 'where do we want to be?' to the simpler and more manageable 'how do we move from here towards the desired direction?' (Berkes *et al.*, 2001: 131).

The need to use a multiplicity of perspectives follows from complex systems thinking. Because of a multiplicity of scales, there is no one 'correct' and all-encompassing perspective on a system. One can choose to study a particular level of biodiversity conservation; but the perspective from that particular level will be different from the perspective from another. In complex systems, time flows in one direction, i.e., time's arrow is not reversible. Especially with social systems, it is difficult or impossible to understand a system without considering its history, as well as its social and political contexts. For example, each large-scale management system (e.g., Gunderson *et al.*, 1995) or each local-level common property system (e.g., Ostrom, 1990) will have its unique history and context. A complex social-ecological system cannot be captured using a single perspective. It can be best understood by the use of a multiplicity of perspectives.

These considerations provide an insight into the reasons that conventional scientific and technological approaches to resource and ecosystem management are not working well, and in some cases making problems worse. In part, this failure is related to the focus on wrong kinds of sustainability and on narrow types of scientific practice (Holling, Berkes, and Folke, 1998). In part, it is related to the ideology of a strongly positivist resource management science, with its emphasis on centralized institutions and command-and-control resource management. Such management is based on a thinking of linear models and mechanistic views of nature. It aims to reduce natural variation in an effort to make an ecosystem more productive, predictable, economically efficient, and controllable. But the reduction of the range of natural variation is the very process that may lead to a loss of resilience in a system, leaving it more susceptible to resource and environmental crises (Holling and Meffe, 1996).

Taken together, these implications of complex systems thinking suggest the need for a new kind of resource and environmental management science that takes a critical view of the notions of control and prediction. Holling (1986) called it the 'science of surprise.' An appropriate metaphor may be the message

on the sign that appears on some remote logging roads on Vancouver Island in Canada: 'Be prepared for the unexpected.'

The lesson from complex systems thinking is that management processes can be improved by making them adaptable and flexible, able to deal with uncertainty and surprise, and by building capacity to adapt to change. Holling (1978) recognized early on that complex adaptive systems required adaptive management. *Adaptive management* emphasizes learning-by-doing, and takes the view that resource management policies can be treated as 'experiments' from which managers can learn (Walters, 1986; Gunderson, 1999). Organizations and institutions can 'learn' as individuals do, and hence adaptive management is based on social and institutional learning. Adaptive management differs from the conventional practice of resource management by emphasizing the importance of *feedbacks* from the environment in shaping policy, followed by further systematic experimentation to shape subsequent policy, and so on. Thus, the process is iterative, based on feedback learning. It is co-evolutionary, involving two-way feedback between management policy and the state of the resource (Norgaard, 1994), and leading to self-organization through mutual feedback and entrainment (Colding and Folke, 1997).

1.3 Integrative approaches to social-ecological systems: an overview

Many of the principles of complex systems apply to both natural systems and social systems. Some of these principles or ideas, for example the importance of context and history in understanding a system, probably make more intuitive sense to social scientists than to natural scientists. Our effort in this volume is to seek principles and ideas which make sense to both natural scientists and social scientists and which can be mobilized towards our objective of examining how human societies deal with change in social-ecological systems, and how they can build capacity to adapt to change.

Until recent decades, the point of contact between social sciences and natural sciences was very limited in dealing with social-ecological systems. Just as mainstream ecology had tried to exclude humans from the study of ecology, many social science disciplines had ignored environment altogether and limited their scope to humans. The unity of biosphere and humanity had been sacrificed to a dichotomy of nature and culture. There were exceptions, of course, and some scholars were working to bridge the nature-culture divide (e.g., Bateson, 1979); we deal with some of them in Chapter 3. But, by and large, models of human societies in many social science disciplines did not include the natural environment. This changed in the 1970s and the 1980s with the rise of several subfields allied with the social sciences but explicitly including the environment

in the framing of the issues. Six of these integrative areas are directly relevant to the perspectives of this volume: environmental ethics, political ecology, environmental history, ecological economics, common property, and traditional ecological knowledge. We describe each briefly here because many of the chapters in this volume borrow from the approaches and terminology of these fields.

Environmental ethics arose from the need to develop a philosophy of relations between humans and their environment, because conventional ethics only applied to relations among people. A number of schools of environmental ethics have emerged, including the ecosophy of Naess (1989). Particularly relevant to this volume, a discussion has developed on the subject of worldviews, pointing out that there is a wide diversity of spiritual and ethical traditions in the world that helps offer alternatives to the current views of the place of humans in the ecosystem (Callicott, 1994). Culturally different attitudes towards the environment have implications for the management of the environment, even though there is no clear correspondence between ethical traditions and their actual performance (Berkes, 2001). Some of the literature on environmental ethics emphasized belief systems (religion in the broad sense) as encoding wise environmental management. For example, Anderson (1996: 166) argued that 'all traditional societies that have succeeded in managing resources well, over time, have done it in part through religious or ritual representation of resource management.'

Political ecology grew out of the field of political economy, but it is different from political economy that tends to reduce everything to social constructions, disregarding ecological relations. 'Political ecology expands ecological concerns to respond to the inclusion of cultural and political activity within an analysis of ecosystems that are significantly but not always entirely socially constructed' (Greenberg and Park, 1994). The analysis of political ecology often starts by focusing on political-economic divisions among the actors. These may be divisions between local and international interests, between North and South; they may involve power relations based on differences of class, ethnicity, and gender (Blaikie and Jeanrenaud, 1996). The political ecology perspective compels the analyst to consider that there exist different actors who define knowledge, ecological relations, and resources in different ways and at different geographic scales. Actors will bring different cultural perspectives and experience, and may use different definitions in pursuit of their own political agendas (Blaikie, 1985; Blaikie and Jeanrenaud, 1996). With its explicit attention to the multiplicity of perspectives and to scale issues, political ecology fits well with systems thinking.

The rich accumulation of material documenting relationships between societies and their environment (Turner *et al.*, 1990) has given rise to a discipline

identified as environmental history (Worster, 1988) or historical ecology (Balee, 1998). Investigating the root causes of environmental problems, environmental historians discussed, among others things, how ecological relations became more destructive as they became more distant, especially after the great transformation following the Industrial Revolution (Worster, 1988). They not only interpreted ancient landscapes but also analyzed the *dynamics* of these landscapes, making ecological sense of resource use practices, and their change that *resulted* in these landscapes. For example, Cronon (1983) studied the colonization of New England states, and found that the early European-Indian relationship could be characterized in terms of two competing economies. The Indian economy treated the environment as a portfolio of resources and services that supported livelihoods, whereas that of the colonists turned the environment into commodities, sequentially depleting one resource after another. Similarly, the push for valuable timber production under colonialism in India resulted in the commodification of resources serving diverse livelihood needs, and the depletion of certain species (Gadgil and Guha, 1992).

Ecological economics examines the link between ecology and economics. Taking issue with conventional economics that often downplays the role of the environment, and conventional ecology that ignores humans, ecological economics tries to bridge the two disciplines to promote an integrated view of economics within the ecosystem (Costanza, 1991). Among the defining characteristics of ecological economics are: the view of the economic system as a subset of the ecological system; a primary interest in natural capital; a greater concern with a wider range of values; and longer time horizons than those normally considered by economists. Ecological economics has helped reconceptualize systems problems such as conservation by shifting attention from the elements of the system to the structures and processes that perpetuate that system (Costanza, Norton, and Haskell, 1992). For example, biodiversity can be seen as providing ecosystem insurance, and redundancy as a mechanism to provide adaptive capacity in an ecosystem characterized by hierarchical organization, scale effects, and multiple equilibria (Barbier, Burgess, and Folke, 1994; Perrings *et al.*, 1995).

Ecological economics makes a distinction between *human-made capital*, generated through economic activity through human ingenuity and technological change, and *natural capital*, consisting of non-renewable resources extracted from ecosystems, renewable resources produced by the processes and functions of ecosystems, and ecological services sustained by the workings of ecosystems (Jansson *et al.*, 1994). To these, a third kind of capital may be added: *cultural capital* refers to the factors that provide human societies with the means and adaptations to deal with the natural environment and to actively

modify it. Ecological knowledge and institutions, important for the arguments in this volume, are considered to be a part of this cultural capital (Berkes and Folke, 1994).

The field of common property examines the linkages between resource management and social organization, analyzing how institutions and property-rights systems deal with the dilemma of the 'tragedy of the commons' (McCay and Acheson, 1987; Berkes, 1989; Bromley, 1992; Ostrom *et al.*, 1999). The emphasis is on *institutions*, defined as 'humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction . . . made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behavior, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics' (North, 1994). Institutions are the set of rules actually used or the working rules or rules-in-use (Ostrom, 1992). However, they are also socially constructed, with normative and cognitive dimensions (Jentoft, McCay, and Wilson, 1998), particularly relevant to this volume in dealing with the nature and legitimacy of different kinds of knowledge.

Institutions of key importance are those that deal with property rights and common-property resources. *Property* refers to the rights and obligations of individuals or groups to use the resource base (Bromley, 1991; Hanna, Folke, and Mäler, 1996). It is a bundle of entitlements defining owner's rights, duties, and responsibilities for the use of the resource, or a claim to a benefit or income stream (Bromley, 1992). *Common-property (common-pool) resources* are defined as a class of resources for which exclusion is difficult and joint use involves subtractability (Berkes, 1989; Feeny *et al.*, 1990).

Local, indigenous or traditional knowledge refers to ecological understanding built, not by experts, but by people who live and use the resources of a place (Warren, Slikkerveer, and Brokensha, 1995). *Local knowledge* may be used as a generic term referring to knowledge generated through observations of the local environment in any society, and may be a mix of practical and scientific knowledge (Olsson and Folke, 2001). *Indigenous knowledge (IK)* is used to mean local knowledge held by indigenous peoples, or local knowledge unique to a given culture or society (Warren *et al.*, 1995). In this volume, we use *traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)* more specifically to refer to 'a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment' (Berkes, 1999: 8). The word *traditional* signifies historical and cultural continuity, but at the same time we recognize that societies are in a dynamic process of change, constantly redefining what is considered 'traditional.'

TEK started attracting attention through the documentation of a tremendously rich body of environmental knowledge among a diversity of groups outside the mainstream Western world (Johannes, 1981; Colding and Folke, 1997; Berkes *et al.*, 1998; Berkes, Colding, and Folke, 2000; Folke and Colding, 2001). The relationship between TEK and science is controversial, but these two kinds of knowledge should not be thought of as opposites. Rather, it is more useful to emphasize the potential complementarities of the two (e.g., Berkes, 1999; Riedinger and Berkes, 2001). We deal with local/traditional knowledge for diversity and conceptual pluralism to expand the range of information and approaches for improving resource management.

Each of the six areas summarized here is a 'bridge' spanning different combinations of natural science and social science thinking. Environmental ethics, political ecology, and environmental history help emphasize that all of the examples in this volume have a cultural, historical, political, and ethical context, as seen in several of the chapters. Various chapters build on and contribute to the literature of ecological economics, common property and TEK. The search for resource management alternatives often includes the ecological economics notions of economic systems-within-ecosystems, natural capital, and intergenerational equity. The questions of the control of property rights, the nature of institutions, and their cross-scale interactions are key considerations in many of the chapters. Complexity draws attention to the fact that local and traditional knowledge and management systems should be seen as *adaptive responses* in a place-based context and a rich source of lessons for social-ecological adaptations.

1.4 Social-ecological resilience

Holling (1973) introduced the resilience concept into the ecological literature as a way to understand nonlinear dynamics, such as the processes by which ecosystems maintain themselves in the face of perturbations and change (Gunderson, 2000). As defined by the Resilience Alliance (2002), and as used in this volume, it has three defining characteristics:

- the amount of change the system can undergo and still retain the same controls on function and structure, or still be in the same state, within the same domain of attraction;
- the degree to which the system is capable of self-organization; and
- the ability to build and increase the capacity for learning and adaptation.

To illustrate the first characteristic, consider the case of insectivorous birds and insect outbreaks in the boreal forests of Canada (Holling, 1988). The

assemblage of migratory insectivorous bird populations is one of the controlling factors of forest renewal produced by budworm population cycles. The existence of these birds contributes to the resilience of the boreal forest. Mathematical simulations based on long-term studies indicate that the total bird population would have to be reduced by about 75 percent before the system might flip out of the current domain of attraction and into a different one (Holling, 1988).

As the populations of these birds are reduced because of overwintering habitat loss or other factors, the resilience of the boreal forest is also reduced. As a system loses its resilience, it can flip into a different state when subjected to even small perturbations (Levin *et al.*, 1998). Loss of resilience can be modeled or viewed as having a system moved to a new stability domain and being captured by a different attractor. Examples include the transformation of productive grasslands in subtropical Africa into thorny shrublands as a consequence of poor cattle management practices (Perrings and Walker, 1995). It is important to note that the actual point of change cannot easily be predicted. There are threshold effects; the changes are relatively sudden – not necessarily gradual or smooth. Recovery can be costly or nearly impossible (Mäler, 2000), and such flips can be irreversible (Levin, 1999a).

Thus, resilience is concerned with the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed or buffered without the system undergoing fundamental changes in its functional characteristics. The issue of disturbance is important. Not only are there natural disturbances, such as forest fires and insect outbreaks, but many human activities, such as resource use and pollution, which also create disturbances. Ecosystem responses to resource use, and the reciprocal response of people to changes in ecosystems, constitute coupled, dynamic systems that exhibit adaptive behavior (Gunderson *et al.*, 1995). This recognition brings into focus the second and third defining characteristics of resilience, those regarding self-organization and learning. It underscores the importance of considering linked social–ecological systems, rather than ecosystems or social systems in isolation (Berkes and Folke, 1998).

Resilience is an important element of how societies adapt to externally imposed change, such as global environmental change. The adaptive capacity of all levels of society is constrained by the resilience of their institutions and the natural systems on which they depend. The greater their resilience, the greater is their ability to absorb shocks and perturbations and adapt to change. Conversely, the less resilient the system, the greater is the vulnerability of institutions and societies to cope and adapt to change (Adger, 2000). Social–ecological resilience is determined in part by the livelihood security of an individual or group. Such security involves, according to Sen (1999), the questions of entitlements and access to resources, the distribution of which is a key element of environmental justice.

The concept of resilience is a promising tool for analyzing adaptive change towards sustainability because it provides a way for analyzing how to maintain stability in the face of change. A resilient social–ecological system, which can buffer a great deal of change or disturbance, is synonymous with ecological, economic, and social sustainability. One with low resilience has limited sustainability; it may not survive for a long time without flipping into another domain of attraction. Here, it should be noted, resilience is not being defined as returning to an equilibrium. This is because we are using a view of ecosystems in which there is no one equilibrium but rather, as a consequence of complexity, multiple states or domains of attraction and multiple equilibria. Thus, ecological stability as a concept is not very useful, and resilience cannot be defined as bouncing back to equilibrium – there is no equilibrium to bounce back to.

In operationalizing this view of resilience, managing for sustainability in socio-economic systems means not pushing the system to its limits but maintaining diversity and variability, leaving some slack and flexibility, and not trying to optimize some parts of the system but maintaining redundancy. It also means learning how to maintain and enhance adaptability, and understanding when and where it is possible to intervene in management. These ‘soft’ management approaches are necessary because ‘hard’ management approaches involving quantitative targets for resource production etc. often do not work. Linear models on which ‘hard’ management depends tend to be incomplete or even misleading in the management of the ecosystems of the world. Equilibrium-based predictive models do not perform well with complex social–ecological systems.

To illustrate policy implications of complexity, Wilson (2000) pointed out with respect to ocean fisheries that the current linear models of resource production (as in single-species management) have to be replaced with a view of ocean ecosystems as multiscale and hierarchical, and the current predominantly top-down institutions with a cross-scale institutional design that matches the hierarchical scale of marine ecosystems. ‘These suggested changes in scientific perspective and institutional design will not necessarily solve scientific uncertainties. But they will replace those uncertainties in an institutional context which encourages learning and stewardship’ (Wilson, 2000).

Gunderson and Holling (2002) embarked on the volume *Panarchy* with the idea that sustainable futures were inherently unpredictable, rejecting the idea that sustainability can be planned in a rational fashion. In the absence of a linear, mechanical universe that would have permitted simple, rational measures, they argued that the best bet for sustainability involves what we have referred to as the second and third characteristics of resilience – capability for self-organization and capacity for learning and adaptation. Gunderson and Holling provide a synthesis of existing theory for sustainability, complexity, and resilience, and

attempt to develop novel extensions of that integration, identifying gaps in knowledge. Several of their conclusions are of significance for the present volume. They find that key unknowns lie in the development of theories to address self-organization at various scales, and to address adaptive change in social-ecological systems.

Another cluster of challenges is in the area of institutions: how do we design institutions and incentive structures that sustain and enhance sources of self-organization and resilience? How can we formulate patterns of emergence of social control mechanisms dealing with environmental problems? How can we create policies to increase the speed of emergence and increase the efficiency of learning? A third cluster of gaps in knowledge concerns the dynamics of disturbance, crisis, response to change, and renewal: how do we facilitate constructive change? Protect and preserve accumulated experience? Build and sustain the capacity of people, economies, and nature for dealing with change?

Gunderson and Holling note that the last decade of the twentieth century saw a cascade of regional and global transformations, biophysical, economic, and political. Such 'gales of change,' they observe, signal periods when the *backloop* of the adaptive renewal cycle dominates, the part of the cycle dealing with disturbance, crisis, response to change, and renewal. To understand the significance of the backloop, we need to review Holling's concept of adaptive renewal cycle.

1.5 Adaptive renewal cycle: emphasis on the backloop

Chapters of the present volume deal with cyclic change as an essential characteristic of all social and ecological systems. Our starting point is the pervasive idea that social systems and ecological systems are dynamic. More specifically, Holling (1986) has argued that ecosystems go through regular cycles of organization, collapse, and renewal. For example, a forest goes through the stages of growth and maturity, followed by a disturbance, such as fire, which releases the nutrients on the way to a new cycle of growth. A business cycle may consist of a company starting up and growing. The company will eventually decline and go out of business, while its parts and the accumulated experience may combine with other sources and reorganize into a new business. Empires start as small states, growing large and eventually collapsing, but giving rise to new nation states and leaving behind organizational legacies in the process. Cyclic change, including birth-death cycles and seasonal cycles, is so ubiquitous in the world that the importance of cycles has been embedded in many traditions of ancient wisdom, including Hinduism and American Indian religions. However, the less wise may see but not recognize the cycle. What may appear as a linear change

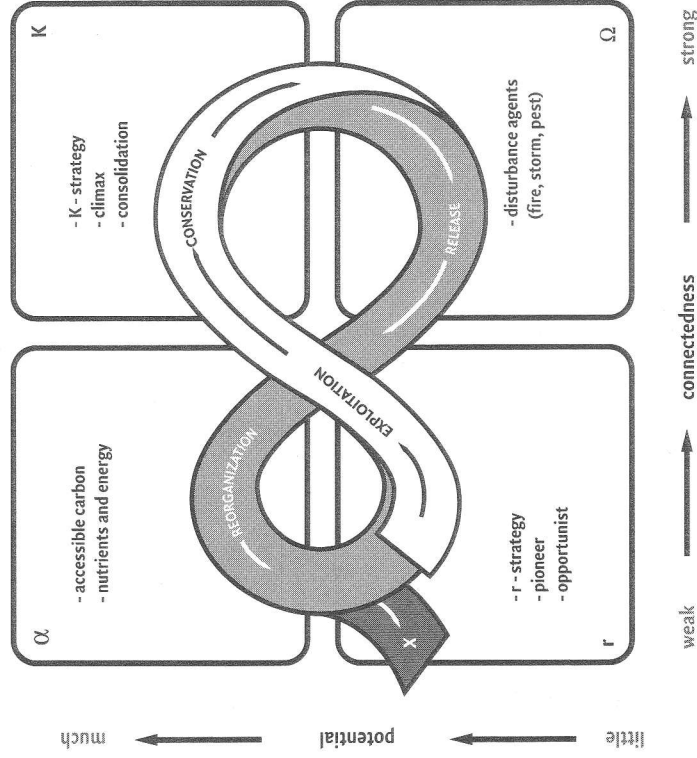


Figure 1.2 The adaptive renewal cycle. A heuristic model of the four system stages and the flow of events among them. The cycle reflects changes in two properties: (1) y-axis: the potential that is inherent in the accumulated resources and structures; (2) x-axis: the degree of connectedness among controlling variables. The exit (marked with an X) from the cycle indicated at the left of the figure suggests, in a stylized way, the stage where the potential can leak away and where a shift is most likely into a less productive and organized system. The shaded part of the cycle is termed the 'backloop' (Holling, 1986, 2001) and concerns the release and reorganization phases.

(e.g., growth) at one temporal scale may in fact be part of a cycle when viewed from a higher-order temporal scale.

Holling's *adaptive renewal cycle* is an attempt to capture some of the commonalities in various kinds of cyclic change (Fig. 1.2). The heuristic model probably does not capture the unique characteristics of different kinds of cycles and the possibilities of divergent responses. But it does provide the insight, for example, that forest succession should be seen, not as a unidirectional process (with climax as endpoint), but as one phase of a cycle in which a forest grows, dies, and is renewed. The cycle in Figure 1.2 consists of four phases: *exploitation*, *conservation*, *release*, and *reorganization*.

In a resilient forest ecosystem, these four stages repeat themselves again and again. The first two phases, *exploitation* (the establishment of pioneering

species) and conservation (the consolidation of nutrients and biomass), lead to a climax, in the terminology of classical ecology. But this climax system *invites* environmental disturbances such as fire, insect pest outbreak or disease, and is more susceptible to these disturbances than non-climax forests. When surprise occurs, the accumulated capital is suddenly released, producing other kinds of opportunity, termed creative destruction. Release, which is a very rapid stage, is followed by reorganization in which, for example, nutrients released from the trees by fire will be fixed in other parts of the ecosystem as the renewal of the forest starts again. It is in the reorganization phase that novelty and innovation may occur (Holling, 1986; Holling *et al.*, 1995).

As a complex system, the forest ecosystem is hierarchically scaled. The term *panarchy* is used to capture the dynamics of adaptive cycles that are nested within one another across space and time scales, as shown in Figure 1.3

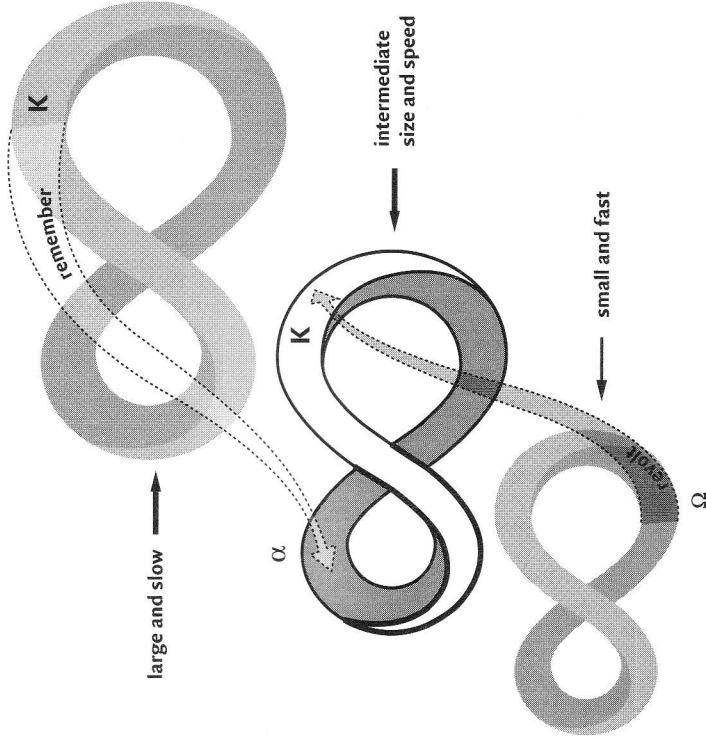


Figure 1.3 Adaptive renewal cycles nested across scales: panarchy. The 'revolt' connection between scales can cause a critical change in one cycle to cascade up to a stage in a larger and slower one. The 'remember' connection facilitates renewal and reorganization by drawing on the memory that has been accumulated and stored in a larger, slower cycle. The 'revolt' and 'remember' connections are exemplified in several of the chapters of the volume and discussed in Chapter 14 in relation to crisis and social-ecological memory. Adapted from Gunderson and Holling (2002).

(Gunderson and Holling, 2002; Holling, 2001). For example, the smallest and the fastest of the three nested 'reclining figure eights' may refer to a tree crown, the intermediate one to a forest patch, and the largest and the slowest to a forest stand. Each level may go through its own cycle of growth, maturation, destruction, and renewal. For institutions, those three speeds might consist of operational rules, collective choice rules, and constitutional rules (Ostrom, 1990). For knowledge systems, the corresponding three scales might be local knowledge, management institutions, and worldview (Folke, Berkes, and Colding, 1998a).

There are many possible connections between phases at one level and phases at another level. The two connections in Figure 1.3 labeled 'revolt' and 'remember' seem to be particularly significant in the context of building resilience. An ecological example of revolt is a small ground fire that spreads to the crown of a tree, then to a patch in the forest, and then to a whole stand of trees. Each step in that cascade of events moves the transformation to a larger and slower level. A societal example may be the transformation of regional organizations by a local activist group.

'Remember' is a cross-scale connection important in times of change, renewal, and reorganization. For example, following a fire in a forested ecosystem, the reorganization phase draws upon the seed bank, physical structures, and surviving species that had accumulated during the previous cycle of growth of the forest, plus those from the outside. Thus, renewal and reorganization are framed by the memory of the system. Each level operates at its own pace, protected by slower, larger levels but invigorated by faster, smaller cycles. The panarchy is therefore both creative and conservative (Holling, 2001) through the dynamic balance between change and memory, and between disturbance and diversity. All living systems, ecological as well as social, exhibit properties of the adaptive cycle, and are nested across scales (Gunderson and Holling, 2002). Several of the chapters provide examples, and the point will be developed further in the synthesis chapter.

Many theories on the management of natural resources and ecosystems have focused on the exploitation and conservation phases of the renewal cycle in order to make management more efficient. This emphasis can be seen in resource management, geared for economic production, that commonly seeks to reduce natural variation in target resources because fluctuations impose problems for the industry that depend on those resources (Holling and Meffe, 1996). Controlling variation, as in the form of natural disturbances, is key in many conventional management systems. This control can be achieved in a number of ways, for example by increased financial investments in harvesting technologies and through energy inputs, such as insecticides, pesticides, and irrigation,

as in conventional agriculture. The system is assumed to be stable as long as change can be controlled.

Such measures seek to maintain the system in a configuration of 'optimality,' in the conservation domain characterized by high levels of stored capital. In the forest case, for example, a great deal of planning goes into shortening the growth and succession stages so that the forest reaches the conservation phase, with a high standing crop or biomass of trees. Using a command-and-control approach, managers then try to keep the forest in that state of optimality. Such management may be effective in the short term, but over time, it may reduce resilience in management systems and in the ecosystem itself by making them more vulnerable to disturbances and surprises that cannot be anticipated in advance (Baskerville, 1995; Holling and Meffe, 1996).

Compared to this single-minded interest in the exploitation and conservation phases of the renewal cycle, conventional resource management has largely ignored the release and reorganization phases (Fig. 1.2). Yet, these two *backloop* phases are just as important as the other two (exploitation and conservation phases) in the overall cycle (Folke *et al.*, 1998a). Furthermore, they are of great interest in their own right for a number of reasons.

Crises have a constructive role to play in resource management by triggering the opportunity for renewal, in systems capable of learning and adapting (Gunderson *et al.*, 1995). In economics, Schumpeter (1950) coined the term *creative destruction* to describe the window of opportunity for novelty and creation that was generated by the failures of existing industrial plants with their old technologies. *Novelty*, or the ability to innovate, is an essential element of adaptability and hence of resilience. Of fundamental importance for self-organization is *memory* – memory that allows a system the ability to reorganize after a disturbance. *Memory* is the accumulated experience and history of the system, and it provides the sources for self-organization and resilience. It has both ecological and social components.

Ecological memory is the composition and distribution of organisms and their interactions in space and time, and includes the life-history experience with environmental fluctuations (Nyström and Folke, 2001). Ecological memory includes the species and patterns that persist in a particular area after a disturbance event, together with support areas and the links that connect the disturbed area to the sources of species assemblages that allow reorganization of the system. We return to this concept in more detail in the final chapter.

Social memory refers to the long-term communal understanding of the dynamics of environmental change and the transmission of the pertinent experience, as used, for example, in the context of climate change (McIntosh, 2000: 24). It captures the experience of change and successful adaptations,

Social memory is the arena in which captured experience with change and successful adaptations, embedded in a deeper level of values, is actualized through community debate and decision-making processes into appropriate strategies for dealing with ongoing change (McIntosh, 2000). Memory is an important component of resilience and reductions in social-ecological memory increase the probability for shifts in stability domains (indicated by X on the left side of Fig. 1.2).

There is evidence that some social-ecological systems build resilience through the experience of disturbance, provided that there is memory in the system in the form of both ecological and social sources for reorganization (Berkes and Folke, 2002). This suggests that disturbances may be important for a social-ecological system to 'exercise' its problem-solving skills, and to innovate and adapt. We return to the concepts of social and ecological memory in the concluding chapter to develop conceptual models for integrated social-ecological memory and its role in self-organization.

1.6 The approach and content of the book

Chapters of the present volume emphasize the need to focus on the release and reorganization phases. The change processes captured in these two phases are significant in understanding the dynamics of building adaptive capacity towards sustainability and the well-being of society. Case studies basically deal with disturbance, crisis, and response to change, and their dynamics. The book addresses the resilience of linked social and ecological systems undergoing change, arguing that management systems that fail to address the release and reorganization phases may lose adaptive capacity and become ecologically and economically brittle. The term *navigating* in the title of the book is meant to capture the dynamic process of building adaptive capacity towards sustainability.

We seek to contribute to the search for new approaches, with visions of smaller-scale, more environmentally sound and more democratic and nested resource management systems that are self-organizing, adaptive, and resilient. Our challenge is that the management of such systems is 'made especially difficult by the fact that the putative controllers (humans) are essential parts of the system and, hence, essential parts of the problem,' as Levin (1999b) put it. *Linking Social and Ecological Systems* included a rich set of cases of alternative approaches, and suggested that many of these systems were based on local ecological knowledge and local institutions of the resource users themselves (Folke *et al.*, 1998a). Some of the cases were characterized by decentralized, pluralistic approaches, as had been noted in previous studies of common

property institutions; some were based on combinations of local and scientific knowledge; and some on historically accumulated and culturally transmitted knowledge.

The major objective of the *Linking* project was to create a transdisciplinary framework through which we could evaluate management practices based on local ecological knowledge and understanding, and the social mechanisms behind them. Having addressed that objective, we turn in this volume to understanding the *dynamics* of ecosystem–institution linkages, with the more explicit objective of examining ways of *building resilience* to enhance the capacity to deal with change and surprise. Resilience increases the likelihood of avoiding shifts to undesirable stability domains, and provides flexibility and opportunity. Avoiding undesirable stability domains will be a major issue in an increasingly human-dominated world (Scheffer *et al.*, 2001; Jackson *et al.*, 2001).

The challenge is to analyze critical linkages in social–ecological systems, and to generate insights into how to interpret, respond to, and manage feedbacks from complex systems (Folke, Berkes, and Colding, 1998a). Also, we need to find ways to match the dynamics of ecosystems and the dynamics of social systems across scales towards social–ecological resilience (Folke *et al.*, 1998b).

Figure 1.4 defines the area of interest of the volume. On the left-hand side is the natural system, which may consist of nested ecosystems (e.g., a regional ecosystem containing the drainage basin of a river, which in turn consists of a number of constituent watershed ecosystems). On the right-hand side is a set of management practices in use. These practices are embedded in institutions, and the institutions themselves may be a nested set. The linkage between the ecosystem and management practice is provided by ecological knowledge and understanding.

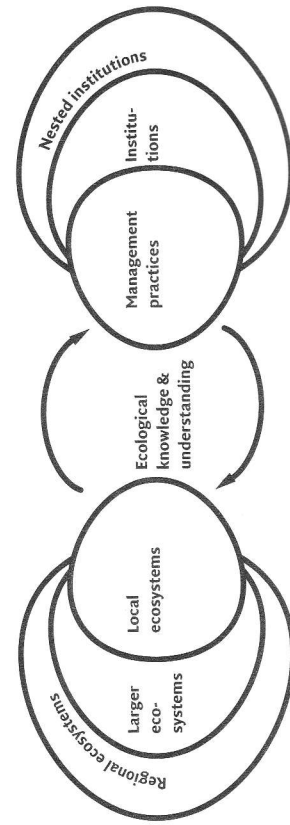


Figure 1.4 A conceptual framework for the analysis of linked social–ecological systems. The focus of the volume is on the dynamics of links among the ecosystem, knowledge (as reflected in management practice), and institutions and how to navigate these dynamics for resilience and adaptive capacity.

As sketched in Figure 1.4, the main focus of the volume is the dynamics of links between the ecosystem, knowledge as reflected in management practice, and institutions. The social–ecological system in Figure 1.4 is an open system. There are a number of influences that impinge on it, including factors such as population growth and urbanization, technology change, communication, effects of markets, international trade and globalization pressures, but the primary focus of the volume is ecosystem–knowledge–institution linkages.

The objectives of the volume (to investigate how human societies deal with change in social–ecological systems, and how capacity can be built to adapt to change and, in turn, to shape change for sustainability) are addressed through the investigation of these interrelationships of ecosystems and social systems. Dynamics of the system are addressed by focusing on four interrelated elements of change and resilience: (1) *disturbance*, which is an essential force in social and ecological change; (2) *diversity*, both social and ecological, which provides the sources for adaptive responses; (3) *ecological knowledge*, which informs institutions and management practice; and (4) *self-organization*, which uses the memory of the system for the renewal process.

Resource and environmental management that suppresses disturbance and diversity will be unsustainable (Gunderson *et al.*, 1995; Gunderson and Holling, 2002). Both disturbance and diversity are essential for building capacity to respond to change. As explored in the chapters of this volume, social–ecological resilience appears to be related to living with disturbance, nurturing diversity, combining sources of knowledge, and creating opportunity for self-organization. The interrelationships among these four elements of change are a recurrent theme in the volume, to which we return in the synthesis chapter.

The book has 13 chapters following this introduction chapter. Part I includes three chapters by Gunderson, Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, and Low *et al.*, which cover the concepts and theory behind the book. Gunderson provides a background emerging from explorations of the resilience idea, and discusses making sense of crisis and surprise, that is, when social systems and natural systems behave in unforeseen ways. He suggests ways of ‘surfing’ such social–ecological crises, and explores some of the strategies to manage for resilience. Davidson-Hunt and Berkes situate the notion of resilience in the literature that investigates the interface between social systems and natural systems. Evaluating a range of pertinent theories, they analyze the impact and significance of resilience thinking. The chapter by Low and colleagues deals with functional diversity in natural systems and institutional diversity. In linking diversity, resilience, and redundancy, they draw attention to the phenomenon of redundancy in complex and dynamic social–ecological systems, and its role during the phase of crisis

and change, and note the similarities that may be observed in several kinds of resource systems.

Case studies are at the heart of the volume because we seek examples situated in particular places where practice informs theory, and grounded in particular cultural traditions. Part II includes case-study chapters by Carlsson, and Tengö and Hammer, as well as a synthesis of three cases by Colding *et al.* The chapters deal with a diversity of resource types and a diversity of social-ecological practices for managing ecosystem dynamics, illustrating the use of the resilience idea to study how human societies deal with change and build adaptive capacity. In each of the three cases, the emphasis is on disturbance and the ability of a social-ecological system to deal with crises, reorganize itself, and redevelop. To accomplish this, Carlsson investigates changes over a decade-to-century time scale in a case involving a Swedish forest region, demonstrating that diverse and well-organized property rights systems with local monitoring and mechanisms for risk spreading are parts of a strategy for social-ecological resilience. The chapter on agro-pastoralist communities in Northern Tanzania by Tengö and Hammer reveals a bundle of management practices and institutional arrangements for resilience building, and seeks to generate principles for adaptive strategies to deal with change. Colding *et al.* focus on major disturbances like cyclones, floods, and droughts, and show how three distinct groups (from Polynesia, Bangladesh, and Africa) have developed ecological knowledge and adapted to living with disturbance through a bundle of management practices stored in the social memory.

Part III also consists of case studies, with chapters focusing on aspects of knowledge. The chapter by Gadgil *et al.* uses cases from India, Sweden, and northern Canada to analyze the diverse ways in which the knowledge of local resource users can complement scientific knowledge to manage complex system dynamics. The chapter shows that knowledge needs to be embedded in institutions and social organization in an ongoing learning process to be effective. Dynamics of the learning process are also addressed in the chapter by Blann and colleagues. Dealing with adaptive management, Blann *et al.* employ a set of cases from Minnesota to show how government agencies and local groups interact in feedback learning to solve resource management problems in creative ways. Kendrick's chapter is about social and institutional learning and focuses on caribou co-management examples from northern Canada involving aboriginal groups. She explores the evolution of conceptual diversity in caribou resource management as a feedback process of social learning, and the building of trust and respect in a cross-cultural setting.

Part IV consists of chapters with cross-cutting themes that address the dynamics of nested institutions in relation to resource management in complex systems. Seixas and Berkes analyze a Brazilian coastal lagoon fishery that shows

several collapse-and-recovery cycles over a 30-year period, and a variety of measures to deal with one problem after another. Their case study demonstrates how resource crisis triggers institutional renewal for ecosystem management at different organization levels and time scales. The case study of Alcorn *et al.* deals with an indigenous peoples' social movement in Indonesia. The movement creates a collective identity for the Dayak people by helping communities build solidarity to face loggers, map their territories, and renew traditional *adat* laws. The chapter reflects on the institutional response of moving from a lower (i.e., local) to a higher (national and international) level of organization in the face of external drivers. Trosper's case study on policy transformations provides insights into the social and political dynamics of the debate between competing interests and competing objectives in the management of national forests of the USA. He illustrates how different response strategies can either erode or enhance social-ecological resilience. He also shows the significance of developing approaches for sustainable ecosystem management to be available when space opens up for reorganization.

The cases and examples are chosen from a diversity of geographic areas, cultures, and resource types to help provide a robust analysis of resilience, change, and adaptive capacity. The chapters are designed to explore different but overlapping aspects of the questions of how human societies deal with change in social-ecological systems, and how resilience, or the capacity to adapt to and shape change, may be nurtured and enhanced. The concluding chapter by the editors presents a synthesis of new insights into the dynamics of linked social-ecological systems for resource and ecosystem management drawing on the case studies. The authors of the volume include both academics and practitioners who come from a diversity of backgrounds, and the authorship represents several social science and natural science disciplines.

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