# In the Power of Power: The Understated Aspect of Fisheries and Coastal Management

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As with other forms of governance, fisheries, and coastal management rests ultimately on power; power to decide, enforce, and implement management decisions. Power is in this sense a productive force. Without it, managers could not do their job. But power can also be disruptive, corruptive, and, hence, negative. It can be used to block management initiatives and/or to make management serve special interests, creating thus inequity and injustice. Therefore, power in fisheries and coastal management involves potentials as well as risks, making it one of the key challenges in institutional design. Yet, although power is perhaps the most central issue in social science, a literature search on power in fisheries and coastal management research yields very little. We may wonder why this is so. But what is power in the first place? Where does power sit? And what does power actually do? How can fisheries and coastal management benefit from the way social scientists have debated these questions? This paper attempts to demonstrate what power involves and how it should be addressed in fisheries and coastal management research.

Key words: Power, Governance, Fisheries Co-management, Knowledge, Phronesis

Whether or not power corrupts, the lack of power surely frustrates.

John Forester Planning in the Face of Power 1989:27

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

or a fisheries researcher, the fishing industry may look like no other industry, as a world in itself of which he or she is a part. As a consequence, fisheries tend to be perceived as a special case, where their problems are defined from the "inside-in," or from what anthropologists call the "emic" perspective (Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990). However, at closer scrutiny, fisheries may not be all that different from other industries. Although problems related to fisheries may have a particular form or manifestation, they are often of a general nature. Therefore, fisheries management research can benefit from the "outside-in" (or the "etic") perspective, in other words, from a broader social theory. Thus, "trained incapacity," a phrase attributed to Torstein Veblen, is not inevitable among fisheries and coastal management researchers. Moreover, since fisheries are not all that special, they may also provide general lessons. This, in other words, is the "insideout" (or the "generative") perspective. Here, fisheries are not the primary focus. Instead, they are a locus; where you situate yourself when you study issues of general relevance.

This paper attempts to demonstrate the differences between, and the relevance of, the three perspectives on one substantive issue in fisheries and coastal management-power. Power is an issue that has drawn interest from the social sciences for a long time, resulting in a massive body of literature. This is not so, however, with regard to fisheries and coastal management. Here, with a few notable exceptions, power is an understated and understudied aspect. What power means and does in this particular praxis rarely draws serious reflection or empirical investigation. An English language literature search on power in fisheries and coastal management yields very little. It is a word not often mentioned in this context. Other social scientists have noted the same. Christie (2005), for instance, finds that the literature on integrated coastal zone management is largely silent on how power is distributed among constituency groups, although it frequently focuses on inter-group conflicts. Davis and Bailey (1996) regard the neglect of power in fisheries management research as a potentially serious oversight. There is thus a reason to applaud the recent and, from a power perspective, unique contribution by Peter Sinclair and Rosemary Ommer (2006). My paper is another contribution to filling the gap, as it is meant to illustrate why power in fisheries and coastal management deserves more attention than it has drawn in the past. The aim is also to identify a number of relevant research questions in this regard.

First, I summarize the (scant) literature on how fisheries and coastal management are shaped by mechanisms of power. This is management and power seen from the "inside-in" perspective. Secondly, from the "outside-in," I demonstrate how the social theory on power may help enrich the fisheries

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and coastal management research. Finally, I conclude that fisheries and coastal management can be a laboratory for power analysis and theory building. I believe that fisheries and coastal management may serve as a test-case for power theory and, hence, an opportunity to provide lessons from the "inside-out."

# The Inside-In Perspective

Judging from the literature, when power is addressed in fisheries and coastal society research, it is largely secondary and implicit even when the issues under investigation are about social conflict, collective action, property rights, class struggle, credit systems, gender relations, poverty, and the like. It is therefore worth noting that the World Bank is among the few explicit proponents of a power focus.

In a very practical way, power over the management of a fishery resource may be exercised, for example, by a fishing community, or a group of wealthy business people, a trade union, or an association of fish processors. The power exercised might even be illegal (e.g., through bribery), but nevertheless a real component of what, in effect, governs the management of fisheries resources. It is necessary to recognize the reality of existing power and influence if effective fisheries and coastal management is to be achieved. Institutional arrangements might need to change to accommodate the participation of stakeholders in their legitimate exercise of power, while undue power exercised by others might need to be curbed before management becomes effective in achieving its objectives. (World Bank 2004)

This "Policy Brief" illustrates some of the complexities surrounding what power is, can be, and does in fisheries and coastal management. Indeed, it reveals that the facets of power are contradictory. Power can be used as a positive, necessary, constructive, and hence legitimate force, but can also be a negative and disruptive element, for instance if captured by special interest groups. The Bank also points to power as process; something that is exercised and played out in social relations, i.e., among interested stakeholders at various scales.

From the perspective of institutional design, power confronts us with a dilemma. While unleashed, power must also be restricted: as it controls, it must also be controlled. However, the problem is that it is often in the power (as capacity) of power (as agent) to delineate its own reach and to control what is to be controlled. Thus, although power is an indispensable component of fisheries and coastal management, it also involves considerable risks. As John Forester (1989) points out, lack of power surely frustrates, but power may easily also corrupt. Since managing fisheries and coastal areas is essentially an act of power, mismanagement might be the same, that is it may result from either too little or too much power. It may be a consequence of the inability to promote the constructive while curbing the destructive forces of power. For instance, in a study of fisheries management reform in South Africa, Anne Katrine Normann (2006:132) notes that power tends to corrupt at all governing levels, and that it takes stamina by the actors involved to endure prosperity and resist temptations to exploit private agendas. She demonstrates that management decentralization risks these tendencies. "Those who have experienced the abuse of power by others can become worse power abusers when they get the opportunity." Then, empowerment becomes "synonymous with enrichment."

# **Institutional Power**

Powerful institutions such as the state or research organizations are not exempt from these risks. In fact, criticisms of mismanagement frequently target central government and sciences. For instance, the plea for decentralization and devolvement of fisheries and coastal management authority, known as "interactive governance" (Kooiman et al. 2005), "co-management" (Wilson, Raakjær Nielsen, and Degnbol 2003), and/or "community-based management" (Dyer and McGoodwin 1994) is often expressed as dissatisfaction with state and scientific institutions. The state is criticized for being biased in favor of "big capital" (Marchak 1987), for having "only thumbs but no fingers" in dealing with local matters, and for blocking any reform that may undermine bureaucratic control and privilege (Cicin-Sain and Knecht 1998). For example, in a study of Norwegian coastal zone management, Roger Bennett finds that central government tends to keep communes in the dark as to what it considers satisfactory documentation of local needs and ambitions. The government also keeps the communes bewildered about what criteria its objections to local planning proposals are based. This he interprets as a way the state exercises, and maintains for itself, power in relation to local authorities.

This line of action is typically authoritative in that its justification relies not on arguments produced in favour of a particular decision, but on the power of the agency to decide unilaterally what types of knowledge are acceptable and what are not. As such, it can be interpreted as a strategy in the reproduction of power (Bennet 2000;898).

Fisheries science, on the other hand, is blamed for disregarding local ecological knowledge (cf. Berkes 1999), for being too much aligned with the state machinery, and for being inhabited by members whose actions are determined by their own particular interests. For example, Durrenberger and King (2000:11) maintain, "Politically and economically dominant groups and institutions—predominantly the state—have separated folk, local, and traditional knowledge from scientific, centralized knowledge, which has been monopolized by states." The disempowering potential of fisheries science is also stressed by Gísli Pálsson (1991) in the case of Iceland. In confrontation with scientists, fishers are "muted." They find the scientific code alien and superior to that of their own, and they lose faith in what they have learned from experience about what holds true in fisheries. Chris Finlayson's analysis of the advisory role of fishery science leading up to the 1992 Northern Cod moratorium in Newfoundland is another case in point (Finlayson 1994). His study also serves as an illustration of Wartenberg's (1992) idea of "situated power." It is not only the particular expertise of the individual researcher that gives legitimacy to scientific advice, but also the fact that it is situated as a powerful institution. It would also be naïve not to assume that scientists would employ their knowledge/power in defense of their institutional interests, whether we are talking about science as such or the particular organization in which science is located.

Another point of relevance is the role of science compensating for state power in fisheries and coastal management. With reference to Bourdieu (1991), Bennet (2000) argues that scientific justification for a particular course of action may serve as an alternative to the use of force. As science provides the state with a reason to exert power, science can help legitimize policies and actions, and thus help to reinforce state power. Thus, together the state and research institutions represent a powerful pair. In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the government and the scientific community are stakeholders in their own right and that an analysis of the workings of power in fisheries and coastal management must include them.

# **Management Tools**

Fisheries and coastal management inevitably triggers interests with regard to outcomes, as there will always be winners and losers. Management restricts stakeholders' degrees of freedom (including those of managers), and the relations stakeholders have to each other. This is no less true of property rights than it is of other management instruments. Property rights as a management tool include and exclude stakeholders and thus permanently change social relationships. Consequently, the issue of property rights is conflictive and tends to exacerbate power games where stakeholders have an incentive to exercise whatever leverage they may possess on the management system in order to make it serve their particular interests, for instance with regard to the value of their quota rights.

Yet, property rights find their rationale in absence of power. As depicted by Garrett Hardin (1968), in the open access situation, common pool resources are over-exploited because resource users are helpless victims of their own disposition. In this situation, property rights have the effect of empowerment, as they provide users with the resources and the incentives to enforce restrictions on harvesting practice. However, although property rights are a device for promoting better stewardship, they are not neutral. They are also rewards of power (cf. Toufique 1997). As Ben-Yami holds: quotas allocation, or limits set on effort. The system chosen determines the distribution of the benefits derived from the resource to the different stakeholders. (2004)

Even if fisheries and coastal management serves the common good, we can assume that they serve some interests more than others. As with other social arrangements, social researchers should ask whom the winners and the losers are (Flyvbjerg 2001).

Deliberately or not, management systems express a political position on relations of power, conflict, and social justice. Fisheries and coastal management systems are therefore inherently political, most often contentious, and subject to criticisms. Maarten Bavinck's analysis of the social relations among industrial and artisanal fisheries in South India clearly illustrates this.

Power is an essential ingredient in both forms of social organization and sea tenure, and also plays an important role in the relationship between the fisheries subsectors. The Fisheries Department, as one arm of government, has deeply influenced the balance of power at sea, which already tends toward the party with the bigger craft and engine power. The department lent essential support to trawler fishers, particularly in the sub-sector's formative phase, rebutting the waves of anger and successfully defanging small-scale fishers protest. But the Fisheries Department has not always sided with the trawler fisher, often striving to play a mediating role. This is motivated also by the fact that small-scale fisheries constitute a substantial vote bank, and cannot be ignored politically. (Bavinck 2005:816)

Similarly, Peter Sinclair (1988, 1990) holds both neglect of local ecological knowledge and partisanship on the part of government as factors leading up to the Northern Cod moratorium. He criticizes Canadian fisheries policy for systematically favoring the offshore trawling sector at the detriment of small-scale fisheries and the fish resources. Therefore, he says that the government is also largely to be blamed for the crisis that led to the cod-fishing moratorium in the early 1990s.

# **Power Sharing**

Co-management and interactive governance in fisheries and coastal management is about the restructuring of relations and moving towards a more equal sharing of power among interested stakeholders (Pinkerton 1989, Pomeroy 2003, Raakjær Nielsen et al. 2004). In fact, a web search for power in fisheries reveals power-sharing and co-management as indivisible categories. Indeed, co-management is defined as power-sharing. Thus, fisheries co-management and other interactive institutional designs do not do away with power but attempt to level the playing field by introducing a system that gives stakeholders an equal chance to apply or shield themselves from power. As Etzioni (1968:320) reminds us, "Power can be exercised only because—and to the extent

The political attitude of the powers in charge determines the choice of the management system and how it is applied through licensing that controls fishing capacity,

that—the power potentials are unevenly distributed among the actors." Co-management neither removes the conflicts of interests that exist between the various stakeholder groups nor will it necessarily eliminate the power games that stakeholders play. Rather, it contains these interactions in another way, while making each participant less vulnerable to the power of others.

Whether in this respect co-management succeeds or not is a question begging for empirical research. Here, Davis and Bailey (1996) warn against the danger of entrenching existing power differentials and social inequities. Delegating management responsibilities to user-groups may only make some of them more powerful than they already are.

If authority over a resource system is transferred to the community level, local elites are positioned to turn this into their advantage and in the process simply strengthen it. The end result, in all likelihood, would not be the sort of equitable development considered an almost natural consequence of community-based management. (Davis and Bailey 1996:262-263)

I think there is a real danger that this will happen as a consequence of co-management reform, as co-management is, in a way, formally legitimizing a position of power that user-groups may already have. Normann (2006) provides a vivid illustration of such a risk in the case of Mozambique. However, no other management system is immune to such dangers, even the informal folk-management systems that exist locally and are commonly hailed by social scientists. King and Durrenberger (2000:9) express similar concerns by stating, "Folk management systems may not function to conserve resources at all, but function to concentrate control of resources in the hands of local elites."

However, similar to what Habermas argues with regard to constitutions and their ability to unite citizens, promote equity, and curb power, one may expect co-management to do the same and, hence, to correct for "community failure" (McCay and Jentoft 1998). Co-management is power-sharing and, therefore, empowerment (Jentoft 2004). Co-management may be designed to avoid the risks of capture by the already powerful stakeholder. But co-management is not a quick fix, for it never takes place in a power vacuum, and well-intended efforts in power-sharing and partnership may cause resistance (Raakjær Nielsen et al. 2004). Co-management is therefore as much a reform process as it is an institutional fix. As Kolikoski and Satterfields conclude from the evaluation of a Brazilian co-management experience:

Important adjustments still need to be made before the outcomes of the Forum can be said to better reflect the interest and knowledge of fishers.... [T]he Forum has yet to find an ideal balance between the empowerment of fisheries versus elite representatives. Conflicting rights over the use of the estuary for purposes other than fishing (e.g., port activity, tourism) persist as does the historically rooted power of governmental and industrial agents. (2004:520)

Co-management rests on the same assumption as does democracy: power is more legitimate when it is shared than when it is not. The legitimacy argument is therefore intrinsic to the idea of co-management. Power-sharing provides a mutual check on power, but hardly a sufficient one. Moreover, it should be noted that as with other institutions, co-management is not only an instrument of power but also an outcome of power. The particular institutional design results from a process through which power is active. For social research, it is therefore important to ask what mechanisms of power lead to the particular design of co-management. What resources do stakeholders mobilize and what strategies do they employ, and with what effect? We also have to ask how exactly, and on what grounds, is power shared in fisheries co-management institutions. Among whom and how does it work in concrete settings? Does it meet the standards of equity and justice? Notably, it could be argued that power should not necessarily be equally shared, as some have more at stake than others. For instance, all stakeholders should not always be equally represented and have the same voice in the decision-making process. Some stakeholders may have more urgent concerns than others; concerns that cannot be postponed or given a lesser priority. Some stakeholders have more legitimate concerns than others, concerns that should therefore have the right of way. For this reason, in the case of Norway, Buanes et al. (2004), by drawing on Mitchell (1997), distinguish between "definite," "expectant," and "latent" stakeholders in fisheries and coastal management. Definite stakeholders are more affected than others, and from a justice perspective it would not be unreasonable if these groups are given a stronger representation than other stakeholder groups. There are even situations in which some stakeholders should have their concerns guaranteed as a right, as with indigenous peoples and human rights (Jentoft, Minde, and Nilsen 2003).

Although there are some merits to "cooptation" of powerful actors (Selznick 1966), co-management could easily be subject to criticism if stakeholders obtain a privileged position simply because they are powerful. Interestingly, Buanes et al. (2004) find a high and positive correlation between urgency, legitimacy, and the power of concerned stakeholder groups in Norwegian coastal zone planning. This, however, may be an exception rather than a rule. The problem would also be serious if, in the co-management system, the position of stakeholders in the management system was set in stone regardless of change of urgency and legitimacy. If circumstances change and stakeholders move from one group to another, their position within the management system should change accordingly, and power structures should not hold them back, as has been the case with Norway's fisheries management system.

Formally and legally binding procedures for making management decision-making and representation transparent and accountable, for instance in applying the "one-man-one vote" principle, may counteract the tendency to reinforce inequities. Still, institutional reforms may not always make the difference it is supposed to. Co-management provides no guarantee against the violations of rules. Neither does it secure that power will always be played out in the open nor that the best argument will always win. In the worst scenario, one may end up with some kind of conspiracy against the fishing population and the public at large, as Adam Smith foresaw would happen to free markets. Thus, we do wisely to follow the advice of Robert Putnam. We should regard institutional reforms such as co-management not as an axiom but as a hypothesis (Putnam 1993). Even with great potentials, they also risk failing. Therefore, it is essential that we understand the relations of power and how power works in such circumstances. Only then can robust and democratic co-management institutions be built.

# The Outside-In Perspective

The philosopher Bertrand Russell (1938) claimed that power is social sciences' most fundamental concept-in the same way that energy is in physics (Russell 1938). Consequently, the social sciences should have a lot to offer to the understanding of how power works in fisheries and coastal management. Nevertheless, that is an opportunity that is largely neglected in fisheries management research-or in fisheries social science for that matter. The reader can quickly check for herself by a web search or by inspecting the index and reference list in any fisheries social science monograph. What follows, therefore, is a discussion of power and politics in fisheries and coastal management from the perspective of social theory. In the terms of Glaser and Strauss (1967), we now move up one level of theoretical abstraction, from a "substantive" to a "formal" theoretical level. Whereas substantive theory is developed for an empirical area of social inquiry, in this case fisheries and coastal management, formal theory is developed for a conceptual area of social science, in this case power. Formal theory would work as a stepping stone both for the development of substantive theory and for empirical research, here on coastal and fisheries management.

Fisheries and coastal management is an exercise of sociopolitical governance (Kooiman et al. 2005), and thus of power. Indeed, the World Bank (2004) defines governance as "*the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources*." But if governance involves the use of power, what then is power? On this question, social scientists have expressed disparate views.

# **Perceptions of Power**

According to Boulding (1990), power represents "a potential for change." Power is a capacity to intervene, to create, to reduce resistance, and to get things moving (Etzioni 1968). Without power, agents would be impotent and vulnerable. Thus, Talcott Parsons related power to authority, consensus, and the pursuit of common goals. Authority built on consensus would then be a legitimate form of power. In this sense, power would depend on the "institutionalization

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of authority" and be regarded as a "generalized medium for mobilizing commitments or obligation for effective collective action" (Lukes 1982:28). Here, power is a constructive force. However, since power just represents "a potential," it is also in the power of power to decide what to do and where to go, including making things stay as they are and to say no. Power therefore may also be a conservative force. Rothschild, on the other hand, emphasizes the negative aspect of power when he defines "economic power in term of unequal initial positions in the market which permit some agents to reap special benefits *in and through* the market mechanism" (Rothschild 1971:15-16).

Robert Dahl (1957) described power as one's capacity to get someone else to do something that he or she would otherwise not do. Such an idea, which Max Weber (1971:53) largely shared, has been reformulated by others, such as Thomas Wartenberg for whom a "social agent A has power over another social agent B if and only if A strategically constraints B's action-environment" (Wartenberg 1990:85). Notably, such definitions tend to individualize power and relate it to social behavior and decision-making. Still, powerful agents or "power elites" (Wright Mills 1956) also work within constraints. Their power is never omnipotent and omnipresent, but specific to situations and events, and circumscribed by rules, regulations, and resources. Restrictions like these are experienced even by such a powerful agent as the state. Patricia Marchak (1987:13) points out, "[G]overments-the momentary embodiment of the state-operate within a constraint system that restricts their initiatives but does not dictate precisely how they should respond to specific situations." Power is neither unilateral, as Gregory Bateson (1972:486) remarked, because also a person in power needs receiving information from someone else, and "[h]e responds to that information as much as he 'causes' things to happen." This point may be illustrated by Wallace Clement (1986:196) who, with regard to Canadian fisheries, holds that for the most part the state has been reactive rather than proactive, "guided by class forces and operates within the context of class struggle."

Thus, from a research point of view, one would need to understand the relational, collective, and institutional dimensions of power and their impact on social systems and agents, as well as how power is restricted from the outside, for instance by lack of information, pressures, and demands from stakeholders, or from "events" that require a response, as when resource crisis hits a fishery. Such an analysis would have to focus on the (dis-) empowering role of (management) institutions, as institutions provide power through the positions that they define, the mandates they give, and the resources they allocate to holders of such positions. Power would, from this perspective, be a property of institutions rather than of individuals.

Power may work more subtly than Dahl's definition would suggest. Individuals (such as charismatic leaders (Weber) and institutions (such as family and community) do not only influence actual behavior, but also consciousness and identity, as Hegel argued (see Wartenberg 2000). Therefore, asymmetrical power relations do not necessarily spur conflict, rebellion, and/or chaos, but may just as well lead to consent, quiescence, and social order (Gaventa 1980). Marx's ideas of "false consciousness" and "ideology" allude to this phenomenon, i.e., a person's preferences may not always be in accordance with his or her objective interests. The response of the powerless is consent rather than obedience. Thus, when it comes to means and goals of fisheries and coastal management, neither a lack of conflict and force nor the existence of consensus are always signs of the absence of power.

It is more than probable that management systems change the very perception of what it means to be a fisher, including the values, beliefs, and aspirations that fishers attribute to their occupation. It is even likely that this is a necessary condition for management systems to work. What the first generation of fishers experienced as an illegitimate intervention into their action space against their interests, subsequent generations take for granted as a fact of life; as an "objective reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966), something that could not be otherwise. In principle, the power imbued in management systems is not different from the power that is inherent in other social systems. Power does not have to be discrete action, exercised at a particular moment. It also works over time, without much noise, through a process of socialization and internalization.

# **Decision Making**

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) argued that organizations are characterized as much by "non-decisions"-i.e., decisions not to make decisions-as by decisions. This occurs by the control of agendas, by disguising interests, and by suppressing conflicts. Therefore, power may also be present even if nothing happens. We must expect that fisheries and coastal management is not immune to this. Problems remain unresolved because powerful interests keep them away from public awareness, or because they lobby governments to remain passive or go slow. Schattschneider's (1960) perspective on organization as "mobilization of bias" is relevant as well. He claimed that organizations prefigure power relations as they always include certain interests, issues, and concerns while excluding others. Again, resource management systems are hardly exceptions to this rule. Power-holders also have the privilege of choosing not to respond to validity claims. Silence can sometimes be an effective tool when confronted by criticism. As Bent Flyvbjerg (2001:143) remarks, "Power often ignores or designs knowledge at its own convenience." In fisheries and coastal management, the politics of deaf ears can be quite effective, as when stakeholders raise claims vis-à-vis government and hear nothing. This, according to David Griffith (1999:176), is what happened in North Carolina fisheries management, something he largely attributes to fragmented organization: "The several, small, grassroots organizations of fisheries that have levied complaints against fisheries managers in the state have all been very local disputes, so tied to local historical circumstances that it has been relatively easy for fishery managers to ignore them." Instead, managers discounted the legitimacy of fishers' grievances by appealing to fishery science.

In order to understand how power works in fisheries and coastal management, we should not only be focusing on behavior that can be easily observed, as it is sometimes the power of power to act back stage, cover up, and even corrupt (see Hollup 2000). Power may involve the use of force or coercion, but may also work as collaboration, authority, and purchase. Sometimes it involves persuasion, seduction, and manipulation. For instance, threats may work indirectly, through body language, hints, in what is not said, or "an offer that cannot be refused." Typically, power is inherent in social practice, communication, economic exchange, and the technology employed. Thus, for instance, power is structuring terms of trade, like prices, in the fisheries distribution chain and quota-markets. Lack of alternative employment opportunities is disempowering to fishing people as it reduces their bargaining power. A not uncommon practice on the fishing ground is big boats bullying small boats.

# **Situated Power**

We should not always think of power as zero-sum, that the empowerment of some necessarily implies the disempowerment of someone else (cf. Parsons 1986). Relationships of power might then be more than the sum of parts. Power is sometimes strengthened by being shared. In the case of co-management, I have argued that power-sharing makes fisheries management more effective (Jentoft 2004). True, power and powerlessness form relationships that may be self-sustaining (Gaventa 1980), but acquiring power, or empowerment, can be a means of building capacity; power serves to build more power. In this situation, power is a productive force, as mentioned above; it is a resource with which to do good or bad.

Empowerment of this kind works at both the individual and system level. Also collective action builds power. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, it is when people are able to cooperate and come to agreement that they become really powerful. In this case, power is not something one has, but something one takes and builds (Arendt 1958). Collective action, the action of the corporate group, is therefore more powerful than that of the individual. Power in the enabling sense, i.e., power to rather than power over (Wartenberg 2000), is strengthened if shared. Moreover, collective action is even more powerful if organized. Clegg (1989:17) says that "[a]gency is something which is achieved by virtue of organization." Thus, organizing is an act of empowerment. It pools resources, builds trust, creates group identity, and boosts confidence, and therefore "collective intentionality" (Sider 1986). All this is subsumed into what Susan Hanna (1997) calls "institutional capital" as regards co-management, "bargaining power" as with trade unions, and "independence" as to cooperatives (cf. Clement 1986; Macdonald 1985).

Fishers have a reputation of being particularly difficult to organize, due to their alleged individualistic mindset (Griffith and Valdéz Pizzini 2002). Durrenberger (1996:72) notes in the case of Mississippi shrimp fishers, "Without a union, shrimpers are powerless in the face of increasing imports, which favor processors.... The folk model of independent shrimpers helps the bureaucrats and the processors alike." But in many countries, fishers do indeed form strong movements, unions, and cooperatives. The conditions under which they do so, how, and with what effect, should thus be central to any study of empowerment in fisheries economies and management regimes. We should then, as Sidney Tarrow (1998:2) recommends, focus on "the changing political opportunities that create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own." Fisheries management systems are clearly among those political opportunities that create incentives for collective action and challenge, as seen for instance in Norway (Mikalsen, Hernes, and Jentoft 2007). But we should be aware of the problem that an empowerment of some stakeholder groups may have a disempowering implication for others. Thus, rather than mitigating conflicts, empowerment may create new ones and, hence, instigating different games of power (Griffith and Valdéz Pizzini 2002).

# Governance

In fisheries and coastal management, one could well perceive power to be "exercised by A over B in B's real interest" (Lukes 1982:33 emphasis added). What, in the short run, may be experienced as painful may in the long run be turned into gain. It is to the benefit of the users that fish stocks and marine ecosystems are sustained, even if rules and regulations are imposed on them. Thus, power is essential in order to maintain both natural and social systems. It is as necessary for the "governing system" as well as the "system to be governed" (Chuenpagdee, Kooiman, and Pullin 2005). According to governance theory, sociopolitical governance and the power it involves (but which governance theory tends to overlook (Arts and van Tatenhove 2004)) is not unilateral and hierarchical, but interactive (Kooiman et al. 2005). Anthony Giddens (1984:16) calls this the "dialectic of control in social systems." Therefore, governance theory starts from the assumption that the state is not the only entity that has power to impact on the course of events. Also markets and civil society harbor governing capacity and, hence, power that should be put to productive use. Together they possess countervailing power. Therefore, potentially they bring more equity and balance into the management equation. But since these institutions also represent particular interests, the power they bring may be counter-productive, reducing rather than enhancing the effectiveness of interactive governance (Mikalsen, Hernes, and Jentoft 2007).

For instance, it is in the power of stakeholders to decide for themselves whether to resist or yield to state power. Some stakeholders are more powerful than others, but no one is entirely powerless. For instance, fishers may not be the one running the management system but they may still largely determine its effectiveness. Managers never have full control. "Exit strategies" (Hirschman 1975) are always an option, as power of the last resort. If fishers put their mind to it, they will find ways to evade the rules. Managers also lack complete information and are subject to restrictions on enforcement. Consequently, the lesson of Herbert Simon (1957) also applies to fisheries and coastal management. There are limits to how rational fisheries and coastal management systems can be, be they of the hierarchical, cooperative, or self-governed mode (Kooiman et al. 2005). As governance theory argues, rationality results from interaction and dialogue within and between social systems. It involves a social process that allows interactive learning rather than a momentous and episodic decision.

# Legitimacy

In some characterizations, for instance that of Max Weber, power is intimately linked to legitimacy. In fisheries and coastal management, monitoring, control, and surveillance are a continuous affair and not things that are settled once and for all. In many situations they have proved to be a never-ending battle. It is likely that enforcement will be less costly if the management system enjoys legitimacy and, hence, the support of users (Jentoft 2000). Thus, legitimacy is institutional capital, which provides "organizational slack" (Cyert and March 1963, Davis and Jentoft 1989) that enables managers to do their job and management systems to prevail, even when it fails or underachieves, as in times of crisis. But does the reverse hold true as well? Is effectiveness sufficient to produce legitimacy and hence institutional capital? At a general level this is Beetham's (1991) question: when is power legitimate? Co-management theory argues the negative: legitimacy hinges not only on outcome but also on process and structure.

For risk of institutional failure and, hence, "power deflation" (Giddens 1977:343), co-management power must be restricted in the form of some legal framework instituted by an external authority like the state to ensure broad participation, equitable representation, and accountability. Therefore, when investigating power, the focus must be broader than the management institution itself. We also need to look outside. Whose resources were mobilized to form it? In whose image was it formed? Whose interests does it serve? These questions are relevant for any management system, co-management or not.

# Knowledge

Francis Bacon said that "knowledge is power." Those who possess knowledge have an edge over those who need it but do not have it. We must assume that this also holds true for fisheries and coastal management. What Robert Michels (1959) famously labelled "the iron law of oligarchy"—the

tendency for even the most democratically oriented organizations to be subjected to the concentration of power in the hands of top leadership because of their unique position to gather, analyze, and, hence, control knowledge. John Kenneth Galbraith's conception of the role of the "techno-structure" in the large corporation alludes to the same phenomenon (Galbraith 1967). Fisheries and coastal co-management institutions are hardly immune to this. What would happen within less democratic organizations then goes without saying. Thus, it is not necessarily the position itself, but the privileged access to information and opportunities for learning that provide managers and bureaucrats with privileged competencies and hence power. Likewise, the role of science in fisheries and coastal management and the power that knowledge vests in scientists are issues that should not be ignored. In this case, power is more a relation of communication than command; it is "discursive power," which, Focault agues, is always more or less present in communication (cf. Flyvbjerg 2001:93). This leads Arts and Tatenhove (2004:340) to conclude that power games are an intrinsic part of argumentation processes, and that the capacity "to argue, name, and to frame" are as unevenly distributed as material resources. Thus, the outcome, who wins, and whose perception of reality becomes valid, are not so much questions of which of the communicating parties "is right," but who at the end of the day "gets right," i.e., who wins the argument. The best argument does not always win.

Therefore, as knowledge in communication is power, the reverse may be equally true: power is knowledge. According to Foucault (1977:131), truth "isn't outside power or lacking in power: it is integral to power." On a similar note, Rothschild (1971:11) argues that with power, "the discovery of truth is not only difficult; it can also lead to clashes with entrenched interests." The history of science is full of examples testifying to this, with the faith of Galileo as the most famous one. As Hajer (1997:139) holds, "...power should be analyzed as inherent in the knowledge claims, and the various practices through which specific scientific claims gain authority and credibility." We need to examine how power is expressed in fisheries and coastal management discourse, including in fisheries science itself. We also need to know how management institutions frame, legitimize, and validates discourse. In the spirit of Jürgen Habermas (1987), we should ask who argues what, from which positions of power, and with what impact. Whose voice is most effective and why?

# **The Inside-Out Perspective**

In the first section, I reviewed how power has been focused in the fisheries and coastal management from the inside-in. Next, I gave some glimpses into what social theory has to offer in terms of ideas, observations, and research questions relevant to the understanding of power in fisheries and coastal management, i.e., from the perspective of the outside-in. What then can be said about fisheries and coastal management from the inside-out? This synthetic perspective would suggest that there are general lessons to be learned with regard to power from studying fisheries and coastal management, and that fisheries management research has things to offer to social theory. Alternatively, we may call this the *generative* perspective. In the language of Glaser and Strauss (1967), we would use "substantive theory" on fisheries and coastal management as basis for the development of "formal theory" on power. Here, fisheries and coastal management would not be the focus but the locus for power analyses (cf. Arensberg 1961).

# **Grounded Theory**

I believe that fisheries and coastal management is fertile for the generation of "grounded theory," i.e., developing social theory from empirical data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). If it is true that "fisheries are more political than most other industries" because of the high level of internal conflict regarding distributional issues (Mikalsen and Jentoft 2001), then they may even work as a paradigmatic case for power analyses. This is not because fisheries are representative of other industries or societal sectors, but because they stand out; because they "shine" to use Heidegger's phrase (Flyvbjerg 2001:80). It is an unfortunate consequence of subject specialization that this potential has not been fully realized. Fisheries remain a marginal issue among social scientists.

Power is an equally marginal issue among social scientists specializing in fisheries and coastal management. Power and power differentials add to the complexities of fisheries and coastal zone systems. As management research cannot ignore these complexities, neither can it ignore power and the dilemmas and risks it poses. The "governability" of such systems rests upon the ability of management (or the "governing system" (Chuenpagdee, Kooiman, and Pullin 2005)) to exercise power. It goes without saying that power, as an aspect of fisheries and costal management, should not be treated as implicitly by social scientists as has been the tendency in the past. Rather, it should be an issue of thorough, systematic, and targeted investigation, drawing on the power discourse of the social sciences, and with an eye for the potentials of developing new formal theory on power. Secondly, fisheries and coastal zones are dynamic systems. There is no doubt that power is among the driving forces of such dynamics. In other words, if we want to understand how natural and social systems change, we should focus on how power works in fisheries and coastal settings. Thirdly, as Kooiman et al. (2005) hold, fisheries and coastal zones also contain enormous diversity. For the generation of a "grounded" theory of power, this is positive because theoretical reflection is stimulated by contrast and comparison research. In principle, it should be possible to study the impacts of power on such things as rationality, transparency, and legitimacy, by comparing fisheries and coastal systems that expose similar natural features but which vary on aspects of power.

# **Identifying Power**

I have claimed that fisheries and coastal management rests ultimately on power; the powers to design, decide, enforce, and implement regulatory decisions. At the core is the willingness to even use violence, as when the coast guard arrests fishing vessels at gunpoint. Power is in this sense a productive force that allows management institutions to do their job. But, as pointed out, power can also be disruptive and corruptive and serve special interests. Therefore, power is potentially both an enabling and disabling resource. What is power, who should have it, and who should distribute it, are key questions in fisheries and coastal management, as in society as a whole. Given this, one would expect power to be at the forefront of fisheries and coastal management research and to draw attention from social researchers interested in power. There are conceptual as well as methodological reasons why currently this is not the case.

First, power is difficult to track down because it often works in subtle ways, in disguise, and backstage. Thus, even if you search for it, you may not be able to find it. It may not sit where you think it is, or when you come and look for it the next day, it may already have left. For instance, feminist sociologists have claimed that as women move into powerful institutions, power moves out, causing (or coinciding with) "institutional shrinkage" (Holter et al. 1996). Secondly, power is not only a "circulating medium" (Giddens 1977) and a moving target, it is also a slippery concept. Social scientists often disagree on what power is. Therefore, definitions flourish with varying degrees of complexity. Thirdly, as Raymond Aron holds, the power concept "is surrounded by a kind of sacred halo...imbued with mysterious overtones that have something terrifying about them" (Aron 1986:253). Although appealing, power is also an issue that people tend to avoid. Instead of talking about power, we often prefer euphemisms like influence, control, dominance, or pressure.

# **Conceptualizing Power**

Then what is this thing called power? When people have power, what is it they possess and do? Scholars like Hobbes and Machiavelli (via Weber, Marx, and Dahl) to Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas have all helped with unique insights, but power continues to intrigue social theorists. The discourse has produced a number of specific power concepts. To name a few, the vocabulary has "relational power," "dispositional power," "structural power," "discursive power," "episodic power," and "facilitative power." It is therefore obvious that we need a more comprehensive definition of power than those that were offered by early theorists, concepts that include the agency, institutional, and discursive aspects of power. The definition offered by Art and van Tatenhove (2004:347) is of that nature: "[P]ower is the organizational and discursive capacity of agencies, either in competition with one another or jointly, to achieve outcomes in social practices, a capacity which is however co-determined by the

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structural power of those social institutions in which these agencies are embedded."

Second, power is not only conceptually tricky, but also difficult from an empirical point of view. Which research methods are the most productive in detecting power? Is power best studied by quantitative or qualitative methods? Is power measurable? Does power lend itself to surveys, interviews, or participatory observation? Is power best studied while in process, or after its effects have materialized? How much social change can be attributed to power? Are there social realms where power is not present?

It is hardly a surprise that social researchers have easier access to the powerless than to the powerful, as it is in the power of the powerful to shield from scrutiny. For this reason, local communities have always been more hospitable to research than corporate boardrooms. Poor fishers are often easier to approach than rich fishers. It is also a reality that people in power rarely admit; perhaps influence, but not to power. As power is never complete, even powerful people may have their hands tied and feel that they have no other choice than to follow rules prescribed by others. Obtaining information from the powerless is not always easier though, as admitting to one's own powerlessness is often experienced as personal weakness, failure, or a loss of dignity. This suggests, however, that power is not an individual but an institutional resource and that powerful people derive their power from the positions they hold in public or private bureaucracies. Once they are out of the organizations and institutions they represent, their power is gone. Consequently, if you want to study power, you would rather study organizations and institutions than try to locate powerful individuals.

# Phronesis

Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that power should be studied in particular situations, preferably in the form of casestudies. "Understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power. And such understanding can best be achieved by focusing on the concrete" (Flyvbjerg 2001:107). He is negative to universal theories about power (as well as other social phenomena), as power is always exercised and experienced in concrete settings, and must therefore also be studied accordingly. To back up his argument, Flybjerg draws on Aristotle's concept of "phronesis" as the knowledge form of the human realm. Phronesis (in contrast to Episteme and Techne) acknowledges that human action does not follow universal rules. Rather, it exercises ethical judgments and practical experiences when faced with challenges in concrete situations. The exercise of power, Flyvbjerg argues, is no exception and should be studied as such. Although power was never central to Aristotle, it should, according to Flyvbjerg, be added to phronetic research.

Inspired by Flyvbjerg, I have elsewhere contended that we should recognize the "phronetic dimension" of fisheries and coastal management (Jentoft 2006). Fisheries and coastal management cannot be reduced to a technicality, an exercise of narrow, instrumental rationality ruled by universal theory. Instead, fisheries and coastal management must relate to the diversity, complexity, and dynamics of real-life contexts and apply compassion and reason in practice. This, I conclude, should always be done with an eye to the presence of power.

#### Notes

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