

CHAPTER 1: THEORISING ABOUT PARTICIPATORY FISHERIES GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

This edited book is about participation in fisheries governance, which is an issue that has become fashionable during the last decade, partly because of dissatisfaction with the performance of fisheries management systems across the world; partly because of the increasing interest in the notion of ‘governance’ as a substitute for ‘government’ in a variety of policy sectors; and partly because of the growing popularity of the concept of stakeholder participation in all areas of decision-making. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to establish a theoretical framework within which the participatory mode of governance may be best understood. First, I explore the conceptual issues raised by the notion of governance. Second, I analyse and discuss the three main ways in which the notion of governance has been applied to fisheries management – the hierarchical mode; the market mode; and the participatory mode – focusing especially on the four sub-types of the participatory mode: industry self-governance; co-management; community partnership; and environmental stewardship. Third, I discuss the wider implications of the three different modes. Finally, I provide a synopsis of the chapters in the book, showing how they all focus in one way or another on the central imperative of contemporary fisheries governance – how to make greater use of participation in order to improve the quality of decision-making.

1.1 Introduction

It is a commonplace that many of the world’s commercial fisheries are in a state of crisis. As Blyth *et al* (2003:409) point out, in 2000, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that 72-75 per cent of the world’s major fish stocks are either “over-exploited, fully exploited, rebuilding or depleted”. A recent report by the highly respected UK Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP 2004: paras 1.7-1.8) refers to a “Crisis in the marine environment”, claiming that the seas “are being depleted of fish and other living creatures at an alarming and unsustainable rate.” Much of the blame for this crisis is levelled at the way in which fisheries are managed (RCEP 2004:para 5.109; van Vliet and Dubbink 1999:13; Jentoft *et al* (1999:239). Symes and Phillipson (1999:59) are in no doubt where the blame lies – with the ‘top-down’ or hierarchical mode that characterises ‘conventional’ management systems, but Holden (1994) argues for a reinforcement of the hierarchical mode. Other critics claim that only a suitably managed market system can deliver a sustainable fishing industry. However, a strong body of opinion favours a much more participatory mode of governance, linked to environmental imperatives to curb chronic over-fishing.

In this chapter, I examine the theoretical foundations and practical implications of the three main modes of fisheries governance – the still dominant hierarchical mode, and its two main rival modes, the market mode and the participatory mode, dividing the latter into its four main types: industry self-governance; co-management; community partnership; and environmental stewardship. My argument is that, although in the real

world we will find a mixture of all three modes of governance in which the hierarchical mode plays a leading part, there is increasing emphasis on the participatory mode of fisheries governance. In the last section of the chapter, I introduce the subsequent chapters in the book, showing where they fit into this schema or taxonomy of modes of fisheries governance, and pointing out their contribution to our understanding of the participatory mode. But first, I analyse the concept of ‘governance’.

1.2 The meaning of the term ‘governance’

The term ‘governance’ is ambiguous, spawning a variety of meanings (Pierre and Peters 2000:7). Political scientists such as Rhodes (1996:652) have associated it with the minimal state, the hollowing out of the state, public-private partnerships, corporatism, new public management, and policy networks. Often ‘governance’ is contrasted with ‘government’: during the 1990s, it became fashionable to denote a shift from the hard-nosed concept of **government**, with its connotations of a legally-based, centralised, sovereign state authority, formally elected, and possessing constitutional powers (including the right to exercise coercive force), ruling over a specific territory by means of an exclusive elite; to the soft-nosed concept of **governance**, with its connotations of a more informally-based, decentralised, shared, collective and inclusive decision-making structure, with multiple levels of engagement. According to Rhodes (1996:652-653), governance is less about making and enforcing authoritative decisions, than about extending decision-making outwards to embrace a wider public, thereby creating a culture of mutual respect between governors and governed. If government is founded on **consent**, governance is founded on **consensus**. Pierre and Peters argue that there has been a “gradual shift from ‘government’ towards governance” (2000:25), and that the “governing state has been replaced by an enabling state that governs to a large extent by co-ordinating and facilitating other powerful actors in society” (2000:12). However, in my view, ‘governance’ has not so much replaced government, as supplemented it, by adding more consensual processes for accomplishing its ends (Rosenau 1992:4).

Another governance issue is about the distinction between governance as a structure of decision-making, and governance as a set of principles. So far, I have been assuming that governance simply refers to *structures* (such as hierarchical, market or participant structures), but the literature also alludes to *principles* of governance, such as transparency, the rule of law, and equity. The European Commission, in its definition of governance, refers to principled elements, as we can see from the so-called “Roadmap” of the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Reform process (EC 2002:23 footnote 14): “Governance means rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.” Some of these governance principles are, of course, directly connected to structures – such as the principle of participation. But others, such as the principle of the rule of law, are largely independent of structures. In what follows, I will include both structures and principles in my analysis of modes of fisheries governance.