



Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice

By Amy R. Poteete, Marco A. Janssen, Elinor Ostrom

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Advances in the social sciences have emerged through a variety of research methods: field-based research, laboratory and field experiments, and agent-based models. However, which research method or approach is best suited to a particular inquiry is frequently debated and discussed. *Working Together* examines how different methods have promoted various theoretical developments related to collective action and the commons, and demonstrates the importance of cross-fertilization involving multimethod research across traditional boundaries. The authors look at why cross-fertilization is difficult to achieve, and they show ways to overcome these challenges through collaboration.

The authors provide numerous examples of collaborative, multimethod research related to collective action and the commons. They examine the pros and cons of case studies, meta-analyses, large-N field research, experiments and modeling, and empirically grounded agent-based models, and they consider how these methods contribute to research on collective action for the management of natural resources. Using their findings, the authors outline a revised theory of collective action that includes three elements: individual decision making, microsituational conditions, and features of the broader social-ecological context.

Acknowledging the academic incentives that influence and constrain how research is conducted, *Working Together* reworks the theory of collective action and offers practical solutions for researchers and students across a spectrum of disciplines.

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Review

"The cutting edge knowledge on collective action introduced in this book is particularly challenging. . . . [T]his book is something that social simulation practitioners should definitely read."--**Olivier Barreteau, *Journal of Artificial Societies Social Simulation***

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"The research of Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues on the emergence of well-functioning collective rules for exploitation of renewable natural resources has overturned conventional wisdom and led to new insights of the greatest importance for both policy and the understanding of fundamental economic and ecological processes. This book does more than survey and integrate the work in this field. It also explores the various methodologies used by different scholars, case studies, comparative analyses, and large-scale statistical research, showing the values and limitations of each and the need for multiple approaches. It is realistic enough to consider the effects of different approaches on the careers of scholars and the likely biases. This is a landmark work which crosses boundaries in the social sciences."--**Kenneth J. Arrow, Nobel Prize-winning economist**

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About the Author

Amy R. Poteete is assistant professor of political science at Concordia University in Montreal. Marco A. Janssen is assistant professor in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. Elinor Ostrom is professor at Indiana University, Bloomington, and Arizona State University, Tempe, and the cowinner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences.

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