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CREATING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR FISHERIES CO-MANAGEMENT IN THE CARICOM REGION

INTRODUCTION

The literature on fisheries resource management in the CARICOM region lays much emphasis on the historical recency of its development. There is a tendency to either ignore or downplay the long history of traditional 'management' systems, prior to their replacement with the centralized management regimes, by both the colonial and post-colonial governments (Johannes, 1981; Dyer & McGoodwin, 1994) with disastrous consequences. Recently, there have been increasing calls for the restoration of communal property rights in the development of community-based management systems.

An even more recent development is the popularization of the concept of co-operative management (co-management) as the preferred system to replace the centrally driven model in the region (Brown, 1996). In the usage of the concept, there is a tendency to limit it to its manifestation at the community or local level. The concept automatically tends to conjure this picture in people's minds.

The reality however, is that the co-management system becomes even more meaningful and effective when manifested both at the state-level and the local-level (Berkes et.al., 1991; Berkes, 1994), with the former providing the political backing that enables the latter to operate efficiently and effectively. Indeed, they complement each other. For example, there is the need for the political will to plan and implement policies which would make co-management regimes functional, while the support and co-operation of the resource users are needed to achieve the same objective. Hence in analyzing the CARICOM situation, the two must not be merely considered as alternatives, but rather as complements, that together would make the system function effectively.

There is also the tendency to overstretch the meaning of the concept of co-management to apply to even the most casual and transient interaction at the community level between fisheries administrators and resource user groups. Admittedly, the concept can be applied to different

levels and points of operations along a continuum, stretching beyond the most centralized model to the complete control by the community or resource user organizations.

However, there is no doubt that the element of sustainability is critical in co-management systems. Hence, the central thesis of this paper; that the building and strengthening of institutional structures provide for both sustainability and change, which are important conditions for the operation of co-management regimes.

In this paper, social institutions created for the sustainable management of the fisheries resources of the region, are depicted as containing elements which are necessary for the development of co-management systems. They are also portrayed as undergoing processes of social change. Hence institutions being built in the region for the sustainable management of the fisheries resources are conceptualized as Ideal Types, to which the past and current operations of these institutions are compared, in order to arrive at an understanding of the present situation and to allow for the prediction of future trends.

The three concepts - co-management, social institutions and ideal types - are therefore central to the analysis of current trends towards the co-management of the fisheries resources of the region.

The first section briefly describes and analyses the three overlapping historical periods of fisheries management in the region, and points out certain features which are relevant to our understanding of current trends. The second section defines the concept of social institutions broadly, and explains how the chief elements of some broad regional institutions which emerged in the 1980s and the early 1990s, have made it possible to develop co-management regimes in the region.

The concept of Ideal Types is briefly defined. A differentiation is made between the ideal typical model which is used as a methodological tool in analyzing the intended outcomes of the operations of the institutional structures, in comparison with the reality as depicted from historical trends and current evidence.

Three main conclusions are arrived at from the analysis. First, that significant strides have been made towards the creation of institutions which could favour the establishment of co-management systems in the region. Second, that the structural and operational weaknesses of the existing resource user organizations render their preparedness to assume the obligations and responsibilities involved in effectively participating in co-managing the resources highly suspect. Third, that judging from historical records and current feet dragging of some governments to forge ahead with the implementation phase, the process could be greatly slowed down and in some cases completely stalled. The argument is advanced that, a lot would depend on the political will of the respective nation states to forge ahead with the process of sharing power and responsibility with resource user groups and communities.

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The deliberate planning and implementation of measures for the promotion of the sustainable management of the fisheries resources of the region has been recognized as being a relatively

recent phenomenon in the region. However, abundant historical evidence has been adduced to confirm the existence of informal systems of resource conservation which reflect the unplanned outcomes of traditional practices which far outdate the modern era. The history of resource management can be periodized into three overlapping phases.

The first was the **Traditional 'Management' Systems Era**, whose beginnings predate the colonial era, and which was either ignored or considerably suppressed by both the colonial states and the immediate post-colonial states. There is evidence that some elements of this system have survived the onslaught of modernization, but are now under fresh siege by recent economic changes in the region. The essential characteristics of these systems, now replete in the literature (eg. Wilkins, 1983; Finlay, 1993 & 1995; Berkes & Shaw, 1986; Mitchell & Gold, 1982; Walters, 1987; P. Espeut, 1992; Brown, 1996) can be outlined as follows:

- 1) They were systems of sea space allocation or fishing territories which were controlled by communities usually adjacent to the fishing grounds. These have been given the collective name of Territorial Use Rights in Fisheries (TURF), which were amply defended by the local communities to the exclusion of outsiders.
- 2) They were efficient in that they involved access control mechanisms which resulted in the reduction of competition and conflict to a minimum, and had in-built rules and regulations, and sanctions which ranged from moral suasion to physical coercion. The outcome was the sustainable use of the resources, suitable for the demographic, technological and ecological characteristics of each location.
- 3) They involved elements of equity in both the equitable access to the fisheries resources which members of the community enjoyed to the exclusion of outsiders, and the equitableness of the mode of sharing the product of collective effort.
- 4) It is also recognized that the sense of communal territorial and resource ownership, resulted in an appreciation of, and willingness to support its sustained utilization (Brown, 1996).

The second period, the **Centrally Controlled and Developmental Period**, should strictly be considered as beginning from the colonial period when the colonial state took control of the management function and embarked upon the expansion of fishing effort and the introduction of technologies which rendered the previous isolation of communal properties vulnerable to outside penetration and hence, the ultimate destruction of the traditional limited entry institution. This process continued during the post colonial era.

The economic rationale, *inter alia*, was to open the fisheries as an easy source of employment, to increase production and incomes in the fishing communities, to create a source for the cheap supply of protein for the population and to reduce dependence on imports of food. These policies would have been defensible had the governments coupled the increasing pressure on the resources, with conservation measures and regulations which were enforceable and enforced.

The outcomes, amply recorded in the literature (Munroe, 1969; Aikin & Haughton, 1987; Haughton, 1987; FAO, 1993; Brown, 1996; Mahon, 1997; Chakalall et.al., 1998) were the creation of virtual open access regimes, with the inevitable evidence of severe overfishing, particularly in the inshore fishing grounds.

The third period, the **Conservation and Management Era** (since the 1980s), was not only inevitable due to the glaring evidence of stock depletion, but was also catalyzed by the lack of knowledge of the conditions of the fisheries and resources (Jentoff & Sanderson, 1993). Additionally, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and more recently, the International Agreement on Straddling Stocks and Highly Migratory Stock, made it imperative for the countries in the region to pursue policies geared towards international cooperation in the management of the fisheries resources (Chakalall et. al., 1998). The individual small nation states could ill afford the enormous resources needed to tackle these responsibilities on their own.

This has given birth to two regionally adopted policies, namely, the need to place resource conservation and management at the forefront of the fisheries agenda; and the need for interstate cooperation in the management of the resources, particularly the straddling and highly migratory species. These developments necessitated the creation of regional institutions capable of handling the issues involved. The next section will deal with these institutional innovations.

2. THE REGIONAL RESPONSE

The concept of social institutions is basically conceptualized in this paper in two interrelated senses. First, the creation of formal organizations, with sets of rules (norms, conventions), 'actually used' (Ostrom, 1992). Second, it encompasses the regular patterns of social interaction and relationships and the stable set of roles and role expectations, which make for 'observable and predictable social behaviour' (Blau, 1963).

The response took the form of the building of regional institutions to form the basic foundation for taking 'advantage of the opportunities and to discharge the obligations assumed through the UNCLOS' (Haughton, 1998). They were formed to address the problems and needs (Stebbins, 1987) in the areas of national and inter-state fisheries management.

The first response was the formation of a Fisheries Unit attached to the sub-regional political organization with seven member states, namely, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). A major outcome of this initiative was a Harmonized Fisheries Legislation, which provided the member states with a common set of principles upon which to create their own laws and regulations for the management of the fisheries resources. Most have taken advantage of this provision to revise their national fisheries legislation. The enforcement of fisheries regulations has however been less successful due to political indecision and reluctance and/or lack of human and material resources.

An innovative institutional component was the provision which allowed member states to create Local Fisheries Management Authorities (LFMA). The LFMA has been defined as:

a body (organization) representing fishermen in a designated fisheries management area that has been vested with the legal authority to make locally applicable by-laws to regulate the

conduct of fisheries operations in fisheries management, in the said designated area (St. Lucia Fisheries Act, 10, 1984).

Clearly this lays the foundation for the establishment of community-based resource management, at least in the form of co-management institutional arrangements. This would entail the devolution of central authority and responsibility to local institutions. The response by the member states has not been as enthusiastic as that for the revision of legislation, which underlies the reluctance of central administrators to share their power with peripheral entities.

Only St. Lucia is on record for virtually institutionalizing consultation and participatory planning and involving local stakeholders in creating various forms of co-management arrangements as for example, the Soufriere Marine Management Authority (SMMA) and the co-management of Sea Moss and Sea Urchin production (Brown, 1996).

The second institutional response took the form of a collective initiative by 12 English speaking countries, including the OECS countries, to form the CARICOM Fisheries Resource Assessment and Management Program (CFRAMP), jointly funded by the Caribbean Community member states and Canada, through CIDA. The following is a listing of the areas of operations:

- 1) Data collection and management systems, licensing and registration for both fishers and vessels, and stock assessment for policy formulation.
- 2) Research in critical conservation and management areas.
- 3) The development of national fisheries management plans.
- 4) The creation of Fisheries Advisory Committees, involving fisherfolk organizations and other stakeholder organizations in the decision making process at the national level.
- 5) Human Resource Development, involving academic and professional training programs for fisheries administrators and officials, for strengthening national capabilities for the sustainable management of the fisheries resources of the region.
- 6) A Community Involvement & Education subproject, which forms the main link between the fishing industry and stakeholder organizations and the governments. This involves institutional building and strengthening and capacity building for both fisheries field officers and fisherfolk organizations, and the involvement of stakeholders and fishing communities in decision making on conservation and management of the fisheries resources. The preparation of the resource user organizations and stakeholders for effective participation in the management of the fisheries, particularly in co-management institutional arrangements, falls within the purview of this subproject.
- 7) The creation of a regional institution- the Regional Fisheries Mechanism (RFM)-to succeed CFRAMP after the latter closes down in 2001.

Most of the institutional provisions listed above, particularly the formation and strengthening of Resource User Organizations and their preparation for the tasks involved in Co-management, Fisheries Management Planning, and Fisheries Advisory Committees, will be further addressed in the context of developing co-management institutions.

3. THE REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CO-MANAGEMENT

The concept of Ideal Types is being used as a methodological tool, a device for capturing an image of reality which is close enough but not the actual reality. It enables us to ask a crucial question: How closely do the institutions approximate the ideal type? (Hansen, 1976; Chicolte, 1981). It will enable us to describe and explain how particular institutions are expected to function, and by analyzing the available evidence, to differentiate the ideal situation from how the institutions have actually operated, or will operate. The institutional structures and their operations will be analyzed under three sub-headings, namely: Formation and Strengthening of Resource User Organizations, Creating Community-level Co-management Institutions, and Creating Macro-level Co-management Institutions.

3.1 Formation and Strengthening of Resource User Organizations

The concept of co-management, as used in this paper, means the sharing of authority and responsibilities between central administrators and resource user groups and other stakeholders, both at the macro (state) level and the micro (community) level, and 'how they interact in practice' (Berkes, George and Preston, 1991). This involves the participation of resource user groups and communities in the decision making process and in the planning and implementation of conservation and management programs. There is therefore the need for strong resource user organizations to function effectively and participate in management planning and in decision making fora.

From the ideal typical model perspective, these should be formal groups formed from members' own initiative, to address common goal(s) or issue(s), on a more or less permanent basis. Such resilience will be achieved if the members share common goals and objectives with which the general membership identify, and if attractive incentives exist to justify members' continuance as active members of the organization. The organization should also agree upon and share a set of norms or rules to guide behaviours and relationships, including sanctions which are applied without discrimination. This means the maintenance of internal democracy. They should develop internal mechanisms for conflict resolution. The existence of stable sets of roles and role expectations will result in observable patterns of interaction and behaviour among the general membership.

Above all, these organizations should be 'Mutual Benefit Associations' (Blau & Scott, 1962), which will allow the rank and file to enjoy on an equal basis from the stream of benefits accruing to the organization. The reality is that the majority of the existing fisherfolk organizations in the region are far below the ideal situation. They range between 'Encounter Groups' (formed deliberately as 'instant' primary groups, to address a threatening problem or issue or to take advantage of government subsidies') and 'Sustained Associations' (Stebbins, 1987:175). The majority will fall between these extremes, more to the proximity of encounter groups, than towards sustained associations. The Belize Fishermen's Cooperative Association and the Guyana Cooperatives are perhaps the only mass resource users organizations which would approximate the sustained association model.

The following are the observed shortfalls of the majority of the organizations:

- 1) They include only a minority of the active fisherfolk in their countries.
- 2) There is lack of incentives for the rank and file, since most of the benefits from government subsidies, such as duty free concessions on fuel, gear and equipment, and other services rendered by the organizations tend to benefit only the boat owners.
- 3) Apathy levels are high and the participatory rates in the activities promoted by the organizations are extremely low, particularly between Annual General Meetings (AGM).
- 4) Control of the day-to-day administrative functions fall in the hands of a few, resulting in the non-democratic control by the boatowners and other non-fishers.
- 5) The capacity to manage the resources even on a co-management basis, to participate in and to advocate for involvement in the decision making process, is greatly wanting.

3.2 Creating Community Level Co-Management Institutions

Through the Community Involvement & Education subproject of CFRAMP, public awareness programs and education/training/workshop programs are conducted to build up the capacity of both the Fisheries Field Officers (who interact with the fisherfolk on a day-to-day basis) and the fisherfolk organizations. The Fisheries Field Officers have been trained to organize these activities in the fishing communities for the benefit of the fisherfolk organizations. CFRAMP provides technical and financial support for these programs, and has begun organizing exchange programs for fishers, whereby groups of members of organizations converge in other countries, to observe, learn from and share knowledge and experience with their counterparts elsewhere, and also to observe progressive projects being implemented. A combination of print media educational materials (eg. posters, brochures, fact sheets) video documentaries, and the mass media are utilized in the process as motivational and instructional tools.

The organizations are also being encouraged and assisted to diversify their economic activities in order to create avenues which will increase the benefits accruing to the rank and file. This includes the creation of alternative income generation schemes. The emerging results are quite encouraging.

Where local resource user groups have been sufficiently strengthened and their capacities built up, and the ecological and physical conditions are suitable, the establishment of co-management schemes could follow. A number of Community Based co-Management schemes at different levels of maturation are emerging (Brown, 1996). These include the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) scheme and the production of Sea Urchin and Sea Moss in St. Lucia; the Co-management of the Sea Urchin in Barbados; the Portland Bight Co-Management Project co-managed by an NGO, the South Coast Conservation Authority (SCCF) and fisherfolk organizations in Jamaica; the Discovery Bay Fisheries Improvement Project, co-managed by the University of West Indies and local fisherfolk organizations also in Jamaica; and a host of Marine Reserve Projects, located throughout the region. Most of these projects develop multi stakeholder local management bodies to manage them at the peak of their maturation.

The approach being advocated by the Community Involvement & Education subproject is to integrate suitable elements of the traditional management practices with modern elements of resource management. This will involve the restoration of communal property rights; the

promulgation of legislation to give legal backing to the communal property regimes; the delegation of authority to the local resource management bodies to pass by-laws, suited to the conditions and circumstances of the localities, including rules and regulations to back the relevant traditional resource management practices (Brown, 1996:17-18).

Although these developments are encouraging, it should be made clear that the majority of fisherfolk organizations and even some of the fisheries administrations are still preoccupied with concerns relating to fisheries development and technology transfer, rather than to shift focus to the conservation and management thrust, which is the order of the day. Such deeply rooted attitudes take time to respond to change.

3.3 Creating Macro-Level Co-Management Institutions

The two processes of consultation and involvement of resource user groups and other stakeholders in the planning of resource management strategies, are indicators that central authorities might be signaling a political willingness to share the power and responsibilities of decision making with peripheral groups. It has been stated earlier in this paper that St. Lucia holds the enviable position of having a unique record of institutionalizing the consultation and participatory resource use planning, and establishing structures for the promotion of co-management. The past two years have seen this tradition being emulated by many other CFRAMP participating countries, under the Community Involvement & Education subproject.

Two of the major planned outputs of CFRAMP are to assist the participating countries in formulating Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and to establish Fisheries Advisory Committees (FACs). The procedure followed were:

- 1) Draft FMPs were produced by a consultant who examined existing documents, including the OECS Harmonised Fisheries Legislation, and consulted with subject matter specialists, fisheries administrators and officers, stakeholders in the fishing industry and representatives of fisherfolk organizations in the countries.
- 2) The new Fisheries Advisory Committees, which were to be formed since 1994, were to review this draft FMPs and introduce some changes. Since this body should be generally representative of the stakeholders in the country, their views were to reflect the popular views in the industry. Moreover, such bodies have subject matter specialists in some of the technical areas covered in the document. Since most of the countries were dragging their feet in forming the FACs, the consultation process skipped this stage in most countries. Outstanding consultation at this stage were held in Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua & Barbuda and partially in other countries.
- 3) The next stage was the Public Consultation process whereby several community level meetings were held at which community groups, fishers organizations and other stakeholder groups made an input. This was the stage which was well implemented by the majority of the countries.

The finalization of the management plans therefore took on board the concerns and views of the stakeholders, following which some of the countries held further public awareness programs,

particularly highlighting the new regulations which might be generated from the final plans. This participatory process has become so popular with some of the countries, that they invited CFRAMP to support community consultation in the area of conflict resolution among fishers. At least three of such activities were held in Grenada, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Dominica in the previous year, to resolve conflicts among beach seine fishers and to revive old traditional rules and regulations. These are to be transformed into legal regulations for which violators could be prosecuted in the courts.

It is through the Fisheries Advisory Committees that the institutionalization of co-management at the macro-level could be ensured. Since membership is mainly drawn from the stakeholder groups, among other things, the expected outcomes are that they would,

- 1) bring the stakeholders and fishers organizations into the mainstream of decision making
- 2) consolidate the state-industry linkage and act as a forum for addressing their needs
- 3) provide them with the opportunity to contribute to fisheries assessment and management
- 4) contribute to the capacity building process through information exchange and dissemination
- 5) bridge the gap between the theory and practice of co-management
- 6) infuse the invaluable ingredients of participatory democracy, representativeness and accountability.
- 7) ultimately, provide the basis of a collaborative institution with decision making authority.

Areas of possible constraints are as follows: *

- 1) The provision which places ultimate decision making powers in the hands of the Minister, and the rigid consensus building proviso for decision making might encourage increasing use of discretionary powers by the political directorate, and could result in advice on crucial and controversial issues being routinely ignored or overridden by the Minister. The old FAC of Grenada became inactive because of "fishermen's dissatisfaction with various government policies", apparently introduced without prior consultation.
- 2) Since members are not directly selected or elected by their constituents, but are appointed by the Minister, representatives might not feel obliged to be accountable to their constituencies, and it might also lead to the appointment of persons on grounds of political affiliation. The Antigua & Barbuda FAC of old, became non-functional in January 1995 because of these reasons.
- 3) Unbalanced membership might result in domination of a few influential voices and the drowning of the 'small voices' of less powerful stakeholder groups, resulting in frustration and apathy. The Guyana FAC of old, "stopped meeting (partly) because the trawling companies dominated the meetings with shrimp issues...."

Regardless of the likely teething problems the institutionalized FACs might have, it is a policy which must be supported to promote the involvement of the fishing communities and the industry in the decision making process and to lend more meaning to the co-management of the fisheries resources in the region.

* The information in this sub-section were derived from the Draft and Final FMP and FAC Plans for all the countries prepared by CFRAMP.

CONCLUSION

The central thesis of this paper is that the building and strengthening of institutional structures provide for both sustainability and change, which are essential ingredients for the operation of co-management regimes. The region is on the verge of moving from the centrally controlled administration of resource management to decentralized forms of conservation and resource management, and inter- state co-operative management of shared stocks. Old attitudes which cling to the fishing effort expansion and the transfer of technology mode, will take sometime to give way to the order of the day. The public awareness and education programmes for resource user groups and other stakeholders should continue to have the desired effects of building the capacities of the target audiences, and preparing them for the tasks of participating effectively in the management of the fisheries resources of the region.

Significant progress has been made towards the creation of social institutions which could favour the establishment of co-management systems in the region; the latter manifested at both the state level and the local level. The creation of community based co-management structures is still in its infancy, although the progress so far made is encouraging. The implementation of the Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) and the formation of the Fisheries Advisory Committees (FACs) through the newly embraced participatory approach to resource management, will in the long run, go a long way to enhance the sustainable development and management of the regional resources.

There are two problems which need to be tackled. The first is the structural and operational weakness of the existing resource user organizations. This reduces their ability to effectively participate in the decision making and management planning processes. The combined strategy of public sensitization and education programs and the development of incentive schemes from which benefit streams will accrue to the generality of the fishing population will go a long way to improve the situation.

The second issue has to do with the uncertainties concerning the genuine-ness of the political directorates' readiness to effect the devolution of central authority to peripheral entities, for the creation of institutional structures which will further promote the decentralization of the decision making process, and lead to the mushrooming of functional co-management institutional structures. The attainment of the sustainable development and management of the fisheries resources of the region will be greatly enhanced if additional solutions to these problems are found as soon as possible.

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