

Evolving the ecosystem approach in European fisheries: Transferable lessons from New Zealand's experience in strengthening stakeholder involvement

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ABSTRACT

Processes and behaviours from New Zealand's experience of industry stakeholders' participation in research and management could be transferrable to Europe, helping expedite its evolution to inclusive governance models consistent with an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. In particular, experience from NZ could help to alleviate bottlenecks arising from inadequate institutional governance apparatus and barriers to acquisition and application of relevant knowledge. The short pathways, fewer people and simplicity of a unilateral decision-making process make NZ a good place to learn about inclusive governance of fisheries. The detail of why, where and how industry stakeholders get involved in research and management is shaped by the legislative framework, the structures that support it, the people, and how they organise their involvement. Specific examples are used to illustrate four ways in which Europe could apply experience from NZ to enhance the inclusivity of industry stakeholders the evidence-management system required to implement the ecosystem approach to fisheries: (i) Defined 'rules' of engagement, (ii) MoU's to promote a shared vision and the planning to achieve it, (iii) Extended peer review process (iv) Inclusion of research knowledge from industry and science-industry partnerships.

1. Introduction

To fulfil its objective to implement an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), Europe's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP, Article 2(3) [1]) extols the ideals of stronger participation of stakeholders in fisheries governance. In particular, Article 3-Principles of good governance, states: "*The Common Fisheries Policy shall be guided by the following principles of good governance: (h) appropriate involvement of stakeholders, in particular of Advisory Councils, at all stages - from conception to implementation of the measures; (e) clear definition of responsibilities at the Union, regional, national and local levels; (aa) taking into account regional specificities through a regionalised approach;...*" These policy principles reflect a long term aspiration of the commission to move toward more collaborative arrangements for managing EU fisheries (E. Penas, DGMARE pers comm June 2012 [2]), and are bolstered similar commitments made under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive [3].

Throughout this paper those involved in commercial fisheries (as opposed to recreational) are referred to as 'industry stakeholders' or 'industry' and where the term 'stakeholders' is used it refers to industry and all other stakeholders.

The incentive for EU stakeholders, scientists and policy managers to

implement the ecosystem approach appears to be strong, because they easily agree on the long-term objective of sustainable fisheries and understand that inclusive governance approaches help prevent confrontation and non-compliance while enhancing responsible stewardship [4]. But a number of difficulties related to inclusivity seem to make implementation more challenging than it seems it ought to be.

Perhaps foremost among these difficulties is the lack of political will to include stakeholders in the regional governance structures responsible for making decisions on fisheries management, or to equip them with the apparatus for designing workable management plans. The framework for evolving the structures and processes to implement the ecosystem approach under the CFP is called Regionalisation (Article 18 [1]). Regionalisation is intended as a mechanism to bring society closer to decision-making by providing a route through which stakeholders can take greater responsibility for managing fisheries. It replaces the previous EU centralised control of management by passing power and responsibility to Member States, and their constituent stakeholders, who share fishing interests in a region. Technically, the Member State governments share the responsibility. Operationally, it would appear to necessitate that industry stakeholders play a central role in developing management plans and measures for their fisheries. It is reasonable then to expect that this new system would lead to a

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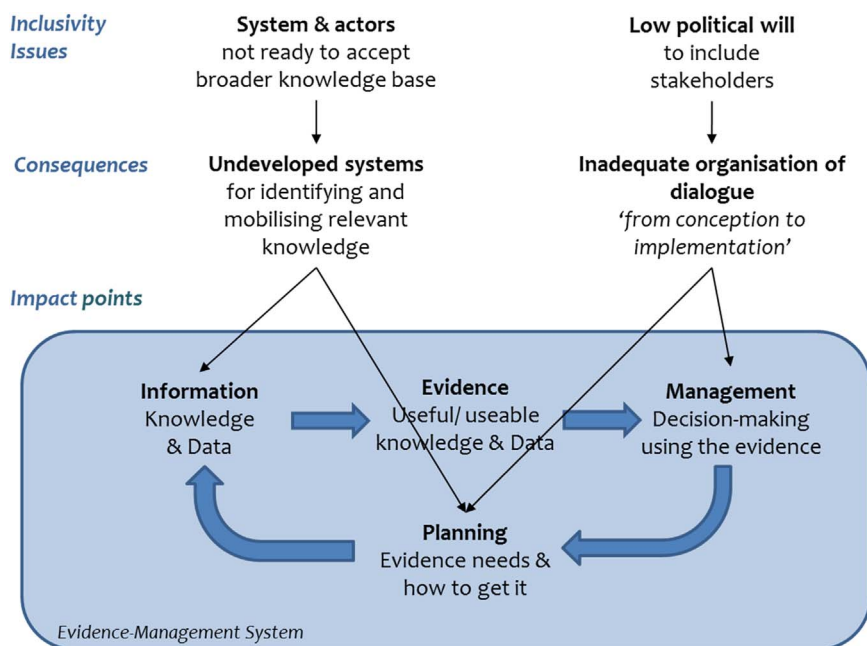


Fig. 1. How inclusivity issues and their consequences impact the gathering and use of evidence in management, causing bottlenecks in the implementation of EAFM.

sharing of responsibilities. However, according to Eliassen et al. [5] the modus operandi in the first year of regionalisation was High Level Groups in the regions operating as elitist 'mini-councils' detached from the Advisory Councils (stakeholders). Thus falling short in realising the value and importance of active and committed stakeholder involvement. Other authors have similarly questioned the extent to which the CFP enables ACs to fulfil their purpose of engaging stakeholders to participate in a responsible way in management and decision-making [6–11]. The knock-on consequence of this is that the practical steps to organising the dialogue and modes of interaction that facilitate stakeholder involvement ‘...from conception to implementation’ remain unresolved and inadequate (GAP2 Policy Brief - December 2013).

Regionalisation also has implications for how knowledge is accessed, shared (among stakeholders, scientists and policy managers), and applied; which brings us to the second difficulty - which is that neither the system nor its actors (at least in some cases) are yet ready to accept a broader base of salient knowledge as legitimate evidence. Thus, the processes necessary to efficiently identify and mobilise relevant knowledge to solve particular management problems are not yet developed (GAP2 Policy Brief - June 2014 [12–14]), (Fig. 1).

Europe's aspiration to move toward inclusive governance echoes the footsteps made back in the 1980s in New Zealand (NZ), where bold moves were taken to provide an enabling framework [15–17]. Accepting that the EU's evolution will be different to NZ's (Fig. 2), there are nonetheless, a number of things that can be learned from NZ's experience with the engagement of industry stakeholders in the evidence-management system which might help alleviating bottlenecks and expedite Europe's transition.

The examples of NZ's experience focus on voluntary engagement of industry stakeholders in ways that empowers and facilitates their involvement in evidence gathering and contributing to management decisions. Discussion on issues such as compliance and statutory obligations to report catches are not included. Furthermore, while it is recognised that the interplay between different stakeholders has an influence on how fisheries are managed in NZ (e.g. catch allocation rights, objective setting and compliance), this dimension is not central to the purpose of the article, and thus also not discussed. Instead, readers are referred to [15,16,18–20] for detailed treatments of the evolution of NZ fisheries management system and roles of stakeholders.

2. Methods

During January–May 2013, Seafood New Zealand facilitated the lead author's immersion in NZ's evidence-management system. Background reading, meeting observations and interviews with a range of stakeholders were undertaken for the purpose of understanding the system and how it works in practice.

Thirteen meetings included science working groups, sector management meetings, government-industry strategy meetings, and one-off meetings addressing particular science/management issues. Twenty-three semi-structured interviews (approx. 47 h) were used to explore people's roles, motivations and incentives for engagement, and how the process is made to have an impact on fisheries management. Chosen for their knowledge and balance of perspectives, interviewees included representatives from the fishing industry (8), scientists (8) and managers/policy experts (6). The discussions were structured along 3 lines of questioning:

1. How does the governance framework enable stakeholders' participation in research and management?
2. Why and how do stakeholders get involved?
3. How is it made to have an impact? In particular, does stakeholders' participation in research make a difference to management from the perspectives of (i) The value of knowledge and its utility in management applications, (ii) Outcomes – the influence on the management system receiving the knowledge.

To set the scene, the contextual influences that shape voluntary involvement of industry stakeholders in the evidence-management system in NZ is briefly described. Then, examples are used to identify and discuss how NZ experience is applicable to address inclusivity-related issues relating to Europe's transition to implement EAFM. In particular, the following attributes are considered: how stakeholder participation is enabled, the conditions that make it work, and the innovations needed for transfer and application. In doing so, specific key documents identified.

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