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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Local Practices vs. Formal Regulations in the Management of Marine Resources

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Abstract

Attentions are directed towards re-engagement of traditional tools in the management of natural resources as the issue of sustainability gets more critical. However, caution has to be taken in this regard due to the complexity of the traditional tools' motivation. We reviewed respective literature in the field of fisheries in order to analyse the motivation of informal regulations and their relative effect in marine resource management. Eventually, incentives which determine the application and effectiveness of local regulations are not conservation of marine resources nor purely economic motivations, but hovers around the maintenance of social relationships. Formal and informal regulations of 12 cases of fisheries management worldwide were reviewed. Also studies from other sectors of common-pool resource management (forestry and pasturing) has been covered (7 cases) to reinforce the findings. The motivation of indigenous practices of each case was analysed from anthropological point of view and the socio-economic drivers of change in the regulation system has been classified. The socio-economic drivers consist of: food consumption change, environmental awareness of stakeholders, competition level of fisheries (considering number and characteristics of fisheries and scarcity of resources).

Benefiting from Ostrom's framework towards common-pool resource management, we will discuss in this study the problems that each, the local practices and formal regulations, address. Local practices mainly seek personal socio-economic stability, while formal regulations impose restrictions in order to stabilise the national economy. We conclude that, although in some cases the outcomes of one party's decision may interest the other party but they are not necessarily, vertically or horizontally, connected. Therefore, one should bear in mind that participatory or bottom-up approaches to policy making in natural resources management is not a simple engagement of natural resources' beneficiaries into the decision making process but it's a negotiation between all stakeholders.

Keywords: Social relationships, sustainability of marine resources, traditional regulations