

HAULING HOME THE CO-MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL FISHERIES:

A study on institutional barriers to fishermen's involvement in the management of coastal fisheries on the West Coast of Sweden.

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Abstract

During the last decade, Swedish fisheries have been in turmoil. Faced with depleted resources and demands from a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the Swedish Government recently made clear the need for institutional reform. Within the framework of this reform a more participative fisheries management system is expected to lead to more sustainable outcomes.

This explorative and empirically based study is concerned with fisheries co-management and analyses various institutional aspects of the issues relating to shared fisheries resources and ecosystems in the coastal waters of the Skagerrak Sea in Western Sweden.

The research applies an actor-oriented approach and a common pool resource theoretical perspective and engages the interdisciplinary debates on collective action, property rights and co-management. In this way, the dynamics of the interrelations between the social and the ecological systems in fisheries are exposed.

The study provides a critical analysis of the dominant centralised co-management regime, which has dissociated conservation from allocation and tends to block, or at least delay, the emergence of institutions using local fishermen's management capacities. It reveals the significance of space and time in the organisation of coastal fisheries and demonstrates the impact that uniform policies and generic rules can have when applied to the use of common pool resources by a heterogeneous fishing community. It is argued that the lack of attention to the specificities of local coastal fisheries is closely related to the narrow conceptualisation of, and the limited knowledge base used in, fisheries management in general. A trend this, which has been reinforced by the way this management system has been organised and has constrained the local fishermen's ability to participate in the management process and secure access to coastal resources.

The study further explores local fishermen's initiatives to become more involved in co-management, analysing their feasibility and uncovering the context of emergence of the ongoing reform. The change consists mainly of the nesting of more pluralistic system of local and regional co-management in an otherwise more centralised co-management regime with corporatist influences.

Keywords: Fisheries, local management, co-management, coastal management, common pool resources, Northern Bohuslän, Swedish fisheries.