

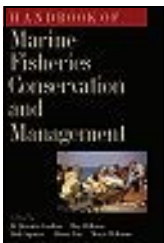
Policy Perspectives

Perspectives on resource management and environmental policy from the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES), Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados.

The Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) has initiated this occasional outreach publication, **Policy Perspectives**, primarily in order to share some of the lessons learnt from ongoing research. The interdisciplinary applied research at CERMES emphasizes learning-by-doing through the collaboration of researchers, beneficiaries and other interested parties. The information in these policy briefs may be used by policy-makers and their advisers to strengthen the linkages between research outputs and policy-making in the Caribbean. This connection is often weak in marine resource governance, but is especially important to develop in complex adaptive social-ecological systems.

Managing Small-Scale Fisheries: Moving Toward People-Centered Perspectives

A chapter bearing the title above was recently published in a large volume edited by Quentin Grafton and others (see full citation below). In this chapter Patrick McConney and Tony Charles provide policy and other perspectives on moving small scale fisheries (SSF) towards becoming more people-centred. The latter term concerns the incorporation of human dimensions into the mainstream of SSF daily management and governance at higher levels on several scales such as marine jurisdiction and decision-making. These authors draw upon examples and experiences from developing countries around the world to distill lessons that should be of interest to governmental and non-governmental fisheries organizations in the Caribbean.



McConney, P. and A. T. Charles. 2010. Managing Small-Scale Fisheries: Moving Toward People-Centered Perspectives. Pages 532-545 in R. Quentin Grafton, Ray Hilborn, Dale Squires, Maree Tait and Meryl Williams (eds.) Handbook of Marine Fisheries Conservation and Management. Oxford University Press, New York. 784pp.

Why is this change being advised?

The authors are well aware that change does not usually happen easily or in a vacuum. There have to be good reasons for people to abandon old practices, even if these are agreed to be problematic. Change takes time and management. In the case of SSF the odds are stacked high against *status quo*.

Criticizing the conventional!

The authors list several reasons why the current conventional approaches cannot continue if we hope to be successful:

- Assessments that are often data intense
- Undervaluation of the human dimensions
- Narrowly single-species, often single gear
- Local knowledge often second class
- Strong biology and economics bias
- Co-management as a last resort only
- Ecosystem approaches still new
- Poor compliance as lacks legitimacy
- Often underestimates uncertainty
- Ignores other economic sectors
- Assumes rational decision makers
- Separated from social, cultural contexts
- Top-down, command and control
- Ignores politics of decision making
- Control not flexible for adaptation
- Overlooks the importance of scale

While McConney and Charles admit that more attention is being paid to social, cultural, institutional and political factors in recent times ... beware too little, too late. They want to see the process of change gain pace because the stakes of human lives and livelihoods are so great. For this they offer suggestions.

A fundamental perspective that needs to be changed is to view SSF as complex adaptive social-ecological systems instead of easily predictable and controlled systems. The latter view has caused the failure of many conventional approaches to fisheries globally.

Consequent to the new perspective is the incorporation of “resilience-thinking” into fisheries management. So concepts such as vulnerability, adaptation, self-organization and others become more commonplace.

Policy scene and context

Determining the policy scene and context are critical first steps before interventions for change can be implemented. A few of the considerations include:

- Precautionary approach and international instruments
- Integration into national policy and goal setting
- Decentralization and devolution
- Markets, trade, and subsidies
- Food security, food sovereignty and poverty

Setting management systems in place

The authors go on to discuss what is needed to set management systems in place that reflect these new perspectives. They write about the following:

- Fishery Systems, the Fish Chain, and Cross-Scale Linkages
- Fisheries Institutions, Participation and Empowerment
- Learning and Adaptive Capacity
- Uncertainty and Adaptive Management
- Livelihoods, Households and Diversification
- Linking to the Ecosystem Approach and Integrated Management

Key considerations for management

Finally they address some of the key operational considerations for management under the following sub-headings:

- Goals, Objectives, and Directions
- Conflict Management and Power Dynamics
- Data, Information, and Communication
- Fishery Planning and Management
- Co-management and Community-Based Management
- Fishing Rights
- Marine Protected Areas

The authors conclude with a look at the implications of these new perspectives. Fisheries policy needs to be enabling. It needs to facilitate self-organization in SSF rather than stifle it.

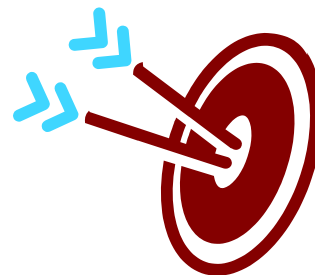
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International instruments often set the tone for such enabling policy. The structures, processes, and approaches involved in setting management in place are of vital importance and a reflection of policy. Systems approaches that seek to acknowledge and integrate social and ecological systems, coastal management and sustainable livelihoods, and other broad perspectives are critical to encourage. Practical management systems in SSF need to avoid mimicking those of large scale fisheries unless adapted to local conditions and agreed to by the major fishery stakeholders. Being people-centered, these perspectives incorporate human dimensions.

Policy advice for CRFM fisheries authorities

All of the above lessons learned are applicable to CRFM Member States. Although this region is moving towards more people-centered approaches to SSF there is still considerable reluctance to relinquish the grip on conventional approaches.

This is not surprising. Our fisheries officers have been well trained in the conventional and they interact often with consultants equally familiar with this way of doing things. There is pressure from funding sources and projects to use what is best known even if not entirely successful. What to aim for?



A good start would be to test the fit and usefulness of initiatives such as used in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Project and the CERMES MarGov project. These are based on the emerging perspectives discussed in the chapter.

This policy brief is an output of the CERMES project on *Marine resource governance in the eastern Caribbean* (the *MarGov project*). Its preparation was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the IDRC. The material in this publication may be freely reproduced for non-commercial use provided suitable credit is given. Additional information on MarGov and related initiatives is available on the CERMES web site.