



# Re-connecting and embedding food in place: Rural development and inshore fisheries in Cornwall, UK



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## A B S T R A C T

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Inshore fishing communities in England, as elsewhere, are facing challenges as they struggle to deal with policy measures aimed at reducing fishing effort. Drawing on findings from a study aimed at exploring the role of fishing for place-making and identity creation in Cornwall, we argue that there may be potential opportunities for developing inshore fisheries under the rural development paradigm. By considering lessons from the agri-food sector, this paper considers models of multifunctionality and the scope for translating these approaches into the fisheries sector. By re-embedding fish in place, through marketing, branding and enabling small-scale supply chains that recognise fisheries' wider role in communities, fishing can be understood as a 'multifunctional' activity in coastal areas by re-connecting fishers with markets, consumers and the environment. To facilitate this, the importance of inshore fisheries to the socio-cultural and economic life of coastal communities needs to be recognised. Through valuing the often intangible benefits, such as identity, social cohesion and heritage, that fisheries bring to communities, fishing can be a useful development mechanism to enhance the economic and social sustainability of coastal communities. This creates new agendas for policy makers to understand the wider range of benefits afforded by marine fishing than productivist approaches alone. While initiatives are emerging to move the industry in this direction, coordinated and integrated policy development is needed to enhance these efforts and contribute to the creation of sustainable coastal communities with marine fishing as the focus.

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## 1. Introduction

Estimates suggest that the world population's demand for food will increase by 50% by 2030 (Worldbank, 2006). Fish as human food reached an all-time high in 2008 (FAO, 2010a) and globally fish provides more than 20% of the average intake of animal protein for around 1.5 billion people and provides livelihoods for about 540 million people (FAO, 2010b). However, the world's fisheries have been in a steady decline since the 1980s, and it is now accepted that there is a "crisis" in fisheries (for example, Blades, 1995; Clark, 2006; McGoodwin, 1990). The FAO *State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2010* reports that 85% of marine fish stocks are either fully exploited, overexploited, depleted or recovering (FAO, 2010a) and in Europe 88% of quota stocks are overfished (EC, 2009). The decline in key stocks has been attributed to a combination of overfishing, climate change (Perry and Ommer, 2010), ocean acidification (Portner, 2008; Oarug, 2009) and, in coastal waters,

eutrophication from sewage and agricultural run-off (Anderson et al., 2008). Despite a range of policies and efforts to reverse the decline, marine fish stocks remain threatened and policy decisions still favour the large-scale, high-tech, efficient sector, over the small-scale artisanal sector, despite the recognition that the global fisheries crisis has mainly been caused by these large-scale industrial fleets (UNEP, 2005).

Furthermore, policy decisions often do not account for the important socio-cultural and economic contribution that small-scale fisheries have on coastal communities (Symes and Phillipson, 2009; Grafton et al., 2008; Urquhart et al., 2011). For many coastal communities in the UK, fishing is part of a broader network of socio-cultural and economic activities in fishing places. In these areas fishing is a deeply embedded tradition and "the glue that holds the community together" (Brookfield et al., 2005, p. 56). Fishing is important for the livelihoods of fishers, but also for tourism and local identity based on a rich heritage of fishing (Urquhart and Acott, 2013a,b, Acott and Urquhart, 2012). In a study of the fishing industry in Hastings, East Sussex, it was found that the local fishing industry inputs indirectly to the tourism sector in Hastings, and tourism spend attributable to the presence of a

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fishing fleet was estimated at 2% of the £110 million tourism spend in 2003, almost double the £1.3 million from landings (Nautilus, 2004). However, in many places the fishing industry seems to get little back from tourism. Given the uncertain situation faced by the inshore sector (and the fishing industry more broadly), this paper explores the potential opportunities and constraints for embedding fishing into local economies in a more integrated way, using examples from the Cornish fisheries. Drawing on lessons from the more developed agri-food sector, we argue that a rural development paradigm, which seeks to embed agriculture within local economies to bring added value and keep economic profitability local (Marsden et al., 1999) through, for example, the development of small-scale supply chains (Renting et al., 2003) and branding of place-based foods such as speciality regional products (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000), may offer some useful lessons for the marine fishing sector. Firstly, the idea of multifunctionality is discussed and the potential for applications in fisheries explored, focussing on multifunctionality as a rural development tool.

## 2. Lessons from the agri-food sector

The idea of multifunctionality in agriculture was introduced around 12 years ago (OECD, 2001). Multifunctionality recognises that agriculture provides other benefits to its primary function of food production, including amenity, biodiversity, landscape benefits, as well as contributing to the socio-economic vitality of rural areas (Schmidt, 2003). Marsden and Sonnino (2008) discuss three models of multifunctionality within agriculture and how they have been variously applied in UK policy. Firstly, the 'agro-industrial paradigm' restricts multifunctionality to the notion of pluriactivity, combining farming and non-farming incomes as a survival strategy. Second is the 'post-productivist paradigm' in which agriculture loses prominence. Post-productivist spaces are seen as arenas for consumption and farmers diversify into amenity and conservation activities that are reinforced through agri-environment schemes. Third is the 'rural development paradigm' where agriculture is combined with the socio-economic health of rural areas and is a tool for sustaining rural economies and culture. It re-emphasises food production and the symbiotic inter-connectedness between farms and the locale (Marsden and Sonnino, 2008). Multifunctional agriculture, in this regard, is no longer simply a survival strategy but is a rural development tool embedding agriculture within local economies to bring added value and keep economic profitability local (Marsden, 2003; Marsden and Sonnino, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Marsden et al., 1999). Marsden and Sonnino (2008) conclude that while UK policy has largely taken a pluriactivity or post-productivist approach, the rural development paradigm may offer ways to embed agriculture more sustainably into rural areas.

While the idea of multifunctionality has been widely used in primary industries such as agriculture and forestry, there has been very little use of the concept in extractive industries, including

fisheries (Wilson, 2007). Some scholars have alluded to the multifunctional use of boats and gear but there are few conceptual notions of multifunctional fishing (Wilson, 2007), although Schmidt (2003) discusses whether the concept of multifunctionality might be a useful analytical framework in fisheries. Using the example of coastal fisheries in Japan, Schmidt outlines how fishing can have multiple roles including social, economic and environmental multifunctionality, although he says little about how multifunctional pathways could be implemented among fishing communities (Wilson, 2007).

An examination of marine fisheries along the three models of multifunctionality outlined by Marsden and Sonnino (2008) above, reveals a number of similarities (Table 1). Many fishers, especially in the small-scale sector, have taken a route similar to Marsden and Sonnino's (2008) pluriactivity model (see, for example, Salmi, 2005). Under this paradigm, fishers remain primarily productivist, but fishers may engage in non-fishing employment to supplement their income. These fishers are in survival mode with multifunctionality restricted to alternative income streams to combat policy-imposed restrictions on fishing effort or market conditions. Pluriactivity is nothing new to the inshore sector, where fisheries are often seasonal due to the migration of fish into local waters and fishers frequently fish on a part-time basis. More recently, coastal and marine environments are seen as important sites for nature conservation (e.g. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)) and leisure activities (recreation and tourism). Fishers are adopting diversification strategies along the lines of Marsden and Sonnino's 'post-productivist' model. In this instance, fishers may combine commercial fishing with offering fishing or sight-seeing trips to tourists, or they may engage in conservation activities such as the Fishing for Litter initiative, which Cornish fishermen are involved in.

However, as with agriculture, the notion of multifunctional fisheries under a rural development paradigm, whereby fisheries are more integrated and embedded in regions and communities, is rarely seen in policy. Yet, given the policy and scientific imperatives to protect and restore key fish stocks to sustainable levels, alongside meeting a growing demand for fish products, a rural development approach to fisheries may provide a process for promoting sustainable fisheries communities.

The following section outlines the methodological approach used in this study, before considering how the concept of place-based foods, which has developed in the land-based sector, could be further extended to fisheries as part of a strategy of sustainable rural development in coastal areas. We conclude by considering the extent to which inshore fisheries satisfy the three conditions that Marsden and Sonnino (2008) indicate are essential for multifunctional rural development: (i) the activity must add income and employment opportunities to the agricultural (or in this case, fisheries) sector; (ii) the activity must contribute to the construction of a new agricultural sector that corresponds to the needs and

**Table 1**  
Marsden and Sonnino's (2008) three models of multifunctionality in agriculture, and potential for adaptation in small-scale fisheries.

Models of multifunctionality	Agriculture	Fisheries
Agro-industrial paradigm	Pluriactivity where on-farm and off-farm incomes are combined in a strategy of survival.	Small-scale fishers often undertake non-fishing work to supplement income.
Post-productivist paradigm	Diversification of farm activities – emphasis on amenity and conservation activities (often driven by agri-environment schemes).	Increasing evidence of fishers diversifying into tourism and conservation activities (see (Roussel et al., 2011)).
Rural development paradigm	Agriculture combined with socio-economic health of rural areas. Re-connection of food, producer and place. Maximising keeping profitability with the local economy.	Fisheries seen as embedded in the local economy. Importance of provenance – emphasising fisher, fish/seafood and place. Adding value and keeping profitability local.

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