

GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALIZATION REFORMS IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES – AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE¹

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Abstract

Relying on a framework that highlights different dimensions of ‘decentralization’, this paper reviews fisheries co-management programmes as they have been implemented over the last 20 years in sub-Saharan Africa. It shows that in most cases, fisheries co-management programmes failed to improve governance, but simply altered the distribution of power and responsibility amongst the different stakeholders. In this new context, the co-management programmes were implemented often at the detriment of the direct end-users (fisherfolk) who benefit from those reforms only in a limited number of cases. Challenging the current narrative that presents participation as the central condition for governance reforms, the review instead highlights the importance of downward accountability. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations.

Introduction

Today, decentralized governance is the overarch-

ing paradigm in development and public policy arenas. Decentralization and community involvement are present as necessary conditions for effective development (Rondinelli *et al.* 1989, Manor 1999, World Bank 2002). Consequently, a large number of programmes and policy reforms promoted by international development agencies and NGOs have been carried out recently in many developing countries, with the explicit objective to support decentralization reforms (Manor 1999). Applied to a wide range of domains and economic sectors, these reforms have also been described or labelled under a wide range of terms, such as democratic decentralization, participatory development, devolution, indigenous management, user-participation, co-management, etc (Ribot 2003).

In the development literature, the arguments in favour of participation and decentralization are not simply based on economic and administrative efficiency. They are often associated with promises of progress in public accountability, environmental sustainability and empowerment of

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poor and vulnerable groups (Manor 1999, World Bank 2002). Amongst other things, decentralization is therefore perceived as one possible solution for the improvement of rural population livelihoods and even as a means for poverty alleviation (Crook and Sverrisson 1999). The most common argument is that decentralization is by definition a mechanism of ‘inclusion’ and ‘empowerment’. Because it involves bringing government closer to the governed, in both the spatial and institutional senses, decentralized governments, it is said, will be more knowledgeable about, and hence more responsive to, the needs of the poorest and marginalized people. This mechanism of inclusion is expected to lead to empowerment and pro-poor policies and outcomes (Crook and Sverrisson 1999, Manor 1999).

In small-scale fisheries, after several decades of a strong-centralized management approach, ‘decentralization’ has also become the new paradigm (Pomeroy 2001, Viswanathan *et al.* 2003). Following the view of influential scholars who advocated for governance reform, the consensus in the policy discourse is now largely in favour of fisheries management decentralization, either in the form of co-management or community-based fisheries management (CBFM) reforms (Pomeroy and Rivera-Guieb 2005). Almost every country in the developing world has now explicitly endorsed co-management or some form of CBFM as one of its main national fisheries policy objectives.

However, as will be argued in the next section, governance reforms in fisheries seem to have followed an internal, independent process that has evolved, for its main part, parallel to the shift in

governance paradigm that has characterized the other socio-economic sectors in the course of the 1980s.

Origins of ‘decentralization’ in fisheries

The consensus on decentralization reform in fisheries has been largely influenced by the ‘community-based’ approach. According to this paradigm, the existence of ‘pro-social norms’ shared by individuals within the community ensures the superiority of local governance over other systems (see, for instance, Folke *et al.* 1998). In particular, it is asserted that local governance, through ‘moral economy’ and social self-regulatory mechanisms, will guarantee the economic efficiency, social equitability and environmental sustainability of the system. Although these three aspects – efficiency, equitability, sustainability – are sometimes assumed to occur simultaneously, one central feature of this paradigm is the emphasis put on the capacity of the community to use and care for the surrounding natural resources in a ‘sustainable’ way:

“The value and wisdom of [community-based management] lies in its recognition that communities, by whatever definition we use, are potentially the best resource managers, since they have the biggest stake in the sustainability of natural resources.” (Rivera and Newkirk 1997, p. 74.)

Under the community paradigm approach, the rationale for decentralization is therefore a

pragmatic one. Local people are more familiar with a given area than outsiders (including the staff of central agencies who are located in the often distant capital city), and local communities have a broader understanding of the environment and, in particular, of the specificities of the local ecosystems and natural resources they depend upon. Furthermore, it is frequently argued that local participation ensures self-interest, without which management efforts and investments are likely to fail.

One of the inspirations for such influence has been the ‘discovery’ by anthropologists and others, in the 1970s, of traditional systems of fisheries management practiced by local communities in Oceania, Africa, Latin America, North America, as well in Japan (Berkes 1989, McCay 1993). By the beginning of the 1980s, statements regarding the desirability of reviving or adapting traditional community institutions of fisheries management to meet modern needs were being made in a number of influential papers published by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Bank and ICLARM. By the early 1990s, those ideas had become the received wisdom as far as the management of artisanal fisheries was concerned.

The theory, however, that played a pivotal role in the shift of paradigm in fisheries sciences away from a centralized management system to community-based – and then co-management – approach is the theory of common property regimes (CPR). Although one primary impetus of the CPR analysts has been to denounce the

conclusions promoted by Garrett Hardin in his article *The tragedy of the commons* (Hardin 1968)², their underlying intention was also to promote decentralization and local-level management reforms. For instance, Ostrom’s very influential work *Governing the commons, the evolution of institutions for collective actions* (Ostrom 1990) has been in fact written in tandem with her participation in the “Decentralization: Finance and management project” sponsored by USAID.³ Similarly, Berkes, in his book *Common Property Resources*, leaves little doubt about the actual motives of his research:

“The major area of emphasis here is on communal resource management systems. The ‘tragedy of the commons’ model overemphasizes the solutions of privatization and central administrative controls at the expense of local-level controls and self-management. This book attempts to redress the balance, inviting resource managers and development planners to integrate local-level management (‘planning with the people’) into the existing common-property resource-management framework.” (Berkes 1989, p. 2.)

In addition to Berkes and Ostrom, many other scholars have been instrumental in the re-orientation of the fisheries governance paradigm over the past 20 years (e.g. Pomeroy 1991, Sen and Nielsen 1996). It is recognised that the policy consensus in favour of fisheries decentralization has now been accepted in a large number of de-

2. See, for instance, Feeny *et al.* (1996).

3. cf Ostrom (1990, p. xvii).

veloped countries (e.g. Denmark, Netherlands, Canada), but also in an increasing number of developing countries, in Africa (e.g. Uganda, Mali, Malawi, Senegal, Ghana), in Southeast Asia (e.g. the Philippines, Malaysia), and in other parts of the world (e.g. the Fiji Islands).

The conventional approach to co-management: a plea for more participation

In fisheries literature, the most frequently quoted framework used to analyze decentralization – and, in particular, its co-management form – is the framework proposed by McCay and Berkes (McCay 1993, and Berkes 1994) – see Figure 1. The core idea of the ‘McCay-Berkes’ framework is that co-management is characterized by various partnership arrangements distinguished

from one another by the “degrees of power-sharing and integration of local and centralized management system” (Pomeroy and Berkes 1997, p. 466). Depending on these different levels of power devolution, five major generic types of co-management arrangements can be defined: Intrusive, Consultative, Cooperative, Advisory, and Informative – to which the two classic types of management, i.e. centralized and community self-management, can be added. In its ‘extended’ version (e.g. Pomeroy 1995) the framework includes seven degrees of power-sharing, associated with seven types of management arrangements (Table 1).

The McCay-Berkes framework is useful to compare fisheries co-management arrangements and a large number of comparative analyses that were proposed in the literature have indeed used

Figure 1. McCay – Berkes co-management framework (redrawn from McCay 1993), distinguishing different degrees of participation (power-sharing) between end-users and centralized management institutions.

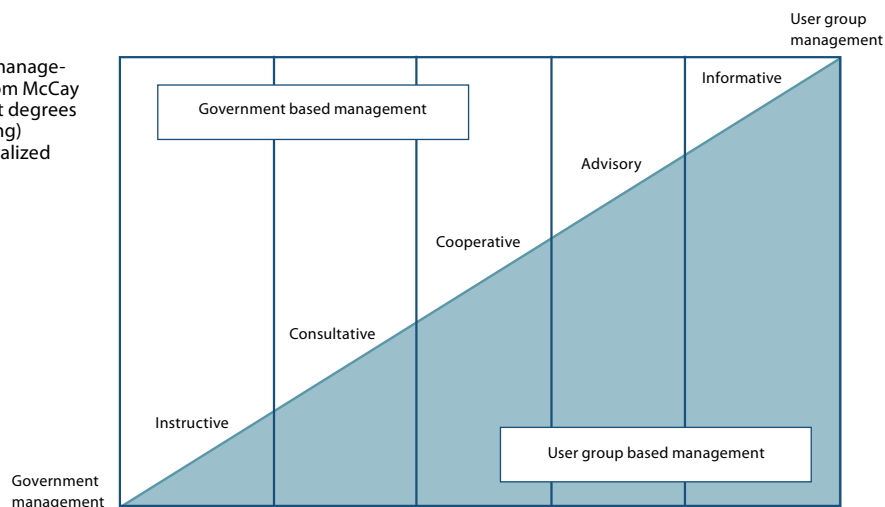


Table 1. Typology of fisheries management arrangements.
 Source: McCay (1993) and Berks (1994), modified by Pomeroy (1995).

Type	Description
Type A(+): Centralized management	The state takes all decisions of policy and does not engage in dialogue with fisheries stakeholders.
Type A: Instructive	There is only minimal exchange of information between government and users. This type of co-management regime is only different from centralized management in the sense that the mechanisms exist for dialogue with users, but the process itself tends to be government informing users on the decisions which they plan to make.
Type B: Consultative	Mechanisms exist for governments to consult with users but all decisions are taken by government.
Type C: Cooperative	This type of co-management is where government and users cooperate together as equal partners in decision-making. For some authors this is the definition of co-management.
Type D: Advisory	Users advise government of decisions to be taken and government endorses these decisions.
Type E: Informative	Government has delegated authority to make decisions to user groups who are responsible for informing government of these decisions.
Type E(+): Self-governance and self-management	Communities or other stakeholders take decisions about fisheries management and do consult or inform government or state laws.

this framework for this purpose.⁴ However, the classification on which it is built is merely descriptive. It does not offer any analytical ‘handles’ for identifying or assessing the underlying mechanisms associated with the changes induced by co-management reforms. Consequently, using this framework for anything other than a descriptive purpose may be misleading. In particular, because the core element which structures the framework is based on a gradient of power-sharing, using this framework as an ‘explanatory tool’ leads to considering the degree of power devolved as the key (explanatory) factor and may in particular lead analysts to associate failure(s) of co-management with too little devolution/participation.

Reviewing the literature⁴ reveals, indeed, that most co-management studies conclude that there is generally not enough participation in the ongoing fisheries reforms and regret that too little responsibility is passed down to the community. Pomeroy, for instance (2001, p. 135), claims that “Many attempts at decentralization have not delivered a real sharing of resource management power”. One reason for this perceived failure is that “Fisheries administrators may be reluctant to relinquish their authority, or portions of it, and governments are often opposed to decentralization” (Pomeroy 1993, p.14–15). This is echoed by Sverdrup-Jensen and Nielsen (1998, p. 11), who comment, “Under the present management arrangements situation, user groups will often be

4. See, for instance, the many papers on fishery co-management in the Proceedings of the Bi-Annual Conferences of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, available on-line at <http://www.indiana.edu/~iascp/past.html>.

patronized in possible disputes with government. The latter seems generally reluctant to devolve power and bestow legal rights and authority in fisheries management to user groups". As Chirwa (1998, p. 69) points out, "The [Fisheries Department's] position of patronage means that the local user communities are the recipients rather than the initiators of decisions. They, themselves, are managed, together with their resources, by the Fisheries Department."

The level of devolution is, however, only one dimension to consider within the process of participation. As emphasized by Cohen and Uphoff (1980), many other important criteria should also be taken into account when evaluating a governance reform, e.g. the *kind* of participation (participation in decision-making; in implementation; in benefits, in evaluation) or *how* the process occurs (the basis of participation, its form, its extent, its effects) – see Table 2. In other words, assessing the participation process – and in the present case the fisheries co-management process – through the degree of participation or the level of devolution is not sufficient. This

mono-dimensional conceptualization of the process reduces governance reform to the degree of participation and does not necessarily capture the main factor(s) explaining the degree of success or failure of decentralization reforms.

This point was confirmed empirically by Neiland and Béné (2003) who conducted a review of 50 case-studies of fisheries across 39 countries. Using the information provided by the literature, they analysed the management systems of these fisheries and assessed in particular the performance of each of the 50 fisheries, using three criteria: economic efficiency, ecological sustainability, and social equity. At the same time, they categorized these fisheries by the degree of participation of their stakeholders in the decision-making process, using the seven categories of power-sharing as defined by McCay and Berkes – see Table 1 above. Their analysis shows that there is no tangible correlation between the level of devolution of responsibility in the fishery and the actual performance of the fishery. In other words, the degree of participation did not explain the performance of the fisheries: some fisheries characterized by highly centralized management system were doing well, while other, more participatory, fisheries were unable to generate good management outcomes – and vice versa.

In fact, as Brett notes, "Maximum participation may not always be possible or efficient" (2000, p. 1). Each fishery in each society has its own 'balance point' on the scale of management intervention and "Some fisheries are more effectively managed by governments or intergovernmental bodies [while] some are more effectively

Table 2. Cohen and Uphoff's (1980) classification of participation.

Types of participation	Participation in decision-making Participation in implementation Participation in benefits Participation in evaluation
Who participates	Local residents Local leaders Government personnel Foreign personnel
How is participation occurring?	Basis of participation Form of participation Extent of participation Effect of participation

managed by local communities and non-government bodies, with various mixtures in between” (Adams, 1996, p. 339). Thus, advocating for a systematic strong participation by the fishery community may not be the correct approach and the issue of *how much* power is shared may be the wrong question. Instead, issues of *how* this power is shared and *who* receive(s) this power may be more important.

The need for a new analytical framework

From a political science perspective, a governance reform may take several forms, involve various agents and induce changes of different intensities at different levels. Broadly speaking, three main

types of reforms are relevant to the discussion of co-management and governance reforms in fisheries: devolution, deconcentration and decentralization.

Applied to the fisheries context, each of these types of reforms leads to different patterns of empowerment over fisheries resources (Figure 2). *Devolution* refers to the transfer of rights and responsibilities from the government to representatives of user groups at the local level (fisher organizations or alike). *Deconcentration* involves changes in governance where the decision-making authority is transferred to lower-level units of bureaucracy or government line agency (provincial and/or district level of the Department of fisheries), while *decentralization* induces transfers of decision-making authority and financial

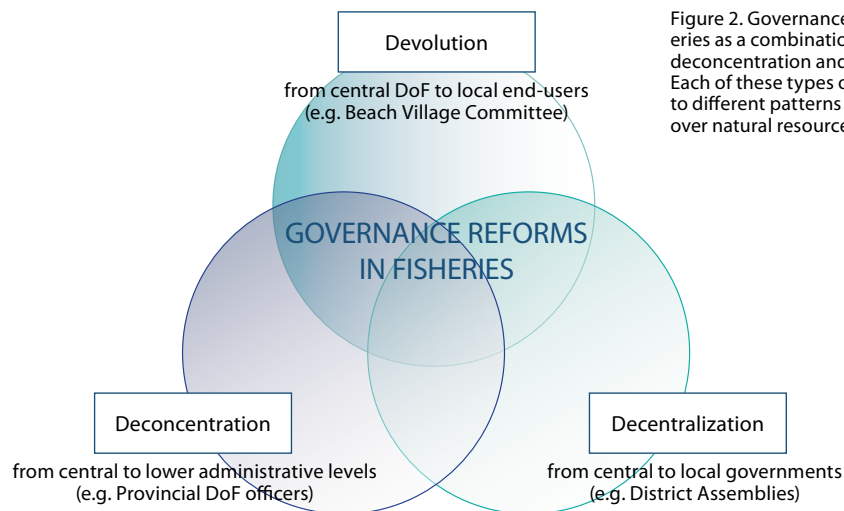


Figure 2. Governance reforms in fisheries as a combination of devolution, deconcentration and decentralization. Each of these types of reforms leads to different patterns of empowerment over natural resources.

capacities related to the fishery management to lower (provincial, district or communal) levels of government bodies. In this framework, note that co-management as conventionally defined in the fishery literature refers to devolution reform.

In many instances, one may argue that the conceptual distinction made here is quite theoretical and may not reflect the empirical reality. In particular, fishery reforms may appear to be a combination of these three types of reform.⁵ Overall, however, the distinction is useful as it provides a relevant analytical framework to explore some of the main changes that are induced by the redistribution of power amongst the fishery stakeholders. In particular, it draws attention to the following key question: which actors are empowered with natural resource uses and management decisions? As recalled by James Ribot, this question is critical since experience has shown that “whether the transfer of natural resource power within or into the local institutional landscape promotes or undermines representative, accountable and equitable processes depends on which local actors are being entrusted with discretionary powers over natural resources” (Ribot 2003, p. 55).

Lessons from Africa

Drawing upon the analytical framework described above, a series of five fishery governance evaluations were conducted simultaneously in five African countries: Cameroon, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, and Zambia, with the specific objective

to assess the various co-management programmes that have been – and are still being – implemented in these countries (Béné *et al.* 2008).

Synthesizing the findings of these five evaluations into one single message might be quite uneasy, as the overall outcomes of the co-management programmes that they reviewed are rather complex and ‘patchy’. In fact, no clear consensus seems to emerge. Some analysts would certainly prefer to emphasize the few success stories that have occurred amongst those co-management projects, but a more rigorous assessment would also highlight some of the less successful outcomes of these co-management experiences. Ultimately, however, the core issue is about governance and the central question remains: Has co-management, as it has been implemented so far in Africa, improved the governance of small-scale fisheries for the benefit of the fisherfolk?

From the information collected by the five assessments, it seems that the answer to this question is: “not necessarily”. While one can hardly dispute that the new governance system introduced by co-management was genuinely intended at improving the governance in fisheries, in practice, however, the outcome has not systematically been positive. In the majority of the co-management programme reviewed by the five documents, the reforms – most of which had been donor-driven and top-down in implementation – failed to effectively *improve* governance. Instead, they simply *modified* the status quo by altering the distribution of power and responsibility between the main fisheries stakeholders.

5. For instance, direct users (fisher representative and/or local Department of Fishery, DoF) may be invited to lead the new management commission created by the local government as part of the newly-decentralized management of the fisheries.

In particular, an interesting result that emerged from the five reviews is the fact that deconcentration is predominant over devolution in the majority of the co-management programmes that were evaluated. If one accepts that the five countries included in this assessment provide a reasonable representative ‘sub-sample’ of the rest of African fisheries, it seems therefore that in many countries the establishment of fishery co-management has led to a partial redistribution of power toward the local (provincial/district) levels of the Department of Fishery (DoF). Overall this finding means that, although co-management has been recurrently presented in the literature as the way to devolve power towards the end-users of the fisheries, in reality the ‘balance’ is still very much in favour of some form of government control – essentially through the DoF. What the reviews of the five countries showed, however, is that this control is becoming increasingly deconcentrated, probably as a result of the continuous pressure imposed by the donors on the governments to show some forms of “good governance”.

The DoFs have not been the only stakeholders that benefited from the reforms. In the ‘fluid’ context of rapid institutional changes created by the co-management reforms, the traditional local authorities (village chiefs and alike) have also been usually quite successful at moving forward their own agenda. However, the institutional ‘paths’ through which these traditional authorities have managed to enter into the new landscape are varied and complex. In some cases, this resulted indirectly from constitutional or legislative changes induced by the decentral-

ization that is implemented – sometimes simultaneously with with, but – independently from co-management reform. This has been the case in Niger for instance, where traditional authorities have been included *de jure* in the decentralization process, thus allowing these traditional leaders to regain or reinforce their past influence. In other cases, this resulted from their own capacities to interfere and ‘capture’ part of the financial and/or political power that was being delegated through the co-management process, using their own existing influence and network, or sometimes through strategic alliance with other local elites or the local DoF staff.

The last important result highlighted by the five reviews concerns decentralization. Although decentralization reforms have been widely promoted in a large majority of countries in Africa (with the notable exception of Nigeria), the reviews showed very little evidence of any positive interactions between small-scale fisheries and the new local government bodies that were created through these decentralization reforms. At ‘worst’, no effective integration of the small-scale fisheries in the agenda of the local authorities takes place; at ‘best’ the relationship is reduced to the taxes that are levied by the local governments – or some of their decentralized agencies – in order to extract some of the rent generated by the fishery sector.

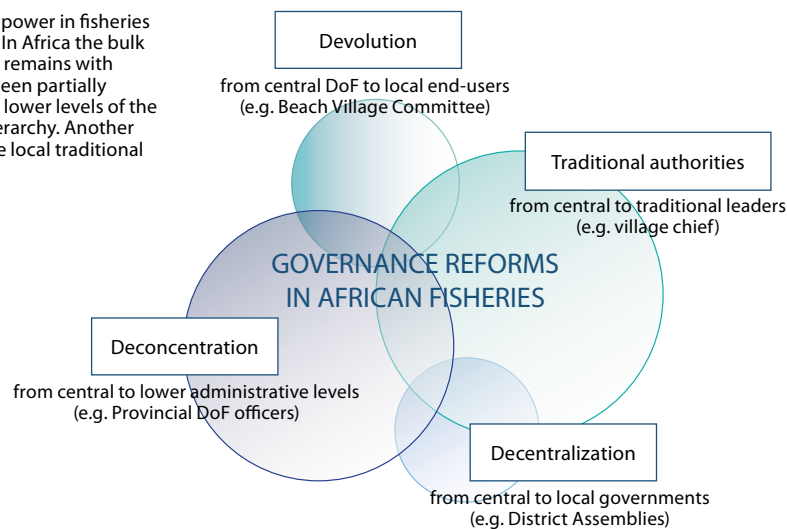
In this context, it should not come as a surprise to hear that the real beneficiaries of the co-management reforms have rarely been the actual end-users of the resources, i.e. the small-scale fishers and fish processors. In fact as evidenced

through the five assessments but also some of the older literature (e.g. Hara *et al.* 2002), many of these fishers (in particular migrant fishers) have often been excluded from the new co-management arrangements. Instead, the reforms opened ‘opportunity windows’ for other actors (mainly at the local level) to reshape the institutional landscape in ways that allow them to reinforce their own socio-political, institutional or economic power, often at the detriment of the legitimate end-users of the resource. This ‘instrumentalisation’ of the co-management (as initially described by Viswanathan *et al.* 2003), is not really surprising, as it simply reproduces the social process frequently described in political economy through which one group of actors (usually the

most powerful, local elite) shape the institutional landscape to create a new status quo favourable to their own interests.

Revisiting the framework presented in Figure 2 with these different conclusions leads us to a modified representation of the governance reforms as they have effectively been taking place in small-scale fisheries in Africa (Figure 3). At the present time, it seems fair to say that the bulk of the power still remains with the DoF, but has been partially delegated to lower levels of the hierarchy. This new arrangement is beneficial to the top level of the administration as it successfully transfers the load of the monitoring and enforcement to the lower-level representatives (local staff), while maintaining the main responsibili-

Figure 3. Share of power in fisheries co-management. In Africa the bulk of the new power remains with the DoF but has been partially transferred to the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. Another major player is the local traditional leaders.



ties and power at the top level through strong upward accountability mechanisms. The other major beneficiaries of these reforms are the traditional local leaders who have received another large part of this ‘decentralized’ power through *de jure* decentralization legislation or through *de facto* coercion or collusion with the local DoF staff. Finally, the real ‘losers’ are the end-users (fisherfolk) who have gained only partial control over the resources.

Conclusions

A series of conclusions emerges from this analysis:

Moving beyond the co-management paradigm

One of the most fundamental (and urgent) challenges for the academic and donor communities in the next few years will be to move beyond the current co-management narrative, recognizing that the existing model (crystallized in the McCay-Berkes framework) does not provide an adequate framework to tackle the more fundamental issues impeding the sector in its attempts to move toward improved governance. “More participation” is not the panacea. In fact, such a view tends to reduce the issues to an overly simplistic one-dimensional problem, while governance reforms in fisheries are in reality a much more complex, multi-dimensional process.

Participation, yes but more importantly accountability

Ensuring or enhancing the participation of the end-users and other legitimate stakeholders in the decision making process is important – as correctly pointed out by Berkes (1989), Ostrom (1990), Pomeroy (1991), and others. The involvement of these end-users is expected, in particular, to increase their sense of responsibility and ownership, thus facilitating the self-enforcement of the management system and, in principle, the ‘sustainability’ and equity of the system. However, as highlighted by many experts (e.g. Devas and Grant 2003), participation without downward accountability is not effective. The involvement of every individual fisher in the decision making-process (that is, direct democracy) is not possible as it would increase *ad infinitum* the transaction costs of the political process. One has therefore to rely on indirect democracy, using representatives of the different stakeholder groups. What recent political and social sciences research on decentralization has shown, however, is that, any direct devolution of power to these representatives is likely to become a source of misuse and abuse, unless these representatives are strongly downwardly accountable to the rest of the community (Agrawal and Ribot 1999, Ribot 2003).

Focusing on implementation issues

Co-management – and more broadly governance reforms – are high on the agenda of most African

countries. It would therefore be misleading to present the failure of co-management reforms as the consequence of lack of official political will. Co-management failure comes essentially from implementation failures. There is therefore an urgent need for academics to turn their attention toward the context-specific nature of co-management implementation. While this has been highlighted many times, there is no 'one sizes fits all' solution and the success (or failure) of a co-management programme will essentially depend on local details: the integrity of the local DoF staff and traditional leaders, the balance between the different ethnic and/or socio-cultural groups of fishers (e.g. migrant versus indigenous), the presence of local NGOs, and in particular the pre-reform relationship between all these different groups and individuals. Note that very little in these failures/successes has to do with the resource itself. Most of the issues are institutional.

Recognizing the political economy of co-management reforms

In direct relation to the point above, it is crucial to recognize that the socio-institutional landscapes where governance reforms in general and co-management in particular are implemented are not 'empty'. These landscapes are in fact the result of a constantly evolving political process that reflects the current distribution of power between different actors (essentially at local level) and their control over the resources. The introduction of co-management has been perceived – and instrumentalized – by these different actors as an new opportunity for them to continue

to shape the socio-institutional landscape in a way that allows them to pursue or even increase their political, social or economic advantages. In this continuous (open or more subtle) struggle, the poorest and most marginalized of the fishing community have generally been the losers as they usually enter the game with some disadvantages.

The recognition of this political economy dimension has strong implications for the way co-management should be planned and implemented. In particular it means that a good understanding of the current 'landscape' and of the current interactions between the different groups likely to be directly or indirectly involved (or excluded) by co-management is essential before the first step of the reform is actually initiated. This preliminary analysis should help predict the changes that are likely to occur as a result of the reform, and thus provide appropriate guidance and recommendations on how to limit the 'unexpected' and/or negative effects.

The 'unavoidable' traditional leaders
Although this is not exclusive to Africa – as many Pacific fisheries also seem to be in the same situation – African small-scale fisheries are largely still under the strong influence of the local traditional leaders. While co-management could have been one way to reduce this influence (if one wished to do so), field data reveals that it has in fact been rather the opposite. Because co-management projects were usually poorly prepared to face this issue⁶, these traditional leaders have usually been one of the groups that systematically managed

6. We recall that this issue of traditional leaders was totally absent from the initial McCay-Berkes framework. Interestingly, it has emerged in the African literature (see e.g. Sverdrup Jensen and Nielsen 1998, or Hara *et al.* 2002).

to strengthen their local power during the establishment of co-management arrangements. This situation means that a large part of the success (or failure) of these co-management reforms depends on the *bon-vouloir* of these traditional leaders. In particular trying to ignore or bypass these traditional leaders would almost systematically prompt some retaliation.

The influence of these traditional leaders is not, however, necessarily always negative. In some cases, they have been key players ensuring the success of co-managements projects. When this happens, it is, however, essentially the result of their own integrity and commitment, rather than the consequence of the co-management arrangement itself. Until clear downward accountability mechanisms are embedded into the process, co-management projects will always depend on the personal commitment and capacities of a few key actors, leaving the overall project's fate – and its impact on the whole community – entirely in the hand of these few leading actors.

Reconsidering the balance between decentralization and devolution

As evidenced in the five assessments considered here, but also through other sources (e.g. Hara 2006), fishery co-management projects have so far suffered from poor, or even inexistent, relationships with the broader decentralized governance structures. Several reasons may be brought forward to explain this situation. Historically fishery co-management has been promoted – at least in its early stages – independently from de-

centralization (Berkes 1989, Pomeroy 1993). The fishery literature is also known to be usually remarkably sectoral in its analysis and links to rural development or other domains (e.g. water management, agriculture) are generally poor. On the other 'side' of the equation, small-scale fisheries are usually not considered as an important or relevant sector by planners and decision-makers. This situation has certainly contributed to the current rent-seeking predatory behaviour adopted by many local government agencies vis-à-vis the small-scale fisheries.

This predatory relationship does not have to become a general rule. A more equitable relationship is possible where both parties (the fishery and the local government) could benefit from one another through a much strongly integrated approach. Better supported small-scale fisheries could clearly contribute to local economic development, thus supporting more effectively the objectives of the local government through revenue generation, but also – perhaps more appropriately – through employment (labour buffer), food security and economic empowerment of women. Ironically local levels of decision making are known to be much more favourable for integrated planning than higher (national) levels. Local government should therefore be in a much better position to integrate and account for the aspirations and needs of the small-scale fisherfolks than the national planners. It is therefore the responsibility of the fisheries stakeholders (starting with the DoFs) to make this integration effective for the benefit of the resources and the end-users.

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