Living with the Sea

Community fisheries management for conservation and cohesion

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1. Aim

This study attempts to examine thoroughly the social interactions within the social-ecological system that constitutes a local fishery, and describe and explain the intra-fishery relations. In most cases, science neglects the human factor in the evaluation of an ecological system, even though humans constitute one of the basic components of ecosystems and human behavior is a major drive of change of the ecosystem health. For this reason, it is important to rethink the way we perceive marine resources and revisit the prevailing management practices, in order to capitalise on the potential of fisheries for sustainability.

2. Data & Methods

Two case studies are examined, one from Japan and one from Greece, in order to identify differences in attitudes towards management that stem for the set of institutions established in each area and the level of local participation in decision-making, and to explore how these differences affect the success of the current management schemes. By comparing the two case study areas, the study aims at identifying differences and similarities in the respective conservation and management plans and activities and evaluating the management outcomes.

3. Results

In Japan, where fisheries are managed primarily locally, with fishermen being the core of the decision-making process, the management results are much more satisfactory than in the case of highly centrally controlled fisheries in Greece. In the current global system, industrialised fisheries prevail, marginalising thus small-scale fisheries dependent communities, and a strict focus towards ever growing profits without any sustainability concerns.

4. Conclusion

There is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in the way that fisheries are being managed in many countries, especially in the EU. Inclusion of local communities in the decision-making processes and a diffusion of management responsibilities at the local level are necessary in order to maintain the sustainability of fish stocks and the longevity of fishing communities.