

REINVENTING THE TREE: *Reflections on the organic growth and creative pruning of fisheries management structures*

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ABSTRACT

Fisheries management is seen as the result of a process of organic growth and accretion driven by the realization that human ingenuity has outstripped the productive capacity of fisheries. The evolution of the symbiotic scientific and management communities is traced from an expansionist period in the 1950s and 1960s to today's climate of depletion. Stakeholder trust in the quality of the information that underpins management decisions, and a guarantee of continuing benefits, are proposed as the key elements of sustainability. Inclusivity, perspective and clarity are identified as key contributors to the perception of fairness, which alone can ensure that fishers comply with management systems. The role of fishing communities, science, government, the public and other interests in policy making is discussed. The reinvention of fisheries management cannot be entrusted to a new partnership, however comprehensive, among those directly involved in fisheries. Fish and fisheries must somehow capture the support of the general public, to whom decision makers respond. The preservation of fisheries values must become a vital consideration for industry. One way to approach this is to stop dead fish and start selling fish as a metaphor for the quality of life. Ecosystem approaches, interdisciplinary cooperation, dialogue with fishers and fishing communities and the incorporation of local ecological knowledge, may yet enable fisheries management to haul itself out of the water like Darwin's fish and peer bleakly at the fresh environment. The next evolutionary challenge is to integrate human communities into the model as more than just a component of fishing mortality.

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