Marine Policy 47 (2014) 153–161

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Marine Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/marpol

Exploring the phronetic dimension of stakeholders' knowledge in EU fisheries governance

Sebastian Linke [a,*], Svein Jentoft [b]

[a] Department of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
[b] Norwegian College of Fishery Science, University of Tromsø, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 5 September 2013
Received in revised form
22 October 2013
Accepted 23 October 2013
Available online 15 November 2013

Keywords:
Phronesis
Fisheries governance
Stakeholder participation
Common Fisheries Policy
Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council

ABSTRACT

Fisheries management is said to be in a perpetual state of crisis, both globally and in Europe. The causes and possible remedies of these problems often create political controversy. Is the solution more and better science or more and better politics? Does one need to improve the former, the latter or both? Or is something else missing? This paper investigates these questions by drawing on social theory and theories of knowledge. The issue of science versus politics and the role of different knowledge perspectives from stakeholders in decision-making are discussed with reference to the *Regional Advisory Councils* within EU fisheries, in particular, the council for the Baltic Sea. It is argued that a lost 'value-rationality' and the aspects of phronetic knowledge and research need to be included in the highly instrumental and science-based EU fisheries policy system to establish environmental and social sustainability in the sector.

The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom (Isaac Asimov).

1. Introduction

Discussions about sustainable fisheries governance are increasingly related to problems regarding knowledge, politics and social justice in addition to implementing and enforcing a (natural) science-based policy and decision-making system. Worldwide and particularly in the European Union, fisheries governance is suffering from a narrow focus on the techno-scientific aspects of managing fisheries, e.g., fishing quotas, technical measures, closed or restricted areas and seasons. This governance model rests on the modern idea that scientific knowledge, predictions and advice can easily be applied to political decisions and administrative implementations and that this will ultimately result in sustainable fishing practices. However, this "ideal causal chain" model of coordinated events in fisheries governance [1] has failed in practice to establish sustainable fisheries systems. This paper illustrates how this failure lies, at least partially, in an insufficient idea of how fisheries systems should be governed. It shows that the social aspects and knowledge dimensions of fisheries are inadequately theorised and represented.

This paper aims to contribute to an emerging area of research that emphasises the social dimensions of knowledge and stakeholder contributions in modern fisheries governance. The overall objective is to bring together theories from social and political thought from within the social sciences with current problems and challenges in EU fisheries governance. More specifically, this paper examines if and how the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* (meaning 'prudence', 'practical experience' or 'wisdom') can be applied in understanding the relevance and contribution of stakeholders and their experience-based knowledge[1] in fisheries governance. This paper also makes a case for integrating the social sciences more thoroughly in fisheries governance; under the current system, this field of study is largely under-represented and ignored, especially compared to the natural sciences and their contribution of 'epistemic' knowledge, to use the other label introduced by Aristotle. A recent source of inspiration for this study is Flyvbjerg's work on phronetic social science and his views on what is required to make social science more relevant [2,3]. This paper is also a follow-up of an article published by Jentoft [4] on the relevance of Flyvbjerg's arguments for fisheries governance.

The first part of this paper analyses classic theories about knowledge distinctions and their attendant rationalities for current discussions about the value and input of the social sciences to

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +46 31 7864754.
E-mail addresses: sebastian.linke@gu.se (S. Linke), svein.jentoft@uit.no (S. Jentoft).

0308-597X/$ - see front matter © 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2013.10.010

[1] As used here, the term "knowledge" should not be mistaken with the factual categories of non-scientific knowledge often referred to in discussions about 'local ecological knowledge', 'traditional ecological knowledge' or 'fishers knowledge' and the analytical approaches for integrating it into science-based management (cf. [43–45]).

governance problems observed in fisheries management. Second, these theoretical explorations are applied to a case study discussing how stakeholders' knowledge perspectives must be made relevant for an appropriate integration into the governance context of EU fisheries. As an illustration, this paper concentrates on the Baltic Sea *Regional Advisory Council* (BS RAC) and the process surrounding the development of a new management plan for salmon. Our perspective also has relevance beyond fisheries, given the move towards more interactive forms of governance emphasising stakeholder engagement, which is now occurring in many sectors of society, as a result of making policy decisions more participatory and democratic and thus more socially legitimate and robust.

2. Theoretical background

Fisheries scientists often declare that political decisions should simply implement consensual scientific recommendations, e.g., reducing fishing effort, and the problems of fisheries would be solved – the rest takes care of itself. Politics in this view just serves to complicate issues and compromise on environmental protection measures (e.g., [5] quoted in [4]). Similarly, in environmental discourse, the argument is made that a top-down, command-and-control mechanism is needed to be effective. Democracy just slows down decision-making and, hence, leads to unsustainable compromises. Given the urgency of most environmental problems, an authoritarian approach seems more adequate than one that allows grass-roots opinions and participation to play a role.

In essence, this is an old debate dating back at least to the controversy between John Dewey and Walter Lippman on public involvement in policy decision-making [6]. In the context of global warming, in Science and Technology Studies (STS) as well as in discussions about fisheries governance, this appears to be a recent debate. The issue, however, remains pertinent: should politics be restricted to allow the 'ideal causal chain' of scientific advice to work without disturbance, or on the contrary, should science temporarily be abandoned in certain contexts? The latter case has been argued by Sarewitz, for example, who observes that "science makes environmental controversies worse" [7] when inappropriately addressed. He argues that the "value bases of disputes underlying environmental controversies must be fully articulated and adjudicated through political means before science can play an effective role in resolving environmental problems" [7, p. 396].[2]

The crucial question addressed below is what is needed to improve the basic policy system of fisheries governance in Europe and elsewhere, as these issues are experienced all over the world. How and in what way can politics and science contribute to more socially robust and sustainable fisheries governance? And what type of science is one then referring to? For this task, a review of some classic theories from the social sciences seems warranted.

2.1. Instrumental- versus value-rationality

As Flyvbjerg [2, p. 53] notes in his now seminal book *Making Social Science Matter* and in the follow-up *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis* [3], writers as early as Aristotle observed the most important task of social and political studies in contributing to the development of the "value-rationality" (a term first coined by Weber [8]) of societies in contrast to scientific and technological rationality, which Weber calls "instrumental rationality".[3] According to Weber, the former type of rationality stresses the inherent values of social phenomena not because they serve a particular purpose but because their very existence is cherished – they have value in themselves and do not need approval because of their contribution to a particular end. Social justice is hence a quality of a good society regardless of the consequences and contributions it provides, such as for the sustenance of a predefined social order. Social justice is also a concern in fisheries governance [9]. It is an ethical value, something society holds to be right in and of itself and not just because it makes fisheries management more effective, for example, in terms of increased compliance [10]. Weber argued that throughout recent centuries, value-rationality has incrementally given way to instrumental rationality, which has become the dominant vision.

The important distinction between the two different types of rationalities was later taken up and further developed by social scholars, such as Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas – the latter introducing the concept of "communicative rationality" to this issue ([11] see also [12]). As Flyvbjerg describes, Aristotle had no doubt that value-rationality was more important for society and that it should influence its counterpart, instrumental rationality, and not vice versa [2]. For Aristotle, value-rationality was a matter of a governance principle. It comes first and serves as a yardstick for instrumental action and is, therefore, a prerequisite to the means-ends of governance. Value-rationality represents the criteria with which to determine what goals are worth pursuing. This view has largely been lost since Aristotle and especially since European Enlightenment and modernity, and the instrumental rationality position has taken over. Weber identified this shift as the "disenchantment of the world". It is for this reason that we, according to Habermas [11], have let the state and the market "colonize the life world". Likewise, Flyvbjerg [2, p. 54] observes that "The Rationalist Turn has been so radical that possible alternatives, which might have existed previously are beyond our current vision, just as centuries of rationalist socialisation seems to have undermined the ability of individuals and society to even conceptualise a non-rationalist present and future". He therefore sees the need for a return of the value position:

> "Today the Aristotelian question of balancing instrumental rationality with value-rationality is forcing its way back to the foreground. Problems with both biosphere and sociosphere indicate that social and political development based on instrumental rationality alone is not sustainable" [2, p. 53].

Flyvbjerg believes that alternatives to instrumental rationality are needed today. Fishers and their problems are hardly exempt in this sense. Therefore, the positions raised in this article are as pertinent to the governance of fisheries as they are for any other societal sector. Flyvbjerg argues that today's problems with respect to the biosphere and humankind call for a re-introduction of the fundamentals of the social sciences as the classic domain for analysing social values, interests, norms, power and ethics. Finding a new balance between the two basically different approaches of instrumental rationality and value-rationality, therefore, seems to be of acute relevance. He contends that it is precisely at this point where the social sciences can and should make their contributions [2, p. 62]. These contributions can be explored more closely by drawing on the Aristotelian distinctions between three basic knowledge types, or 'intellectual virtues', as he called them, the *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis*. These knowledge types relate to

[2] This has been specifically performed with Nuclear Waste Management in Germany, for example, where a new government, in 1998, established a memorandum for scientific and technological explorations to solve the heated value conflict in the region surrounding Gorleben.

[3] The terms instrumental rationality and value-rationality refer to Max Weber's famous distinction between *Zweckrational* action and *Wertrational* action. Value-rationality may also be called "substantive rationality" (cf. [2, p. 53]).