



Exploring stakeholders' images of coastal fisheries: A case study from South Korea



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ABSTRACT

Images that stakeholders have about fisheries can fundamentally influence how fisheries are to be governed. They represent underlying perspectives about the issues in question and the world at large, helping thus explain why certain governance decisions and actions come about and how policy ideas are carried forward. While it is crucial to identify and integrate them in a policy making process, their practical appearances and characteristics are not always understood, making it less possible to assess their meanings and generate applied insights. Using a case of coastal fisheries in South Korea and its co-management initiative called 'Jayul', this study captures the images of various stakeholders through an exploratory survey design. The results show a diverse range of thematic content of stakeholders' images, but which can be characterized into four dimensions – positive or negative overtones; straightforward vs. composite meanings; time dimension; and action-based vs. describing state of affairs. The article discusses images' useful bearing on the progress of Jayul implementation and draws implications for the governance of Korean fisheries and worldwide.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, a line of thinking has arisen in fisheries governance discourse which focuses on stakeholders' images (Bundy et al., 2008; Cinner et al., 2012; Jentoft et al., 2010, 2012; Kooiman et al., 2005; Thornton and Laurin, 2005; Sønvisen, 2014). These conceptual developments explore what images mean in governance contexts and how they may influence governance processes and outcomes. Images are "representations of the issues in question and the world at large" (Jentoft et al., 2012: 186), and they provide visions for other governing elements such as regulations and incentives, as well as guide behavior of those being governed. Overall, they form an underlying cognitive framework through which stakeholder views are understood and organized, and their decisions and actions explained. The assertion is that they can help attain a deeper understanding of policy experiences, make sense of ongoing trends and events, and even offer a reasonable ground upon which the future course of action can be foreseen, thereby making governance a more proactive endeavor. Hence,

images should be properly considered and made explicit in a governance process.

More specifically, according to a review of how images (and other analogous concepts such as mental models and cognitive frames) have been approached and discussed in fisheries (see Song et al., 2013), images gain importance in at least three main ways. First, a faulty representation of fisheries realities can mislead governance effort into perverse consequences. Thomas Huxley's (1883) idea that "all the great sea fisheries are inexhaustible" is one example of the well-publicized images in fisheries policy-making. Secondly, images can exhibit disparity among different stakeholder groups, which pose a potential danger as incompatible images could lead to misunderstanding and confrontation (see also Hall-Arber et al., 2009). Greater awareness and appreciation of different ways of seeing are called for to carefully negotiate the socio-political complexity emanating from potential image disagreements. Finally, a discursive power and hegemonic dominance of certain images are what fisheries governance must also be made conscious of. An ideology or a discourse maintains its discursive power through images it creates and propagates. For example, the neoliberal ideology paints a forceful portrayal of fishing economies as pre-capitalist and a barrier to capital accumulation. This particular image of fishing communities is consequently used to promote a capitalistic mode of production and fisher identity, while

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repudiating other alternative fishing forms such as subsistence, spiritual, and community-based fishery (St Martin, 2007). Therefore, how images are linked to ideological purposes and how they can become hegemonic becomes another important theme in the ways images influence governance processes and outcomes.

The concept of images is, however, less than clear-cut and invites various interpretations. Its un verbalized existence, indefinite meanings, and multiple usages make it difficult to clearly delineate the contours of what we mean by images, especially in an empirical setting. What are the general characteristics of images generated by stakeholders? Do they show certain differences or commonality in terms of their format or orientation? Hence, in what form the images are constituted? Such questions have not been fully examined in a practical context. As a result, what is still less apparent are the dimensions within which our understanding of stakeholders' images lie, and this creates challenges in operationalizing the theory of images.

Research into stakeholders' images has thus far either focused on their conceptual development (e.g., Jentoft et al., 2010, 2012), or revolved around a particular issue such as marine protected areas (Jentoft et al., 2012), ecosystem-based management (Bundy et al., 2008) and fisher ideology (Sønvisen, 2014), or specific metaphors such as 'fishing as mining' (McCay et al., 2011) and 'the sea as a frontier' (Bromley, 2005). In this article, we conduct an empirical research in South Korea to elicit what various fishery stakeholders express as their images about the fishery and fishing life. Through a use of an elicitation tool developed for the study, we identify the characteristics and contents of stakeholders' images, as well as discuss policy implications.

We commence by revisiting key theoretical postulations of images informed by a wider set of literature, especially as they are approached from the interactive governance perspective. Next, a description of the fisheries situation in South Korea is provided, focusing especially on a governance initiative called 'Jayul'. Following a section on the design and application of the survey method, we present several main thematic areas of the images that emerged as the results of the survey. We reflect on the findings to discuss their implications for the Jayul governance and formulate suggestions to help inform future directions. We conclude with a summary of potential contributions to method and theory.

2. Theoretical conceptions of images from interactive governance perspective

Aristotle regarded images as the main medium of thought (Eysenck and Keane, 2000), and proclaimed that thoughts are impossible without images (Hummel, 1993). Despite opposing debates on their utility over the years due in part to their elusive nature (Goldstein, 2008), the traditions of anthropology and cognitive science have put great emphasis on images and explored their linkages to aspects such as culture and internal information processing, respectively. Images have become also relevant to the resource governance context. Approaching from the angle of policy decision-making and implementation, the most salient issue is related to understanding how images that governance stakeholders hold influence policy initiation, execution and evaluation, and in turn how they are affected by the very process. This entry point is supported by an argument that "individual cognitions or mental models of resources are not irrelevant to environmental decision making, as assumed by content-free framing in terms of utilities" (Atran et al., 2005: 771).

The interactive governance perspective highlights image as one of the fundamental elements representing the normative and cognitive concerns of fishery stakeholders (Chuenpagdee, 2011;

Kooiman et al., 2005; Song et al., 2013). Images gain additional significance because their disagreements and interactions among them can affect the overall governability of a fishery system (Chuenpagdee and Jentoft, 2009, 2013). Framed as 'meta-level' governance (i.e., what governs governance), images, along with values and principles, underpin the overall governance process, guiding, shaping and inspiring decisions and actions. Kooiman (2003: 29) argues that "anyone involved in governing, in whatever capacity or authority, forms images about what he or she is governing". Similarly, Jentoft et al. (2010: 1315) explains that "governing is inconceivable without the formation of images, and that they are needed for the sake of understanding, communication and action". Such statements affirm that images are omnipresent and integral in the act of governing. Because images can serve a persuasive role and be used as a rhetorical tool to shape policy, it is in the interest of governors to find compelling images that can help clarify or favorably represent their vision of governance (Morgan, 1997).

Images are not only the domain of those who govern, however. Every person involved in the fishery holds an idea of what they believe, what they perceive could happen, and what they think should happen (Jentoft et al., 2010), whether it is elaborated or vague, perceptible or hidden. In fact, images are understood to go deeper than simple opinions stated by stakeholders (Jentoft et al., 2012). Whereas attitudes and perceptions provide a useful way of assessing people's sentiments about specific objects, situations or issues, they themselves are based on other mental constructs, such as values and images, which are slow-changing, few in number and deeply ingrained (Rokeach, 1973; Vaske and Donnelly, 1999). Since images are "a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally" (Morgan, 1997: 4), they help describe our life-world through encapsulation and synthesis of numerous independent observations into a coherent model (Jentoft et al., 2012). Further, images have a predictive quality. While real practices and experience shape one's images, the reverse is also true because people can be driven by their ideas held in their images. They tend to see the world in the way the images are drawn, and then act in ways that make the world conform to them. In effect, they do not only describe what is happening but also prescribe how things ought to look like (Carrier, 1998; Foster, 1965).

Finally, images do shift over time, and may also go through an abrupt switch at times akin to an epiphany. Boulding (1956) posits that images become what they are through the continuing process of receiving and responding to innumerable messages via face-to-face communication, personal or secondary observation, news media, and policy directives. In fisheries, images may be altered as stakeholders observe changes in the natural conditions or start to engage in new practices. For instance, a decline in wild capture fisheries in South Korea has raised the popularity of stock enhancement, which involves rearing of fish in the hatchery, released as juveniles and caught later in the sea. These stock and release fish are accepted by producers and consumers alike as part of the wild fisheries, in contrast to those fully grown in tanks or offshore cages, which are labeled as farmed fish and do not enjoy the same status. Another example is the introduction of individual vessel quotas in the Norwegian coastal cod fishery, which imbue each vessel with an image of a self-regulating governor, responsible not only for the operation of catching fish, but also for making arrangements with regard to processing, staffing, and managing of the quotas and capital investments (Johnsen, 2014). Images thus have long attracted scholarly attention and recently gained traction in a fisheries governance context. The following case study aims to further strengthen their practical linkages through an empirical examination and generate potentially useful insights.

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