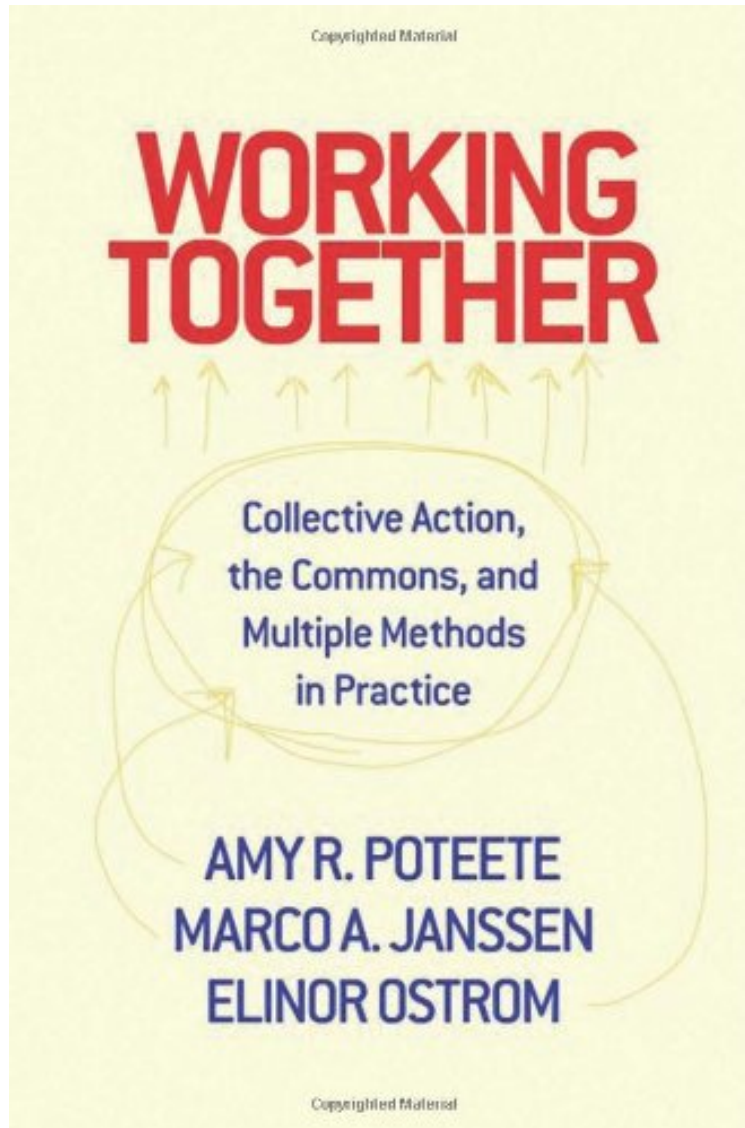


# Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice

Amy R. Poteete, Marco A. Janssen, Elinor Ostrom  
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**Amy R. Poteete, Marco A. Janssen, Elinor Ostrom : Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice:

31 of 31 people found the following review helpful. An inspiration for Transdisciplinary ResearchersBy Herbert GintisThis book, which is based on the several decades of research by Nobel award winning political scientist Elinor

Ostrom and her talented colleagues, vigorously asserts two messages with equal fervor. The first is that "it is possible for individuals to act collectively to manage shared natural resources on a sustainable basis." (215) The second message is that the existing structure of academic disciplines in the system of higher learning deeply handicaps researchers from attaining true insights of this type. The possibility of people managing their own common pool resources through democratic and egalitarian participation was determined through research "based on field studies, laboratory and field experiments, game theory, and agent-based models," and no discipline recognizes the legitimacy of models that span such a broad range of statistical, qualitative thick description, formal analytical and computer simulation methods. This book shows dramatically how seriously the feudal structure of the behavioral scientific disciplines is harming our ability to advance useful knowledge in the area of social and economic policy. The well-known story of the seven wise men each exploring a different part of the elephant and coming up with seven different, equally absurd, "theories" of the creature is a fairly literal depiction of what happens when economists, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists address the issue of the regulations of the commons, or virtually any other complex social problem. Each has important insights that are ignored or negated by the others. In the words of Poteete, Janssen, and Ostrom, "Unfortunately, there are still considerable 'battles' among scholars who rely on different methods or assumptions. Some scholars engaged in in-depth descriptions of cases challenge the usefulness of efforts to seek general patterns, while some who do large-N observational research do not recognize the value of case studies or experiments in untangling causal process. Likewise, scholars from different disciplines or theoretical perspectives often hold different assumptions about the world works, or disagree about priorities, both in research and in policy." (266) Not only researchers, but funding agencies such as NSF and NIH should be encouraged by the stunning results reported in this volume to redouble their efforts to create a truly unified and transdisciplinary ensemble of behavioral science disciplines.

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.

"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* From the Back Cover "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 "This remarkable book ties multiple complex themes into a balanced whole. Well-argued, it emphasizes the science in social science and illustrates that carefully designed research questions, tested and extended through the use of multiple methods, lead to the culmination of knowledge."--Edella Schlager, University of Arizona "This excellent book is superior to other works, and the most effective I have read. It provides a learned guide for integrating various tools in developing rigorous research designs. The book's accessibility and sheer breadth allow readers to think of applications for their own research."--Jim Granato, University of Houston 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.